

Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Strategy

August 2023



Mayor's Message

It is my extreme pleasure to share Richmond Hill's first ever **Age-Friendly Community Strategy**. This Strategy outlines how the City of Richmond Hill is committed to and working towards becoming an age-friendly community – a community that provides opportunities for people of all ages to participate in community life.

In Richmond Hill, older adults aged 55+ comprise 31.9% of Richmond Hill's population (2021 Census). This Age-Friendly Community Strategy is an important step towards meeting the needs of our aging population and, in turn, creating a community where residents of all ages can thrive.

Over the past year, we listened to residents and community stakeholders about what an age-friendly community means to them and learned from the experiences they shared. These insights were used to create the core components for the City's Age-Friendly Community Strategy.

Promoting the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life and supporting their ability to age with dignity, respect and independence is the cornerstone for being an age-friendly community. I look forward to the implementation of this Strategy and realizing the age-friendly vision we have for Richmond Hill.



Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David West".

Mayor David West

City of Richmond Hill

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the City of Richmond Hill residents, Members of Council, staff, and community organizations for taking the time to share your experiences, wisdom, and guidance throughout the various Age-Friendly Community Strategy engagement activities.



We are especially grateful to have the Age-Friendly Community Council providing leadership and support through the age-friendly planning process and for providing guidance in the direction of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy:

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Mayor's Message	2
Acknowledgements	3
Age-Friendly Community Strategy – At a Glance	6
What is an Age-Friendly Community?	9
Why is it important for Richmond Hill?	11
Age-Friendly Planning Process	12
Key Findings and Learnings	14
Planning Context	14
Local policy	15
Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment	16
Community Profile	17
Projected future characteristics of seniors	24
What We Heard	26
Summary of Activities	26
Key Messages	27
An Age-Friendly Community Strategy	30
Vision for an Age-Friendly Richmond Hill	30
Guiding Principles for an Age-Friendly Richmond Hill	30
Strategic Actions	30
Collective Accountability	45
Stay Informed!	46
Appendix A: Summary of Local Policy Context	48
Appendix B: Older Adult Services in Richmond Hill	53

Age-Friendly Community Strategy At a Glance



Age-Friendly Community Strategy – At a Glance

An inclusive, accessible, and welcoming community where all ages and abilities enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle.



Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Ensuring Welcoming and Accessible Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

Ensure parks, trails, and open spaces are accessible and support wellness for all ages

Work with local businesses and community partners to enhance accessibility within city spaces

Identify opportunities to improve maintenance of sidewalks and walkways in winter months

Develop Age-Friendly Design Guidelines



Transportation

Supporting Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Transportation Options

Develop guidelines to ensure streets are safe, welcoming, and comfortable for all residents

Share information on current transit needs of Richmond Hill residents with York Region

Incorporate a “complete streets” planning framework



Housing

Creating Affordable and Diverse Housing Options

Provide a range of housing options

Support advocacy for additional funding towards affordable and supportive housing



Respect & Social Inclusion

Treating People with Respect and Including them in Community Life

Share and promote local resources that support social connection and inclusion

Continue to celebrate seniors



Communication & Information

Creating Simple and Equitable Access to Local Information

Create an Age-Friendly Communications Plan

Create learning seminar series

Create Seniors Coffee Chat



Civic Engagement & Employment

Providing Opportunities for Engagement and Civic Participation

Identify opportunities to enhance the recruitment, training, and recognition of older adult volunteers

Incorporate older adult interest in local planning



Community & Health Care

Supporting Awareness and Access to Community and Health Services

Put seniors' health and wellness information and resources in community centres

Support increased health care services in Richmond Hill



Social Participation

Providing Access to Recreational, Social, and Cultural Activities

Continue to expand recreation opportunities for older adults

Promote the City's Recreation and Culture fee assistance program

Support opportunities for alternative transportation modes to access services and programs

What is an Age-Friendly Community?



What is an Age-Friendly Community?

Age-friendly communities support aging with dignity, respect, and independence and promote the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life.

The concept of age-friendly communities was developed in 2007/2008 following the World Health Organization's (WHO) *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project*. The project was a direct response to the rapid aging of the population, with an expected doubling of the world's population over the age of sixty by 2050.

The World Health Organization (WHO) [Age-friendly Cities Framework](#) proposes eight interconnected domains to help identify and address barriers, and enhance the well-being and participation of older people:



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The external environment has a major impact on the mobility, independence, and quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives beyond the comfort of their homes.



Transportation

Accessible and affordable public transport is key to ensuring a city's older population is able to age actively and remain engaged with their community, with access to health and social facilities.



Housing

The housing conditions, such as design, proximity to services, affordability, and safety of older people, are often linked to their quality of life and whether they are able to age independently and actively in their community.



Respect and Social Inclusion

An inclusive society encourages older people to participate more in their city's social, civic and economic life.



Community and Health Care

Accessible and affordable community and health services are crucial in keeping seniors healthy, independent, and active.



Civic Participation and Employment

An age-friendly city and community provides ample opportunities for older people to continue contributing to their communities, be it through voluntary or paid employment, and keeps them engaged in the political process.



Communication and Information

Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible, and practical information is a key part of active aging, especially with the trend of information overload in urbanized cities.



Social Participation

Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community fosters seniors' continued integration with society and helps them stay engaged and informed.

Why is it Important for Richmond Hill?



Why is it important for Richmond Hill?

The City of Richmond Hill is taking steps toward becoming an Age-Friendly Community — a community providing opportunities for people of all ages to participate in activities that support health and inclusion.

An age-friendly community benefits people of all ages. Age-friendly communities design policies, services, programs, and structures related to our physical and social environment to support seniors to age safely and be engaged in their communities in a meaningful way. Age-friendly communities consider the biological, psychological, behavioral, economic, social, and environmental factors that operate over the course of a person's life to determine health and well-being in later years (WHO, 2007). Age-friendly communities are ones where all citizens:

- recognize the diversity among older adults,
- promote their inclusions and contribution in all areas of community life,
- respected their decisions and lifestyle choices, and
- anticipate and respond flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences.

According to the Government of Canada's Guide on Age-Friendly Communities (2016), an age-friendly community is reflective of the following:

- Outdoor areas and public buildings are pleasant, safe, and accessible.
- Housing is affordable, safe, and well designed for seniors.
- Roads and walkways are accessible and kept in good shape.
- Public transportation is affordable and accessible.
- Neighbourhoods are safe.
- Relationships with the community and community members are respectful.
- Health and community supports are accessible and readily available.
- There are opportunities for seniors to be social and active.
- Seniors are taking part in volunteering, political and employment positions.
- Information is easy to find and easy to understand.

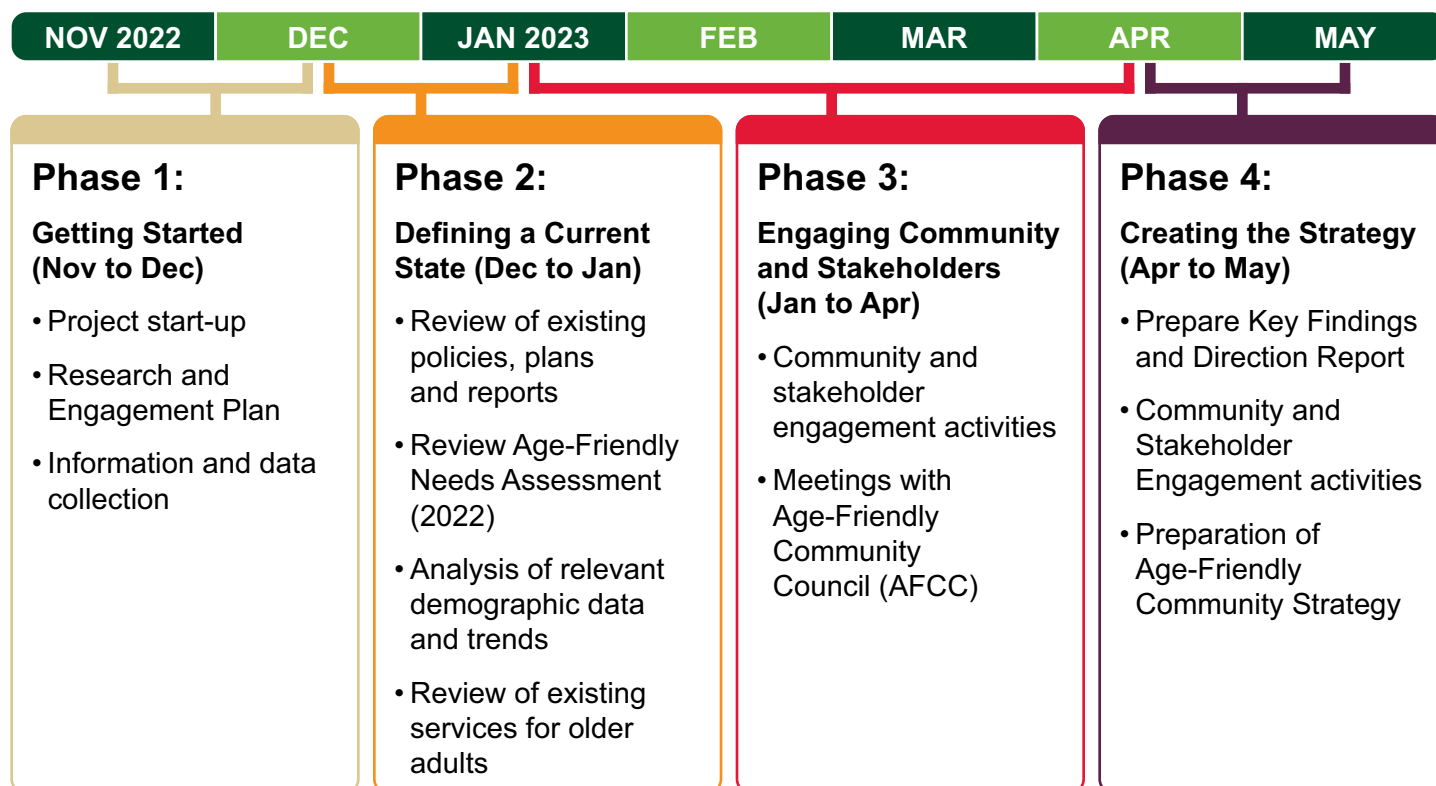
To achieve the goal of becoming an age-friendly community, the City of Richmond Hill had developed an Age-Friendly Community Strategy as part of the Council's Strategic Priority to Create a Strong Sense of Belonging.

Age-Friendly Planning Process

The Age-Friendly Community Strategy was developed under the direction and guidance of the Age-Friendly Community Council (AFCC). Work completed is outlined below over four project phases.

Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Council (AFCC)

The purpose of the AFCC is to build a collaborative working relationship between the community, local businesses, and the City, to provide input and direction into the Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Strategy. The AFCC is an advisory body to Council and various division staff of the City of Richmond Hill. The Age Friendly Community Council consists of members from Richmond Hill's older adult residents, local businesses that serve the older adult population, and representatives from community organizations that serve older adults in Richmond Hill. Members are experienced in issues facing older adults and are drawn from a broad range of community sectors. All members hold office for a two-year term and meetings are held three times a year.



