



Long-Term Care
and Seniors Services



2024 BUILDING AN AGE-FRIENDLY SIMCOE COUNTY

**Community Needs Assessment
Executive Summary**

Released April 2025



Acknowledgments

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Members of the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee, our public libraries, the Simcoe County Accessibility Group, our local municipalities and municipal leaders, and all other stakeholders who participated in our engagement strategies and supported this initiative with your energy, enthusiasm, and invaluable input.

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2024

**Community Needs
Assessment Report
Executive Summary**

As Simcoe County residents are living longer, healthier lives, the County is updating its positive aging strategy including a framework that will help community stakeholders identify, plan for, and address the needs and priorities of older adults. Making communities more age-friendly is essential to helping promote the well-being and contributions of older adults as they age in our communities.

Many issues affecting older adults are in fact issues that affect everyone, but they may be more pronounced or experienced differently by seniors. The benefits of planning age-friendly communities extend to everyone, regardless of their current age, as people of all ages will benefit from “aging into” a more accessible and supportive environment and may have family members who benefit in the meantime. Supporting older adults in their wish for independent living may also help reduce strain on healthcare and hospital systems in the long term.

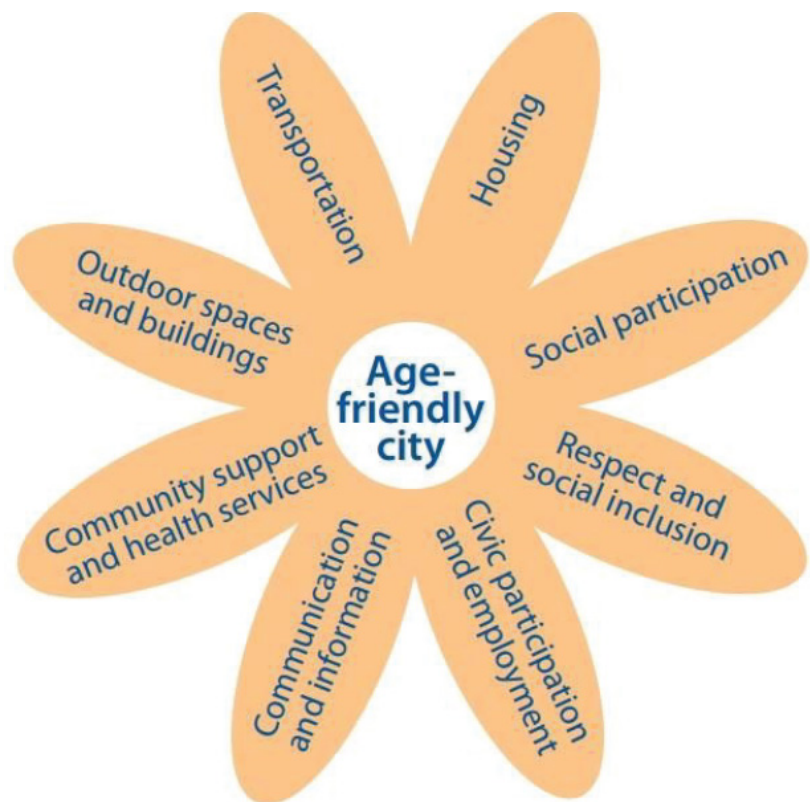
What is an Age-Friendly Community?

It is not news to Canadian and international communities that the population is aging. As baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) age, and subsequent generations have smaller families, the proportion of the population made up by older adults is increasing. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects the proportion of the global population aged 60 will double from 12% in 2015 to 22% by 2050. This shift has caused policy makers around the world to ask the question: how do we create communities that are more inclusive and accessible to people as they age? The Global Age-Friendly Cities project was developed by the WHO in 2007 to help cities assess their age-friendliness. *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* outlines the framework for creating age-friendly communities (AFC).

The WHO guidelines for communities to better meet the needs of aging populations that consider every stage of aging and outline the necessary supports to help people age with dignity and grace includes eight (8) dimensions that are central to creating an Age-Friendly Community: outdoor spaces/buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect/social inclusion, civic participation/employment, communication/information, and community support/health services.

These eight (8) dimensions illustrate a community’s age-friendliness and identify priorities for individuals as they age to maintain their autonomy and create opportunities for active community participation.

An age-friendly city is a place that encourages “active aging” by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security to enhance quality of life as people age. It is a place that works to improve and support healthy active living of people of all ages.



Source: WHO (2007) *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*, Page 9

These cities enable people to truly participate in their community. They provide an environment where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age. Age-friendly cities recognize the wide range of resources and capacities among older people and anticipate and respond to their needs and preferences.

Outdoor spaces/buildings

Outdoor spaces and public buildings are pleasant, clean, secure, and physically accessible.

Transportation

Public transportation is accessible and affordable.

Housing

Housing is affordable, accessible, appropriately located, well built, and well designed.

Social participation

Opportunities exist for social participation in leisure, social, cultural, and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.

Respect and social inclusion

Older adults are treated with respect and are included in civic life.

Civic participation and employment

Opportunities for employment and volunteerism cater to older adults' interests and abilities.

Communication and information

Age-friendly communication and information is available and accessible.

Community support and health Services

Community support and health services are tailored to older adults' needs.

Age-friendly communities support and enable people to age actively by:

- recognizing the wide range of skills, abilities, and capacities
- anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences
- respecting the decisions and lifestyle choices
- protecting those who are most vulnerable
- promoting inclusion in and contribution to all areas of community life



Age-Friendly Simcoe County

Simcoe County is experiencing rapid aging above national and provincial averages. In 2021, the proportion of adults aged 65 and over in Simcoe County was 19.8% of the population of 533,169 compared to 18.5% in Ontario and 19% in Canada.

The Rapid Aging of Simcoe County

5-year growth percentage in older adult population from 2016-2021 in Simcoe County

	% Growth		
	55+	65+	85+
Bradford West Gwillimbury	30.2%	36.5%	40.4%
Collingwood	22.2%	29.5%	31.1%
Innisfil	29.2%	28.9%	20.4%
Midland	11.0%	17.3%	6.7%
New Tecumseth	24.6%	21.8%	17.3%
Penetanguishene	27.7%	38.4%	79.3%
Wasaga Beach	23.8%	24.9%	57.0%
Adjala-Tosorontio	15.5%	16.1%	40.0%
Clearview	11.7%	11.8%	4.7%
Mnjikaning First Nation	36.6%	56.3%	300.0%
County of Simcoe	20.3%	22.8%	21.9%

	% Growth		
	55+	65+	85+
Essa	23.8%	23.3%	0.0%
Oro-Medonte	18.0%	23.7%	4.8%
Ramara	18.3%	17.8%	18.4%
Severn	15.2%	19.2%	30.2%
Springwater	21.8%	27.9%	6.5%
Tay	19.6%	23.5%	52.2%
Tiny	18.3%	22.4%	25.0%
Barrie	18.5%	19.5%	20.9%
Orillia	13.2%	17.1%	7.6%
Christian Island	25.0%	71.4%	N/A

Source: 2016-2021 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of population, 2021 Census of population.

Rural vs. Urban Considerations

Simcoe County has a diverse geographical profile, with large urban centres, medium and small municipalities, and many residents in small centres and rural settings such as farming communities. The needs of older adults may be consistent, but their access to resources and services may vary depending on their location.

These varying needs came up often through the discussions informing this report and should be given consideration in future planning. The County plays a central leadership role in supporting rural communities and local municipalities and should identify areas of shared opportunity. Seniors living in rural communities may be at higher risk of isolation and lack of social inclusion and participation. Close-to-home recreation, community support care, and health services are often much less available.

Source: Simcoe Muskoka's Vital Signs (2016) – A Community of Support

Social and environmental challenges identified through this process specific to rural communities include but are not limited to:

- Lack of services/supports available
- Limited housing and transportation accessibility options
- Travel required for many health services
- Limited financial resources
- Social isolation

Simcoe County History of Age-Friendly Needs Assessments

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the opinions and lived experience of older adults in the local community, the County applies the WHO framework in the implementation of Age-Friendly community engagement initiatives.

In 2015 the County received funding from the Government of Ontario's Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant Program to better support and bolster the active aging of its older population. The program helps governments and community organizations to develop local plans that will address aging demographics and enable people of all ages to fully participate in community life.

At that time, the Age-Friendly Community Project was implemented to maximize older adults' input and perspectives. The County engaged Public Interest from April 2016 to March 2017 to conduct a thorough needs assessment, identify age-friendly priorities and develop strategic actions for future considerations in support of establishing Simcoe County as an Age-Friendly Community. The project was under the guidance of a steering committee consisting of representatives from the County, municipal councillors, local health unit, Local Integrated Health Networks, agencies serving older adults, senior representatives, accessibility representative and other participants with local insights.

The 2024 Community Needs assessment builds on learnings from the previous assessment and continued to build an understanding of how older adults live and thrive in our communities.

2024 Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment Approach

Due to the pandemic, priorities and concerns have grown regarding the project since its initial debut in 2018. In 2023, the County of Simcoe launched a follow-up to the survey completed in 2016 to gauge the effectiveness of the Age-Friendly Community Project as well as lay the groundwork for developing new strategies for the project.

