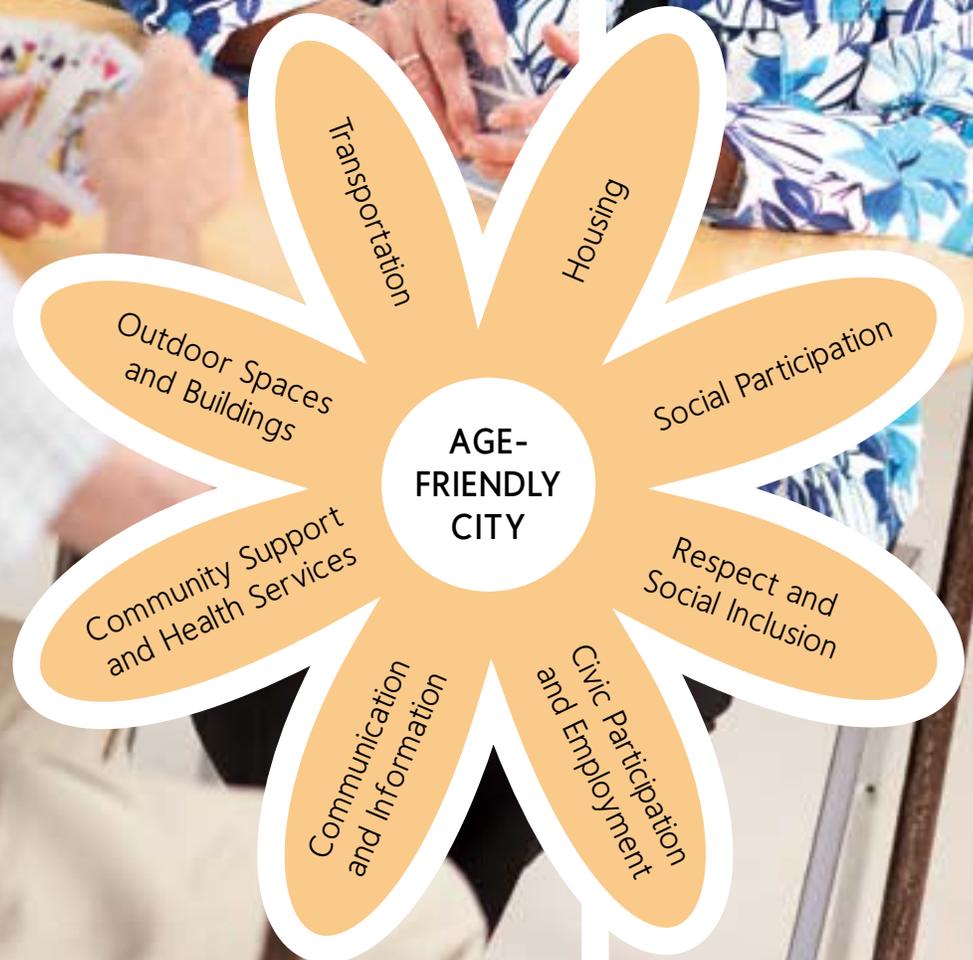




ANNUAL MAYOR'S FORUM ON AGE-FRIENDLY WATERLOO

2014 - Round Table Discussions





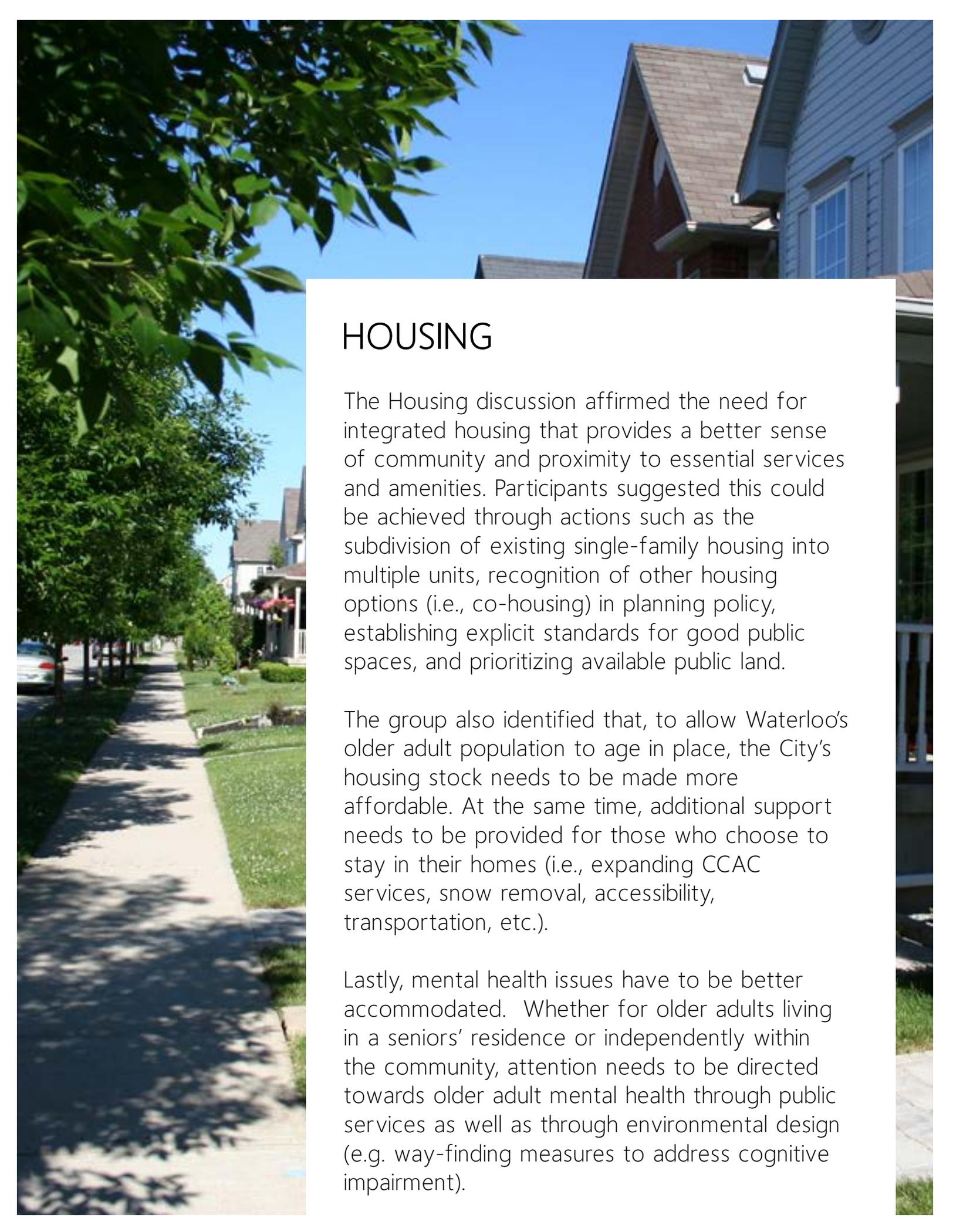


SUMMARY

This year's Mayor's Forum was held on November 28th, 2014 and was another successful event, amounting to about 116 participants. The Waterloo residents got to see actors portray a variety of senior issues after which they had a chance to contribute their opinions as to how those should be mitigated. As a result, Waterloo residents walked away with new thoughts and ideas on how to improve the age-friendliness of their city. The participants affirmed needs that have been identified through prior research and community events, including:

- better social inclusion,
- more affordable and centrally located housing,
- better accessibility both in terms of the built environment and services, and
- more age-appropriate channels of communication.

The following report expands upon these themes and presents the major ideas, issues, and actions brought forth by Waterloo residents through the round table discussions.