Building on direction from the AFCC, the feedback and insights shared by current residents and community stakeholders, a review of current policy and planning documents, analysis of Census and other data, and based in best and promising practices, the Age-Friendly Community Strategy (AFCS) sets out the long-term vision, principles, and inclusive strategies to improve seniors' ability to age at home, live safely, and enjoy their community. The 5-Year Strategy will guide the City's future decisions on older adult policies, practices, services, programs, and amenities to optimally support older adults as they age and streamline information. The Strategy will also support coordination among relevant community partners.

Key Findings and Learnings



Key Findings and Learnings

Planning Context

As the senior population across Canadian communities continues to grow, it is more important than ever to support the health and wellbeing of older Canadians. In Canada, seniors (people aged 65 years and over) now represent Canada's fastest growing age group – a trend that is expected to continue for many years to come. In the province of Ontario, the number of people 65 and over is projected to almost double from 2.7 million, or 18.1 percent of population, in 2021 to 4.4 million, or 21.8 percent, by 2046¹.

While the governments of Canada and many provinces have been promoting the development of age-friendly environments for the health and well-being of their older adult population, there is a growing awareness that local communities play an important role in addressing the eight dimensions of healthy age-friendly cities. Through the Age-Friendly Community Strategy, the City of Richmond Hill seeks to become not only age-friendly for seniors, but friendly for all residents. Supports for seniors also support the needs of other populations - from clear signage for those with visual impairments to the benefits of clear walking paths, safe sidewalks, sloped curbs, and ramps for ease of walking for all ages.

The Ontario Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations (2021), is aimed at supporting municipalities in creating, implementing, and sustaining local plans that foster age-friendly, inclusive, and accessible environments. The guide continues to use the WHO 8 Dimensions of an Age-Friendly Community as the planning framework and groups the 8 dimensions under three core areas: Physical Environment, Social Environment, and Personal Well-being. The Guide sets out four key steps in the age-friendly planning process: Define Local Principles, Assess Needs, Develop Action Plan, and Implement and Evaluate.



¹ Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2021.

Local policy

Council's Strategic Priorities for 2020-2022 act as the City's roadmap to recovery following emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. The document focuses on four strategic priorities, including: Balancing Growth and Green, Fiscal Responsibility, Strong Sense of Belonging, and Getting around the City. Age-friendly planning is aligned with the strategic priority of a Strong Sense of Belonging. Under this strategic priority, the implementation of an Age-Friendly Community initiative was identified to ensure Richmond Hill is an inclusive community for all ages.

In addition, there are several plans guiding Richmond Hill in developing policies, programs, and services to support a healthy and vibrant City. These include the City's Official Plan (Consolidated 2021), Parks Plan (2022), Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2010), Urban Forest Management Plan (2020), Affordable Housing Strategy (2022), Environment Strategy (2022), Community Energy and Emissions (CEEP) (2021), Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023), Recreation and Culture Plan (2022), and the recently adopted Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan (2023). Many of these plans support the overall objectives of an age-friendly community and are aimed at ensuring that all residents, including older adults have access to the places and programs needed to age well and to be engaged in community life.

For example, the Recreation and Culture Master Plan highlights the City's commitment to walkable streets and transit-oriented communities, to providing services to people of all ages and abilities, and to create outdoor spaces that are welcoming and safe. The Parks Plan emphasizes the need to ensure inclusivity and accessibility among a growing aging population so that older adults can remain healthy and socially connected within their communities. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan emphasizes the need to ensure physical spaces, communication platforms, as well as customer service standards are continuously improved upon. The Affordable Housing Strategy supports the provision of a range of housing options for seniors to age-in place, new accessible and supportive housing options for seniors and people with disabilities, and an increase in the number of rental housing options for low-income households.

A summary of local policies is provided in **Appendix A**. And a summary of local older adult services is provided in **Appendix B**.



Age-Friendly Community Needs Assessment

In 2020, Council approved conducting a needs assessment as part of the Age-Friendly Community Initiative, an action item identified in Council's Strategic Priorities for 2020-2022. The purpose of the Needs Assessment was to inform and guide the implementation approach to the Age-Friendly Community Strategy.

The City of Richmond Hill conducted public engagement with residents 55 and older as part of the needs assessment. Over 800 residents took part in an online survey and 60 individuals took part in eight online or in-person focus groups. The Needs Assessment results were used as a benchmark, or baseline, for the WHO's eight domains of community life for age-friendly communities, which were also divided into three different categories: Social Environment, Physical Environment, and Personal Well-Being. The findings highlighted several successes and gaps within each category and showed strong alignment among participants to the engagement activities conducted as part of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy planning process. Key messages from the Needs Assessment are outlined below:

Social Environment:

- Most survey respondents have frequent interactions with friends, family, and neighbours several times a week or daily.
- 73% of respondents aged 75+ felt there was a good variety of activities offered for older adults.
- Most respondents across all age ranges report having access to the internet at home.
- Older adults would like to be engaged and consulted more on City planning initiatives and other aspects of their community.
- Respondents felt that employers should be more aware of the contributions older adults can make in the workforce.

Physical Environment:

- Over 99% of respondents felt outdoor spaces were important and spaces should be accessible for people who use mobility aids, and more consideration should be made for benches and opportunities to rest in the shade.
- Focus group participants and survey respondents raised concerns about the difficulty they and their peers 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 felt seniors housing should be better located to transit, citing the importance of accessibility. Conversely, there were also comments about how seniors housing should be located away from high-traffic areas for safety.

Personal Well-Being:

- Respondents identified a range of preferred options for receiving information about City services including email/e-newsletters, flyers by mail, the City's website, newspaper articles, and social media.
- Respondents identified available medical facilities as important to their continued mental, physical, and social health, but wanted an all-of-government approach to support the needs of older adults.

Community Profile

Understanding current and future trends related to population, the aging of the population, and various other socio-economic indicators is important in guiding the direction of age-friendly planning across the city.

The most current data available is presented below. In some cases, the 2021 Statistics Canada Census data is not yet available and therefore 2016 data is presented.

Population and Household Characteristics

An aging population

As of 2021, the population of Richmond Hill was 202,022, and the population is aging (Statistics Canada, Census, 2021).

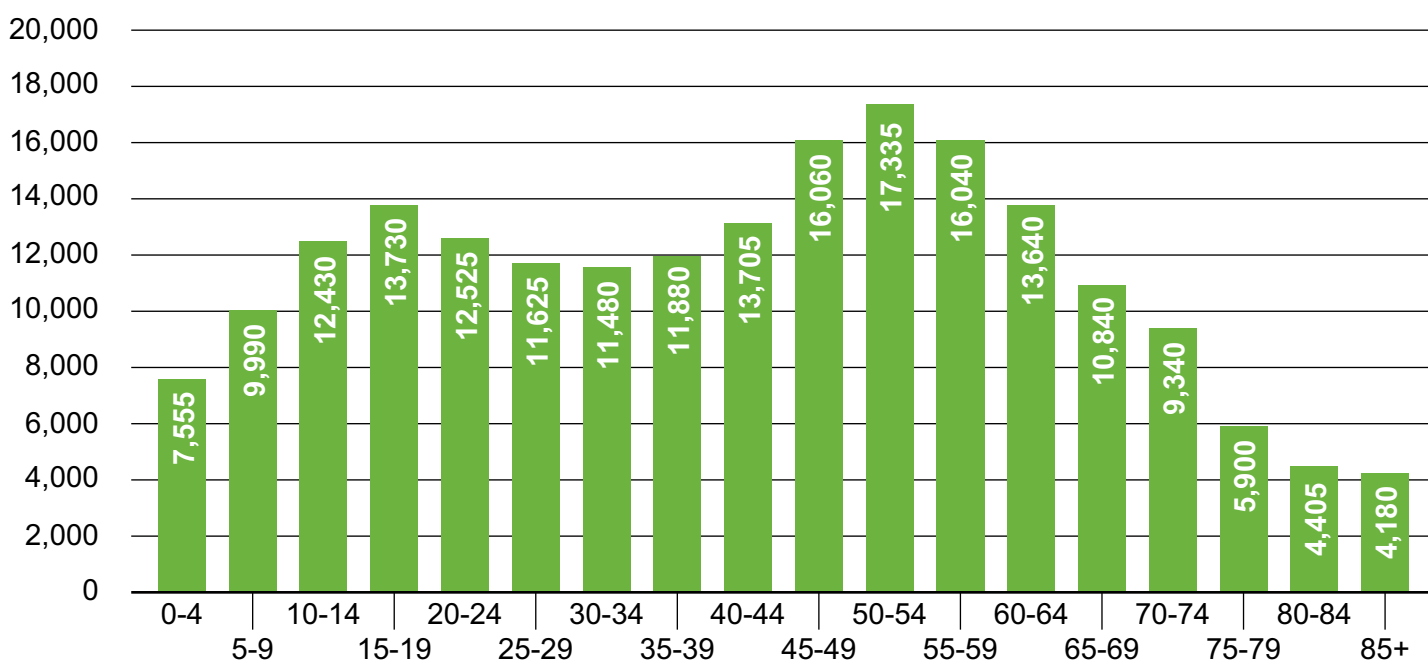
While the City of Richmond Hill's total population grew by 3.6% between 2016 and 2021, its seniors' (65+) population grew by 22.1%.

The seniors age group comprised 17.2% of Richmond Hill's population in 2021. Comparatively, Richmond Hill has a younger population than the province, and a slightly older population than York Region. Seniors make up 18.5% of Ontario's population and 17% of York Region's residents.

Like many other municipalities throughout the province and country, Richmond Hill's population is aging. Just five years before (2016), seniors aged 65 and over only accounted for 14.6% of the population.

