



AGE-FRIENDLY BASELINE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Source Document: Town of Orangeville Age-Friendly Community Action Plan

Background

The Town of Orangeville (incorporated in 1873) is a town in south-central Ontario, located about 100km northwest of the City of Toronto. It is the largest urban area within the County of Dufferin, the region's upper tier level of municipal government serving the Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Melancthon, Mulmur and the Towns of Grand Valley, Mono, Orangeville and Shelburne.

In 2013, Orangeville Council authorized then Councillor Mary Rose and the Mayor's Seniors Advisory Committee to review the feasibility and requirements to join the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. This resolution demonstrated a willingness and interest by Council in becoming an age-friendly community. It also positioned the Town to successfully pursue and receive funding from the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat through the Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant Opportunity.

Orangeville's "Age-Friendly Initiative" is coordinated by a unique partnership between the Orangeville Public Library and a Committee of Council: the Orangeville Seniors/Age-Friendly Community Committee. The Committee is chaired by sitting Councillor Mr. Scott Wilson, and includes strong representation from volunteer senior residents, local retirement homes, the Alzheimer's Society, the County of Dufferin, the Orangeville and District Seniors Centre, and the Orangeville Public Library. In this way, both municipal and community oversight have been present in our Town's age-friendly initiative from the beginning.



Since 2014, a variety of data have been collected to inform the recommendations in the action plan.

a) Seniors' Survey

In June 2014, a seniors' survey was developed and distributed to the community (aimed at residents aged 55+ years) with options to complete online or on paper. There were 256 responses, reflecting a statistically valid and significant response rate. The questions were based on a number of Quality of Life (QoL) and Age-Friendly Community (AFC) instruments that reflect person-based and environment-based questions respectively. The questions surveyed seniors' perceptions and experiences in the community across the eight WHO domains. Together, the QoL and AFC instrument questions enabled researchers to consider p-e fit (person-environment fit) and look for gaps or mismatches in seniors' lived experiences and the resources that the community provides. The key gaps are identified under the heading "Opportunities for Improvement" for each of the World Health Organization pillars, beginning on page 18.

b) Focus Groups

The survey was followed up and supplemented with focus groups that asked seniors open-ended questions. The discussions fleshed out the survey with additional insights and helped the researchers to test the p-e survey questions.

c) Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews and consultations were conducted with the Dufferin Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (DNPEA); Town staff (Public Works; Planning; Economic Development; Parks and Recreation); Orangeville Police; Public Health; Georgian College Employment; Food Bank. These consultations provided additional statistics related to seniors' use of resources and agencies' services and qualitative data regarding the clients' needs.

d) Municipal Plan Reviews

A review of relevant municipal plans was made during the writing of this action plan: Official Plan, Municipal Cultural Plan, Police Services Business Plan, Fire Master Plan 2015, Accessibility Plan, Parks Master Plan, County of Dufferin Homelessness and Housing Plan, Transit Optimization Study, Procurement Review.



The committee had an opportunity to respond to the following reviews in 2015/16: Official Plan, Transit Optimization Study, Arts and Culture Summer Survey, Procurement Review. In each case, a Committee member and/or the Age-Friendly Consultant was asked to review a draft plan and/or attend an interdisciplinary committee meeting during the review process.

The committee provided specific recommendations to the Official Plan Review Committee:

- Include new section entitled **B.2.21 Age-Friendly Planning** that describes Canada’s rapidly aging population trend and Orangeville’s commitment to becoming an age-friendly community and member of the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities.
- Include **active aging** as part of Orangeville’s future infrastructure planning, including housing and amenities that allow seniors to “age-in-place.”
- Include provision for **affordable and accessible housing for older adults**, in proximity to a variety of services (e.g., banking, medical/dental, shopping, recreation, transportation), to help residents “age-in-place.”

Creating Priorities from the Assessment Data

During the assessment stage of the Seniors’ Survey (2014), focus groups, review of age-friendly assets and municipal plans, several themes emerged from the data. These themes overlap several of the WHO domains, which is to be expected. For example, in the Seniors’ Survey (2014), **loss of independence** was the number one area of concern reported by seniors when considering their future years. The loss of independence is tied to several WHO domains: inability to access **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings** because of reduced mobility; potential loss of driver’s licence because of reduced health makes **Transportation** more difficult; it can also result in reduced **Social Participation**, and **Respect & Social Inclusion**. Thus the seniors’ expressed fears of “losing independence” becomes a priority for an age-friendly community to address because it is both a voiced concern and a known risk factor for social, emotional, and physical health. Seniors’ fear of “losing independence” becomes an age-friendly strategy of “reducing social isolation” using a variety of community resources. Some examples include the following: connecting seniors to each other through media and technological training; developing peer support programs; providing community supports; and, helping seniors with greater health issues access their needed supports.



Priorities and Recommendations

The Orangeville Age-Friendly Community Action Plan as submitted in our application to the World Health Organization, prioritizes five areas that capture the research themes that have emerged from the data. The plan integrates both the assessment data and the recommendations beginning on page 18 – 35.

- ✓ **Page 16** summarizes the priority areas that address our gaps while building on existing collaborative relationships across multiple sectors.
- ✓ Pages **18 – 35** examine each WHO age-friendly pillar in detail, capturing the research data from our community under the headings “Age-Friendly Strengths,” and “Opportunities for Improvement”.

Following these headings, the recommendations are then presented as “Strategies for Improvement” in order to close the gap between our strengths and weaknesses in each pillar.

Three-Year Timeline

This plan is based on a three-year timeline. This is just the beginning of our community’s age-friendly journey. Building an age-friendly community requires tremendous physical and social planning. During the process of writing the action plan, the Orangeville Seniors/Age-Friendly Community Committee, community partners and Town staff have been busy laying the groundwork for many of the action items outlined in the action plan. Some of the items are well underway and the community partners involved in implementing those items have been making a difference in our seniors’ lives; other items are still in the idea stage and need further research and development over the next few years.