The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee provides oversight and ongoing evaluation of Simcoe County's Positive Aging Strategy. The advisory committee has membership of County of Simcoe staff, two Simcoe County Councillors, and several representatives from each of Simcoe County's member municipalities. The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee oversaw the creation of the 2023 community survey and 2024 age-friendly focus groups. The advisory committee assisted with the distribution of the survey and informing residents of the Age-Friendly Focus Groups.

The needs assessment required two (2) main public engagement strategies promoted via press releases, websites, and newsletters. These activities included:

- A comprehensive Age-Friendly community survey
- Age-Friendly Focus groups

Age-Friendly Community Survey

An Age-Friendly Community survey was developed in partnership with Georgian College Research Analyst Program to collect information from residents 60 years of age and older, caregivers and service providers of older adults. (See Appendix A)

The survey was designed to gather future considerations and areas of concern for older adults across Simcoe County's 16 municipalities, two separated cities and two First Nations. (See list on page 9)

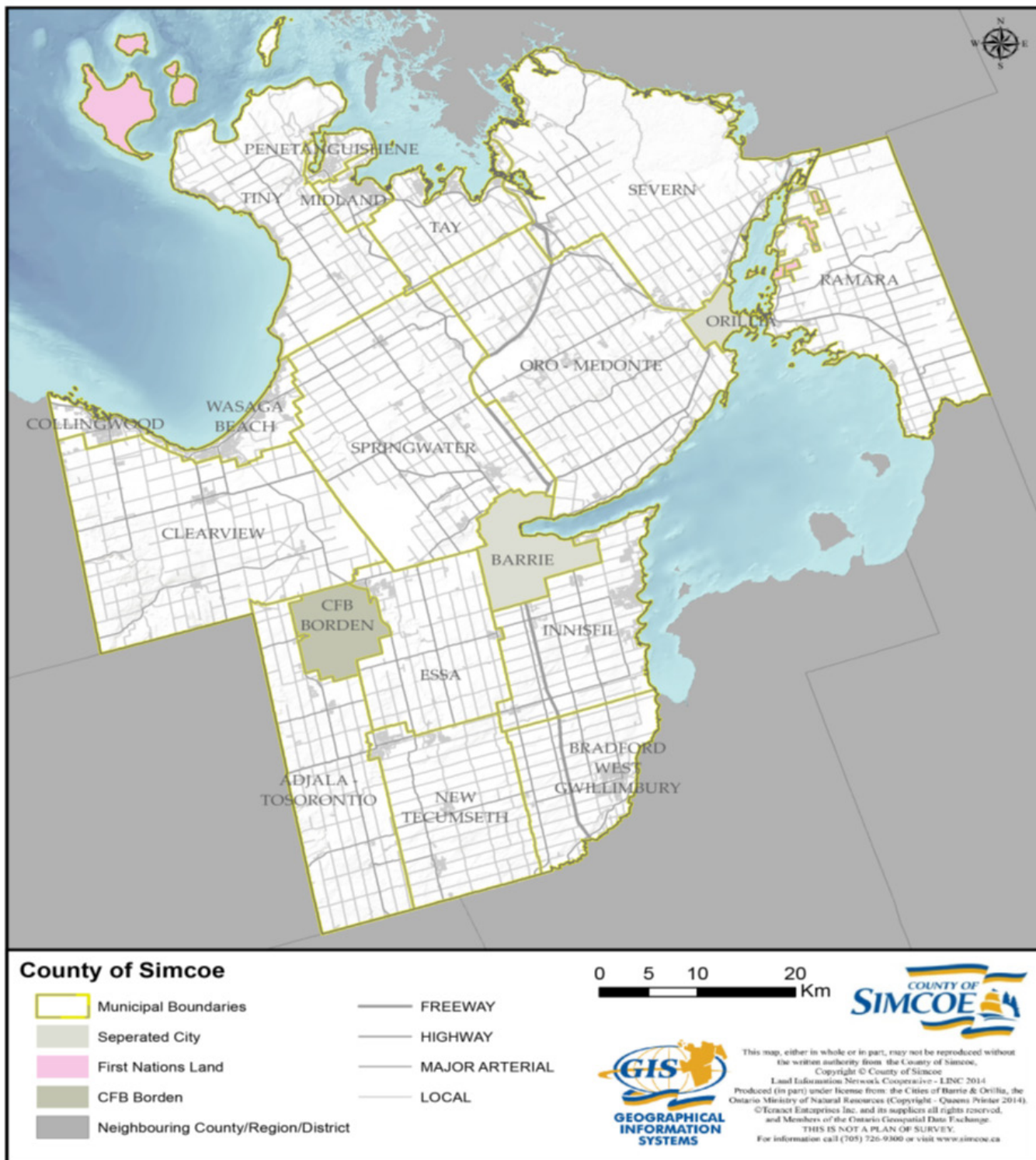
Simcoe County Municipalities

Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury
 Town of Collingwood
 Town of Innisfil
 Town of Midland
 Town of New Tecumseth
 Town of Penetanguishene*
 Town of Wasaga Beach

Township of Adjala-Tosorontio
 Township of Clearview
 Mnjikaning First Nation
 Township of Essa*
 Township of Oro-Medonte
 Township of Ramara
 Township of Severn

Township of Springwater
 Township of Tay
 Township of Tiny*
 City of Barrie
 City of Orillia
 Christian Island - Beausoleil

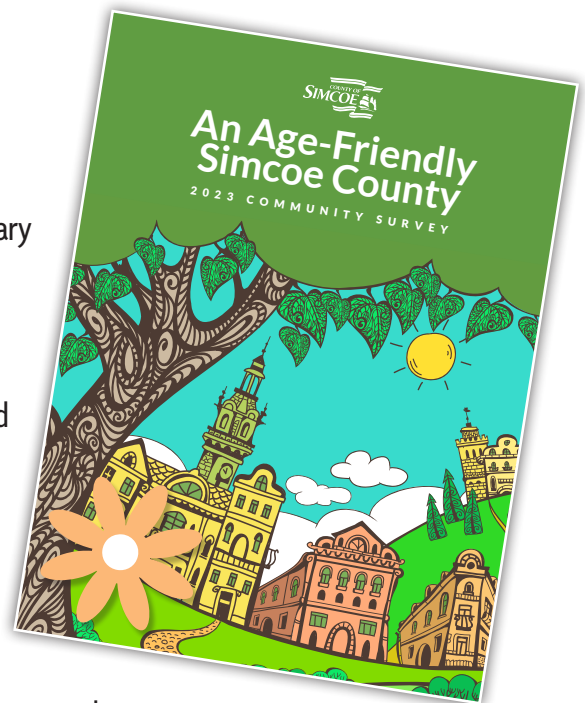
* Designated Francophone area



Age-Friendly community survey

In the fall of 2023, the research team consisting of County staff and Research Analyst students distributed hard copies of the survey at locations throughout the County, including municipal offices, local library branches, local agencies, recreation centres, seniors' centres and social clubs, social housing buildings, retirement and seniors housing, service clubs, churches, and businesses. A printable version and online survey were also available on the County website. Prizes were offered as an incentive to return completed surveys. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A and focus group guide can be found in Appendix B.

The Survey received an overwhelming response from residents with a total of 2,587 surveys received. 94% of respondents reported being over the age of 55, and 78% were over the age of 65. Half of the participants (46%) were between 65 and 74 years old. Respondents reported a mix of income and housing types. Women were more likely to respond to the survey than men, as 76% of survey respondents were female, 22% were male, and 2% preferred not to answer. The reported annual household/family income of survey respondents had a median range of \$40,000 - \$49,999. Participants were distributed evenly across the different townships, ensuring involvement from all of Simcoe County. Eighteen municipal profiles will be created for each of Simcoe County's 16 member municipalities and two separated cities including survey and focus group data for those specific municipalities.



Focus Groups

Analysis of the survey results aided the development of the Focus Group Script. (See Appendix B). The focus groups hosted were small, round-table discussions to gain insight from participants' lived experiences. Having small discussion sessions fostered natural connections between participants, allowing an open environment where participants could safely share their experiences and build on each other's opinions.

Ten (10) focus groups were hosted throughout Simcoe County with participants from all 16 local municipalities and two (2) separated cities. The focus groups were approximately two (2) hours long and were recorded for accurate transcription purposes. Notes were also taken for reference. The transcriptions and notes were then reviewed and analyzed. In total, 48 residents of Simcoe County participated in the focus groups held November 2024 - January 2025.

Throughout the engagement and with the help of local networks from the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee, participants were recruited by outreach to associations, businesses, churches, clubs, community organizations, and agencies, health centres, and municipalities as well as local indigenous councils, groups, programs and associations.

Simcoe County considered a positive place for older adults



The research from both the initial and the current needs assessment suggests that Simcoe County is considered a supportive place to live, although priorities for improvement continue to be identified. Most of the priorities within the current community needs assessment were related to outdoor space and buildings, transportation, and communication and information.

Simcoe County has several age-friendly features that enhance quality of life and allow greater independence for elder persons. Overall, the research indicates that older adults consider Simcoe County a positive place for aging adults to live. Regarding aging, residents are most looking forward to enjoying their hobbies and interests and spending increased time with loved ones.

In general, older adults feel respected, included, and that their contributions are adequately recognized. A range of volunteer and intergenerational opportunities exist in the County, in addition to opportunities to participate in spiritual and community life.

