



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: May 25, 2022

Report Number: SRCM.22.03

Department: Office of the City Manager
Division: Strategy and Government Relations

Subject: SRCM.22.03 Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the results of the Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment and to have Council approve the terms of reference for the Age-Friendly Community Council.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That the Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment, attached as Appendix A to SRCM.22.03, be received.
- b) That the terms of reference for the Age-Friendly Community Council be approved as outlined in Appendix B to SRCM.22.03;
- c) That the Recreation and Culture Division be directed to recruit for the initial membership of the Age-Friendly Community Council to begin their term following the 2022 Municipal Election.

Contact Person:

Lise Conde, Manager, Strategy and Government Relations, extension 6410

Donald Hearn, Director, Recreation and Culture Division, extension 2503

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Lise Conde, Manager, Strategy and Government Relations

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, Interim City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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Background:

In 2020, Council considered a report on the feasibility of developing an Age-Friendly Community Strategy for Richmond Hill. Consideration of developing a strategy was referred to the strategic planning process that was underway. The result of that process, [Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022](#), was approved by Council in November 2020. One of the four priorities was creating a Strong Sense of Belonging. An Age-Friendly Community initiative is highlighted as one of the implementation actions in order to support this priority.

An Age-Friendly Community is one that meets the specific needs of an aging population. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified eight domains of community life that overlap and intersect to affect an individual's personal well-being and their independent and active living in physical and social environments. The identified domains are divided into three categories and are:

Social Environment:

- social participation;
- respect and social inclusion;
- civic participation and employment;

Physical Environment:

- outdoor spaces and buildings;
- transportation;
- housing;

Personal Well-Being

- communication and information; and
- community support and health services.

Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment

The Province of Ontario's document [Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations](#) sets out best practices for becoming a more Age-Friendly Community. The Guide emphasizes that the identification of principles, needs, strategy and action must be done collaboratively with older adults to ensure that their unique needs, challenges and experiences are the foundation for moving forward. This approach was used to prepare a Community Needs Assessment, as well as to guide next steps outlined in this report to establish a Community Council and develop the Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan.

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Process and Approach

In June and July 2021, the City undertook a community engagement project to connect with and gather information from the older adults in Richmond Hill. Using an online survey and focus groups the City staff were able to gather information about community life for older adults in Richmond Hill.

In order to reach as many residents aged 55 and older, staff employed several tactics to circulate an online survey and encourage completion. The tactics included circulating the survey to:

- the Recreation and Culture Adult 55+ membership database;
- clients of local organizations for seniors, such as Community and Home Assistance to Seniors;
- older adults who are family members or friends of City of Richmond Hill employees.

Staff also collaborated with the Planning and Infrastructure Department, adding to their survey that targeted a similar demographic.

Residents were given the option to complete the survey online or over the phone with staff. Follow up focus groups provided additional information and detail on the information collected in the survey.

The City advertised the survey in English and non-English media and on the City's website and social media.

Over 800 residents completed the survey, and 60 people participated in the focus groups. The results provided input for the Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment (Appendix A).

Consultation Findings

The findings of the public engagement process are detailed in the Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment (Appendix A). Highlights include:

- The majority of respondents rated Richmond Hill as a very good or excellent place to live as they age and felt strongly that Richmond Hill should continue to be their home as they age.
- A significant number of respondents across all age ranges (55 years and older) report having access to the internet at home.
- Older adults would like to be consulted more on planning, services and other aspects of their community.
- Respondents feel that employers should be more aware of the contributions older adults can make in the workforce.

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- Over 99% of respondents felt that outdoor spaces (including parks, sidewalks and accessible buildings) were important to support older adults in their neighbourhoods.
- Participants consistently raised concerns about the difficulty that they experience as pedestrians in relation to traffic volume, speed and safety at pedestrian crossings.
- Respondents identified the need for housing options to accommodate low-income seniors and for seniors housing to be better located in relation to transit for accessibility. Conversely, there were also comments about how seniors housing should be located away from high-traffic areas for safety, echoing comments related to the transportation.
- Respondents preferred to receive information on City services from the top five ranked options: email/e-newsletters; newsletters, notices or flyers by mail; the City's website; newspaper articles and social media.
- Respondents identified the availability of medical services in Richmond Hill as well as parks, trails and other community facilities as important to their continued mental, physical and social health, and wanted to see an all-of-government approach to supporting their needs.

