



Age-Friendly *Waterloo*



EVALUATION REPORT
Spring 2018





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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFC	Age-Friendly City
GNAFCC	Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities
WHO	World Health Organization
MCV	My Community Vision (visualization software used during focus groups)
WMRC	Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex
LHIN	Local Health Integration Network



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an evaluation of the City of Waterloo's progress towards becoming an age-friendly city. This report has been prepared in keeping with the City's commitments as a member of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network on Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC).

Established in 2010, the GNAFCC acts as an international platform for promoting communication and engagement between local authorities committed to age-friendliness. Continued membership in the Network requires active, ongoing engagement and periodic progress reports. The City of Waterloo joined the GNAFCC in 2012. Membership in the GNAFCC does not designate a community as 'age-friendly', but instead signals a community's commitment to ongoing improvement.

The purpose of this evaluation was to review the City of Waterloo's challenges and areas of strength as an aspiring age-friendly community. Four of the eight age-friendly city domains identified by the WHO were examined: housing; community support and health services; respect, social inclusion, and social participation; and communication and information. These four areas were selected as priority domains from Waterloo's age-friendly needs assessment conducted in 2010.

Accordingly, this evaluation is based on data collected from three focus groups held in February 2018. In total, 57 individuals participated in these focus groups. The vast majority were older adult residents (age 55 and over) of the City of Waterloo. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from research participants through surveys, and focus group discussions.

The project team comprised Vidya Inc., a local public engagement consulting firm, and six graduate students from the University of Waterloo's School of Planning.

Research participants reported a high degree of satisfaction with local housing, health, and social service providers. Housing affordability, access to service information, and transit services were identified as areas of significant concern.



1.0 BACKG

1.1 Global Network for Age-friendly Cities

In 2010 the WHO established its Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC). The GNAFCC was created in response to global population trends including rapid ageing and urbanization, and connects local communities committed to becoming greater places to grow old. The GNAFCC is not an accreditation program.

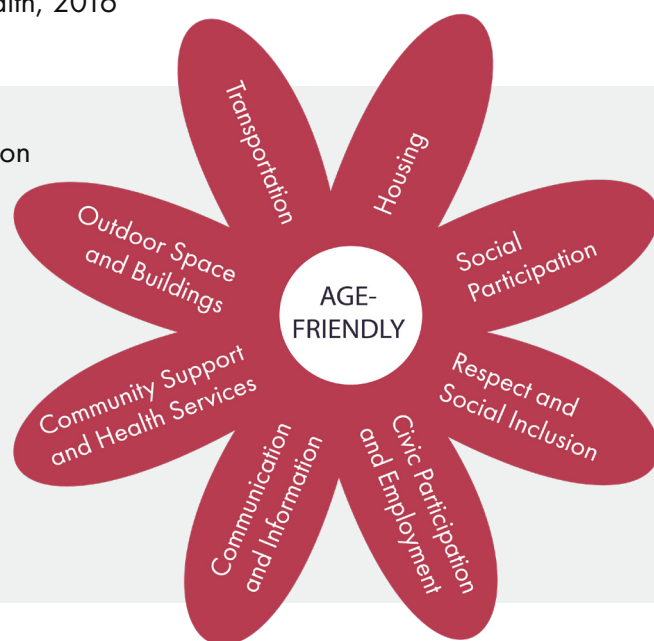
Membership in the GNAFCC is open to any local authority committed to becoming more age-friendly, which is located in a WHO member country. The Network currently includes over 500 member cities and communities across 13 countries.

The GNAFCC is governed by five core WHO documents:

- Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide, 2007
- Age-friendly Environments in Europe policy tool and related guidelines, 2012
- World report on ageing and health, 2015
- Measuring the age-friendliness of cities: a guide to using core indicators, 2015
- Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health, 2016

In Global Age-friendly Cities, the World Health Organization identifies eight areas of urban life which age-friendly communities should work to address:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social participation
5. Respect and social inclusion
6. Civic participation and employment
7. Communication and information
8. Community support and health services



GNAFCC members are expected to continuously strive towards becoming communities that promote active and healthy ageing. To maintain their membership status, members must engage actively in the network by submitting at least one age-friendly practice per year to the GNAFCC database. Members are also encouraged to submit periodic reports evaluating progress to date.



1.2 City of Waterloo Age-friendly Initiatives

The City of Waterloo has a long history of initiatives, mainly recreational programming, serving older adults. The City currently operates two seniors' centres, the Adult Recreation Centre and Wing 404 RCAFA Rotary Adult Centre. These facilities opened in 1976 and 1986 respectively. In 1998 an Older Adult Master Plan was created to guide City services catering to this demographic.

The impetus for the City of Waterloo's current work on age-friendly initiatives came in 2009, when former Mayor Brenda Halloran held the first Mayor's Forum on age-friendliness. Following this event, the Age-friendly City Advisory Committee (now the Age-friendly Waterloo Multi-agency Advisory Committee) was established to guide this work, and provide ongoing support and advice. Over the next two years, the advisory committee would engage extensively with the community on how Waterloo could become a more age-friendly city. Thematically, the committee organized its work around the eight age-friendly city domains identified by the WHO.

*The City
of Waterloo joined the
Global Network for
Age-friendly Cities and
Communities
in 2012.*

In 2012 the City of Waterloo joined the WHO's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC).

In 2013, the Mayor's Age-friendly City Advisory Committee presented its recommended actions to City Council. On September 30, 2013 Council approved the committee's recommendations, directing staff to work on them. Since 2013 these recommended actions have been integrated into the City's various work streams.

Notably, in 2015 City Council approved an updated Older Adult Recreation Strategy. Furthering this work, the following year Council directed staff to begin assessing opportunities to replace its ageing older adult recreation facilities. At the time of writing, this work is ongoing.



2.0 EVALUATION

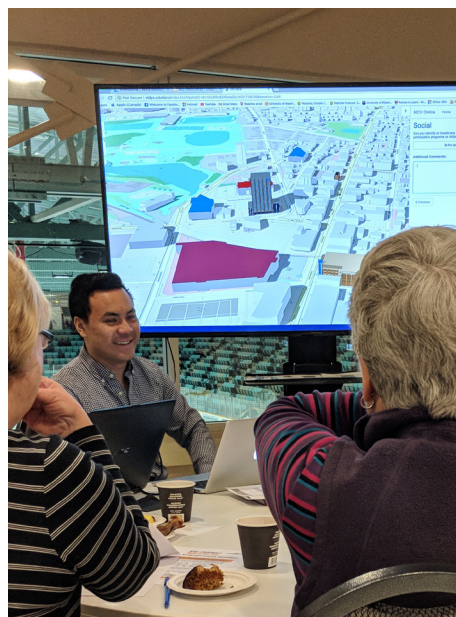
The purpose of this evaluation is to determine how well the City of Waterloo is doing in creating an age-friendly city.