Richmond Hill's population by age is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Population by Age, Richmond Hill, 2021

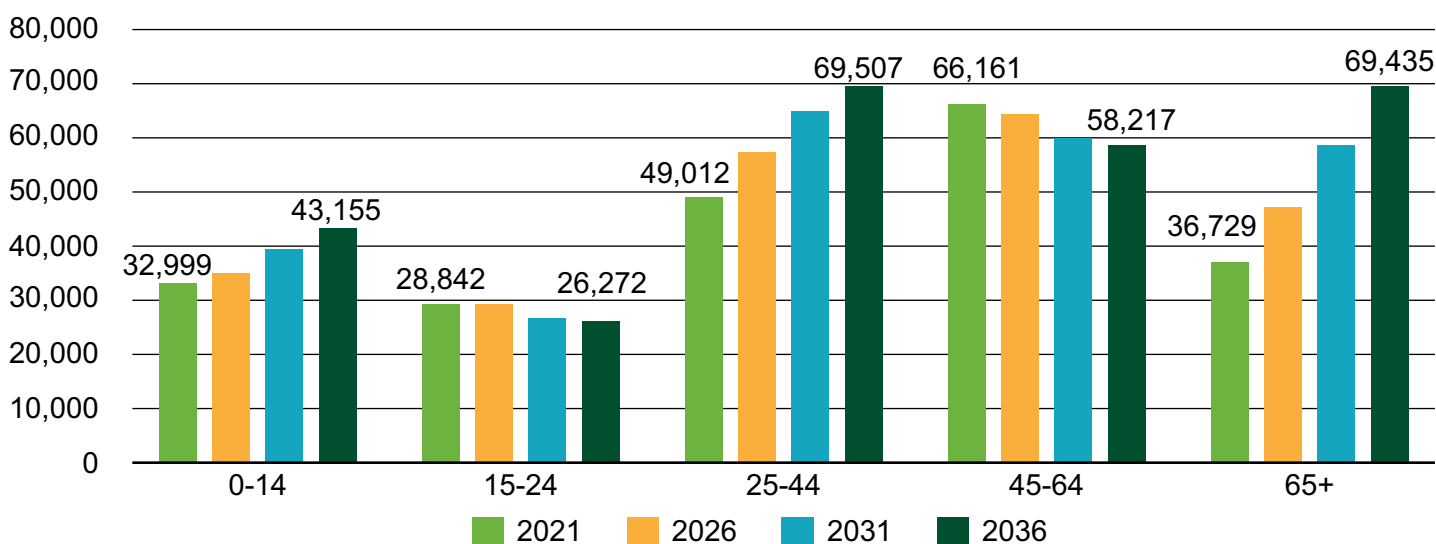


Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

Richmond Hill's senior population is anticipated to see significant growth.

Richmond Hill's senior population is anticipated to increase from 36,729 people in 2021 to 58,539 by 2031, a 59.4% increase over the 10-year period. It is estimated to further increase to 69,435 people by 2036, as shown in Figure 2.

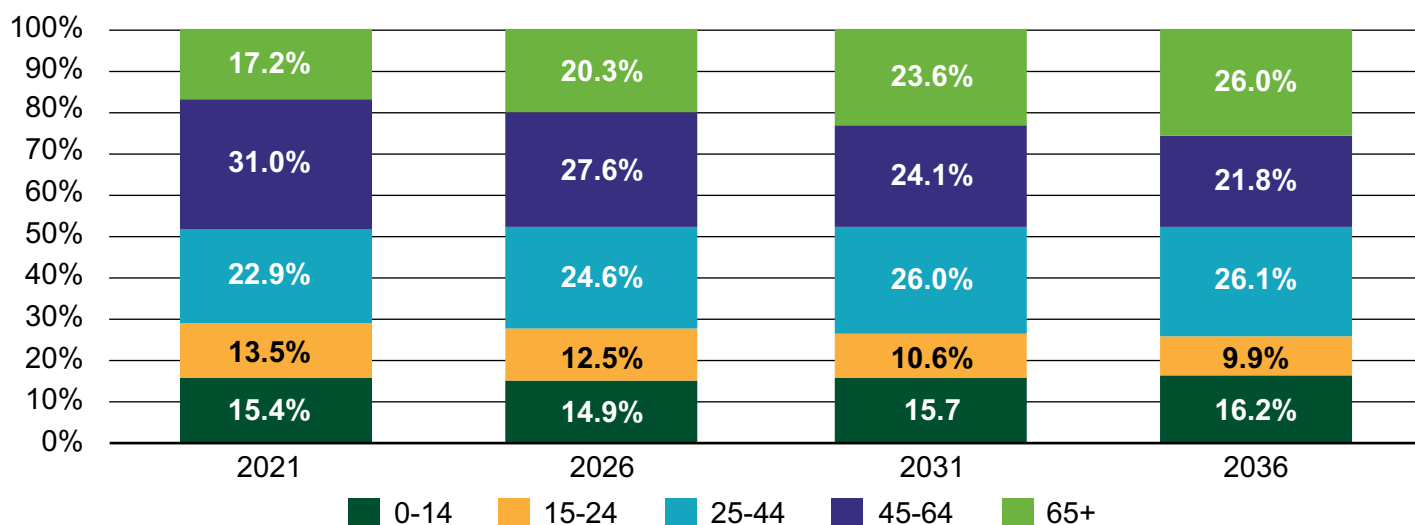
Figure 2: Proportion of Seniors, Richmond Hill, Actual 2016-2021, Projected, 2026-2051



Source: Region of York (2023)

Shown a different way, in 2021, seniors accounted for 17.2% of Richmond Hill's population. Seniors are anticipated to make up almost one quarter (23.6%) of the population by 2031 and account for 26.0% of the population by 2036.

Figure 3: Actual (2021) and Projected (2026-2036) Distribution of the Population by Age, Richmond Hill



Source: Region of York (2023)

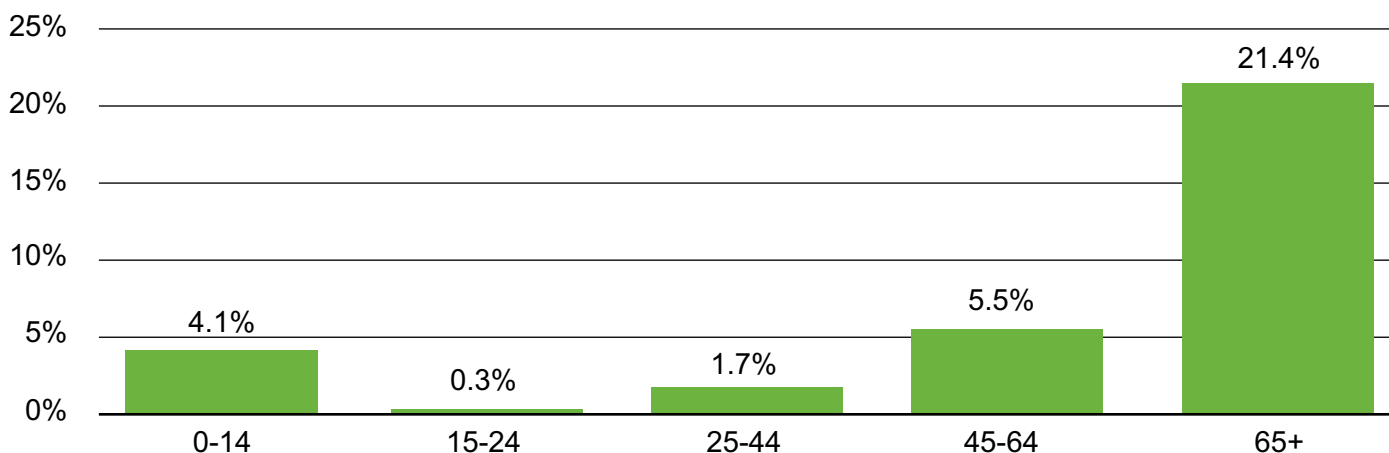
A diversity of seniors.

In 2021, there were 45 seniors who identified as Indigenous, and there were 1,410 recent immigrants (who came to Canada between 2016 and 2021) over the age of 65. Seniors accounted for 11.2% of all recent immigrants in 2021. York Region receives a higher percentage of new permanent resident seniors in comparison to the GTA, Ontario and Canada (Regional Municipality of York, 2016).

Some 7,250 seniors in Richmond Hill, or 21.4% of seniors, do not speak English or French. The proportion of Richmond Hill's seniors who do not speak English or French is much higher than younger cohorts. For additional context, the proportion of seniors who do not primarily speak English or French is 17.5% in Vaughan, 24.3% in Markham and 13.1% in Toronto.

Among the seniors in Richmond Hill that do not speak English or French as their primary language, 27.4% have Chinese ethnic origins, 15% are Persian (Farsi), and 7.2% are Russian.

Figure 4: Proportion of Population Unable to Speak English by Age Group, Richmond Hill, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2021

Most seniors in Richmond Hill own their homes.

Most senior households in Richmond Hill own their homes (82.1%), while 17.9% of senior households rent their homes. In 2016, among seniors renting, 29.5% live in subsidized housing (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016).

More seniors are living alone and without family.

Many seniors, 5,100 or 28.9%, are living alone and without a family². With living alone, there is potential for social isolation. However, many seniors do live in family households, including 39.3% who live in family households without children, 23.1% who live in family households with children, and 8.7% who live in multiple-family households (Statistics Canada, Census, 2021).

For comparison, Richmond Hill has a lower proportion of seniors who live alone than Vaughan and Markham, while Oakville and Burlington have a higher proportion.

² This does not include seniors living in congregate settings such as retirement homes and long-term care homes.

Education and employment among seniors

Many seniors are continuing to work past the age of 65.

Many seniors are continuing to work past the age of 65. At the time of the 2016 Census, 4,365 seniors were working or looking for work, resulting in a labour force participation rate of 16.9%. The unemployment rate of seniors, at 6.1%, was lower than Richmond Hill's total labour force at 6.9%.

Volunteer rates among seniors are lower than younger cohorts, but the number of volunteer hours is higher.

Some 29% of seniors in York Region volunteered in 2014. Volunteering rates for seniors are lower than for York Region residents 15 to 64 who volunteered at a rate of 44.5%. However, boomers (generation born between 1946 and 1964) and seniors provide more than half of the volunteer hours in Ontario (York Region, 2014).

Half of seniors have at least postsecondary education.

Some 49% of seniors have at least a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree (Statistics Canada, Census, 2021). This is lower than younger age groups age 25 and over.



