

## **Age Friendly Recognition Program**

### **Action Plan: Strait Shores**

The Community Needs Assessment, conducted within Strait Shores in the Fall of 2023, and approved by the Age Friendly Community Advisory Committee highlighted some noticeable gaps in services for seniors in our area. After discussion with the AFCAC, it was determined that we had the capacity and resources to address some items in the domains of Social Participation, Transportation, Communication & Information, and Community Support & Health Services. Therefore, our Action Items for our 3-year plan are as follows: 1) The creation of a directory of services in Strait Shores, which has categories for local tradespeople, local businesses, health & community services, as well as a section identifying volunteers for various services (snow shovelling/wood stacking). 2) The creation of more social activities in the community for seniors, and 3) An accessible van/bus for seniors in the community. More information, including the groups responsible for these action items can be found below.

#### **1) A Directory of Services in Strait Shores**

This will be a document available throughout the region via hard copy and online in various formats that outlines in an organized manner the applicable resources and services available in the Strait Shores area. With their permission, it will include local retail businesses such as the Guardian Pharmacy, Loella's and East Main Market, as well as those of local contractors, electricians, auto mechanics, etc. There will also be a section for Health and Social Service resources, such as PEDVAC, the Port Elgin Health Clinic Blood Lab, the New Brunswick Public Library's Books by Mail Program, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Horizon's One at a Time Counselling, and Nursing Homes Without Walls' senior navigation support. Additionally, there will be a "Volunteer" Section where we will gather a list of volunteers within the community who can be available to provide some services for seniors, such as snow shovelling, wood stacking, and other odd jobs.

The Age Friendly Advisory Committee will be responsible for the implementation of this Action item, specifically Nursing Homes Without Walls, the Municipality, and Horizon's Community Developer. We hope to leverage our partnerships on this committee to assist with printing and distribution costs and logistics. We also hope to call on the broader community for submissions, as well as to populate the volunteer section. This item addresses the Age Friendly Domain of Social Participation, as well as Communication and Information, and was highlighted by our Community Needs Assessment as an important step in improving the awareness of the numerous resources in our community for seniors. The Volunteer section in particular will increase social participation and has the potential to decrease isolation – both for the volunteers and the seniors receiving the assistance.

We hope to have this Action Item completed by December 2024. It will be occurring throughout Strait Shores, as we will be including submissions/resources from the entire Strait Shores Community, as well as those in neighbouring areas that our citizens can access. We will also work to make it available in several formats to increase our reach and accessibility as well.

## **2) More social/recreational activities in Strait Shores**

Strait Shores is a fairly engaged community, with a number of different opportunities for seniors to stay active and involved. It was identified during our Community Needs Assessment that these are vital to the health and well being of seniors in the area, and that folks would like more added to the roster of activities. We have plans to increase the number of Bingo afternoons, rotate the Senior's Coffee group to different locations weekly to encourage more varied attendance, and increase the frequency of a new Senior Games Gathering at the Public Library that was created in response to feedback gained at the Age Friendly Town Hall, among others.

The Age Friendly Advisory Committee will be responsible for implementing this Action Item, lead by Nursing Homes Without Walls, and leveraging partnerships with others on the Committee, including Horizon's Community Developer, the Public Library, Westford Nursing Home, the Municipality, as well as external partners such as PEDVAC, East Botsford Recreation Centre and the Cape Tormentine Legion. This item addresses the Age Friendly Domains of Social Participation, as well as Respect & Social Inclusion.

We have already begun implementation of this Action item and will continue to build onto it throughout our 3-year time frame. Regularly checking in with the seniors in the community to ensure the programming is meeting their needs, and adjusting it where possible to increase attendance, reach, and the benefits gained. As this is a community of Strait Shores initiative, we will work to ensure these programs cater to all seniors across the Strait Shores region and attempt to mitigate barriers to participation such as rural transportation challenges.

## **3) An Accessible Van/Bus for Seniors in the Community**

As mentioned above, transportation across our rural community is a barrier for many in Strait Shores. Many people, including seniors do not have access to an accessible vehicle, do not have their licenses, or cannot afford to maintain a vehicle. For seniors, this can make it very difficult to access health appointments, get groceries, and attend social events which can contribute to isolation and lead to poorer mental health and well being. Nursing Homes Without Walls currently provides free transportation for seniors through their Volunteer Driver program, driving to medical, dental, legal, and other qualifying appointments, but they do not have an accessible van, so cannot transport people who use wheelchairs. Urban Rural Rides, which

provides safe, affordable transportation was designed to operate in the Strait Shores region, but they are currently experiencing difficulties recruiting volunteer drivers from the area. They also do not have any accessible vehicles to assist those with mobility devices. Through our Community Needs Assessment process it was identified that the implementation of a transportation project, where an accessible van/minibus was purchased for the community would greatly reduce these barriers, addressing the Age Friendly Domain of Transportation.

This Action item is large and will require the collaboration of not only our Age Friendly Advisory Committee, but also numerous external partners, both in the non-profit and business sector. We will need to create a plan and budget for the purchase, maintenance, insurance, staffing and scheduling of the vehicle to ensure that all bases are covered, and the project will serve the needs of the community in a sustainable way. We will need to fundraise and apply for various grants to cover the costs of the vehicle itself, as well as the maintenance and insurance costs, and the compensation for the drivers. We also need to plan for the scheduling and the parameters of the van (i.e., will it only be for seniors to access medical appointments, will it be available for people in Strait Shores who are not seniors but require transportation in specific circumstances, how often will it run and will it be on a schedule or on a dispatch basis similar to the model of Urban Rural Rides.) In addition to these considerations, we will also need a host organization who will take on the liability of the vehicle and house it while it's not running (likely Nursing Homes Without Walls as an addition to their current Transportation services). Due to the number of logistical details required, as well as the cost required, this Action Item will likely take our full 3-year time frame and we hope to have it implemented by the Spring of 2027.

To maintain transparency and accountability, the Age Friendly Advisory Committee will regularly share the status of these 3 Action Items with the public and the Strait Shores Council. We will seek community feedback and support where necessary and draw on the existing resources in our communities to ensure these projects remain relevant to and informed by the seniors and future seniors of Strait Shores.