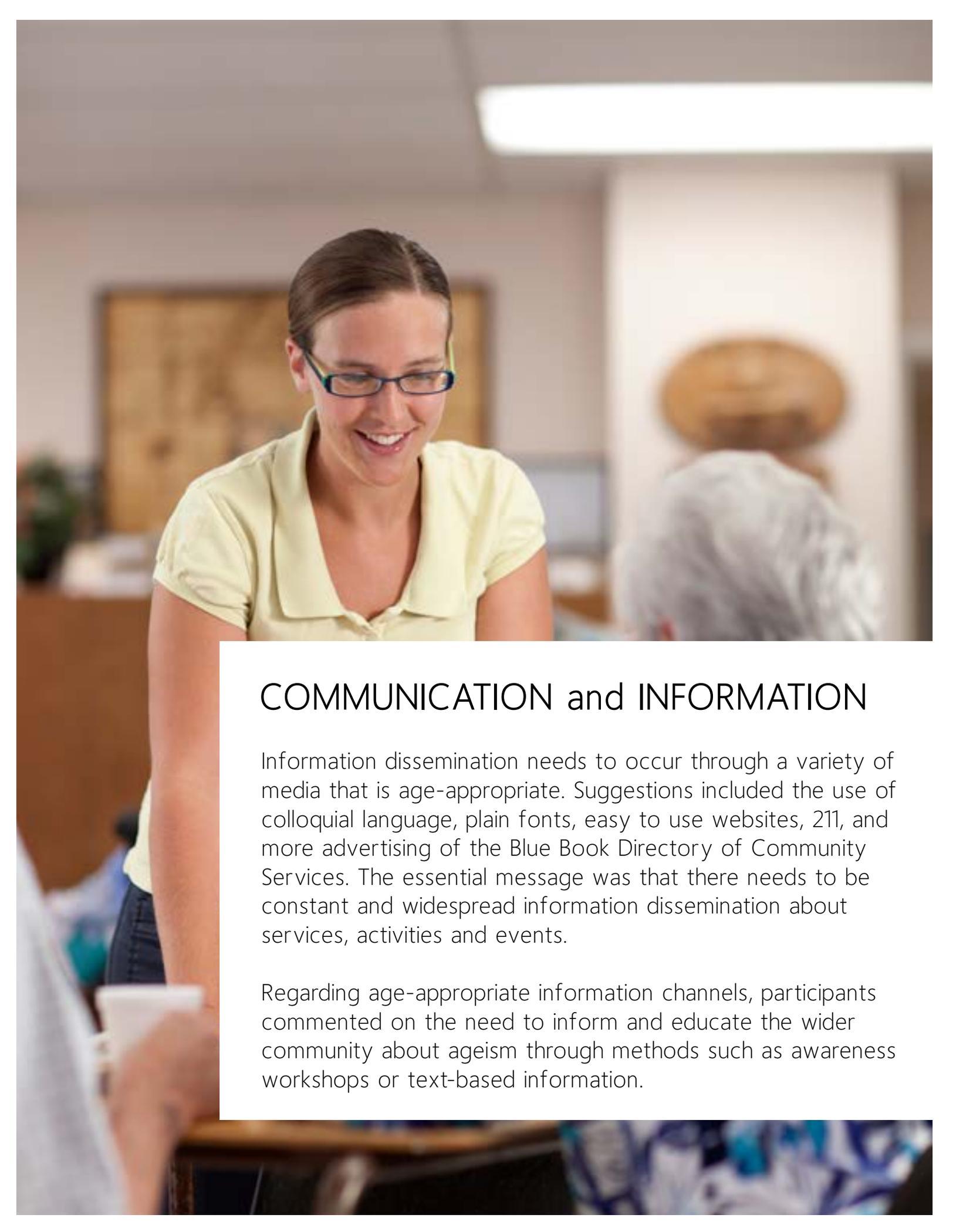


HOUSING

The Housing discussion affirmed the need for integrated housing that provides a better sense of community and proximity to essential services and amenities. Participants suggested this could be achieved through actions such as the subdivision of existing single-family housing into multiple units, recognition of other housing options (i.e., co-housing) in planning policy, establishing explicit standards for good public spaces, and prioritizing available public land.

The group also identified that, to allow Waterloo's older adult population to age in place, the City's housing stock needs to be made more affordable. At the same time, additional support needs to be provided for those who choose to stay in their homes (i.e., expanding CCAC services, snow removal, accessibility, transportation, etc.).

Lastly, mental health issues have to be better accommodated. Whether for older adults living in a seniors' residence or independently within the community, attention needs to be directed towards older adult mental health through public services as well as through environmental design (e.g. way-finding measures to address cognitive impairment).

A woman with brown hair pulled back, wearing glasses and a light yellow polo shirt, is smiling and looking down. She is in a meeting or office setting with other people blurred in the background.

COMMUNICATION and INFORMATION

Information dissemination needs to occur through a variety of media that is age-appropriate. Suggestions included the use of colloquial language, plain fonts, easy to use websites, 211, and more advertising of the Blue Book Directory of Community Services. The essential message was that there needs to be constant and widespread information dissemination about services, activities and events.