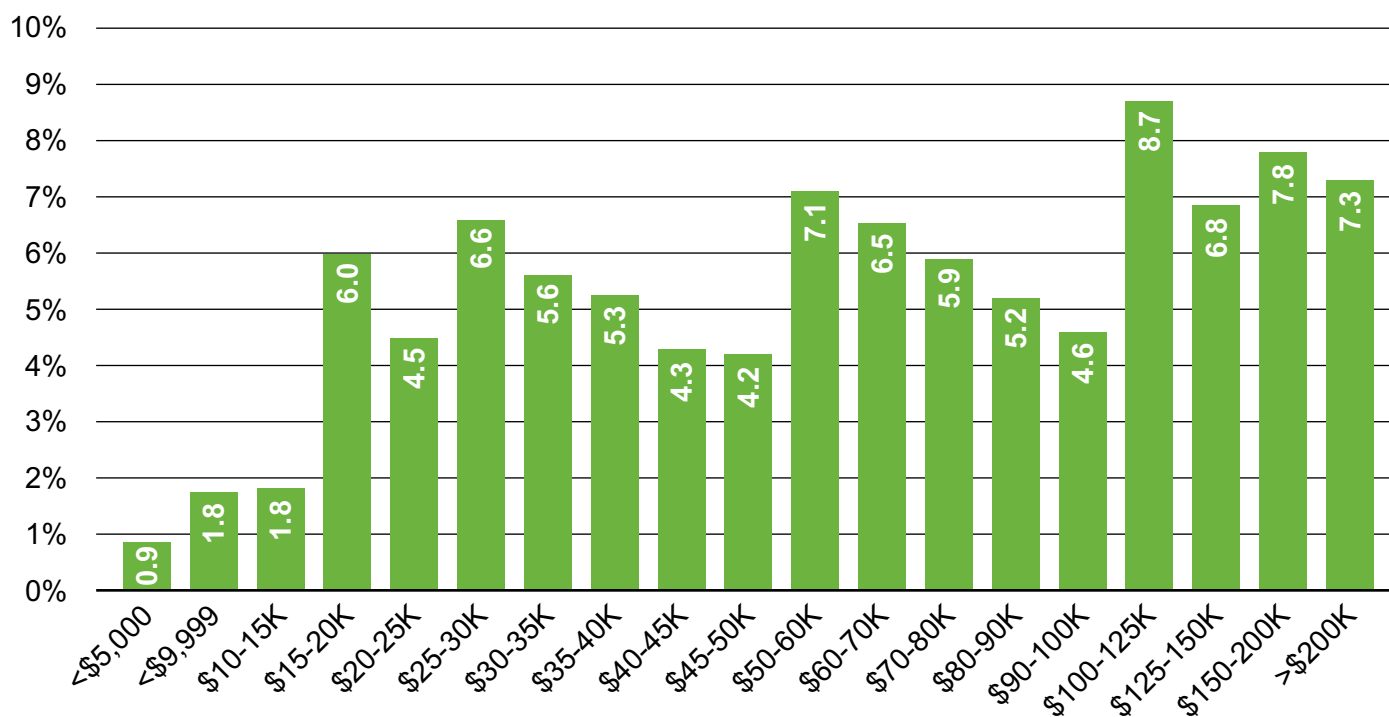
Income of households with seniors

Average income of households with seniors is lower than other households, including 31.6% with incomes below \$40,000.

The average income of households with at least one senior in 2016 was \$90,486, and the median was \$64,309. Some 9.6% had incomes below \$20,000 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Another 22.0% had incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000. These households are economically vulnerable, especially if they were to experience a health issue, loss of a partner, housing loss, or in the face of continually increasing cost of living.

Some 3,105, or 9.2% of seniors were in poverty in 2020³. Low-income rates are higher among seniors not in an economic family, where the incidence of low income was 17.2%.

Figure 5: Senior Households Income Distribution, Richmond Hill, 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016

³ Based on Statistics Canada's individual Market Basket Measure of low-income status.

Housing and affordability

Most of Richmond Hill's seniors live in single-detached houses, and many live in large family homes.

Some 61% of Richmond Hill's seniors live in single-detached houses, although one-quarter (25%) live in apartment buildings (Statistics Canada, Census, 2021). It is not as common for seniors to live in row houses (11.5%), semi-detached houses (3%), as it is for younger households.

Many seniors still live in large family homes. Over three-quarters (77%) live in dwellings with at least 3 bedrooms, including 49.7% living in dwellings with four-or-more bedrooms.

Many seniors in Richmond Hill still have a mortgage.

Many seniors in Richmond Hill still have a mortgage. The proportion of seniors with mortgage debt is increasing. In 2016, in Canada, the proportion of senior-led households with mortgage debt was 12%, almost double (6.6%) from 1999. In Richmond Hill, 29.9% of senior-led owner households still have a mortgage (Statistics Canada, Census, 2021).

In 2019, the proportion of senior families in Canada with any form of debt was 43.3% (Statistics Canada, Survey of Financial Security, 2020). Among senior families with debt, the median amount of debt was \$25,000 in 2016, up from \$9,000 in 1999 (expressed in 2016 constant dollars). However, the median level of assets held by these families also rose, from \$327,000 to \$607,400 (in 2016 constant dollars).

Housing affordability is an issue for many of Richmond Hill's seniors, particularly those who rent.

Affordability is the primary housing issue among Richmond Hill's seniors. In 2016, 5,420 senior households, or 34.8% of senior households, spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs⁴. This includes 2,610 households, or 16.8% of senior led households facing severe affordability issues, who are spending 50% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Affordability issues are much more common among seniors who rent their homes, with 64.2% of these households spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs in 2016. This compares to 28.7% of seniors who owned their homes who spend 30% or more of their income on housing.

Core housing need is an indicator that helps to identify who needs housing assistance. Core housing need happens when: major repairs are required, and residents don't have the means to move to a good unit in their community, there are not enough bedrooms for the residents, and they don't have the means to move, or the current home costs more than the residents can afford.

Some 5,492 or 19.3% of Richmond Hill's senior households were in core housing need in 2016. Renters have a much higher rate of core housing need than owners, at 38.5% compared to 12.6%.

Many people are waiting for long-term care in Richmond Hill.

As of April 30, 2022, there were 708 long-term care beds in Richmond Hill, and 4,518 people on the waitlist. There were 2,891 people waiting for basic beds, 31 were waiting for semi-private beds and 1,596 were waiting for private beds⁵ (Central LHIN, 2022). In York Region, there are 0.05 long-term care beds per population 75 years and over. This is lower than the median (0.08) for comparator municipalities which include the other Greater Toronto Area – Hamilton municipalities (MBN Canada Performance Report, 2020).

4 For renters, shelter costs include rent and any payment for electricity, fuel, water, and other municipal services.

For owners, shelter costs include mortgage payment (principal and interest), property taxes, and any condominium fees, along with payments for electricity, fuel, water, and other municipal services.

5 These numbers may include double counting if individuals were waiting for a bed at more than one long-term care home.

While a significant proportion of seniors have sufficient resources to meet their housing and/or care needs, others do not have adequate financial resources. Local data is available on senior's incomes but is not available on wealth. However, data is available nationally that can provide some indication of seniors' net worth and the proportion of seniors with limited financial resources. Nationally, senior homeowners have a significantly higher median net worth (\$685,400) than renters (\$24,000). This is true regardless of age. For those nearing retirement age (55 to 64), the median net worth of homeowners was \$952,100, compared with \$40,000 for renters. This suggests that renters in this age group have not accumulated a large nest-egg in preparation for retirement.

Health and Wellbeing

A high rate of seniors in Richmond Hill have activity limitations compared to younger adults.

In 2016, 28.7% of seniors aged 65 and over (7,890) had activity limitations always or often compared to 8.8% of 15 to 64 years older (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016).

Older adults are accessing more recreational programming as they age.

Participating rates among 55+ community drop-in programs increased from 21,100 (22%) in 2018 to 29,600 (29%) in 2019, as compared to total program capacity. 55+ annual membership usage increased from 38,000 in 2018 to 43,900 in 2019 (City of Richmond Hill, 2022).



Projected future characteristics of seniors

York Region's "A Profile of Baby Boomers and Seniors in York Region" provides a profile of what future seniors in York Region might look like:

Education

- Seniors will be more educated.
- They will be staying in the workforce longer.
- More seniors will be pursuing secondary careers and seeking out ongoing personal growth suggesting an increased need for personal and professional development opportunities.
- Seniors will be Internet and technology savvy and rely on the Internet to access information.

Employment

- More seniors will be employed beyond the age of 65.
- More seniors will be seeking out part-time work, working from home or self-employment opportunities, pointing to a need for flexibility and accommodation in the workplace.

Volunteering

- Dedication to volunteering will vary based on available time and other commitments seniors have.
- Seniors will volunteer to leverage professional skills and obtain meaningful and challenging experiences.

Income and financial security

- Seniors will rely on multiple sources of income.
- Seniors will likely be wealthier than previous cohorts before them and may have the ability to pay for needed services, suggesting that senior discounts should be based on income-sensitive criteria rather than just age.
- Employment income and home equity will be increasingly important to fund retirement.
- More people will be potentially entering senior years with some form of mortgage or consumer debt. Those with low incomes or experiencing chronic health problems will be particularly vulnerable to financial insecurity.
- There is a risk of affordability challenges due to supply of appropriate, affordable, and accessible housing, particularly for seniors who rent their homes or who have only been homeowners in the region for a relatively short time.

Housing and living arrangements

- A higher proportion of homeowners will be staying in their own residences.
- Downsizing will be based on financial resources and supply of appropriate housing, although there are limitations in the supply of senior rental housing and housing that is accessible.
- More seniors will be aging in place or neighbourhood with family and community support.

Health

- Boomers moving into their senior years may place additional pressure on health and support services in the community.
- There may be increased rates of dementia and cognitive decline, which points to an increased demand to provide and develop services to assist individuals with dementia or other cognitive problems.

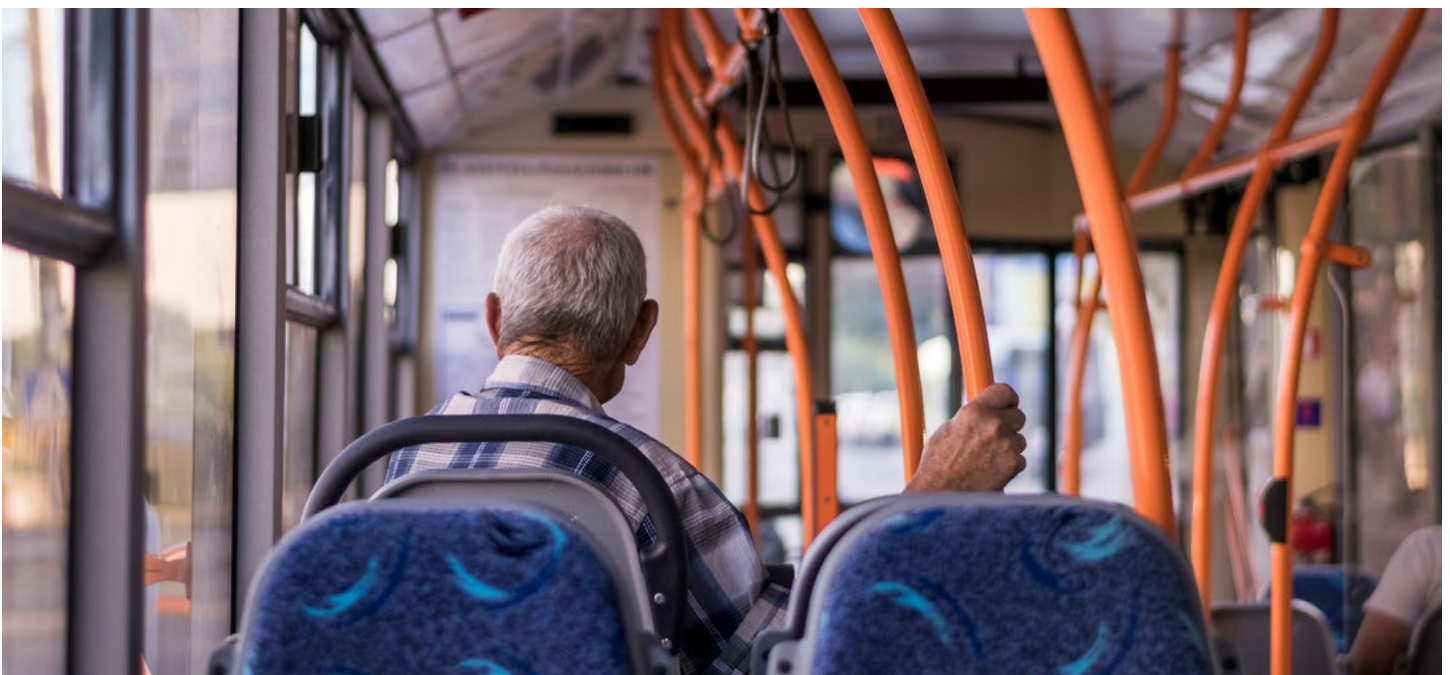
Personal safety

- There will be risk of elder abuse, neglect or family violence with increased caregiver burden and crimes against seniors, pointing to the need for public awareness about elder abuse and resources to support seniors so they can live safely in their own communities.