Despite the general feedback that Simcoe County is a positive and supportive home for older adults, the research highlighted certain areas of improvement in reducing barriers to age-friendliness that significantly affect seniors' lives. Respondents expressed overwhelming appreciation for local libraries, seniors' clubs and recreation and community centres that provide a variety of activities and programs.

Outdoor space and buildings issues stem from a lack of accessible buildings and outdoor accommodations in the community. With the large geography of Simcoe County, there is reasonable doubt that all indoor and outdoor spaces are built to the same accessibility standards. These issues can be further broken down by outdoor spaces that are not designed with accommodations for seniors in mind and public buildings not having accessibility standards such as ramps, elevators, and grab bars.

Broadly speaking, transportation issues arise from the large geography of Simcoe County, with large rural areas and many population centres between which people need to travel to meet their living and health-care needs. Transportation issues can further be broken down by the need to support older adults with personal transportation such as cars, and mass transportation such as community buses.

Many of the concerns and priorities arise from a need to better communicate the availability of services and resources that are, in fact, already available, but are not widely known. Additionally, communication strategies could better support civic participation and inclusion. The findings in the report are intended only to convey the opinions and perceptions of the participants. Where facts differ from these perceptions, the County may consider it an opportunity to enhance communications and general awareness of existing services and supports.

Domains of Focus and Top Themes

The top three themes sections present the ideas and opinions that came up most often in the community survey and focus groups and how they relate to the top three domains, including highlighting opportunities for improvement.

The top Recommended Areas of Focus section shows those domains highlighted as requiring attention due to the analysis of the data received from the community survey and focus groups. Presented in this summary are areas within the domains that are recommended for further action and where there are opportunities for improvement in the next age-friendly strategy.

Finally, analysis from each domain was summarised including potential areas of improvement and recommendations to address the top areas of improvement for each of the domains.



Top Three (3) Themes

Outdoor Space and Buildings – Building Accessibility

An item brought to attention in the community survey and then verified through focus groups was the accessibility of buildings in Simcoe County. The survey data shows that there is general satisfaction for public building accessibility but there is need for improvement. Focus group data showed that there was a general dissatisfaction of building accessibility. Participants mentioned accessibility standards that were lacking were ramps, bar rails, and doors not being wide enough/staying open long enough. Participants also mentioned parking for older adults can be an issue considering distance to the building, and lack of parking spaces designated for seniors.

Transportation – Transportation Accessibility

A transportation item brought to attention in the community survey and then verified in the focus groups was the lack of public transportation in rural areas as well as accessibility and safety standards of public transportation. The survey data showed that 88% of participants do not use public transportation and 24% of them indicated that the reason was that there was no public transportation available. 22.71% expressed dissatisfaction in public transportation which indicates a need for improvement in service quality and accessibility.

Communication and Information – Internet Accessibility

The most prevalent item from the communication and information domain is internet accessibility for older adults. The survey found that there was an increased usage of the internet post-pandemic with 69% of respondents claiming increased reliance on online platforms. The most preferred option of receiving information was through the internet. Concerns were expressed of not being able to access and afford internet, as well as not knowing how to navigate the internet. Focus group participants found that they could not access latest information due to lack of knowledge on how to use the internet safely.





Recommended Areas of Focus

Outdoor Space and Buildings

Outdoor space and buildings domain was used to measure the level of satisfaction Simcoe County residents have with outdoor spaces and public buildings. For outdoor spaces, the lowest satisfaction rates focused on the availability and ease of use of water fountains in parks (13%), available seating along sidewalks (19%), washroom availability in parks (24%), pet facilities in parks (24%), and available garbage cans along sidewalks (24%). For indoor spaces, the lowest satisfaction rates focused on accessibility of washrooms (31%), number of accessible parking spaces (33%), availability of elevators, escalators, and ramps (36%), and availability of washrooms (41%). The focus groups found that regarding outdoors spaces, trails are dangerous to walk because of lack of upkeep, not enough seating on sidewalks and trails, and parking lot designs are not accessible for seniors. For indoor spaces it was found that lighting of public buildings was poor for older adults with vision impairments, and buildings were not being designed with accessibility of older adults in mind.

Outdoor Space and Buildings Recommendations

For outdoor space and buildings, the principal areas of focus include making buildings more accessible for older adults and upkeep of trails/parks by making sure paths are clear and there are sufficient benches available.



Transportation

The transportation domain inquired on the residents of Simcoe County's perception of transportation services in Simcoe County. From the survey results it was found that the most significant factor impacting residents' ability to travel was access to a vehicle they could drive at (52%). Usage of public transportation was low at only (12%) of respondents indicating that they use public transportation and (22.71%) of those using public transportation are dissatisfied with the transport services. Of those that do not use public transportation, (24%) said that it was due to public transportation not being available in their area. Over 91% have not utilized the LINX transit service and awareness of LINX is low. From the qualitative survey data there is significant concern of accessibility and safety of using public transportation. The focus groups found that LINX was seen as a good transit service for older adults. More advertising of the LINX transit service would be helpful for older adults in determining what transport options are available to them. Focus group feedback found a concern that there was no public transportation for residents in some rural areas.

Transportation Recommendations

For transportation, the principal areas of focus should be on increasing the coverage areas of transit services so residents in rural communities have access to public transportation and enhancing the service quality and safety of public transportation.

Communication and Information

The communication and information domain inquires on how residents of Simcoe County connect with others and stay informed about important news and events. Survey data showed that 57% of respondents felt moderately informed about their local area and expressed a desire for greater community awareness. The primary communications mediums are listed as follows: internet, word of mouth, friends/family, television, and community/bulletin boards. The preferred communication mediums are internet, social media, mail, newspaper, and brochures. Post-pandemic there has been a significant surge of internet usage with 69% of respondents claiming increased reliance on online platforms. Awareness of the services provided through 211 is low with only 40% of respondents indicating familiarity with the service. Interestingly, the focus groups found that information was harder to access online because of lack of computer/internet knowledge which contradicts the survey finding of the most preferred communication medium being the internet. The survey and focus group results indicated a preferred way of receiving information was through newspapers and conveyed concerns that newspapers have been discontinued.

Communication and Information Recommendations

For communication and information, the principal areas of focus for this domain include increasing computer literacy and increasing knowledge of the services provided through 211.

Remaining Domains

The WHO's remaining domains including respect and social inclusion, housing, civic participation and employment, social participation, and community support and health services will be included with Community Needs Assessment Findings Report, along with the County of Simcoe's additional domain of affordability and accessibility.

Overall Recommendations and Future Considerations

The future considerations for priorities in this document are intended to support the County as it develops its *Positive Aging Strategy: Older Adults Strengthening Our Communities* including its Age-Friendly planning framework, as well as the broader community in supporting older adults. Various departments, divisions, municipalities, agencies, and partner organizations are encouraged to develop more specific plans based on the wisdom gathered from the community and included in this report.

The top three (3) domains where significant improvement needs to be an area of focus for the next Age-Friendly strategy should be outdoor space and buildings, transportation, and communication and information. These domains yielded significant results from both the community survey and focus groups.

Next steps

Over the next few months, consultations will be scheduled with stakeholders to analyze the Age-Friendly community needs assessment findings and identify items that should be included in the Simcoe County Aging Strategy: Older Adults Strengthening Our Communities and planning framework. In doing so, the strategy will ensure and incorporate multifaceted recommendations that align with the core business strategies of the County of Simcoe.

A continuing priority for this next iteration of the strategy will be to update and further define indicators and measures that will track and highlight progress made across the region in becoming more Age-Friendly. These indicators will be used to develop a scorecard that will enable reporting on progress for our Age-Friendly Advisory Committee, County of Simcoe Staff and Age-Friendly stakeholders throughout Simcoe County.

Further to this report, an overall Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment Findings report, along with Age-Friendly Municipal Profiles will be finalized and available on the age-friendly website at: www.simcoe.ca/age-friendly. These reports will provide fulsome details of all the research conducted as part of the Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment including all survey and focus group findings.

Moving Forward

Building on the *Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment Study* that took place in 2016, this current study was implemented to further our understanding of current state of senior' priorities in Simcoe County and to help anticipate their needs now and in the future. As well, the County wished to evaluate with older adults how the Age-Friendly strategy developed previously had impacted our communities.

The findings and recommendations summarized above, and fully detailed in the 2024 Simcoe County of Simcoe Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment Findings Report, along with the Municipal Profiles, will provide information for developing a Positive Aging Strategy: Older Adults Strengthening Our Communities to be released in early summer 2025.

Needs Assessment Survey and Focus Group Findings

Respect and Social Acceptance

Survey Results

- The top five future aspirations reported by participants were enjoying hobbies and interests, increased time with loved ones, engaging in physical and cultural activities, travelling, and volunteering.
- The top five (5) concerns for the future are declining physical health, loss of independence, declining mental health, financial concerns, and difficulty getting around.
- I feel respected and valued by my local community – 51% agree.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected my social life – 49% agree.

Focus Group Themes

- Disrespect felt in community based on age and being retired.
- Disrespect felt by not having access to a family doctor.
- Disrespect felt when information is not being communicated directly to the senior.
- Future anticipations of volunteering and socializing more.
- Most prevalent future concern was declining physical health.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: Decisions made in the community consider the needs of aging adults – 36% agree.