Regarding age-appropriate information channels, participants commented on the need to inform and educate the wider community about ageism through methods such as awareness workshops or text-based information.



TRANSPORTATION and ACCESSIBILITY

The group identified a variety of issues within this category, including the need for more frequent crosswalks, longer crossing times at intersections, more pedestrian-friendly roundabouts, a mobile app for bus times, and better by-law enforcement for sidewalks (i.e., stricter enforcement of obstruction and snow removal standards).

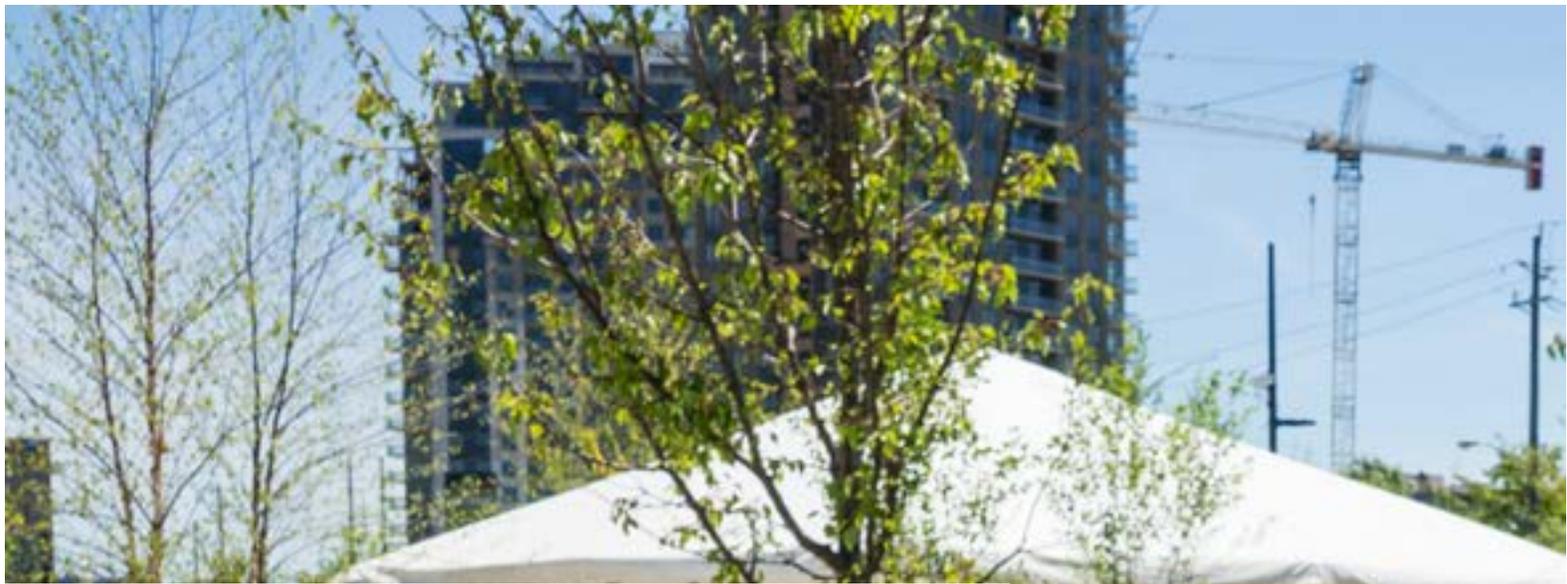
Furthermore, both public and private buildings need to be made more accessible, by encouraging owners to install features such as handrails or ramps.