Transportation

- Most seniors will rely on personal vehicles and driving as their primary mode of transportation.
- Seniors will be providing transportation to other seniors.
- There will be an increase in seniors with mobility challenges relying on specialized transit services.

It is critical to bring together this context with the lived experiences of seniors, families, and service providers to create a more complete basis for this strategy.



What We Heard

Listening to and learning from the experiences of residents and community stakeholders is the core component in creating the City's Age-Friendly Community Strategy. This section provides an overview of what we heard from the community.

Summary of Activities

Several community engagement activities were undertaken with the aim of building awareness for the age-friendly project and hearing from a range of people about their experiences with the current age-friendly needs across the city. Throughout these conversations many ideas and opportunities in creating an even more age-friendly city emerged.

ACTIVITY	DATE	PARTICIPATION
Survey	January 26 to March 8	118
Focus Group 1: Age-Friendly Community Council	January 27, 2023	21
Focus Group 2: Richmond Hill City Staff	January 30, 2023	21
Focus Group 3: Community Organizations & Groups	January 31, 2023	16
Community Round Table 1 (virtual)	February 6, 2023	15
Community Round Table 2 (in-person)	February 7, 2023	7
Interviews: Members of Council and Senior Staff	February 6-9, 2023	9
Community Group Discussions	February 17 & March 6	22
Additional Feedback (email and telephone)	February & March 2023	5
Community Workshops	April 24 & 25	32
Phase 2 Survey	April 26 to May 10	32

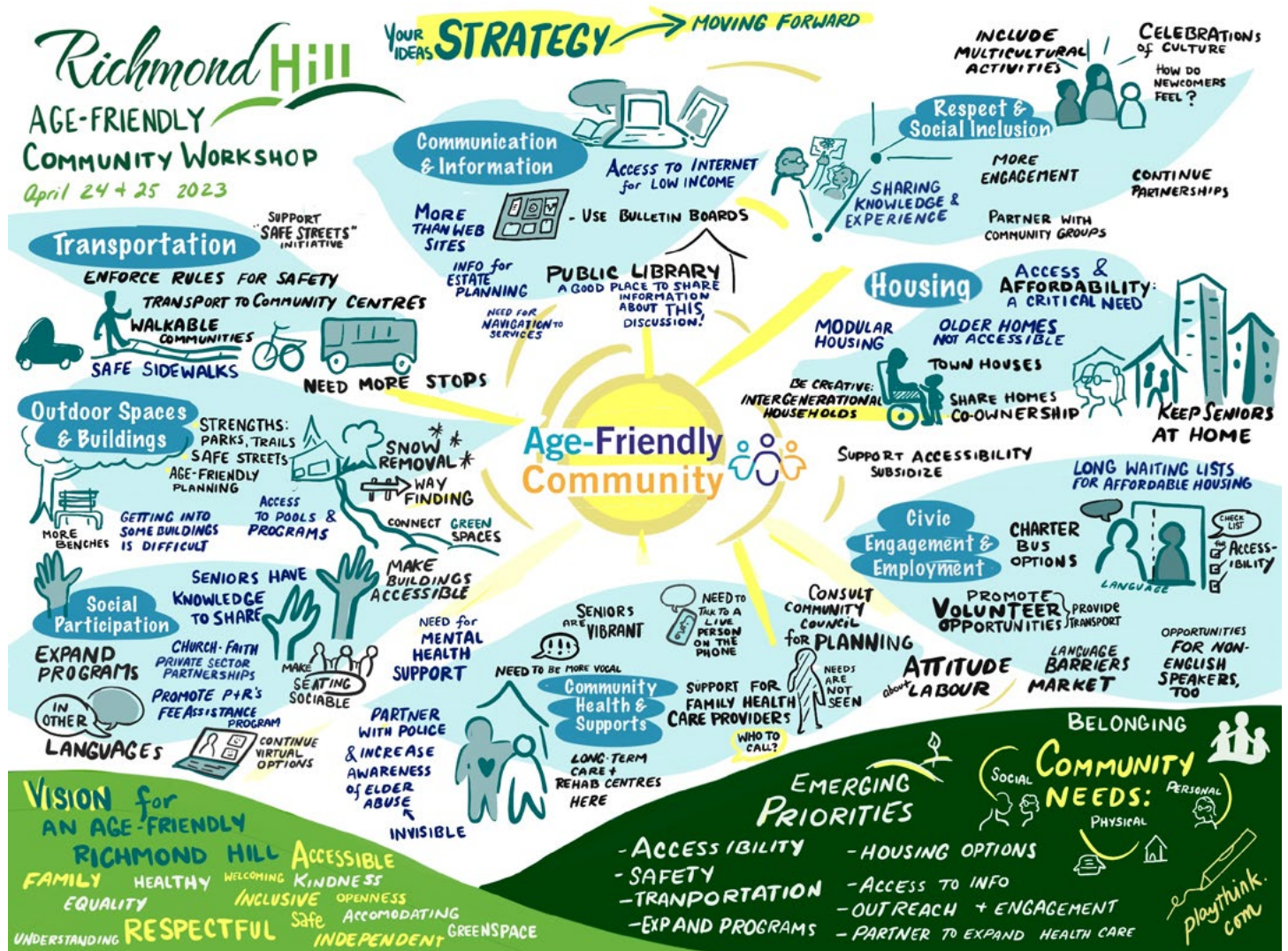
Key Messages

Through all the conversations and feedback, residents and stakeholders placed emphasis on several areas for action as the city moves forward in becoming an age-friendly community. These include:

- Reducing barriers to transportation
 - Increasing affordability, accessibility, and flexibility of system
- Improving safety of streets, trails, and crosswalks
- Continuing efforts to improve accessibility within city spaces, buildings, and events
- Providing more housing options for seniors
 - Ensuring range of housing options (type and tenure)
- Increasing community outreach and engagement
- Enhancing access to community information
 - Considering a diversity of platforms/methods
- Continuing the expansion of programs for older adults and seniors
 - Creating opportunities to socialize and connect
 - Providing affordable and free program options
 - Creating multi-generational programs and events
 - Including cultural programs and programs a range of languages
 - Ensuring coverage across the city
- Improve health navigation and access to health care services
 - Enhancing friendly visiting and caregiver support programs

It was also noted numerous times that many of these suggestions across all the domains will support older adults, but they will also support people of all ages and abilities.

For further information on 'What We Heard', please take a look at the full City of Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Strategy: [What We Heard Report \(March 2023\)](#).



Summary of Community Priorities

- Continue to ensure all spaces, buildings, activities, and events are physically accessible.
- Remove current barriers to street safety and accessibility.
- Improve the public transportation system for people with disabilities and seniors.
- Provide a range of housing options for seniors.
- Enhance community outreach and engagement.
- Ensure easy access to information on services and programs across the city.
- Continue to expand city programs for seniors.
- Work with community partners to increase access to health care services.

An Age-Friendly Community Strategy



An Age-Friendly Community Strategy

Vision for an Age-Friendly Richmond Hill

As part of developing the Age-Friendly Community Strategy, stakeholders and residents were asked to share their aspirations for what an age-friendly Richmond Hill looks and feels like. The vision for an age-friendly Richmond Hill is inspired by these hopes and goals and was further refined by the City's Age-Friendly Community Council.

An inclusive, accessible, and welcoming community where all ages and abilities enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle.

Guiding Principles for an Age-Friendly Richmond Hill

In addition, feedback and insights were sought on the principles the city should hold in its age-friendly planning. The following principles will direct our action, as a community, in support of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy:

Achieving the vision for an age-friendly community is a collective responsibility that requires partnerships and **collaborative** action.

Programs, services, and supports will be **person-centred** and aimed at achieving inclusive and supportive environments for all residents.

The City is **accountable** to report back to the community and responsive to changing needs and priorities.

Equitable access to programs, services, and facilities, and minimizing barriers to participation is at the core of all planning.

Strategic Actions

The Age-Friendly Community Strategy has been developed with input and collaboration from the Age-Friendly Community Committee, City Staff and Members of Council, residents, and community groups and organizations.

The following strategic actions evolved using information collected and shared on the city's strengths and assets, current and future demographic trends, barriers and gaps, and suggested ideas and opportunities, and are based in best and promising practices.

The strategic actions below are presented within the framework of the World Health Organization's 8 Domains for an Age-Friendly Community. In addition to these core domains, directions are also put forward to establish a more intentional approach in age-friendly planning.

Structures and Collaboration


Supporting the creation of an age-friendly system at the City of Richmond will include steps reflective of best practices in age-friendly community planning. The Recreation and Culture Division will assume a corporate leadership role in championing the Age-Friendly Community Strategy. Reflective of the *Ontario Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations* (2021) key steps have been outlined for the City of Richmond Hill to establish key structures to support the implementation and achievement the Age-Friendly Community Strategy:

- A. Continue the role of the Age-Friendly Community Council (AFCC) to guide overall leadership of the City's Age-Friendly planning and promote collaboration and engagement among key stakeholders and raise awareness and interest in planning for an age-friendly community.
- B. Incorporate the recommendations of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy into City Department work plans as appropriate.
- C. Develop a checklist or framework to apply an age-friendly lens to decision making across City departments. The checklist could include considerations and principles to build into plans, policies, and daily work at the City.
- D. Monitor the Age-Friendly Community Strategy progress. Ongoing monitoring and measuring of age-friendly activities allow a community to see how far it has come and where it needs to improve and how plans will be adjusted and re-evaluated. Monitoring the AFCS includes:
 - a. Prepare an annual work plan, including measuring implementation from the previous year(s).
 - b. Prepare an 'Annual Report to the Community'.
 - c. Conduct a full review of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy in 2027.
- E. Join Ontario's Network of Age-Friendly community initiative.
- F. Actively seek-out funding and grants for initiatives that support an age-friendly community and share information with local service providers, organizations, and clubs.
- G. Seek out opportunities to share the Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Strategy with York Region and other community partners.