Encourage Community Engagement and Participation: The County of Simcoe can encourage the active involvement of seniors in community decision-making processes, volunteer opportunities, and civic engagement initiatives. Empower older adults to contribute their skills, knowledge, and expertise to community projects and programs, fostering a sense of purpose and belonging.

Area of Concern: Survey showed that 51% agreed to feeling respected and valued by their local community. Focus groups had disrespect felt in community based off age and retirement.

Promote Respect and Dignity: Develop an initiative focused on promoting respect and dignity in daily interactions, particularly towards older adults. Offer courses that show participants how to interact with seniors in a friendly way that promotes respect and dignity.

Area of Concern: The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected my social life – 49% agree.

Expand Social Activities and Programs for Seniors: Expand social activities by collaborating with local organizations, senior centres, and community groups. Offer a diverse range of activities including hobby clubs, intergenerational events, cultural outings, and educational workshops. While also promoting these activities it is also important to assure participants that things like wearing a mask if you are feeling ill, washing your hands, and using hand sanitizer frequently are still common practice so participants that are uneasy about partaking in social events because of the pandemic can feel safer.

Outdoor Space and Buildings

Survey Results

- **Level of Satisfaction with Outdoor Spaces:**
Number of parks/trails – 66% satisfied.
Quality of parks/trails – 64% satisfied.
Maintenance of Streets – 43% satisfied.
Safety walking on streets – 40% satisfied.
Available seating in parks – 36% satisfied.
Available garbage cans along sidewalks – 24% satisfied.
Washroom availability in parks – 24% satisfied.
Available seating along sidewalks – 19% satisfied.
- **Level of Satisfaction with Indoor Spaces:**
Number of parking spaces - 48% satisfied.
Availability of washrooms – 41% satisfied.
Availability of elevators, escalators, and ramps – 36% satisfied.
Accessible washrooms – 31% satisfied.

Focus Group Themes

- Trails seen as dangerous to walk due to lack of upkeep, fear of being alone, and fear of being hit by a bicycle.
- Not enough seating on sidewalks and trails.
- Lighting of public buildings was seen as poor and difficult for seniors with visual impairments.
- Road signs could be made larger for those with visual impairments.
- Public buildings not being designed with accessibility in mind (parking lot structures, doors not being wide enough, doors not staying open long enough).
- Parking lot designs are not very accessible for seniors. Some also mentioned making parking spaces specifically for seniors.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: Available seating in parks – 36% satisfied, and available seating along sidewalks – 19% satisfied.

Add Public Seating: Develop an initiative for adding more public benches along streets and in parks. Perhaps use a metric for measuring the amount of distance between benches in urban areas.

Area of Concern: Washroom availability in parks – 24% satisfied, availability of washrooms – 41% satisfied, and accessible washrooms – 31% satisfied.

Prioritize Washroom Availability: Prioritize the construction and maintenance of clean, accessible, and adequately equipped washrooms. This can involve increasing the number of washrooms, ensuring their accessibility, and implementing regular maintenance protocols.

Area of Concern: Public buildings are not being designed with sufficient accessibility standards for seniors.

Enhance Accessibility Features: Evaluate the current accessibility of public buildings, then develop plans for adding accessibility features such as ramps, handrails, washrooms, and elevators.

Area of Concern: Trails are seen as dangerous to walk due to lack of upkeep (garbage, branches on the trail, snow not being ploughed).

Trail Upkeep Initiative: Develop an initiative focused on keeping the trails in Simcoe County well maintained. This could take the form of garbage removal teams that check the trails daily for garbage, and a snow ploughing service for the winter months.

Transportation

Survey Results

- 12% of respondents indicated that they used public transportation services in Simcoe County. Among those who used public transportation, the satisfaction levels varied with 33.47% expressing satisfaction, 22.71% dissatisfaction, and 20.32% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- Access to a vehicle that respondents can drive is the most significant factor impacting their ability to travel, with 52% citing this as a determining factor.

Focus Group Themes

- LINX transit service was seen as a good transportation service for older adults.
- LINX could have more stops in popular public areas.
- More advertising of LINX was requested to show more information on routes and times for pick up/drop off.
- Nonexistent public transportation in rural areas making it harder for some older adults who do not drive to get to their destinations.
- Public transportation not needed for some as they had the means to drive themselves.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: 24% reported that the lack of accessible transport in their area was a barrier to transportation. Many participants mentioned the lack of public transportation in rural areas during focus groups.

Increase Public Transportation Presence: Increase the presence of public transportation in rural areas. This can be accomplished by increasing the number of routes and extending service hours.

Area of Concern: LINX was seen as a good transit service for older adults, however the awareness and usage of LINX is low at 8%.

Increase Advertising of LINX: Develop a campaign for increasing the awareness and accessibility of LINX. Possibly adding more routes to LINX could help with improving transportation accessibility standards in rural areas.

Area of Concern: Accessibility and safety concerns using public transportation services for individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges.

Increase Accessibility: Ensure accessibility standards are met for public transportation services for people with disabilities or mobility challenges.

Housing

Survey Results

- 31% of respondents reported living alone, while 69% reported living with others.
- 89% reported that their current living situation fits their needs. The survey data suggest that many individuals are satisfied with their current living situations, however there is a notable need for modifications to accommodate various needs, especially among seniors.
- 22% were aware of the County of Simcoe's Age-Friendly Housing Grant. There appears to be a lack of awareness regarding funding support and senior village campuses offered by the County of Simcoe.

Focus Group Themes

- Housing accommodations mentioned that would help with aging adults includes home AI, grab bars, elevators, chair lifts, and walk-in showers.
- Condominiums and bungalows were mentioned as housing options that were purchased specifically for aging.
- Lack of awareness of the Age-Friendly housing grant.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: The need for housing accommodations to make aging in place easier. Awareness of funding for housing accommodations is low.

Information and Communication: Improve communication and outreach efforts to inform seniors about available resources, grants, and housing options. This could include creating centralized information hubs, hosting workshops and information sessions, and leveraging technology to make information more accessible.

Area of Concern: Some expressed a desire for community living options.

Community Living Options: Explore opportunities to create senior-friendly communities or neighborhoods where seniors can live independently while also having access to social activities, support networks, and shared amenities.

Civil Participation and Employment

Survey Results

- 84% of respondents reported being retired. 90% of those who are retired are still engaged in some form of work.
- Among the working population, more than half indicated that they were working out of necessity and 15% reported having multiple jobs. 30% of the working population are over the age of 75.
- 31% of respondents are willing to volunteer and majority of them want to volunteer for 1-5 hours per week.
- The top 4 barriers to volunteerism were not having time to volunteer, physical limitations, not wanting to volunteer, and health issues.

Focus Group Themes

- Financial pressures still felt after retirement.
- Still being engaged in some form of work after retirement.
- Some familiarity with the 211 service and majority thinks the service is good.
- Actively volunteering and searching for more volunteering opportunities.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: 31% are willing to volunteer and majority want to volunteer for 1-5 hours per week.

Flexible Volunteer Opportunities: Develop volunteer programs that offer flexibility in scheduling and commitment levels. This could include short-term or one-off volunteer opportunities, virtual volunteering options, and roles with adjustable time commitments to accommodate diverse schedules and abilities.

Social Participation

Survey Results

- 42% of respondents indicated they socialized weekly, while 37% indicated that they socialize daily.
- Top reported barriers to socialization are distance, costs, lack of information about events, health, and mobility issues.

Focus Group Themes

- Aware of social opportunities in their local community.
- Satisfied with the number of social opportunities seen in their local community.
- The pandemic impacted ability to socialize in a negative way.
- Transportation and financial barriers to socializing.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: Top two barriers to socialization are distance and cost.

Improve Transportation Options: Enhance transportation services, especially in rural areas, to improve access to social events and activities for seniors. Explore partnerships with ride-sharing services, community transport initiatives, or volunteer driver programs to address mobility challenges. Provide more on-line social opportunities.

Address Financial Constraints: Provide subsidies or discounts for seniors to participate in social activities, especially for those on fixed incomes.

Area of Concern: Concerns in being able to participate in social activities due to a disability.

Promote Inclusivity and Accessibility: Ensure that social activities and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing barrier-free access and accommodating diverse needs. Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for all seniors, regardless of background, identity, or mobility status.

Area of Concern: COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability to socialize in a negative way. Reports of some seniors being reluctant to return to social activities due to fear of contracting an illness.

Take Precautions to Make Social Activities Safe: Develop checks to make sure that social activities have the proper protective equipment available such as masks and hand sanitizer.

Communication and Information

Survey Results

- 57% felt slightly informed of their local area.

Current Communication Sources	Preferred Communication Sources
Internet 70%	Internet 67%
Word of Mouth 63%	Social Media 50%
Friends/Family 55%	Mail 38%
Television 31%	Newspaper 32%
Community/Bulletin Board 27%	Brochures 28%

- An increase in internet usage post-pandemic with 69% of respondents claiming their increased reliance of online platforms, 90% of them use the internet daily.
- 40% of respondents indicated familiarity with the 211 service.