2.1 Purpose and Research

In order for the City of Waterloo to maintain its status with the WHO as a member of the GNAFCC, it must submit at least one age-friendly practice per year to the GNAFCC database. This evaluation and the recommendations derived from it fulfill three goals:

1. To identify strengths and opportunities for the City of Waterloo in its goal to create an age-friendly city,
2. To help the City of Waterloo determine whether they are following through with the requirements of the WHO's GNAFCC, and
3. To represent an age-friendly practice, namely, evaluating its progress annually.

The approach taken for this evaluation is one that seeks to provide in-depth feedback on the City of Waterloo's age-friendliness. Seeking depth, rather than breadth, allows for more detailed feedback and recommendations. In this case, focus group style public engagement was used to illicit conversations about what the City of Waterloo is doing well and what it needs to improve upon to be more age-friendly. The depth of information gathered will be used to form the basis for a broader, generalizable study of the community in a subsequent, follow-up phase. This approach created a context in which participants were allowed to explore possible solutions for making Waterloo more age-friendly. Many of these solutions are reflected in the final recommendations. This evaluation focused on four domains that were identified as priority issues in Waterloo's Age-friendly Action Plan. These domains are: Housing, Community Support and Health Services, Social Inclusion and Participation, and Communication and Information.

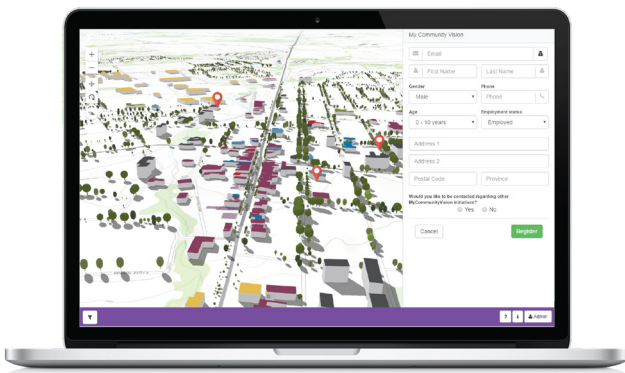


2.1 Purpose and Research

A team of six graduate students from the University of Waterloo's School of Planning were responsible for designing and facilitating this evaluation. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, where individual surveys were used alongside focus group conversations to determine how well Waterloo is performing in the areas of Housing, Community Support and Health Services, Social Inclusion and Participation, and Communication and Information. These four domains were evaluated by Waterloo residents who attended one of three public engagement sessions held for the purpose of this evaluation. The three public engagement sessions were conducted between February 6, 2018 and February 26, 2018 at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex, a venue that is wheelchair accessible and centrally located.

At the public engagement sessions, participants filled out an evaluation survey (see Appendix A) independently, and subsequently took part in facilitated focus group discussions at tables of 5-8 people. The survey instrument was the same instrument used in the 2010 People's Survey, with the addition of several control variables, which allows for comparison between the 2010 results and the 2018 results. The survey consisted of four subsections that reflected the four domains of this evaluation, and was used to guide focus group conversation as participants reflected on their individual answers. All participants took part in four 20 minute focus group conversations that each focused on one of the four domains. Prior to conducting the focus groups, all facilitators were trained to lead the discussions using the same verbal prompts and cues.

By combining quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) methods with spatial (mapping) technology, a detailed and comprehensive evaluation was achieved.



A visualization tool, known as My Community Vision (MCV), was also incorporated into the public engagement sessions so that participants could capture spatial elements associated with age-friendliness in Waterloo. MCV is a mapping software that allows participants to “drop a pin” on locations in Waterloo that are significant to age-friendliness. For example, participants may identify a particular crosswalk that is problematic due to short crossing times, or they may identify a recreation centre that offers good seniors’ programs. These

locations can be tagged using MCV. For the purpose of this evaluation, locations that were seen as positive by participants were tagged to produce a community “asset map”.

Participants

Participants were recruited in a number of different ways. Outreach consisted of putting up posters at local coffee shops, recreation facilities, libraries, banks, and grocery stores. Email invitations were also sent to all Waterloo residents who have participated in age-friendly events in the past, as well as local churches. Students enrolled in Wilfrid Laurier University's Association for Lifelong Learning were invited to participate in the evaluation, as were people who attend Third Age Learning (a lecture series for older adults). Please see Appendix B for participant demographics.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was broken down into two components: 1) Quantitative data analysis using survey data, and 2) Qualitative data analysis using notes gathered from focus group conversations. For the quantitative portion of this evaluation, survey data was entered into excel software and analyzed to produce basic descriptive statistics. For the qualitative portion of this evaluation, facilitator notes from the focus groups were coded for themes. Open-coding was used, and pre-determined categorization was avoided so as to let the data speak for itself. This method is sometimes called affinity diagramming. Each

one of the six evaluation team members coded focus group notes independently to determine themes. Following this, inter-rater reliability was ensured by comparing and sorting team member "bibbets", checking for overlaps, consistency, and discrepancies. Themes that were consistent across team members, were deemed reliable and included in the findings of this report.

Limitations

The methods used for this evaluation had limitations. The main limitation is that focus groups may not be representative of the larger population. That being said, steps were taken to ensure that results are as representative as possible under the constraints of focus group methodology. Such steps included holding three separate public engagement sessions where the focus groups were carried out, and ensuring that we had at least 50 people in total take part. Another limitation may be that the individuals who participated in this evaluation already possess a considerable amount of knowledge of programs and services offered by the City of Waterloo. Individuals who are not part of the pre-existing groups that participants were recruited from, or who might be socially isolated, may not have been captured in this particular evaluation.



In total,

57

participants took part in the evaluation



3.0 FINDINGS

Overview

- There is a general lack of awareness of housing-related services and resources including homeware services, home modification services, qualified contractors and the older adult housing directory.
- The quality, availability, and accessibility of services offered by the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) is inadequate. Quality of care and services at hospitals, as well as accessibility of hospitals is excellent
- Participants generally describe City of Waterloo staff as friendly and helpful when accessing support or services from the City.
- The city can promote age-friendliness by leveraging relationships with existing private and non-profit sector groups such as Third Age Learning and other independent clubs, services, and, programming.
- Printed media such as the Recreation Book and The Chronicle are the preferred methods for learning about events, for most seniors. However, if you opt out of flyers, you also lose access to these helpful publications.

A clear theme that resulted from the public engagement sessions was that the City of Waterloo needs to improve external communication and access to information. Across all four domains of Housing, Social Inclusion and Participation, Community Support and Health Services, and Communication and Information, participants expressed that they either had limited knowledge of what age-friendly programs and services existed in Waterloo, or had limited knowledge of how to access them.

For example, in relation to housing, participants explained that they would appreciate a comprehensive list of different housing options in Waterloo available in both

print and online form. Although the City of Waterloo already has an Older Adult Housing Directory, only one participant was aware of this resource, suggesting that communication and promotion of city materials could be improved. When considering community support and health services, and social isolation, similar sentiments were shared surrounding access to information.