The above recommendations are intended to support the establishment of an age-friendly 'system' within the City of Richmond Hill including the overall leadership of the Age-Friendly Community Strategy.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Ensuring Welcoming and Accessible Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	1. Through parks design, continue to ensure parks, trails, and open spaces are accessible and encourage activity and wellness opportunities for all ages.
	2. Share information with local businesses and community partners to promote accessibility and ensure Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards are implemented across city spaces.
	3. Explore opportunities to improve the maintenance of sidewalks and walkways, particularly during winter months.
	4. Develop Age-Friendly Design Guidelines to integrate age-friendly design into new and developing built environments.

Ensure parks, trails, and open spaces are accessible and support wellness for all ages

Outdoor spaces such as parks, trails, and open spaces are highly valued by residents. Through existing parks design initiatives, it is important to ensure these spaces are accessible and encourage activity and wellness opportunities for all ages as much as possible. This includes the provision of washrooms, seating, lighting, shaded areas, accessible pathways, and gathering spaces. The Recreation and Culture Plan (2022) highlights the need to consider these and other features in creating comfortable and welcoming environments. Consideration should also be given to wayfinding signage that is accessible to users with different abilities (i.e., visual impairments, deaf or hard of hearing), and incorporating inclusive design features such as raised beds in new community gardens. Through the community engagement activities, residents also emphasized the desire to be able to access the trails all year round.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Through parks design, continue to ensure parks, trails, and open spaces are accessible and encourage activity and wellness opportunities for all ages.

- Ensure appropriate provision of washrooms, seating, lighting, shaded areas, accessible pathways, and gathering places.
- Consider expanding wayfinding signage to be accessible to users with different abilities.
- Aim to ensure trails and open spaces are well maintained for use all year round where possible with winter maintenance focusing on trails between key destinations.
- Consider accessible design features, such as raised beds, in new community gardens and encourage location of community gardens near high density development.

Accessible Gardens

Accessible gardens can provide an opportunity for residents of all ages to connect with their community, get physical activity, learn new skills, and increase access to healthy food. Design considerations in creating accessible community gardens may include to:

- Incorporate vertical gardening for ease of reach.
- Provide raised beds for people in wheelchairs or those unable to garden at ground level.
- Ensure access to and around garden by considering appropriate ground/path coverage.
- Provide seating options.
- Consider various colours and textures for people with visual impairments.

Source: Evergreen (2001). Community Gardening Ideas.

<https://www.evergreen.ca/downloads/pdfs/CG6-Community-Gardening-Ideas.pdf>

Work with local businesses and community partners to enhance accessibility within city spaces

During the various engagement activities, many residents acknowledged improvements in the physical accessibility of many city spaces yet pointed to continued barriers within the private businesses such as restaurants and shops. The Accessibility with Ontarians with Disabilities Act provides regulations for customer service standards as well as for public spaces. It is recommended that these resources, and others, be shared by the City with local partners (i.e., Richmond Hill Board of Trade) and local businesses to encourage and promote greater accessibility within all buildings and spaces in the city.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Share information with local businesses and community partners to enhance accessibility and ensure Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards are implemented across the city in both public and private spaces.

Identify opportunities to improve maintenance of sidewalks and walkways in winter months

Many residents expressed safety concerns for themselves and loved ones in using sidewalks and walkways in winter months. It is recommended that the City examine sidewalk maintenance in winter months and identify opportunities to enhance snow removal services where appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Identify opportunities to improve maintenance of sidewalks and walkways during winter months.

Develop Age-Friendly Design Guidelines


It is recommended that the City develop age-friendly design guidelines to help direct how new development in Richmond Hill can better meet needs of all residents including an aging senior's population. The intent of such guidelines is to integrate age-friendly design into new and redeveloping built environments.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop Age-Friendly Design Guidelines to integrate age-friendly design into new and redeveloping built environments.

Transportation

Supporting Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Transportation Options

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	5. Develop guidelines to ensure streets are safe, welcoming, and comfortable for residents of all ages and abilities.
	6. Share information on current transit needs of Richmond Hill residents with York Region.
	7. Through the Transportation Master Plan Update, incorporate a “complete street” framework for a well-connected sustainable, multi-modal, and inclusive transportation network for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users) of all ages and abilities.

Develop guidelines to ensure streets are safe, welcoming, and comfortable for all residents

Street safety was identified as a priority for residents within City’s Age-Friendly Needs Assessment (2022) and validated through the engagement activities completed for the Age-Friendly Community Strategy. Residents highlight the need for longer crosswalk times as well as ensuring there are no other barriers along sidewalks and walkways (i.e., uneven pavement, lack of curb cuts). It is recommended that the City explore a ‘safe streets engagement initiative’ to further identify areas of concern. This may include in-person and online engagement activities designed for people to share their ‘stories’ on current barriers. Based on results from this, it is recommended that the City develop guidelines, and introduce pilot project areas, to ensure streets are safe, welcoming, and comfortable for residents of all ages and abilities.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Develop guidelines to ensure streets are safe, welcoming, and comfortable for residents of all ages and abilities.

- Consider a ‘safe streets engagement initiative’ to identify areas of concern.

York Region Traveller Safety Plan

York Region is developing a multi-year Traveller Safety Plan. The Plan will include local and regional roads. [LEARN MORE](#).

Share information on current transit needs of Richmond Hill residents with York Region

Another area of priority recognized throughout the community engagement activities was access to transportation. Current barriers identified include long wait periods for specialized transit services (i.e., Mobility On-Request), lack of public transit to certain community locations, affordability of public transit services, and no cross-border transportation options for residents using specialized transit services traveling from Richmond Hill to Toronto. It is therefore recommended that the City share with York Region the current transportation needs, and barriers to service facing residents in Richmond Hill with the goal of identifying opportunities to enhance current public and transit programs in Richmond Hill including opportunities to provide a deeper transit subsidy for low-income individuals and families and provide free transit for children, persons with disabilities, and low-income seniors.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Share information on current transit needs of Richmond Hill residents with York Region.

- Consider opportunities for low to no cost fares for people in need, removing barriers to cross-jurisdiction transportation (i.e., York Region to Toronto), and enhancing schedules to better respond to resident transit needs.

Incorporate a “complete streets” planning framework

The City is updating its Transportation Master Plan (TMP) to inform Richmond Hill’s future for all travel modes within the city. The TMP is aiming to provide a robust framework for a well-connected, sustainable, multi-modal, and inclusive transportation network for all users. The Age-Friendly Community Strategy supports this goal and establishing a ‘complete streets’ planning framework. A complete streets framework will help support active transportation such as walking, cycling, and making public transit safer and more convenient. Creating more walkable neighbourhoods and encouraging active transportation support healthy aging. Considerations can include comfort (i.e., surface type and quality, rest stations), connectedness (i.e., connection to services and amenities), and visual cues (i.e., lighting, signage, and walkability including connectivity between destinations).


RECOMMENDATION 7:

Through the Transportation Master Plan Update, incorporate a ‘complete streets’ framework for a well-connected sustainable, multi-modal, and inclusive transportation network for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users) of all ages and abilities.



Housing

Creating Affordable and Diverse Housing Options

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	8. Continue working towards achieving a range of housing options including affordable rental housing, smaller unit sizes, shared housing/co-housing living options, units with accessibility features and sustainable design elements, and housing with supports.
	9. Support advocacy to senior levels of government for additional funding and incentives towards the creation of affordable and supportive housing in Richmond Hill.

Provide a range of housing options

The Richmond Hill Affordable Housing Strategy (2021) is the framework identifying how the City can deliver more affordable housing for moderate-and-low-income households. The Strategy identifies key goals aligned with age-friendly planning, including to:

- Support further diversification of housing stock by creating a range of housing options for seniors to age in place and for younger households to settle in the community.
- Attract new accessible and supportive housing options to Richmond Hill that are suitable for seniors and households with disabilities by establishing partnerships and collaborating with stakeholders.
- Increase the number of rental and purpose-built rental housing options that are in a good state of repair and affordable for moderate-and-low-income households.

In addition, the City's Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) also includes actions promoting multi-residential housing development.

In support of this work, it is recommended that the City continue to work towards the goal of achieving a range of housing options for seniors, persons with disabilities, and lower income residents. It is recommended that the City examine opportunities to update its Official Plan and Zoning By-law to achieve these goals.



RECOMMENDATION 8:

Through the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, and the work of the Affordable Housing Committee, continue working towards achieving a range of housing options including affordable rental housing, shared housing/co-housing living options, smaller unit sizes, units with accessibility features and sustainable design elements, and housing with supports.

- Update the Comprehensive Zoning By-law to ensure permission of a range of housing options including shared and co-living arrangements, and smaller unit sizes.

Support advocacy for additional funding towards affordable and supportive housing

Senior levels of government are vital partners in increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing options. It is recommended, that the City of Richmond Hill share information on the key housing needs facing Richmond Hill residents and support York Region in advocating to senior levels of government for increased funding to support the development of more affordable, accessible, and supportive housing options in the city.


RECOMMENDATION 9:

Support advocacy efforts to senior levels of government for additional funding and incentives towards the creation of affordable and supportive housing in Richmond Hill.



Respect & Social Inclusion

Treating People with Respect and Including them in Community Life

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	10. Share and promote information and local resources on current programs and services that support social connection and inclusion.
	11. In partnership with local organizations and community partners, continue to coordinate Seniors' Month celebrations and re-establish the Seniors Fair to celebrate seniors and bring people of all ages together.

Share and promote local resources that support social connection and inclusion

Residents and stakeholders expressed concern for seniors who may be living alone, feeling isolated, may not speak English, and unsure of where to access support. Creating greater awareness of existing resources and programs is one way the City can support people's connection with important community support. For example, friendly visiting programs are meaningful programs that connect volunteers with people who may not have immediate support such as family and friends, and who may be isolated. It is recommended that the City share and promote local friendly visiting programs and other resources that support social connection of residents.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Share and promote information and local resources on current programs and services that support social connection and inclusion. Including but not limited to:

- Resources and programs to increase awareness of ageism and elder abuse.
- Friendly visiting and caregiver supports.
- Information on existing newcomer and cultural services.

Work with community partners such as CHATS, York Region Police, and Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario to identify resources and potential training opportunities.

Continue to celebrate seniors

Seniors Month, held every June, is a great way to celebrate seniors and create greater awareness of local services and programs. It is recommended that the City continue to support its Seniors Month events and re-establish the annual Seniors Day Fair in partnership with local organizations, businesses, and groups.


RECOMMENDATION 11:

In partnership with local organizations and community partners, continue to coordinate Seniors' Month celebrations and re-establish the Seniors Fair to celebrate seniors bring people of all ages together.

- As part of the Fair, share information on current resources, programs, and services, and seek out opportunities to celebrate local vendors and entertainers.

Communication & Information

Creating Simple and Equitable Access to Local Information

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	12. Create and implement an Age-Friendly Communications Plan to increase awareness of, and access to, existing programs, services, and events.
	13. Partner with community organizations and groups to offer a learning seminar series on issues such as cyber security and fraud, estate planning, computer/technology literacy, emergency preparedness, and financial planning.
	14. Create 'Seniors Coffee Chat' regular drop-in program for residents to learn about programs in the community and connect with other community members.

