

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County releases framework for building Age-Friendly communities

Midhurst/February 13, 2018 – Simcoe County’s older adult population is expected to double during the next 20 years and the County is taking critical steps to ensure that the region remains a positive, safe and sustainable area for seniors to live and thrive. As a result of extensive public and stakeholder consultation, research and assessment, the County is pleased to release its Positive Aging Strategy, which includes detailed planning framework and recommendations to support regional and municipal governments and businesses in building and strengthening age-friendly communities.

The Positive Aging Strategy builds on the 2017 Age-Friendly Needs Assessment. The Assessment identified high-level regional age-friendly needs, priorities and opportunities, which aligned with the World Health Organization’s eight Age-Friendly dimensions.

The Positive Aging Strategy now provides a framework for implementing key actions, projects and initiatives to support our communities and businesses in fostering positive aging and creating more sustainable strategies that meet the needs of Simcoe County’s aging population. The Strategy also aligns with the County’s Vision of “Working Together to Build Vibrant, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities” and its corporate long-term strategic directions. In addition to providing a framework for new strategies, the document also outlines objectives to build on and promote the many existing age-friendly programs currently in place throughout the County.

Using the World Health Organization’s eight Age-Friendly dimensions, the County’s Strategy identifies the following goals for each theme and lists priority implementation initiatives.

Communications and Information

Goal: Remove communication barriers that progressively cut older people off from others, particularly barriers related to accessibility, affordability, low literacy and diminished capacity by providing timely, practical information to manage life and meet personal needs vital for active aging.

Transportation

Goal: Provide transportation options that are accessible and affordable to promote active aging. Improve mobility options, support social and civic participation and increase access to community and health services.

Housing

Goal: Ensure sufficient, appropriate, and affordable housing dedicated to older people is provided and located close to essential services and transportation. Ensure older people are well informed of these housing options across Simcoe County.

Health and Community Supports

Goal: Remove barriers that older adults experience with accessing and utilizing community and health supports. Ensure services offered address the needs and concerns of older people to enhance quality of life and meet personal health needs.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Goal: Provide pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible outdoor spaces and public buildings by increasing accessibility and removing barriers that limit opportunities for people with disabilities or age-related impairments to participate in healthy, active living activities and to access services in their communities.

Civic Participation, Volunteerism and Employment

Goal: Increase awareness of the impact of an aging demographic, and provide opportunities for employment, volunteerism and intergenerational programming that cater to older adults' interests and abilities.

Social Participation

Goal: Remove barriers that prevent older adults from participating in their community such as inaccessible buildings; personal safety at night; transportation needs; affordability; and sometimes restricted admission. Social participation and support are strongly connected to good health and well-being throughout life.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Goal: Simcoe County older adults will be treated with respect, recognition and inclusion.

The Positive Aging Strategy Report is available online at www.simcoe.ca/age-friendly. Under the guidance of the Simcoe County Age-friendly Advisory Committee, staff will monitor progress achieved and submit an annual report card to the County Council over the next five (5) years to measure impacts and identify additional opportunities.

Age-Friendly Committee and Consultation Process

The County established the Age-Friendly Steering Committee to help guide the process. More than 3,000 surveys were received from the public and the County also hosted 16 focus groups across our municipalities. The County also hosted eight (8) Public Consultant meetings in fall 2016. Telephone interviews were also conducted in an effort to gather information from harder to reach, isolated and low income older adults. Visit our [report](#) to view regional statistics on aging populations, life expectancy, dementia, disabilities, immigration and rural communities.

County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at simcoe.ca.

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Quotes:

“Simcoe County is one of the best places to live in Ontario for residents of all ages and as our population ages we are committed to making our communities as age-friendly as possible. This is an important document that will guide our strategies and helps shape our communities. We thank the province for providing funding support, our Age-Friendly Steering Committee and our residents for contributing to this vision.” – County of Simcoe Warden Gerry Marshall

“Our older adults are increasingly living more active, healthy lifestyles and contribute to our growing economy as consumers, employees and entrepreneurs. We are excited to move to the implementation stage and committed to helping our municipalities, businesses and community partners incorporate these positive aging recommendations.” – Jane Sinclair, General Manager of Health and Emergency Services, County of Simcoe.

Allan Greenwood
Director, Corporate Communications
705-726-9300 ext. 1230
Allan.Greenwood@simcoe.ca

Collin Matanowitsch
Communications Co-ordinator
705-726-9300 ext. 1430
Collin.Matanowitsch@simcoe.ca