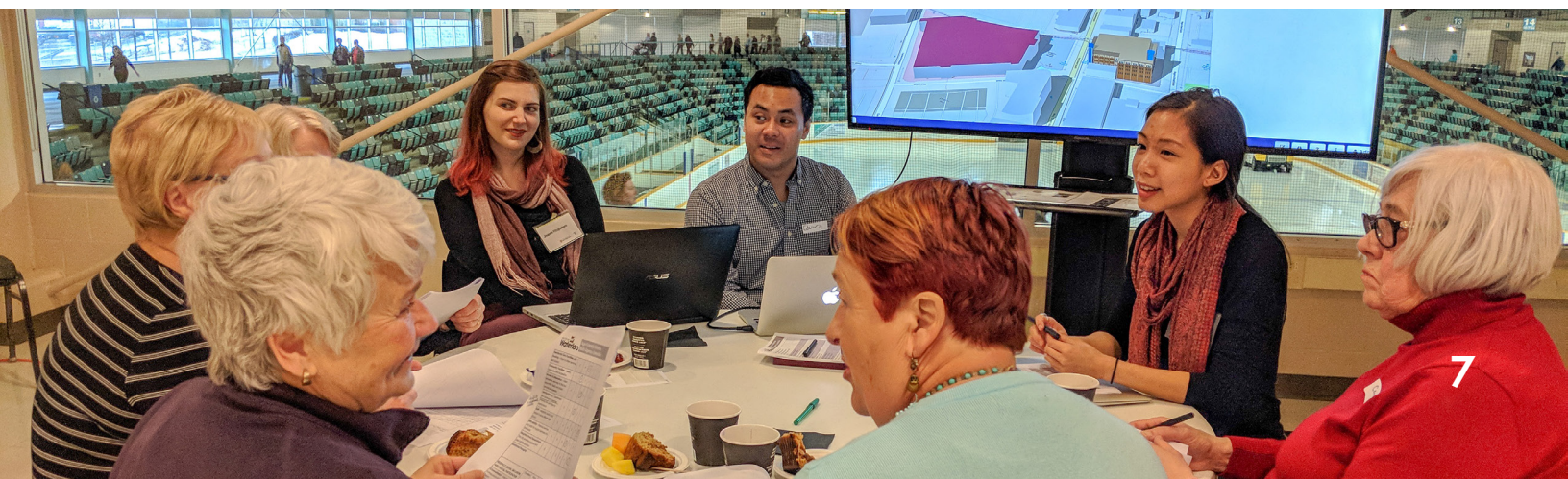


The concept of a one-stop-shop directory for older adults that contains topic based sections on housing, home-care services, health services, clubs, cultural organizations, private and nonprofit programs, etc. repeatedly came up as a possible solution to this problem. Since access to information was the main issue that arose from public conversations, we have focused our efforts on creating one main recommendation aimed at solving it. This recommendation can be found under the section titled “Major Finding & Recommendation: Access to Information.” Domain specific actions have also been developed and can be found in the section titled, “Domain Specific Findings & Recommendations.” Each of the domain specific actions has been assigned a level of difficulty and has been labeled as a short, medium, or long term priority.

In addition to access to information, several other cross-cutting themes were identified. Transportation was one of these themes. Many long-term care facilities and affordable housing for seniors are not transit accessible. Similarly, transit services are inadequate to key facilities such as the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex making it difficult to access if one does not own a car. The conversations around transit and accessibility also led to more broad discussions about Waterloo’s car-centric urban planning and the interconnected nature of transit and affordable housing. Participants expressed that amenities and suitable housing are clustered near the Uptown core, but this

area tends to be less affordable. As such, residents who cannot afford to live in the Uptown core are forced to adopt a car dependent lifestyle and live in areas that lack essential services and amenities. This becomes especially problematic for older adults who are less mobile or who may eventually be unable to drive, and may lead to increased risk of social isolation. Finally, participants explained that many older adults cannot take advantage of the LRT because of long distances between stops. Some participants also expressed feeling confused about navigating the transit system alone. Given how prominent transportation was throughout the public engagement sessions, we have created an additional section that outlines transit related themes and recommendations that can be found in Section 6.25 - Transportation.

In addition to access to information and transportation, participants expressed that Waterloo is a particularly challenging city for newcomers to integrate into. Although Waterloo’s neighbourliness was generally seen as a positive, and city staff were recognized as being kind and helpful, many people said that finding information on programs and services was still challenging. A significant number of participants said that they were aware of programs, services, and resources for seniors in neighbouring communities. This also suggests that improving access to information is essential and that learning about age-friendly practices from other cities should be prioritized.



3.1 Major Finding and Recommendation: Access to Information

Major Finding

The public engagement process quickly and clearly identified that the city's weakest point in terms of age-friendliness related to accessing information.

Major Recommendation

We recommend that the City create a consolidated information portal, in the form of an "Older Adult Directory", where residents can learn about all city and non-city recreation activities, services, and events in one place.

The City's Older Adult Housing Directory is a promising initiative that aims to address some of the communication gaps that our participants identified. While the Directory is a positive resource, very few of our focus group participants were familiar with it. This is a symptom of a common problem described by our participants: information exists in "silos", and older adults are often unsure of where to turn to find crucial information. As a solution to this problem, participants recommended that the City create a consolidated information portal for the diverse programs and services that exist in Waterloo.

The City is strongly encouraged to expand on the model of the Housing Directory in order to develop a more comprehensive "Older Adult Directory". This would be a single, consolidated, "one-stop-shop" directory where residents can learn about all city and non-city recreation activities (eg. choirs, older adult lecture series, hiking clubs, etc), services (contractors, home-care, etc), and events (public information sessions, free concerts, etc). Many participants commented that the "Blue Pages" in phone books and the Region of Waterloo's "Blue Book", both discontinued as of 2015, meant a lost opportunity to access information and services. The Older Adult Directory would fill this gap, and should be available both online and in print form.



Case Study One

Senior's Guide to Services, Brantford

The City of Brantford developed a Senior's Guide to Services, also known as the "Senior's Toolkit". This guidebook, available both online and in print, lists a number of organizations in the City that service seniors in a variety of issue areas, from legal services, taxes and religious clubs, Aboriginal services, life long learning opportunities, LGBTQ services, and many more.

In addition to improving access to information, this initiative would facilitate stronger partnerships and mutually beneficial relationships with nonprofit and private sector organizations that are already working to create an age-friendly Waterloo. By leveraging these relationships and supporting existing programming, the City can create age-friendliness in a more holistic and encompassing way than it could if it prioritized City-run initiatives alone.

Waterloo could build on existing models such as Brantford's (Figure 1.0) and create a larger guide that also features City-led recreation opportunities and news about City plans and developments that affect seniors. The online version of this service could also feature upcoming events and an option to "subscribe" to receive notifications from key organizations.