Focus Group Themes

- Communication was well received through mediums such as radio stations.
- Comments of a Springwater news app that participants have found useful.
- Word of mouth mentioned as a primary way some seniors receive their information.
- Newspapers used to be primary form of receiving information, but now many newspapers have been discontinued.
- Older adults felt that they could not access the latest information because they didn't know how to use the internet or computers.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: Difficulty in accessing and affording the internet.

Digital Literacy Initiatives: Develop and offer digital literacy programs and workshops to seniors and others who may be less familiar with technology. Provide the resources and guidance to promote online safety and privacy. This could include educating individuals on how to identify and avoid online threats.

Accessible Online Resources: Ensure that online resources, such as community websites and social media pages, are user-friendly and accessible to individuals of all technological proficiency levels.

Area of Concern: Low awareness of the 211 service at 40% awareness.

Increase Awareness of 211 Service: Develop awareness campaigns of the services provided through 211. This could take the form of social media advertisements and brochures listing the different services available through 211.

Area of Concern: 57% felt moderately informed of their local area and expressed a need for greater community awareness.

Community Awareness Campaign: Develop an awareness campaign to highlight events and services offered in all of Simcoe County using communication mediums such as the internet, social media, mail, newspapers, and brochures.

Community Support

Survey Results

- Based on the survey responses, the current community support for older adults includes assistance with income tax preparation, banking, accessing health services, collecting mail and parcels, and garbage removal.
- Initiatives that seniors have noticed includes:
 - Implementation of LINX and expanded bus routes for the local area.
 - Activities organized by the Lions Club.
 - Library programs tailored for seniors.
 - Services provided by Georgian Village.
 - Organization of 'Senior Day Events' in spring and fall.
 - Projects undertaken by Long-Term Care facilities.
 - Community Paramedicine Program

Focus Group Themes

- Community Paramedicine Program is seen as a great service for older adults.
- Community support services such as transportation, snow removal, and lawn maintenance worked very well.
- Community support was not easy to find.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: 43% of respondents have not noticed any improvements made to support older adults.

Advertise Improvements: Develop an advertising campaign for showcasing improvements made to the community for supporting older adults. This could also include conducting regular assessments and feedback of some of the new community support programs to look for areas of improvement.

Area of Concern: Community support is not easy to find for older adults.

Promote Inclusivity and Accessibility: Develop an advertising campaign to highlight the available local support services. Encourage community organizations and stakeholders to collaborate on initiatives that address the specific needs of seniors, such as social events, educational workshops, and transportation services.

Health Services

Survey Results

- 74% of respondents reported that their physical health ranged from good to excellent while 82% indicated that their mental health falls within the same range.
- Regarding access to healthcare providers, 77% of survey respondents indicated that they had a family doctor or nurse practitioner located within Simcoe County.
- Among those seeking health services, the most desired options are family doctors, walk-in clinics, and urgent care clinics.

Focus Group Themes

- Mentions of family health teams as a way of accessing health services.
- Wait times of a year to longer than a year for specialist appointments.
- Lack of access to walk-in clinics.
- Family doctors dropping patients for going to walk-in clinics that are not associated with their practice.
- The need for a family doctor was seen as the most prevalent desired option of health services.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: Shortage of family doctors in Simcoe County.

Improve Access to Healthcare Providers: Implement initiatives to address the shortage of family doctors and nurse practitioners, particularly in underserved areas.

Area of Concern: Long wait times for medical appointments.

Increase Availability of Walk-in Clinics: Explore options for increasing the availability of walk-in clinics and urgent care centers to reduce wait times for medical appointments.

Area of Concern: 86% are willing to consider using virtual appointments but there are a few factors preventing participation such as technical issues, difficulty using technology, and data privacy concerns.

Improve Digital Literacy: Focus on digital literacy to enhance online appointment systems. Offer digital literacy courses at local community centres/libraries to encourage older adults to take part.

Affordability and Accessibility

Survey Results

- Top three (3) affordability issues: automobile expenses, food costs, and housing costs.
- Top three (3) accessibility issues: home repairs, public transportation, and housing costs.

Focus Group Themes

- Housing and food costs were the most concerning factors considering affordability.
- Accessibility of pensions was brought into question, with some indicating that they had access to a pension and some indicating the opposite.
- Access to transportation was seen as the most concerning factor considering accessibility.

Recommendations

Area of Concern: Housing costs appear as a top affordability and accessibility concern.

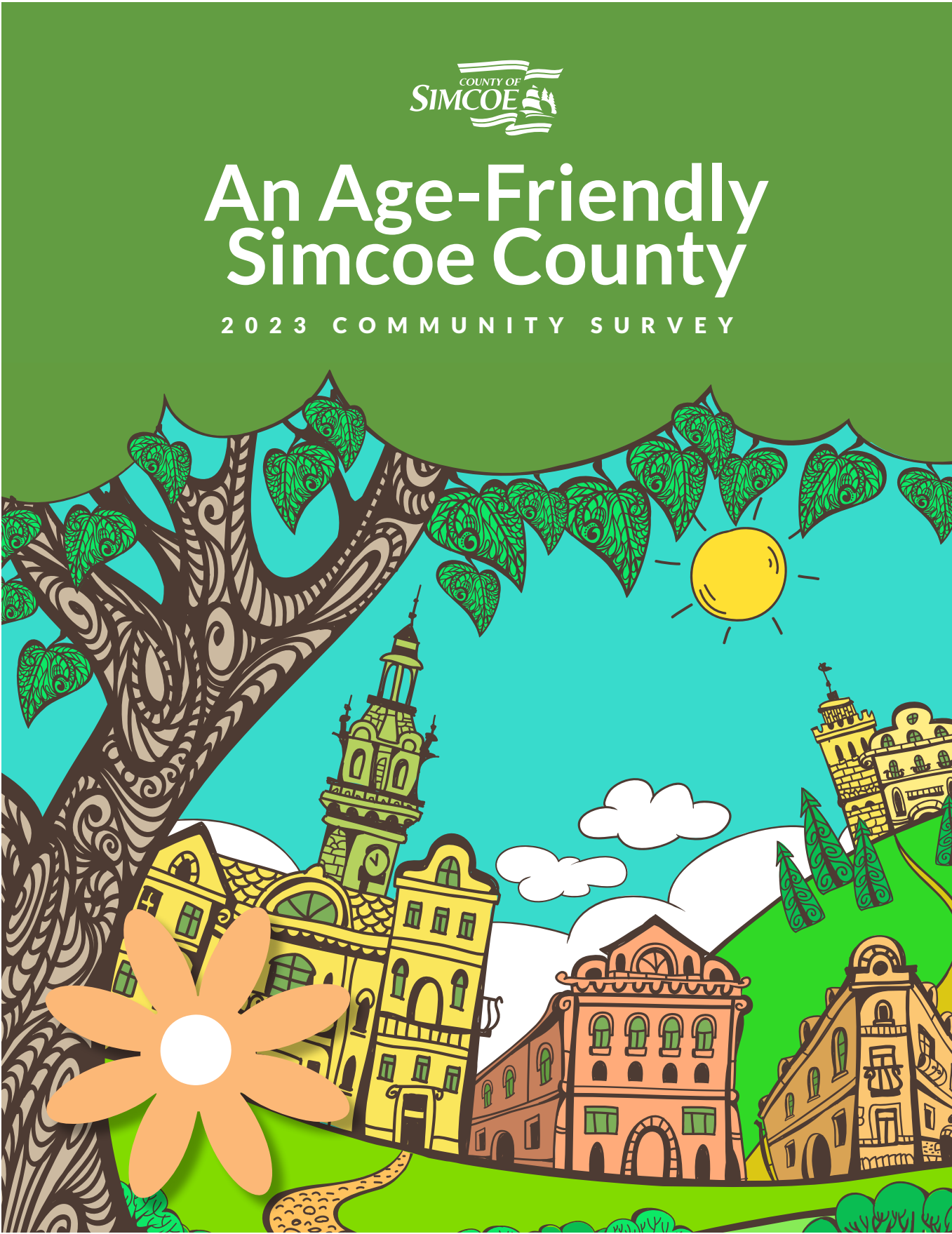
Increase Awareness of Affordable Housing Options: Increase public awareness of more affordable housing options that are also accessible for older adults.

Area of Concern: Transportation accessibility was considered a top concern for participants.

Increase Transportation Accessibility: Increase the coverage areas of public transportation to ensure that rural areas are included. Ensure that municipalities have access to bus services, LINX, and taxi services.

| Appendices | A&B

Appendix A



The County of Simcoe is committed to creating an age-friendly community that puts the needs of our older adults at the centre of future planning. Creating a community where older people are valued and can enjoy good health, happiness, and fulfillment is our priority.

The goal of this survey is to collect feedback from you to understand the most pressing age-friendly priorities in our communities, and measure the Age-Friendly Program awareness. By defining these priorities, we can include age-friendliness into our planning processes to improve the overall health, well-being, and quality of life for older adults across this region. The results of this survey will be posted on our website, simcoe.ca/age-friendly, and presented at a community meeting in 2024.

To ensure we are successful in planning for age-friendly communities, we count on your voice being heard. Every voice counts! Please help improve your community by filling out this survey before **December 31, 2023**. The survey may take about 20 to 25 minutes to complete. All feedback will remain anonymous and will only be used for Age-Friendly Community Planning.