Create an Age-Friendly Communications Plan

The City of Richmond Hill has a range of service providers, community organizations, and clubs. Despite this, many stakeholders and residents expressed not being aware of what is available or how to access information on current services and programs. It is recommended that the City develop a Communications Strategy to evaluate options to ensure information is available to residents in a format that is fully accessible.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Create an Age-Friendly Communications Plan to increase awareness of existing programs, services, and events. The Plan should include strategies to:

- Continue the Age-Friendly webpage and consider the creation of a monthly newsletter.
- Create multiple options for accessing information (such as online and telephone).
- Design materials and platforms in consultation with Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Ensure communication materials and customer service standards are designed for all ages and abilities and meet or exceed all AODA requirements.
- Ensure communication and promotional materials reflect and celebrate the city's diversity.

Access Richmond Hill

Access Richmond Hill Contact Centre helps with general inquiries, responds to questions or concerns regarding programs and services. The Access Contact Centre also provides translation assistance for residents who need services in languages other than English. Access Richmond Hill includes a direct phone line, email, and webpage.

[Richmondhill.ca/access](https://richmondhill.ca/access)

905-771-8800

access@richmondhill.ca

Create learning seminar series

Learning helps people keep the mind active and can contribute to greater wellbeing. Through the various engagement activities, residents identified a desire for more information on topics such as cyber security and fraud, estate planning, computer/technology literacy, emergency preparedness, and financial planning. It is recommended that the City explore with community partners the creation of a learning series for older adults and seniors. Sessions could be held quarterly throughout the year in both in-person and digital settings.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Partner with community organizations and groups to offer learning seminar series on issues such as cyber security and fraud, estate planning, computer/technology literacy, emergency preparedness, and financial planning.

Create Seniors Coffee Chat

As another strategy to help increase community awareness of programs and services for seniors, it is recommended that the City create a community Seniors Coffee Chat or drop-in program to share information with the community on existing services, programs, and events. It can also provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions and connect with other community members. Local service providers and partners could be invited in to share information and provide additional resources.


RECOMMENDATION 14:

Create 'Seniors Coffee Chat' regular drop-in program for residents to learn about programs in the community and connect with other community members.



Civic Engagement & Employment

Providing Opportunities for Engagement and Civic Participation

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	15. Review the City's volunteer program to identify opportunities to enhance the recruitment, training, and recognition of older adult volunteers.
	16. Ensure Older Adult interests are incorporated into the planning and implementation of City activities, events, and initiatives by all City departments.

Identify opportunities to enhance the recruitment, training, and recognition of older adult volunteers

Volunteering can provide people with many health benefits including greater social inclusion, physical activity, and civic engagement. Through the community engagement activities, residents expressed a desire to contribute to their community through volunteering. Residents identified the need to better connect volunteers, including senior volunteers, with local opportunities. It is recommended that through the City's existing volunteer program, opportunities to enhance the recruitment, training and recognition of older adult volunteers be identified. Opportunities could be shared in both a hard copy/physical format and online through the City's website, newsletters, and social media accounts, as well as directly with community partners.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

Review the City's volunteer program to identify opportunities to enhance the recruitment, training, and recognition of older adult volunteers.

- Create a space (physical and virtual) to share city volunteer opportunities and promote broadly in community.

Incorporate older adult interest in local planning

The City of Richmond Hill Age-Friendly Community Council can provide a valuable 'age-friendly' lens to current planning initiatives. It is recommended that City staff seek feedback from the AFCC in major planning initiatives in addition to broader public engagement activities.


RECOMMENDATION 16:

Ensure Older Adult interests are incorporated into the planning and implementation of City activities, events, and initiatives by all City departments.

- Seek feedback from the Age-Friendly Community Council in major planning initiatives.

Community & Health Care

Supporting Awareness and Access to Community and Health Services

Age-Friendly Domain	Actions
	<p>17. Work with the Region to put seniors' health and wellness information, resources, and programs in community centres.</p> <p>18. Continue to engage with the Western York Region Ontario Health Team to share resources and information with local health organizations and service providers.</p>

Put seniors' health and wellness information and resources in community centres

Having greater awareness of existing community health services and programs is a priority for residents and stakeholders. As a key partner in the delivery of health services, it is recommended that the City of Richmond Hill work with York Region to explore ways of sharing information on seniors' health and wellness, resources, and programs in local community centres. This may include providing more information at service counters, adding a community board, or hosting events to share information with residents. Information and resources may include mental health programs, in-home supports, as well as caregiver supports.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

Work with York Region to put seniors' health and wellness information, resources, and programs in community centres.

CHATS Support for Caregivers

CHATS' Caregiver Support and Education Program supports caregivers through personal consultations and individual counselling, support groups, workshops, information, and referral services. As part of their programming, CHAT provides weekly teleconference sessions for caregivers to meet with other caregivers to share concerns, share stories, strategies, and find new ways to cope and learn about community resources.

Support increased health care services in Richmond Hill


As the population continues to age and health care needs continue to expand, it is important to strive for continuous enhancements in the delivery of health care services across the city. It is recommended that the City continue to engage with the Western York Region Ontario Health Team to share existing resources and information with local health care organizations and service providers. The Western York Region Ontario Health Team coordinates services and connecting partners across the area.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

Continue to engage with the Western York Region Ontario Health Team to share resources and information with local health organizations and service providers.

Social Participation

Providing Access to Recreational, Social, and Cultural Activities

Age-Friendly Domain	Preliminary Strategies
	19. Continue to expand recreation opportunities for older adults throughout the city.
	20. Promote the City's Recreation and Culture fee assistance program to actively target older adults who need financial support to participate in recreation activities.
	21. Work with community partners to support opportunities for alternative transportation modes such as ride sharing, volunteer drivers, and other options to increase access to services and programs.

Continue to expand recreation opportunities for older adults

The City of Richmond Hill offers a wide range of recreational and social programming. It is recommended that the City continue to explore options to expand service delivery to residents. Consideration should be provided for intergenerational programs, programs for persons living with dementia and for people with disabilities, continued inclusion of virtual options (incorporating technical support as needed), programming that meets needs of diverse ethno-cultural groups, programming in other languages, and outdoor programming options. Some suggestions offered by residents include intergenerational cooking and music classes, multicultural dance, luncheons, and 'movie nights'.

RECOMMENDATION 19:

Continue to expand recreation opportunities for older adults throughout the city.

- Continue to include multi-purpose space to accommodate program opportunities for adults 55+ at the future North Leslie Community Centre and Richmond Hill Centre, and at all Richmond Hill Community Centres, libraries, and parks.
- Enhance diversity of programs including outdoor activities (i.e., walking groups, outdoor tai chi), cultural activities (i.e., dancing), educational workshops (i.e., nutrition, financial planning), and multi-generational programs (i.e., cooking classes, music, and art programs).
- Offer programs in different languages.
- Continue to offer virtual program options.
- Partner with churches/faith spaces and other community organizations to leverage existing community space and to explore new programming opportunities.

GrandPals

GrandPals is an example of an intergenerational program that connects middle school students with older adults (55+) for mutual learning, storytelling, and meaningful friendships. GrandPals was first implemented in 2010 in Orangeville, Ontario with the support of the local age-friendly community initiative (AFCI) and has since been implemented in 55 classes at nine elementary schools.

Promote the City's Recreation and Culture fee assistance program

The City's Fee Assistance Program supports Richmond Hill residents in participating in recreation and cultural activities. Each year eligible families can be approved to receive a subsidy of up to \$100, twice a year, for each family member to put towards various programs and services offered by the Recreation and Culture division. Individuals and families must be below the low income cut off (LICO) amount to be eligible. It is recommended that the City actively promote the Fee Assistance program to older adults in need of financial support so they can participate in recreation activities. Consideration could also be given to expanding the subsidy over time to increase the number of low-income residents supported. Increasing the budget to support subsidized access to recreation and culture was also identified as an Action within the City's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

Promote the City's Recreation and Culture fee assistance program and actively target older adults who need financial support to participate in recreation activities.

Support opportunities for alternative transportation modes to access services and programs

For a variety of reasons, many people experience significant barriers or are not able to access public transit options. Feedback from stakeholders and residents highlight the need to provide accessible transportation options to residents especially given the continued aging of the population and more people living with disabilities. It is recommended that the City work with partners such as CHATS, and others to promote and expand, alternative transportation options (i.e., ride sharing, volunteer drivers) in the city. Support may include advocating for increased funding, assisting with education and promotion of existing programs, and facilitating collaboration and partnerships. Consideration could also be given to establishing a volunteer network of drivers.

RECOMMENDATION 21:

Work with community partners to support opportunities for alternative transportation modes such as ride sharing, volunteer drivers, and other options to increase access to services and programs.



Collective Accountability

Realizing the age-friendly vision for the City of Richmond Hill will require the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to implement the recommended actions and ultimately become a more age-friendly community to all residents.



City of Richmond Hill has taken on a leadership role in the coordination and facilitation of the actions outlined within the Age-Friendly Community Strategy. Various departments within the City play a significant role in setting policy that supports the principles and actions outlined within the plan and that supports the continued growth of the municipality through an age-friendly lens. The City also has an important role in collaboration, communication, and education. This Strategy will be implemented with the leadership of staff in collaboration with the Age-Friendly Community Council.

Regional Municipality of York fulfills several roles in creating age-friendly communities including through various planning tools (i.e., Official Plan, Transportation Master Plan, Housing and Homelessness Plan). The Region is presently developing its new Plan for Seniors 2023-2027 (formerly the Seniors' Strategy). York Region is responsible for facilitating affordable housing, administering and funding various community programs, public health, providing transportation and policing, as well as determining regional land use and development. York Region is also an important partner in advocacy with senior levels of government and collaboration with community organizations and service providers.

Government of Ontario has a broad role in age-friendly planning. The province has established a framework, [Creating a more inclusive Ontario: age-friendly community planning guide for municipalities and community organizations](#) (2021), and provides funding for some age-friendly initiatives. The Ontario Government also sets a policy framework for growth across the province. The Province has a significant role as a funder of many services, infrastructure, and programs across communities and across the 8 key areas of age-friendly communities.

Government of Canada provides a policy direction for age-friendly planning, [Age-Friendly Communities in Canada – Community Implementation Guide](#), and provides funding that shapes how our communities grow.

Community Organizations and Service Providers assume several roles in age-friendly planning including the direct provision of health services (primary care, in-home supports, emergency care, mental health), support programs (accessible transportation, friendly visiting, food banks, literacy, and language), housing (social housing, long-term care, supportive housing), and social connection (local clubs and networks).

Private Sector has a responsibility in age-friendly planning by ensuring safe and inclusive spaces for residents to live, work, shop, visit, and play.

Richmond Hill Community Members have an important role in supporting the vision of this plan by being welcoming and inclusive of all people of all ages and abilities. Communities can also support the development of an age-friendly city through advocacy, collaboration, and education.