This service could be complemented using the My Community Vision platform which provides spatial data on where key services and organizations for older adults are located. This platform can act as a living asset map of Waterloo's age-friendly resources. A service like this would have multiple benefits, ranging from improving open government and public engagement, to fostering greater community belonging and inclusion among newcomers and long-time residents alike.

“An age-friendly city should have a list of resources that older adults can access”

How do we achieve these goals?

This report provides a road-map with concrete steps for achieving the Major Recommendation in Appendix C.



3.2 Domain Specific Findings and Recommendations

Within each of the four domains, key themes were also identified. The themes identified in each in each individual domain are as follows:

3.2.1 Housing

Throughout the engagement process, housing affordability was identified as an area that needs improvement. Several participants suggested that the proximity of affordable housing to transit is problematic and contributes to a car-dependent lifestyle. Furthermore, some participants suggested that even if housing is affordable, it may not be suitable.

Although many participants expressed that they would like to age in place for the social and psychological benefits, others explained that they could not afford to live in a retirement facility, but that their current home would need to be modified to accommodate their changing needs as they age. Services like home modification contractors, or home-care services are seen as important, but a number of people said they are generally unaware of these services, and that a list of services and resources would be helpful.

Brighton Yards was referenced several times as a positive example of housing in Waterloo that is affordable and socially mixed.



38% of respondents rated "Home Maintenance and Support Services" as "Good".

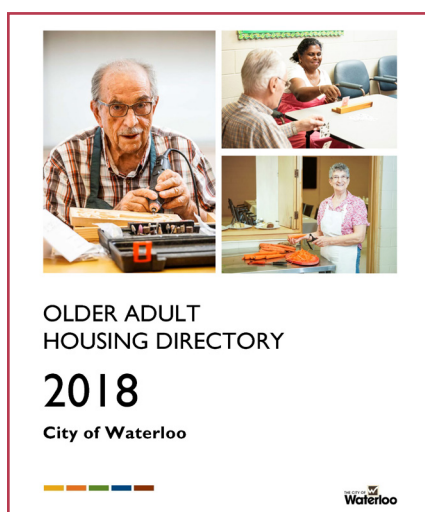
53% of respondents did not know about the quality and availability of rental housing.



Finding One: Housing Affordability

- Throughout the engagement process, housing affordability was identified as an area that needs improvement. Several participants suggested that the proximity of affordable housing to transit is problematic and contributes to a car-dependent lifestyle. Furthermore, some participants suggested that even if housing is affordable, it may not be suitable.
- Although many participants expressed that they would like to age in place for the social and psychological benefits, others explained that they could not afford to live in a retirement facility, but that their current home would need to be modified to accommodate their changing needs as they age. Services like home modification contractors, or home-care services are seen as important, but a number of people said they are generally unaware of these services, and that a list of services and resources would be helpful.
- Brighton Yards was referenced several times as a positive example of housing in Waterloo that is affordable and socially mixed.

Finding Two: Securing Suitable Housing



- There is a general lack of awareness of housing-related services and resources, including home-care services, home modification services, qualified contractors, or the older adult housing directory.
- Housing is available, but it may not be suitable for older adults for reasons of accessibility or proximity to transit and amenities.
- Securing housing is a challenge due to a lack of information and wait times that can be three or more months in duration.
- People rely on informal or familial care networks during life transitions or crises, such as a change in one's mobility.

Finding Three: Housing construction is of generally good quality.

Finding Four: There is a strong desire to live in socially-mixed housing where young people and older people can live in the same building.

HOUSING ACTIONS

● Short Term (easy) ● Medium Term (moderate) ● Long Term (challenging)

- 1. Conduct further public engagement with residents facing housing insecurity who may not have been present at previous engagement sessions
- 2. Explore incentives for developing accessible housing. (See Case Study Two).
- 3. Develop a list of qualified service providers that can help older adults age in place. Partnering with small-project contractors who carry out home modifications, companies that provide snow shoveling or lawn mowing services, or organizations that help care for pets will allow older adults to more easily age in place.
- 4. Prioritize and incentivize the development of housing near existing amenities and transit routes so as to promote complete communities.

Case Study Two

Affordable Housing Reserve Fund, Vancouver

In 2009, the City of Coquitlam (Vancouver) established an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (AHRF), and subsequently renewed its Housing Affordability Strategy in 2015. The Strategy includes direct actions aimed at increasing units that are affordable, accessible, and adaptable, and the development application process at the City encourages securing accessible units. For example, the Density Bonus Program permits additional density during rezoning, in exchange for a financial contribution from the developer - a key priority for Coquitlam is to then direct a portion of these contributions to the AHRF, to be used on amenities and infrastructure in the City.

In July 2017, the Council voted to grant \$177,545 from the AHRF toward 14 subsidized rental units in a 67-unit rental building for seniors, in partnership with the Finnish Canadian Rest Home Association. Through this integrated strategy, the Council offers an important tool for affordable and accessible housing solutions.



3.2.2 Community Support and Health Services

Many of the people present during the engagement sessions recognized that they have been fortunate enough to not require extensive use of local health services. As such, they suggested that we speak to people who have used health services in Waterloo more extensively. They also expressed that they were generally unaware of community and health services and how to access them in Waterloo. Several newcomers to Waterloo also explained that finding information on community support and health services is difficult and confusing. Of those who had experience with health services in Waterloo, several things were identified as problematic including the quality and availability of home-care services, and services offered by the LHIN. Hospitals and recreation facilities were seen as positive assets in the community that are generally accessible to all people. A number of non-city run programs, clubs, and groups were also mentioned as positive community services that should be supported by the City.



36% of respondents rated the safety and accessibility of community facilities as "Very Good".

49% of respondents did not know about measures in place to improve affordability of support services.



Finding One: Accessing Health and Community Services

- There is a general lack of awareness of what community supports and health services are offered to residents of Waterloo and how to access them. This problem is particularly pronounced for newcomers to Waterloo who struggle to access resources that may help them integrate into the community.
- Many residential care facilities are poorly located in areas that lack essential amenities and transit services.

Finding Two: Quality of Health and Community Services

- Recreation facilities such as WMRC are positive assets in the community and are accessible by design, however, transit services are lacking to this facility making it difficult to access if one does not own a car.
- The quality and availability of home-care services is inadequate due to infrequent and short visits from home-care workers.
- The quality, availability, and accessibility of services offered by the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) is inadequate. Quality of care and services at hospitals, as well as accessibility of hospitals is excellent.

Finding Three: City Support for Health and Community Services



- Programs such as Third Age Learning, local clubs, and programs offered by the Libraries are good opportunities to get involved in the community, but the City does not promote them as much as they should.
- The Waterloo Recreation Booklet was identified as an important resource for older adults. However, if residents choose to opt out of receiving flyers, they miss out on receiving the Recreation Booklet, which is problematic.
- Although many neighbourhoods do not have a neighbourhood association, when present, neighbourhood associations are seen as a positive asset in communities. However, there is a desire to have more programming aimed towards seniors, and greater support from the City of Waterloo.