Please be sure to submit your completed survey to be eligible to win one of these great prizes:

**Braestone Club Ktchn
Restaurant Gift Card
(\$500 Value)**

**Vetta Spa Gift Card
(\$150 Value)**

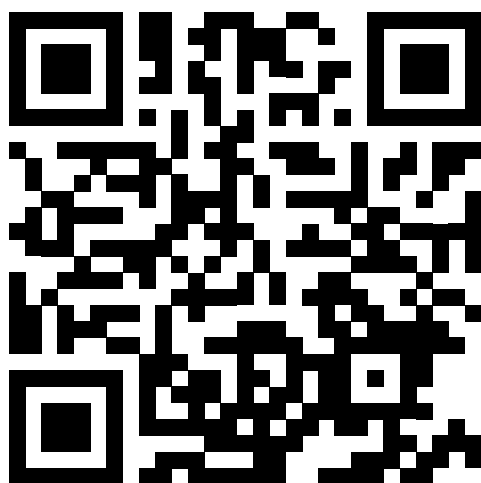
**Georgian Bay
Gift Basket
(\$100 Value)**

**Tiny Township
Gift Basket
(\$67 Value)**

You may withdraw from this study at any time before the submission of your survey. After submission, the results from each participant will be made anonymous by the removal of personal identifiers.

Complete the survey online!

If you prefer, you can complete this survey online from your smartphone, tablet, or computer. Scan the QR code below with your smartphone camera to be taken to the online survey.



Or visit www.simcoe.ca/age-friendly on your computer.

Please check the applicable box below:

- ☐ An older adult (65+)
- ☐ A caregiver on behalf of an older adult
- ☐ A family member on behalf of an older adult
- ☐ An interested citizen on behalf of an older adult
- ☐ Other: _____

Do you need support completing this survey?

Please contact us at
1-800-263-3199, or you can email us at:
agefriendly@simcoe.ca

When filling out the survey, please mark your applicable choice with a check mark or an X. Some questions feature a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'.

	Strongly Disagree ← → Strongly Agree					
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Example Question	✓			✗		

Respect and Social Acceptance

This section will ask about the level of respect you feel you have in your community and whether you feel included in community life.

1. Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
My local area is an ideal place for aging adults to live						
Decisions made in the community consider the needs of aging adults						
There are enough opportunities to participate in community programs						
I feel respected and valued by my local community						
The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected my social life						

2. In thinking about your future, what are you most looking forward to?

(Select Top 3)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Increased time with loved ones | <input type="radio"/> Enjoying hobbies and interests |
| <input type="radio"/> Continuing education/workshops | <input type="radio"/> Sharing life experiences/mentoring |
| <input type="radio"/> Physical/cultural activities | <input type="radio"/> More free time in general |
| <input type="radio"/> Self-directed learning | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Taking up new hobbies | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> Traveling | ----- |
| <input type="radio"/> Volunteering | |

3. In thinking about your future, what are you most worried about?

(Select Top 3)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Aging alone | <input type="radio"/> Declining mental health |
| <input type="radio"/> Declining physical health | <input type="radio"/> Losing my independence |
| <input type="radio"/> Moving into more sustainable housing | <input type="radio"/> No one to take care of me |
| <input type="radio"/> Financial concerns | <input type="radio"/> End-of-life care |
| <input type="radio"/> Difficulty getting around (home) | <input type="radio"/> Death |
| <input type="radio"/> Difficulty getting around (transportation) | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Falling/getting injured | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| | ----- |

Are there any other comments about *respect and social acceptance* you would like to share?

Outdoor Space and Buildings

This section will ask you opinion of the outdoor spaces you frequently use in your community.

4. Please share your level of satisfaction with public outdoor spaces in your community.

	Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Pedestrian crossings						
Signs on streets						
Lighting on paths/streets						
Safety walking on streets						
Number of parks/trails						
Quality of parks/trails						
Pet facilities in parks						
Washroom availability in parks						
Lighting in parks						
Maintenance of streets						
Maintenance of parks						
Available seating along sidewalks						
Available seating in parks						
Available and easy to use water fountains in parks						
Available garbage cans along sidewalks						
Available garbage cans in parks						

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Snow removal on streets						
Snow removal on sidewalks						
Number of accessible parking spaces near parks						

5. Please share your level of satisfaction with public indoor spaces in your community.

	Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied		
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Number of parking spaces						
Number of accessible parking spaces						
Availability of elevators, escalators and ramps						
Availability of washrooms						
Accessible washrooms						
Proper lighting						
Ease of opening doors						

Are there any other comments about **outdoor space and buildings** you would like to share?

Transportation

This section will ask about your ability to move about both inside and outside of the County of Simcoe.

6. Please describe your level of mobility

- ☐ I can walk unassisted
- ☐ I use a wheelchair or similar assistive device
- ☐ I use a cane or walker
- ☐ Other _____

7. Please identify the factors that impact your ability to travel.

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Access to a vehicle you can drive
- ☐ Access to a friend/family who can drive and/or assist
- ☐ Taxi services
- ☐ Access to public transit
- ☐ Access to community transportation services (such as Red Cross, Helping Hands Orillia, Community Reach, etc.)
- ☐ Services and stores within walking distance

8. Do you use public transportation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8a. If yes, how satisfied are you with the public transportation in your community?

- ☐ Very satisfied
 ☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Satisfied
 ☐ Very dissatisfied
☐ Neither

8b. If no, why not?

- ☐ Public transportation is not available in my area
 ☐ It is not easily accessible
☐ I do not require public transportation
 ☐ Other _____

9. Share your level of satisfaction with the transportation services in your community.

	Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied		
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Taxi services (Uber/Lyft included)						
Availability of wheelchair transportation						
Private transportation companies						
Accessible parking spaces						
Other						

10. Have you used any new transportation routes introduced in the last few years?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No

10a. If yes, how would you rate your experience?

☐ Excellent

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Poor

11. Have you traveled through the Simcoe County LINX transit service initiated by the County of Simcoe?

☐ Yes

☐ No

11a. If yes, how would you rate your experience?

☐ Excellent

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Poor

CT Link is a community transportation service that provides accessible door-to-door transportation to non-emergency medical appointments for seniors and people with disabilities. To book a CT Link service dial 211.

12. Have you used CT Link?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12a. If yes, did you find this service useful?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Are there any other comments about **transportation** you would like to share?

Housing

In this section we will ask about your current housing and plans for housing in the future. (Refer to appendix A for contact information on affordable housing programs for older adults.)

13. Do you live alone?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

13a. If no, who do you live with?

- ☐ Family member ☐ Shared dwelling
☐ Friend(s) ☐ Prefer not to say

14. Your home is:

- ☐ Owned by you ☐ Community living
☐ Subsidized ☐ Prefer not to say
☐ Rented by you ☐ Other
☐ Owned or rented by family _____

15. Does your current living situation fit your needs?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

16. Do you require modifications (better lighting, wheelchair ramp, grab bars) to your household to continue to live there safely?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Have you used or are aware of funding support through the County of Simcoe Age-Friendly Housing Grant for accessible enhancements?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Are you aware of the senior village campuses run by the County of Simcoe?

☐

Yes

☐

No

Are there any other comments about ***housing*** you would like to share?

Civil Participation and Employment

This section will ask about your current employment and volunteer activities. Refer to appendix A for contact information regarding volunteer services for older adults.

19. Are you retired?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

19a. If no, have you planned for your retirement?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

20. Are you currently employed?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

20a. If yes, how many employers are you currently working for?

- ☐ One ☐ Multiple

20b. If yes, what is the reason for your employment?

- ☐ By choice ☐ Out of necessity ☐ Prefer not to say

21. Are you looking for volunteer opportunities within the community?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

21a. If yes, do you know where to find the information on how to volunteer?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

21b. If no, what barriers are preventing you from volunteering?

(Select all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Transportation | <input type="radio"/> Unaware of opportunities |
| <input type="radio"/> Criminal reference checks | <input type="radio"/> Limited options |
| <input type="radio"/> Health issues | <input type="radio"/> I don't want to volunteer |
| <input type="radio"/> Physical limitations | <input type="radio"/> I don't have time |

22. On average, how many hours per week would you consider volunteering?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 1-5 hours | <input type="radio"/> 21+ hours |
| <input type="radio"/> 6-10 hours | <input type="radio"/> I do not want to volunteer |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-15 hours | <input type="radio"/> I prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> 16-20 hours | |

Are there any other comments about ***civil participation and employment*** you would like to share?

Social Participation

In this section we will ask about your social participation within and outside of your community.

23. How often do you socialize with family, friends, and others?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Daily | <input type="radio"/> Once in a few months |
| <input type="radio"/> Weekly | <input type="radio"/> Never |
| <input type="radio"/> Monthly | |

24. If you would like to socialize more, what prevents you from doing so?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Mobility issues | <input type="radio"/> Costs |
| <input type="radio"/> Safety concerns | <input type="radio"/> Lack of information about events |
| <input type="radio"/> Distance | <input type="radio"/> I'm happy with my |
| <input type="radio"/> Lack of transportation | level of socializing |
| <input type="radio"/> Event scheduling | <input type="radio"/> Other: |
| <input type="radio"/> Lack of opportunities | ----- |
| <input type="radio"/> Health | |

Are there any other comments about **social participation** you would like to share?

Communication and Information

In the following section we will ask about how you get in touch with others, and about how you get information on news and events important to you.