It is important to acknowledge that the feedback received through the community engagement for the development of the Needs Assessment encompasses both programs and services provided by Richmond Hill, a lower-tier municipality, as well as those provided by other levels of government, such as York Region. Although the City may not be able to directly effect change to services in response to all the feedback, this provides us with data to inform how we may approach advocacy to support older adults in Richmond Hill as part of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy.

Age-Friendly Community Council

To support the development of the Age-Friendly Community strategy (see Next Steps), this report recommends that an Age-Friendly Community Council, modelled after the Cultural Leadership Council, be established. This Age-Friendly Community Council will create a forum for the City to engage community members, local businesses and community organizations in the development and implementation of the Strategy. This approach will continue to support the WHO's domains of respect and social inclusion as well as civic participation. The establishment of such a group is identified as a best practice by the Province in their previously mentioned Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide.

This report recommends approval of the attached Terms of Reference for the Age-Friendly Community Council.

With Council approval of the terms of reference for the Age-Friendly Community Council as recommended in this report, Recreation Program staff will begin to recruit membership as outlined in the Terms of Reference in Q4 2022.

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Next Steps

This Age-Friendly Needs Assessment was completed as an input to the upcoming work to develop an Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan specific to Richmond Hill. It is anticipated that the City will hire a consultant in Q3 2022 to undertake this work, with a Strategy anticipated to be completed by Q2 2023.

In the meantime, staff have already begun to implement change as a result of the feedback received for the Needs Assessment. These efforts respond to the feedback that social isolation is a concern for many older adults, and that opportunities need to consider individual risk and safety. The following are some examples:

- Recreation Program staff have continued with virtual programming and are working to incorporate a hybrid model of virtual and in-person programs to ensure that program opportunities are available to everyone.
- Similarly, in-person events and activities have begun again, bringing people together while following current safety requirements for COVID-19.
- In response to feedback appreciating the City's outdoor spaces, staff are looking at opportunities for additional outdoor programming so that a wider range of older adults can enjoy the City's outdoor amenities.
- Given the significant number of older adults who reported having internet access at home, Recreation and Culture Staff are continuing with electronic communication established during the pandemic as print editions of the monthly newsletter and program schedules are re-introduced.
- The results of the Needs Assessment will be shared with all City Departments to help inform projects that may impact older adults as we work toward the development of the larger strategy and action plan.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Funding for the creation of an Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan, based on the Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment presented in this report, was allocated as part of the 2022 Operating Budget. The City has also applied for a Provincial Inclusive Communities Grant for this Strategy, as it is specifically geared towards supporting age-friendly efforts.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Undertaking work to support becoming a more Age-Friendly Community directly supports Council's Strategic Priority of "A Strong Sense of Belonging," which specifically identified an Age-Friendly Community initiative as an implementation item.

Climate Change Considerations:

Climate change considerations are not applicable to this staff report.

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Conclusion:

The Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment, attached as Appendix A to this report, is the output of a public consultation effort that involved more than 800 older adults identifying the successes and gaps where the City can become more age-friendly. This is an important input to the next step in the City's efforts on this initiative, the development of an Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan. The Age-Friendly Community Council will be a key connection to the community as this work continues.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Appendix A: Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment
- Appendix B: Age-Friendly Community Council Terms of Reference

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCM.22.03 Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment.docx
Attachments:	- Age-Friendly-Community-Needs-Assessment-May2022.docx - Age Friendly Community Council TOR final.docx
Final Approval Date:	May 12, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Donald Hearn - May 11, 2022 - 9:50 AM

Tracey Steele - May 12, 2022 - 3:50 PM

Darlene Joslin - May 12, 2022 - 4:17 PM