Many people who were present for the focus groups had limited to no experience with long-term care facilities or other health-related services, so they felt unable to adequately respond to questions related to this topic.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES ACTIONS

● Short Term (easy)

● Medium Term (moderate)

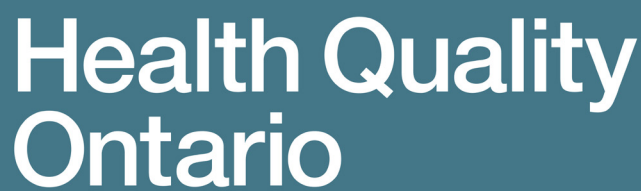
● Long Term (challenging)

- 1. Conduct further public engagement with residents of long-term care facilities who may not have been present at previous engagement sessions due to challenges with mobility and accessibility.
- 2. Ensure that the Recreation Booklet is sent to residents regardless of whether they opt out of receiving flyers.
- 3. Explore the potential to support existing neighbourhood associations and encourage the development of new neighbourhood associations.
- 4. Work with healthcare partners to develop a service that helps people who are recently released from hospital transition after a lifestyle change due to illness or injury (See Case Study Three).
- 5. Re-visit transit connectivity to key community assets, such as WMRC, to ensure that older adults are able to easily access health and community services.

Case Study Three

Transition of Care, Province of Ontario

In post-hospital transitions, many patients do not get adequate information when they are discharged. Health Quality Ontario's best PATH "Transitions of Care" package aims to develop a system that improves transitions between different areas of care.

The logo for Health Quality Ontario, featuring the words "Health Quality" stacked above "Ontario" in a white, sans-serif font, set against a dark teal rectangular background.

For example, the University of Ottawa's Heart Institute's "Get with the Guidelines for Heart Failure" program combines evidence-based best practice guidelines for heart failure, individualized care planning, and post-discharge requirements to support transitioning patients. The program integrates a GAP tool (discharge tool), a heart failure pathway, standard physician orders, and a toolkit for patients and families. The care plan is discussed with the patient in full, and the patient is instructed to bring the tool to their primary physician(s) following discharge. This program is aimed at improving health outcomes, experiences of care, and system effectiveness.

3.2.3 Respect, Social Inclusion and Social Participation

Most people felt that their social networks were built around non-city led programs such as Third Age Learning, local clubs, or interest groups. In terms of “neighbourliness”, most people felt that they had good relationships with neighbours, however, others felt that Waterloo was a difficult city to integrate into. Participants also recognized that people who are socially isolated were likely not present during the focus group sessions. As such, they suggested further consultation with people who may not have been able to make it to the engagement sessions.



39% of respondents rated “Access to Event Information” as “Good”.

60% of respondents did not know whether there is consistent outreach to people at risk of social isolation.



Finding One: Public Consultation

- Participants urged the consulting team to extend consultation efforts toward people who struggle with social isolation, such as individuals living in long-term care facilities or subsidized housing.

Finding Two: Social Networking

- There may be an opportunity to leverage existing (eg. home care) or discontinued (eg. Welcome Wagon) services to combat social isolation.
- Among our participants, most attributed their strong social networks to recreational programming like Third Age Learning, local choirs, yoga classes, etc.

Finding Three: Sense of Belonging and Neighbourliness

- Participants were divided in terms of their overall sense of community belonging in Waterloo. Some felt that they had strong relationships with their neighbours, and that their community “looked out for each other”. Other participants (particularly people who had moved here from elsewhere) described having a very hard time integrating, and being disenchanted with their neighbours.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES ACTIONS

● Short Term (easy)

● Medium Term (moderate)

● Long Term (challenging)

1. Investigate the potential to re-invigorate the Welcome Wagon or similar programming that can help newcomers to get connected to clubs, services and opportunities for social networking. (See Case Study Four below).
2. Create a public engagement strategy to address systemic barriers facing low-income and long-term-care residents, as well as residents from different cultural backgrounds. The “New Horizons” grant recently awarded to the Committee could help to support this initiative.

Case Study Four

Abundant Community, Edmonton



Abundant Community is a neighbourhood engagement strategy aimed at increasing social connections between neighbours by helping neighbours form relationships at the block or building level. Abundant Community Edmonton helps “facilitate local recreation opportunities, foster an environment of care for one another, [and] reduce social isolation” (City of Edmonton, 2018).

This initiative uses an asset-based community development approach to gather information on residents’ interests, skills, talents, and gifts. “Neighbourhood Connectors” also help organize community functions such as block parties. This initiative is supported by Edmonton’s community leagues (neighbourhood associations), the Mayor of Edmonton, and the City of Edmonton’s Community Services Department.

3.2.4 Communication and Information

Echoing comments made throughout the public engagement process, access to information and knowledge of existing services and resources were an issue. Participants felt that the city could do a better job of making people aware of what programs and services (both city- and non-city-run) are available in Waterloo. They also felt that a multi-pronged approach to communication should be taken where both online and print versions of information are circulated. Finally, in terms of city engagement opportunities, participants felt that their input was not really being taken into consideration, and that their participation was somewhat tokenistic.



28% of respondents said that clear and straightforward language is used in print and spoken communication.

68% of respondents did not know if people at risk of social isolation are getting information from trusted sources.



Finding One: Communication

- Generally speaking, the city could do more to notify older adults about opportunities for public engagement and specialized age-friendly programming.
- People typically rely heavily on word-of-mouth and social networks to learn about events and opportunities.
- Participants expressed the belief that the City's public engagement process is somewhat tokenistic. Many pointed to the consultations surrounding the LRT and the Memorial Recreation Complex as examples of times where the City held public meetings after they had already decided on their plan. Despite being an active group of individuals, only one resident was familiar with engageWaterloo, the city's on line platform for public consultation.
- Participants viewed the political/city treatment of transit and walkability concerns surrounding the Memorial Recreation Complex as dismissive.

Finding Two: Promotion of City and Non-City Programs

- The city has an opportunity to promote non-city programming such as Third Age Learning and other independent clubs, services and programming. The City can promote age-friendliness by leveraging relationships with these existing private and nonprofit sector groups.
- Participants found it problematic that the City seemed unaware of important programming for seniors, like Third Age Learning.

Finding Three: Access to Information



- Printed media such as the Recreation Book and The Chronicle are the preferred methods for learning about events, for most seniors. Even those who were skilled with computers found paper copies to be more impactful. However, printed resources are also unevenly distributed - many commented that if you opt out of the flyers, you lose your access to these helpful publications.
- The computers available at the Waterloo Public Library are an important resource. Following the example of neighbouring communities, public computers should be made available in all recreation complexes.
- Radio and TV are under-utilized resources for communication. While they may be falling out of fashion among younger generations, they are still very effective tools for reaching out to seniors.