25. How informed do you feel about the local area?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Very informed | <input type="radio"/> Not interested in being informed |
| <input type="radio"/> Slightly informed | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Not informed | |

26. How do you learn about what is going on in your local area?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Word of mouth | <input type="radio"/> Newspaper |
| <input type="radio"/> Internet | <input type="radio"/> Mail |
| <input type="radio"/> Television | <input type="radio"/> Friends/Family |
| <input type="radio"/> Radio | <input type="radio"/> Bulletin boards |
| <input type="radio"/> Mail | <input type="radio"/> Does not apply |
| <input type="radio"/> Social media | <input type="radio"/> Other: |
| <input type="radio"/> Brochures | _____ |

27. Are you aware that dialing 2-1-1 will connect you with the right community and social services in your area?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

28. Would you like to be more informed about your local area?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

28a. If yes, how would you like to be informed?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Internet | <input type="radio"/> Newspaper |
| <input type="radio"/> Television | <input type="radio"/> Friends/family |
| <input type="radio"/> Social Media | <input type="radio"/> Bulletin boards |
| <input type="radio"/> Radio | <input type="radio"/> Does not apply |
| <input type="radio"/> Brochures | <input type="radio"/> Other: |
| <input type="radio"/> Mail | _____ |

29. How often do you use the internet?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Daily | <input type="radio"/> Less than once a month |
| <input type="radio"/> 2-4 times per week | <input type="radio"/> Does not apply |
| <input type="radio"/> About once a week | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Less than once a week | |

30. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you noticed an increase in your use of virtual communication tools (e.g. video calls, emails, Telehealth)

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No | <input type="radio"/> Not sure |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|

Are there any other comments about **communication and information** you would like to share?

Community Support and Health Services

In the following section we will ask you questions about the kind of help you might need and what is available in your community.

31. How would you describe your physical health?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Excellent | <input type="radio"/> Fair |
| <input type="radio"/> Very good | <input type="radio"/> Poor |
| <input type="radio"/> Good | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

32. How would you describe your mental health and wellness?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Excellent | <input type="radio"/> Fair |
| <input type="radio"/> Very good | <input type="radio"/> Poor |
| <input type="radio"/> Good | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

33. Do you have a family doctor/nurse practitioner?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes, within County of Simcoe | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Yes, outside County of Simcoe | <input type="radio"/> I don't know |
| <input type="radio"/> No | |

34. What services are you currently looking for?

(Select all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Nurse practitioner | <input type="radio"/> Other health professional |
| <input type="radio"/> Personal support worker | <input type="radio"/> Do not require |
| <input type="radio"/> Counsellor | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Walk-in clinic | <input type="radio"/> Other: |
| <input type="radio"/> Urgent care clinic | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Family doctor | |

35. Would you consider using virtual appointments if available in-home?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

36. What factors would encourage you to participate in virtual (video) appointments? *(Select all that apply)*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Overall convenience | <input type="radio"/> Ease of access |
| <input type="radio"/> Eliminate time in waiting rooms | <input type="radio"/> Lack of transportation |
| <input type="radio"/> Reduce the risk of exposure to infection and viruses | <input type="radio"/> Difficulty with mobility |
| <input type="radio"/> Time-saving | <input type="radio"/> None of the above |
| <input type="radio"/> User-friendly | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |

37. What factors would prevent you from participating in virtual (video) appointments? *(Select all that apply)*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Technical issues | <input type="radio"/> Online payment |
| <input type="radio"/> Difficulty understanding or using technology | <input type="radio"/> None of the above |
| <input type="radio"/> Lack of trust in virtual healthcare | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Data privacy concerns | |
| <input type="radio"/> Lack of personal interaction | |

38. Are you able to access the help you need for the services mentioned below?

	Yes	No	N/A
Filling out forms			
House cleaning			
Income tax preparation			
Yard care			
Grocery shopping			
Affording enough food			
Accessing health services			

	Yes	No	N/A
Accessing social services			
Preparing meals			
Accessing virtual communication tools			
Transportation			
Delivery service			
Pet care			
Garbage removal			
Collecting mail or parcels			
Banking			
Taking medication			
Picking up medicine from the pharmacy			
Language interpretation/translation services			
Please list languages:			
Other:			

39. Have you noticed any improvements related to local initiatives/projects in your community to support older adults over the past few years?

☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☐ Not sure

39a. If yes, please provide examples:

Are there any other comments about **community support and health services** you would like to share?

Affordability and Accessibility

40. Are you experiencing any challenges with affordability and accessibility in the following areas? *(Select all that apply)*

	Affordability	Accessibility
Food		
Housing costs (mortgage/rent, insurance/utilities)		
Home repairs		
Automobile expenses (repairs, gasoline, insurance)		
Activity memberships (exercise/fitness classes)		
Public transportation		
Community transportation services (transportation service companies for non-urgent medical appointments, including dialysis, chemotherapy, and regular check-ups)		

Are there any other comments about ***affordability and accessibility*** you would like to share?

41. Considering all of the age-friendly aspects we have discussed; how would you rate your overall satisfaction with living in Simcoe County?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neither
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

Personal Information

In this final section you will be asked some questions about yourself. This information is important to better understand how needs and priorities differ for certain groups in our community.

42. What is your preferred gender identity?

- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

43. What is your age?

- ☐ 55 or under ☐ 65-74 ☐ 85 or above
☐ 56-64 ☐ 75-84 ☐ Prefer not to say

44. Where do you live in the County of Simcoe?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury | <input type="radio"/> Township of Essa |
| <input type="radio"/> Town of Collingwood | <input type="radio"/> Township of Oro-Medonte |
| <input type="radio"/> Town of Innisfil | <input type="radio"/> Township of Ramara |
| <input type="radio"/> Town of Midland | <input type="radio"/> Township of Severn |
| <input type="radio"/> Town of New Tecumseth | <input type="radio"/> Township of Springwater |
| <input type="radio"/> Town of Penetanguishene | <input type="radio"/> Township of Tay |
| <input type="radio"/> Town of Wasaga Beach | <input type="radio"/> Township of Tiny |
| <input type="radio"/> Township of Adjala-Tosorontio | <input type="radio"/> City of Barrie |
| <input type="radio"/> Township of Clearview | <input type="radio"/> City of Orillia |
| <input type="radio"/> Mnjikaning First Nation | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Christian Island - Beausoleil | |

45. What is your marital status?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Single, never married | <input type="radio"/> Separated |
| <input type="radio"/> Married or domestic partnership | <input type="radio"/> Widowed |
| <input type="radio"/> Divorced | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

46. What is your current total annual household/family income?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than \$10,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$60,000 - \$69,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$10,000 - \$19,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$70,000 - \$79,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 - \$29,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$80,000 - \$89,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 - \$39,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$90,000 - \$99,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 - \$49,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$100,000+ |
| <input type="radio"/> \$50,000 - \$59,999 | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

47. Do you live in?

- ☐ Rural community ☐ Urban community ☐ Prefer not to say

48. Are there any other comments you would like to share?

Survey Collection and Drop-off Locations

- ☐ Your local library
- ☐ County of Simcoe Administration Centre, 1110 Highway 26, MIDHURST
- ☐ Town of Bradford-West Gwillimbury, 100 Dissette St., BRADFORD
- ☐ Town of Collingwood, 97 Hurontario Street, COLLINGWOOD
- ☐ Town of Innisfil, 2101 Innisfil Beach Road, INNISFIL
- ☐ Town of Midland, 575 Dominion Avenue, MIDLAND
- ☐ Town of New Tecumseth, 10 Wellington Street East, ALLISTON
- ☐ Town of Penetanguishene, 10 Robert Street West, PENETANGUISHENE
- ☐ Township of Adjala-Tosorontio, 7855 30th Side Road, RR#1, ALLISTON
- ☐ Township of Ramara, 2297 Highway 12, BRECHIN
- ☐ Township of Severn, 1024 Hurlwood Lane, ORILLIA
- ☐ Township of Springwater, 2231 Nursery Road, MINESING
- ☐ Township of Tay, 450 Park Street, VICTORIA HARBOUR
- ☐ Township of Tiny, 130 Balm Beach West, RR #1, PERKINSFIELD
- ☐ Township of Wasaga Beach, 30 Lewis St, WASAGA BEACH
- ☐ Township of Clearview, 217 Gideon Street, STAYNER
- ☐ Township of Oro-Medonte, 148 Line 7 South, ORO-MEDONTE
- ☐ Township of Essa, 5786 Simcoe County Road 21, UTOPIA

Alternatively, you can mail the completed survey to the following address:

Age-Friendly Program Lead
County of Simcoe
1110 Highway 26
Midhurst, Ontario
L9X 1N6

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Your feedback is very valuable and will help the County of Simcoe to make improvements that can raise the quality of life for all its citizens.

Only fill out this section if you wish to enter your name into the draw for one of the following prizes

**Braestone Club Ktchn
Restaurant Gift Card
(\$500 Value)**

**Vetta Spa Gift Card
(\$150 Value)**

**Georgian Bay
Gift Basket
(\$100 Value)**

**Tiny Township
Gift Basket
(\$67 Value)**

Protection and Privacy Statement

Personal information contained in this survey is collected pursuant to The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Your personal information will be only used to contact you regarding prizes awarded for filling out this survey. Questions about this collection can be directed to:

Email agefriendly@simcoe.ca, or 1-800-263-3199.