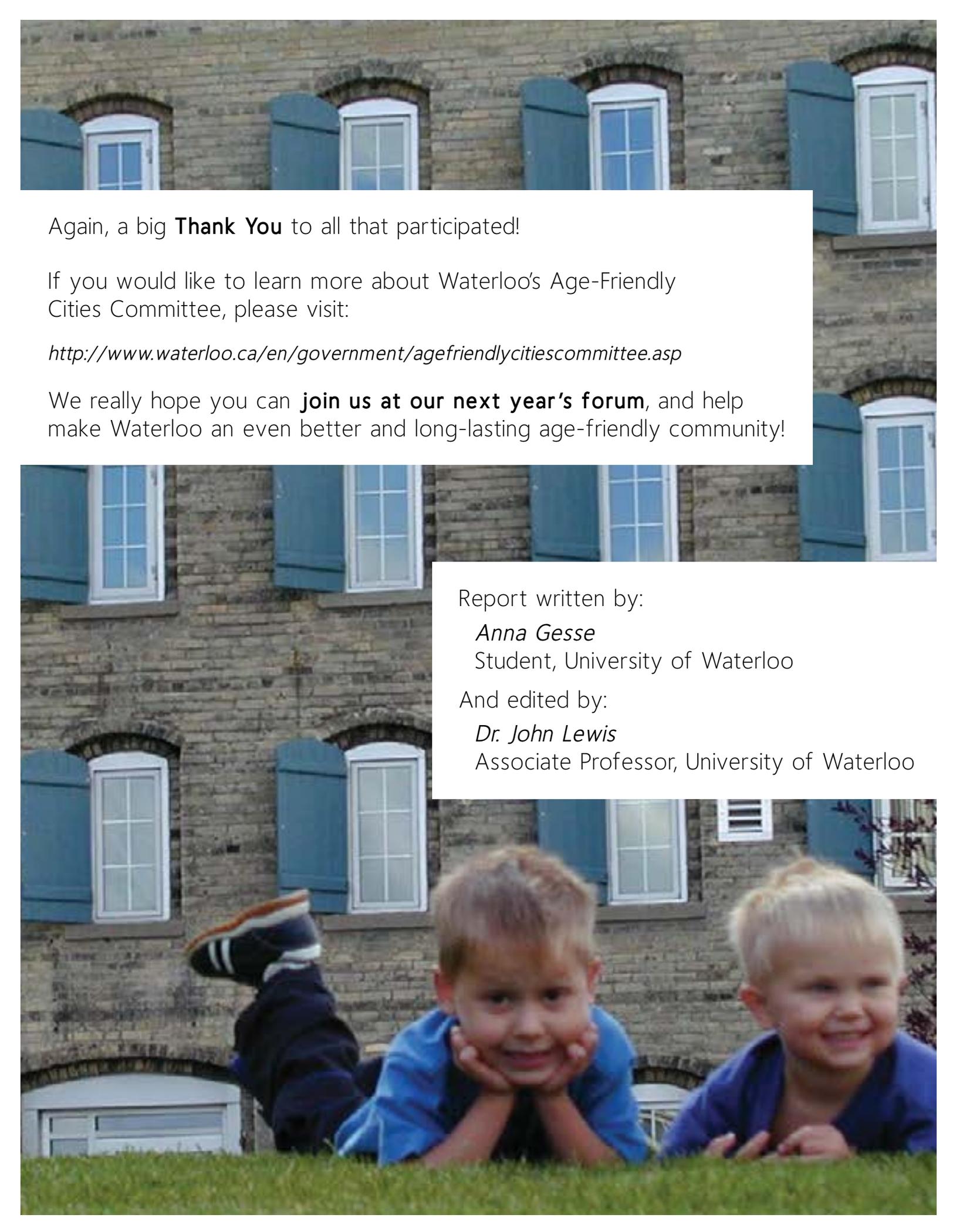
Participants also suggested that areas of the city that contain large concentrations of older adults should be mapped to allow for better development decisions (i.e., transportation). Meanwhile for walking trails, bikes should have designated paths in order to improve path safety and mitigate pedestrian traffic disruption.

RESPECT and SOCIAL INCLUSION

The participants would like to see more social inclusion both through the built environment (i.e., integrating seniors' facilities into pre-existing neighborhoods) and inter-generational programming. One suggestion focused on technology, taking advantage of the large student population in Waterloo to exchange ideas about digital media and enhance the capacity of older adults with digital technologies.

As well, Waterloo could be more proactive in educating its staff and residents about disability and to become advocates of disability awareness. In effect, awareness training needs to be community wide, making residents throughout the City more aware of the needs and abilities of the older population (i.e., ask if one needs help rather than assuming).





Again, a big **Thank You** to all that participated!

If you would like to learn more about Waterloo's Age-Friendly Cities Committee, please visit:

<http://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/agefriendlycitiescommittee.asp>

We really hope you can **join us at our next year's forum**, and help make Waterloo an even better and long-lasting age-friendly community!

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