Finding Four: City of Waterloo staff are friendly and helpful. Participants generally describe positive experiences with accessing support or services from the City.

Finding Five: Street names are small and challenging to read. Road signage could be more accessible, and the City would benefit from a simple, easy-to-read map.



COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION ACTIONS

● Short Term (easy)

● Medium Term (moderate)

● Long Term (challenging)

- 1. The City of Waterloo should make more concerted efforts to promote and advertise engageWaterloo.
- 2. The City should address accessibility and distribution problems surrounding The Record, The Chronicle, and the Recreation Book. These and other print resources should be detached from flyer mailings and made available in malls and libraries in order to improve access.
- 3. Equip all recreation complexes, such as the Memorial Recreation Complex, with public-access computers.
- 4. The City of Waterloo's Public Engagement Guidelines explain that public input should be sought during all phases of the planning process. Yet, many participants explained that they had only been consulted after the design and decision making processes had taken place. Additionally, engageWaterloo is a positive online service for consultation, but since many seniors do not use the internet regularly, a multi-pronged approach is required to access all citizens. Thus, the City needs to make concerted efforts to diversify engagement media, consult earlier in the process, and notify participants about how their input has influenced outcomes.
- 5. Over time, the City should replace existing street sign age with larger text.

3.2.5 Transportation

Transportation did not feature prominently during the 2010 consultations. However, participants were eager to speak about transportation issues during the 2018 consultations. It became clear that transportation was a theme that cut across all issue areas and that these findings are relevant for creating an age-friendly city. As such, we have included participants' feedback on transportation issues as an additional theme in this report. While we recognize that the City of Waterloo cannot easily influence regional transit or roads, some actions can be taken at the local level in both the short and long term to improve the transportation environment.

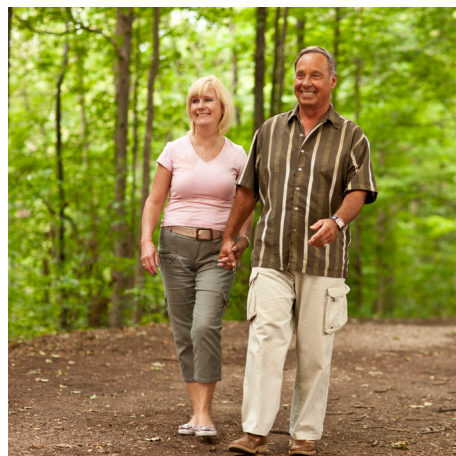
In some places, sidewalks do not complement transit accessibility, making access to key services challenging.

There is a lack of transit connectivity for important age-friendly services. Some retirement communities do not have bus service (eg. Luther Village) and multiple participants contended that they could not take advantage of the new LRT because of long distances between stops. Generally speaking, long distances between transit stops and destinations present a serious accessibility barrier for older adults.

Many participants were also concerned that the new Adult Recreation Centre will be located at the Memorial Recreation Complex, which is not easily accessible by transit.

There is an opportunity for the City to support transit accessibility for seniors by providing peer-learning or instructed outings. Many participants expressed confusion and fear around navigating the transit network alone - having someone there to support them through the process of buying a ticket, reading the transit map, getting off at the correct stop, etc. would greatly improve the comfort level that seniors could have with using public transit (See Case Study Five).

Most residents agreed that Waterloo is very car-oriented. When you can no longer drive, they explained, your quality of life declines. The city could do more to facilitate accessibility and make Waterloo incrementally less car-dependent. For example, seniors expressed concern over the future LRT because the stops are too far apart. If there were more Park & Rides, seniors may be more likely to use the LRT to get to events. Accessible parking is often misplaced. The Shops at Waterloo Town Square were seen as one example of this, where the accessible parking spaces are on the other side of train tracks and require people with mobility issues to go out of their way to get to the door.



TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS

● Short Term (easy)

● Medium Term (moderate)

● Long Term (challenging)

- 1. Use the findings of this report and public engagement process as evidence to urge the Region of Waterloo to modify key transit routes to improve connectivity to the WMRC.
- 2. Consider implementing public parking near key transit terminals and stops to facilitate access to the LRT and bus system.
- 3. Develop a support program for seniors to improve their comfort with independently using the transit system.

Case Study Five

Let's Ride the Bus!, Burlington

The City of Burlington's Age-friendly Council and Burlington Transit have partnered to empower seniors, by presenting information sessions on transit in the City.

They provide hands-on sessions to learn about fares, schedules, transit routes, and special features of buses. There is an educational component, as well as a ride-along, to help ease anxieties with navigating the transit system.



4.0 SUMMARY

One of the primary objectives of this evaluation was to determine how well Waterloo is doing at creating an age-friendly city. Specifically, this evaluation looked at the domains of housing, community support and health services, social inclusion, respect, and participation, and communication and information.

The findings of this evaluation suggest that several improvements could be made in each of these domains to help create a more age-friendly Waterloo. While a number of domain-specific themes were identified, improving communication and access to information was the most dominant theme that cut across all domains. As such, we have recommended that improving communication and access to information through the creation of an Older Adult Directory should be made a priority. Modeled after the Older Adult Housing Directory, the Older Adult Directory would act as a “one-stop-shop” for older adults to access information on City and non-city run activities, programs, services, and events.

If communication and access to information were improved, a number of other domain-specific issues would also be resolved. For example, many participants explained that they are unaware of what healthcare or housing services are available in Waterloo, and therefore do not access them.

If this information were made available in the form of an Older Adult Directory, these issues could largely be solved. Although the recommended Older Adult Directory is not a panacea, it does represent an important step toward improving engagement, social participation, and access to information. It also empowers citizens with knowledge of local services and resources. This in turn has the potential to improve the quality of life for residents of all ages in Waterloo. As explained in Appendix C, a communications and outreach strategy must be developed alongside the Older Adult Directory to ensure residents are aware of the Directory and can access it easily in print and online.

Finally, it should be noted that this evaluation is the first step toward a more comprehensive study of Waterloo’s age-friendliness. This evaluation serves to form the basis of a broader, generalizable study of resident’s perceptions of, and experiences with, age-friendliness. This study is to be completed in a subsequent, follow-up phase.



APPENDICES

A: Focus Group Questionnaire	25
B: Participant Profile	32
C: Major Recommendation Next Steps	36



Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

The Age Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee is looking for your feedback on a range of city features that are essential to creating an age friendly city, in which people of all ages have a high quality of life. Your feedback will assist the City in identifying its strengths, targeting its weaknesses, and establishing a benchmark to measure our progress as we work together towards becoming the most age friendly Waterloo that we can be!

This survey uses 4 'age-friendly city' categories that were identified as priority issues following a baseline analysis of Waterloo's age-friendliness. These categories are also part of a larger framework developed through consultation with older people in 33 cities and 22 countries for the WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) Age-Friendly Cities project.