Confidentiality

The only time we will be collecting or retaining information about your identity is at the bottom of this consent form. The information you provide us on this form will be kept separate from any information you give in the survey. Records will be kept in a locked file and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file on a USB. Although some responses may be quoted in reports and presentations, they will in no way be attributed to you.

Contest Entry Form

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Signature _____

List of Important Contacts from Age-Friendly Simcoe County

Age-Friendly Simcoe County

simcoe.ca/age-friendly

Age-Friendly Seniors Housing Grant

705-726-9300 ext. 3127

Volunteer Organizations:

2-1-1: <https://211ontario.ca>

Volunteer Connection: <https://simcoecounty.cioc.ca/volunteer>

County of Simcoe Long-Term Care & Seniors Services Volunteers:

<https://www.simcoe.ca/dpt/ltc/volunteer>

Housing Renovations & Modifications

Age-Friendly Seniors Housing Grant

705-726-9300 ext. 3127

Ontario Renovates

<https://simcoe.ca/dpt/sh/ontario-renovates>

Secondary Suites

<https://simcoe.ca/dpt/sh/secondary-suites>

Access to Housing Programs - Simcoe County

Rent Supplement / Housing Allowance Programs - Simcoe County

Empower Simcoe (Barrie, Orillia, Collingwood, Midland) 705-739-0485

Community Services (Alliston, Bradford, South Simcoe area) 705-435-4900

Rent Geared to Income - Simcoe County

Request an application be mailed to you by calling 705-725-7215, press '3'

www.simcoe.ca/dpt/sh/rent-geared-to-income-housing

Access to Housing Programs - Simcoe County (Cont.)

Special Needs Housing- Simcoe County

Request an application be mailed to you by calling 705-725-7215, press '3'
www.simcoe.ca/dpt/sh/special-needs-housing

Barrier Free Units - Simcoe County

If you or someone you are assisting requires a modified or barrier-free unit, please contact Simcoe County Housing Corporation at 705-725-7215, press '3'

Appendix B

Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment Focus Group Guide

Hello Everybody,

My name is _____, and welcome to the County of Simcoe's Age-Friendly Community Focus Group.

The purpose of this focus group is to discuss your ideas and address your concerns related to Age-Friendly initiatives in the region. The following questions will address priority areas in the County of Simcoe. We expect that this focus group will last approximately 2 hours.

Ground Rules:

During the next 2 hours we would like to set some ground rules to make the focus group a safe and inclusive environment for everyone, so please remember to:

- Respect everyone's opinions.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Keep discussions confidential.
- Be open and honest

Confidentiality:

We appreciate your participation in this focus group aimed at enhancing age-friendly communities in Simcoe County. Your insights are invaluable, and we want to ensure that all participants feel safe and comfortable sharing their thoughts.

All information shared during this focus group will be kept confidential. Your individual responses will not be linked to your identity in any reports or publications resulting from this focus group. We will not disclose any personal identifying information (such as your name, contact details, or any other personal data) in our findings. We may share aggregated feedback, but it will be presented in a way that does not identify any individual participant. We ask that all participants respect the confidentiality of others in the group. Please refrain from discussing anything shared in this focus group outside of this setting. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without any impact on your involvement in future activities.

This focus group will be recorded. You can request to not be recorded, and the recording will be turned off. By participating in this focus group, you agree to these terms and understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality. Thank you for your cooperation and for contributing to our shared goal of creating a better community for older adults.

To start us off, I'd like to start with introductions around the group. Let's start with everybody telling us our names and any relevant experience or connection to age-friendly initiatives.

Let's begin with a warmup question:

- What does an age-friendly community mean to you?

Respect and Social Acceptance: (10 Minutes)

First off, we will explore the perceptions of social acceptance and inclusion within the region. The survey we conducted last year concluded that the top five future aspirations reported by participants were enjoying hobbies and interests, increased time with loved ones, engaging in physical and cultural activities, travelling, and volunteering. Interestingly, participants aged 85 and above showed a higher preference for increased time with loved ones at 53%. 57% agreed that their community was an ideal place for aging adults. 51% felt respected and valued by their community and 25% felt negatively about their community considering the needs of older adults while making decisions.

- What are some things that you are looking forward to in the future as you age?

Wrap Up Question:

- In what ways do you feel respected or disrespected by others in your community based on your age?

Outdoor Space and Buildings: (10 Minutes)

This section will focus on the outdoor and indoor spaces frequently visited in the community. Results from the community survey indicated that 66% were satisfied with the number of parks/trails in their community. 51% were satisfied with the lighting of indoor spaces. 61% were satisfied with the signs on streets. 38% were dissatisfied with the availability of garbage cans along sidewalks and 44% were dissatisfied with availability of seating on sidewalks.

- What outdoor and indoor facilities do you feel are easily or not easily accessible to older adults?

Wrap-Up Question:

- Do you feel that outdoor spaces and public buildings are designed with the comfort of older adults in mind? Why or why not?

Transportation: (10 Minutes)

This section will explore the mobility and travel capabilities of the residents in Simcoe County, including both internal and external movements. Findings from the survey concluded that access to a vehicle they could drive was the most significant factor impacting their need to travel. Interestingly only 12% of respondents reported using public transportation. 8% of participants have used the LINX transport service and 46% of them rated the service as “Good”. 24% reported that public transportation was not available in their area.

- Do you use public transportation? If not, why?

Wrap-Up Question:

- How easy or difficult is it for you to access public transportation in your community?

Housing: (10 Minutes)

The housing section of the survey inquired on housing in Simcoe County, focusing on the living arrangements, satisfaction levels, need for modifications, awareness of funding support, and knowledge of senior village campuses among respondents. Results from the community survey showed that 31% of respondents lived alone. 71% reported that the house they lived in was owned by them. 24% require modifications to their household to continue to live safely and 22% have used or were aware of the County of Simcoe Age-Friendly housing grant.

- How accessible is your current home? Are there features that make it easier or more difficult for you to live independently as you age?

Wrap-Up Question:

- What specific modifications would make your home more Age-Friendly?

Civil Participation and Employment: (10 Minutes)

The civil participation and employment section of the survey found that 84% of respondents reported being retired, however it was found that 90% of those who reported being retired were engaged in some form of work. 15% of working respondents reported having multiple jobs. 31% are willing to volunteer and majority of them want to volunteer for 1 – 5 hours a week.

- Do financial pressures faced make it more difficult to retire and stay retired?

Wrap-Up Question :

- Are there any volunteering opportunities that you would like to participate in, that aren't offered currently in the region?

Social Participation: (10 Minutes)

The social participation section of the survey explores involvement in social activities both within and beyond the community. Results from the survey indicated that weekly socialization was the most common at 42%. Daily

socialization is also prevalent, with 37% of respondents indicating that they socialize daily. The top five socialization constraints were reported as follows: distance, cost, lack of information about events, health, and mobility issues.

- Do you feel there are enough social opportunities available for older adults in your community?

Wrap-Up Question:

- What impact did the Covid-19 pandemic have on your ability to socialize in your community?

Communication and Information: (10 Minutes)

The communication and information section of the survey explores how the respondents connect with others and stay informed about important news and events. According to the survey, 57% of respondents felt moderately informed about their local area and expressed a desire for greater community awareness. The top three current areas where respondents get their information from are internet, word of mouth, and friends/family. The top three preferred ways for respondents to receive information are internet, social media, and mail.

- Do you feel that information is not communicated well to older adults?

Wrap-Up Question:

- What is your preferred way of receiving information about community events and services. Do you feel that your community is using these methods effectively?

Community Support: (10 Minutes)

The community support section of the survey indicated that the top five accessible services for older adults included assistance with income tax preparation, banking, accessing health services, collecting mail and parcels, and filling out forms. The top 5 not accessible services included affording enough food, accessing health services, accessing virtual communication tools, yard care, and house cleaning. It was also found that 43% of participants did not notice any community improvements made to support older adults in their communities.

- Which community support programs for older adults, do you feel work very well?

Wrap-Up Question:

- Are there any services or support systems that you feel are lacking or underdeveloped for older adults in your community?

Health Services: (10 Minutes)

The health services section of the survey outlines what is accessible to older adults in terms of healthcare. Approximately 74% of respondents reported their physical health as ranging from good to excellent, while 82% indicated that their mental health falls within the same range. 77% of respondents reported that they had access to a family doctor or nurse practitioner within the county, while 16% reported having healthcare providers outside of Simcoe County.

- What are your preferred methods of accessing health services? (walk-in clinics, family doctors, urgent care clinics, virtual appointments, etc.)

Wrap-Up Question:

- Do you feel that there is adequate health service options available in your area, for older adults?
- Affordability and Accessibility: (10 Minutes)

The affordability and accessibility section of the survey outlined the concerns of participants over affordability and accessibility of certain services. The top three affordability challenges were as follows: automobile expenses, housing costs, food. The top three accessibility concerns are as follows: home repairs, public transportation, housing costs.

- What are some affordability and accessibility concerns you have now, or for the future?

Closing Message:

Thank you for participating in this focus group! We very much appreciate hearing your thoughts, opinions, and experiences. Thank you for contributing to a better age-friendly Simcoe County.



Age-Friendly
Simcoe County