Before you begin the survey, please complete the following Personal Information section. Please note, the information you provide will be kept completely confidential – i.e. will only be used to inform the analysis of this survey. Completion of the Personal Information section is optional, but the information you can provide members of the Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee with a clearer picture of Waterloo's age-friendliness for specific demographic groups (e.g. women, moderate to low-income residents, UpTown residents, etc.)

Rating System:

5 = Excellent! We're Doing Great!

4 = Very Good

3 = Good, But Could Do Better

2 = Fair, Needs Attention

1 = Poor, Needs Major Improvements

0 = I Don't Know

Sex (please circle):	Male	Female	Prefer not to specify	Other:
Age:				
Current or Former Occupation/ Profession:				
Retired (please circle):	Yes	No		



Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

What is your current family income (please circle):	less than \$24,999 \$25,000 to \$54,999 \$55,000 to \$84,999 \$85,000 to \$114,999 more than \$115,000
How many years have you lived in Waterloo	
What part of Waterloo are you from (e.g. neighbourhood)	
What is your primary mode of transportation (e.g. car, bus, walking, etc.)	
Do you currently own or rent your home?	
Have you attended a City of Waterloo age-friendly events in the past? (e.g. Mayor's Forum)	
How did you hear about this engagement session?	

How would you rate the following features of Waterloo?	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
HOUSING						
Affordable Housing - sufficient, affordable, safe, close to other services	5	4	3	2	1	0
Securing Housing - information on housing is easily accessible	5	4	3	2	1	0



Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

Rental Housing – clean, affordable, available and well-maintained	5	4	3	2	1	0
Specialized Affordable Housing – available for people living with a physical, cognitive, or emotional impairment or requiring additional care	5	4	3	2	1	0
Home Maintenance and Support Services – sufficient, affordable, available	5	4	3	2	1	0
Housing Construction – good quality, safe, comfortable	5	4	3	2	1	0
Interior Spaces - level surfaces, allows freedom of movement	5	4	3	2	1	0
Home Modification - options and supplies are available and affordable	5	4	3	2	1	0
Additional thoughts:						
COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
Health and Community Support Services – adequate range, high quality, conveniently located, and accessible by transit	5	4	3	2	1	0
Home Care Services – such as health and personal care, housekeeping	5	4	3	2	1	0



Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

Residential Care Facilities and Housing – close to other services, well located	5	4	3	2	1	0
Community Facilities – safely constructed and accessible	5	4	3	2	1	0
Access to Information – clear, accessible, and easy to find out about what health and social services are available	5	4	3	2	1	0
Service Delivery – coordinated and convenient to arrange, relatively low wait times for appointments	5	4	3	2	1	0
Staff – respectful, helpful, and trained to serve different age groups	5	4	3	2	1	0
Affordability – financial barriers and costs for support services are minimized	5	4	3	2	1	0
Neighbourhood Associations - The city provides support and clear communication	5	4	3	2	1	0
Additional thoughts:						
RESPECT, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
Consultation – older people are consulted on how to better serve them	5	4	3	2	1	0
City Service Staff - courteous and helpful to older people	5	4	3	2	1	0



Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

Age Appropriate Settings - for activities and events that accommodate age specific needs and preferences	5	4	3	2	1	0
School Engagement - schools provide opportunities to learn about ageing and older people and involve older people in school activities	5	4	3	2	1	0
Equality – those who are less well-off have good access to services	5	4	3	2	1	0
Venues - conveniently located, accessible and easily reached by public transit or personal vehicle	5	4	3	2	1	0
Event / Activity Schedules – held at times convenient for older people	5	4	3	2	1	0
Affordability – events and activities are affordable	5	4	3	2	1	0
Access to event Information - it is easy to find out about events, and event advertisements are sufficiently detailed	5	4	3	2	1	0
Outreach – consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation	5	4	3	2	1	0
Additional thoughts:						



Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
Communication Outreach – information is accessible, well distributed through the community to reach residents of all ages	5	4	3	2	1	0
People at risk of social isolation – get information from trusted individuals	5	4	3	2	1	0
Printed information - large lettering, main ideas are clear and bold	5	4	3	2	1	0
Print and spoken communication – clear and straightforward language	5	4	3	2	1	0
Telephone answering services - instructions are slow and clear	5	4	3	2	1	0
Electronic equipment – has large buttons and big lettering	5	4	3	2	1	0
Computers – wide access, at no or minimal charge, in a variety of public places	5	4	3	2	1	0
Additional thoughts:						

Thinking about your current needs as an older adult, please indicate the top issue that needs to be addressed in order to improve Waterloo's age friendliness:



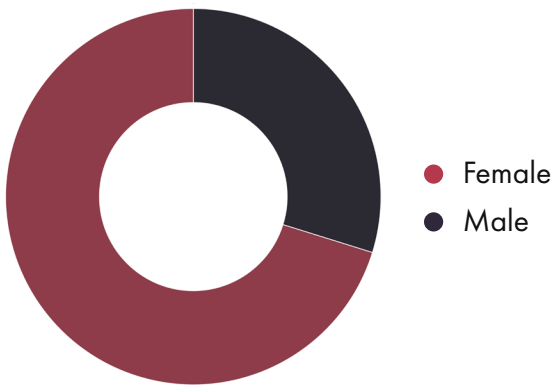
Age-Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee

Is there anything regarding Age Friendliness in Waterloo that we haven't addressed?

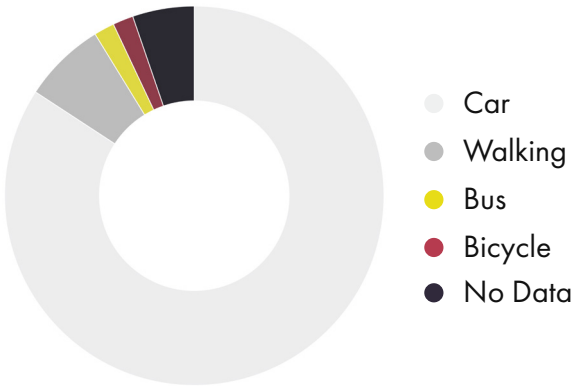
Please fill out this survey and place in the DROP BOX before you leave the room!

~THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY~

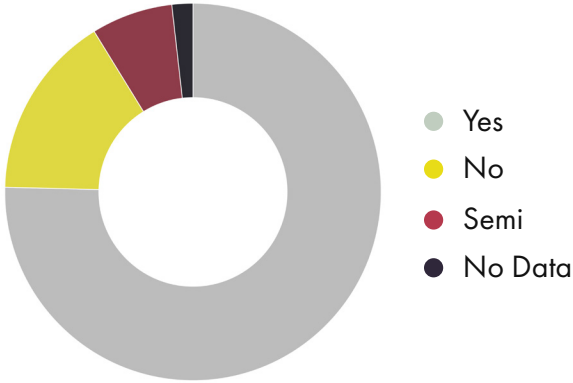
Participant Gender



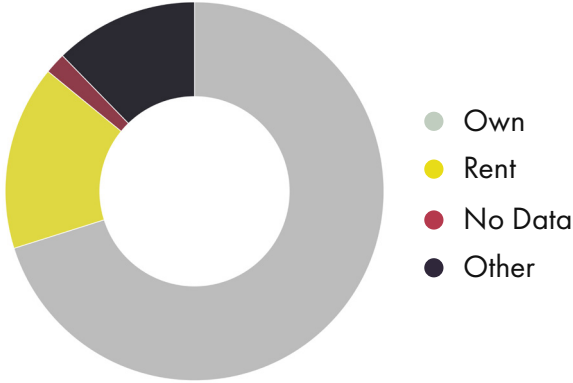
Primary Transportation Mode



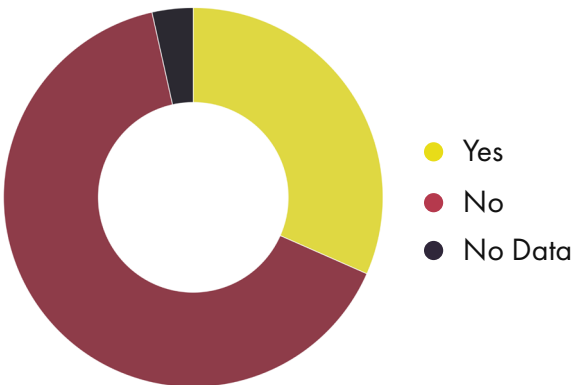
Retirement Status



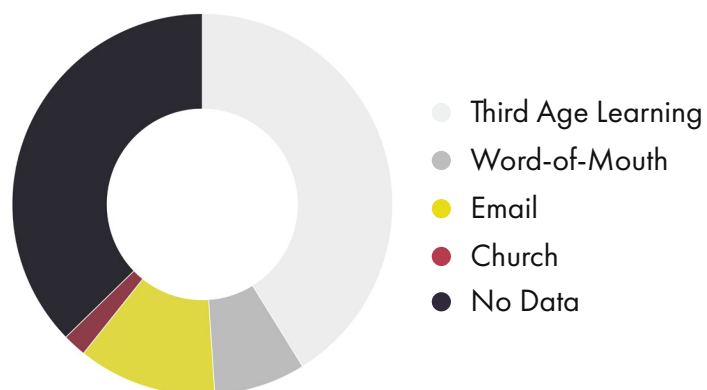
Housing Tenure



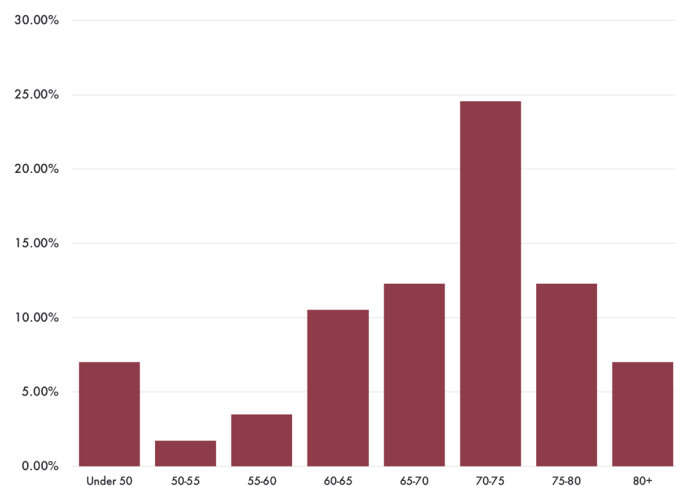
Have you attended a City of Waterloo age-friendly events in the past?



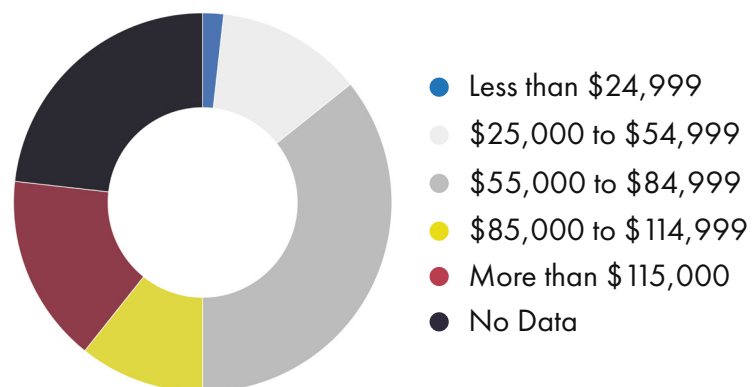
How did you hear about this engagement session?




Participant Age Distribution




Current Family Income



Appendix C: Main Recommendation Next Steps

 **Short Term**
2019 or ongoing

 **Medium Term**
2019-2022

 **Long Term**
Ongoing, or 2022 onward

 **Not Significant**

 **Moderate**

 **Significant**

Timeline Feasibility

Financial Investment

Tasks


*urgent



Make ardent efforts to pursue grants, corporate sponsorship, and other funding opportunities to support the proposed project.



Improve outreach and promotion of existing communication tools like engageWaterloo.



Create an online form for non-City organizations in the City of Waterloo to provide the City with a description of their mandate, services they provide, their current address, their contact information, etc. This will eventually be used to populate the online directory with non-city services and resources.


*urgent



Undertake inclusive public engagement with older adults to collaboratively decide upon the parameters and user experience of this service. Some examples of questions to ask include:


Early consultations:

- How and where should we promote this service, once it is produced?
- Which websites do you use most often? (This will be helpful for promotion of the tool)
- What are examples of websites you find very easy to use?


Later consultations:

- Prototyping / "beta testing" early versions of the online platform during focus groups

Appendix C: Main Recommendation Next Steps

 **Short Term**
2019 or ongoing

 **Medium Term**
2019-2022

 **Long Term**
Ongoing, or 2022 onward

 **Not Significant**

 **Moderate**

 **Significant**

Timeline Feasibility

Financial Investment

Tasks (Continued)



Appoint or hire a city staff member to assist older adults in finding and accessing city and non-city supports. This employee would be responsible for promoting the Directory, teaching older adults how to use it, and coordinating necessary changes to the Directory.



Create and launch a web-based searchable directory of City and non-City programs. We recommend hiring a programmer to create a platform that can auto-populate based on form inputs. This removes the need for a staff member to monitor and maintain the database.



Create an interactive map using data from My Community Vision exercises. This map will serve as a visual inventory of age-friendly services to complement the Directory. We recommend recruiting the developers of the My Community Vision software, Vidya Inc., to develop this inventory.



Flexible



Replicating the Recreation Book and Blue Book models, create print version of the directory and begin distributing hard copies.



Ongoing promotion of the Directory.

Install electronic terminals in key locations (eg. malls, Public Square, etc) to facilitate access to the Directory.



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