Stay Informed!

To learn more and for more opportunities be involved, please visit RichmondHill.ca/AgeFriendly or contact adults55+@richmondhill.ca



Appendices



Appendix A: Summary of Local Policy Context

Regional Policy Frameworks Aligned with Age-Friendly Initiatives and Strategies

Policy Document	Description	Age-Friendly Context
York Region Seniors Strategy (2016)	The City of Richmond Hill is one of the local area municipalities in the Region of York. The <i>Region of York Seniors Strategy</i> looks at the changing senior populations and sets the road map on how to best support the aging population.	<p>Within the Age-Friendly Communities action area, several recommendations are made including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an internal joint planning table to explore the age-friendly community concepts. • Establish an external joint planning table with the local municipalities on age-friendly communities. • Reduce the complexities and costs associated with second units. • Leverage inclusionary zoning for needed housing options. • Develop a variety of housing options by type and tenure. • Develop a variety of transportation options. • Implement communications campaign to raise awareness of the need for housing that is affordable, including rental for seniors.
York Region – Seniors Strategy Update “What You Said” Report (2022)	The Region is taking steps to renew the Strategy to ensure it reflects the current needs and future opportunities to best support seniors. The updated Strategy will be released spring of 2023. Several engagement activities were conducted in 2022 and a “What You Said” report was released.	<p>The following updated actions were identified to support seniors to live in an age-friendly community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing options must be affordable and accessible, and it must fit with and between living independently and long-term care. • Facilitate the integration of services to ensure providers are aligned and working collaboratively. • Create or use more place-based initiatives or services in buildings and community spaces where seniors are already engaged or accessing services.

Policy Document	Description	Age-Friendly Context
York Region Official Plan (2022)	As the Region's primary planning document, the <i>York Region Official Plan</i> is aimed at guiding economic, environment, and community building decisions to manage growth across nine municipalities. The Plan sets the stage for growth management, land use, financial sustainability, and infrastructure planning for the next 50 years until 2051.	The Plan remains rooted in the Region's vision of creating strong, caring, and safe communities by adopting best-practices reflective of the changing responsibilities to plan for complete and inclusive communities. The Plan highlights that planning for complete and inclusive communities, "means every person, regardless of age, lifestyle or stage of life and background can live, work, play and thrive in the York Region."

Local Policy Frameworks Aligned with Age-Friendly Initiatives and Strategies

Policy Document	Description	Age-Friendly Context
Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2010)	The City of Richmond Hill developed a 25-year <i>Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan</i> (PCMP) to guide the City's commitment to adopting a city-wide pedestrian system and cycling network to encourage walking and cycling.	The Plan seeks to develop guidelines and action items that address the specific concerns of seniors when it comes to walking and cycling. The plan also highlights the importance of ensuring seniors have access to the community by improving transit mobility and reducing barriers in the design of walking and bike infrastructure.
Socio-Economic Study (2019)	The <i>Socio-Economic Study</i> was compiled to better understand the people, communities, businesses, and how the city is changing overtime to better inform future planning efforts.	The study found the population of Richmond Hill is growing, getting older and more diverse, with an increasing number of multi-generational households that include at least one grandparent living in the home. The study found that many seniors are living alone, and that seniors and children were overrepresented in the low-income categories. Social housing was also found to be in high demand with approximately 55% of all applicants on the waitlist being over the age of 55.
Council's Strategic Priorities (2020-2022)	The <i>Council's Strategic Priorities</i> for 2020-2022 act as the City's roadmap to recovery following the emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. The document focuses on four strategic priorities, including: Balancing Growth and Green, Fiscal Responsibility, Strong Sense of Belonging, and Getting around the City.	Age-friendly planning is aligned with the strategic priority of a "Strong Sense of Belonging" which identifies the implementation of an Age-Friendly Community initiative to ensure Richmond Hill is an inclusive community for all ages. *The City's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan is in development. As part of its development, the City is engagement with the AFCC to ensure the needs of an age-friendly community are being included in prioritization and goal setting.
Urban Forest Management Plan (2020-2040)	The <i>Urban Forest Management Plan</i> sets out the City's approach for managing urban forest.	Protecting and enhancing the urban forest can foster greater overall health for residents by ensuring access to green space, growing local food, removing pollutants from the air, and engaging residents in environmental initiatives.

Policy Document	Description	Age-Friendly Context
Richmond Hill Official Plan (2010 – Office Consolidation 2021)	The <i>Richmond Hill Official Plan</i> is the City's primary planning policy framework, outlining the long-term vision for future growth and development.	The Official Plan encourages a mix of housing units to meet the needs of the whole community, including the requirement that a minimum of 35% of all new housing units be affordable in the City's Centres and Corridors, and minimum of 25% of all new housing be affordable across the remaining settlement area. Affordable housing should comprise a diverse range of type, lots, sizes, and tenures to provide opportunities for all households including families, seniors, and residents with special needs. The Official Plan also promotes universally accessible and barrier-free design for both public and private dwellings.
Community Energy and Emissions (CEEP) (2021)	CEEP is the City's guide in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving energy, and exploring related economic opportunities.	CEEP supports increasing the density of the housing stock, for example more multi-family housing, which can support more diverse and affordable housing options for residents. Policies further support mixed-use communities which can support more walkable neighbourhoods.
Affordable Housing Strategy (2021)	The <i>Richmond Hill Affordable Housing Strategy</i> is the framework identifying how the City can deliver more affordable housing for moderate-and-low-income households.	The Strategy identifies key goals aligned with age-friendly planning, described below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support further diversification of housing stock by creating a range of housing options for seniors to age in place and for younger households to settle in the community. • Attract new accessible and supportive housing options to Richmond Hill that are suitable for seniors and households with disabilities by establishing partnerships and collaborating with stakeholders. • Increase the number of rental and specifically purpose-built rental housing options that are in a good state of repair and affordable to moderate-and-low-income households.
Parks Plan (2022)	The 10-year <i>City of Richmond Hill Parks Plan</i> provides direction for the planning and development of Richmond Hill's municipal park system.	The Plan highlights how the City's aging population will continue to place pressure on park activities and advises that future recreational and leisure activities should consider the inclusivity and accessibility needs of active older adults who wish to remain healthy and socially connected within their communities as they age.

Policy Document	Description	Age-Friendly Context
Recreation and Culture Plan (2022)	The <i>Recreation and Culture Plan</i> 's primary objectives are to better understand the current and future recreation and cultural needs of residents and to prepare recommendations and strategic direction for implementation.	The Plan highlights that the City's aging population will drive demands for services geared to residents 55+ and participation in structured and unstructured recreation activities among older adults is increasing. The Plan outlines recommendations to address the projected demand for diverse and inclusive recreation programming and spaces for adults 55+.
Environment Strategy Update (2022)	The <i>Environment Strategy</i> aims to find approaches to protecting the environment as the City continues to grow and climate change impacts intensify.	Several of the strategic themes support age-friendly planning including making local food available and developing accessible and equitable transportation options.
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023 - 2027)	The <i>Richmond Hill Multi-Year Accessibility Plan</i> details the City's progress and commitments to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers for persons with disabilities and outlines how the City will continue to meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).	The AODA sets detailed standards for the provision of accessible: customer services, information and communications, employment, transportation, and the design of public spaces.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan (2023)	The City's first <i>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan</i> outlines the City's overall commitment to "build a strong sense of belonging", and to embed the City's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in all municipal roles and services.	Actions are organized by four areas: Public Commitment and Accountability, Personal and Attitudinal Change, Systemic Service Improvements, Continuous Improvements. Actions include a range of tactics aimed at increasing municipal accountability, capacity, and monitoring over a five-year time frame.
Transportation Master Plan Update (2023)	The City is updating its <i>Transportation Master Plan</i> (TMP) to inform the future for all travel modes within Richmond Hill.	The TMP is aiming to provide a robust framework for a well-connected, sustainable, multi-modal, and inclusive transportation network for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users).

Appendix B: Older Adult Services in Richmond Hill (Community & Non-Profit)

Adapt of Ontario

Adapt provides accessible transportation for seniors using mobility aids and people with physical or mental disabilities for a fee.

Affinity Health Transportation Services

Affinity Health offers Richmond Hill a broad range of transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities including arranging transportation for caregivers and friends or family on public transportation or using a rideshare service.

Bayview Hill Community Centre and Pool

Bayview Hill Community Centre and Pool has a designated 55+ space which is provided in partnership with Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association. The pool and other recreation activities for 55+ are integrated with other multi-purpose spaces.

Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association

Carefirst is a health and support service for older adults and adults with disabilities. Carefirst supports people to remain independent through a range of services, including adult day programming, home care services, bereavement support, Lifeline telephone services, chronic disease management, caregiver support and educational programming, elder abuse helpline, respite care, transportation services, and the senior's wellness club. Carefirst Seniors has a partnership with the City of Richmond Hill and delivers programs for older adults in designated program rooms at the Bayview Hill Community Centre.

Community and Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS)

CHATS provides home care and community services to older adults and their caregivers. CHATS offers a range of services including adult day programs and social and wellness programs such as community meals, outreach programs, social events, and cultural programming for newcomers from the South Asian community. CHATS also offers transportation services and in-home services to ensure older adults can live independently at home for longer. In-home supports include Meals on Wheels, personal care, assistance with activities of daily living, and 24/7 on-call supports.

Circle of Care

Circle of Care is part of Sinai Health and is a non-profit home and community care provider in the GTA. Circle of Care offers a range of senior's programming including personal support, hospice care, friendly visitors, meals on wheels, transportation, social activities and groups, exercise and fall prevention classes, and adult day programs.

Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Program

As part of a pilot, the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program aims to keep individuals who are waiting for long-term care safe and stable in their own homes for as long as possible. Community paramedics can offer 24/7 access to non-emergency medical needs and provide ongoing monitoring for changing or escalating conditions to prevent or reduce the likelihood of emergency incidents.

Hill House Community Hospice

Hill House Hospice provide a home-like alternative to institutional care and in-home care for those who are in the final stage of a terminal illness.

Home and Community Care Support Services

Home and Community Care Support Services are publicly funded organizations that coordinate long-term care placements and access to nursing services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy services, speech-language pathology services, dietetics, pharmacy services, diagnostics and laboratory services, respiratory therapy, and social work services. Services can be delivered in home and community or in long-term care home settings. There are no charges associated with accessing Home and Community Care Support Services.

Hope House Community Hospice

Hope House Community Hospice is a volunteer agency offering service and supports to those and their families who are bereaved. Services provided include support groups, education sessions and Wellness programs such as yoga, meditation, and walking-groups.

Long-Term Care Centres

Richmond Hill has several long-term care homes for individuals with significant health or cognitive impairments who need access to 24-hour access to nursing care and supervision. Richmond Hill has five long-term care homes that include primary care, nursing care, supportive with activities of daily living and a variety of therapies, including: Elginwood Long-Term Care Centre, Langstaff Square Care Community, Mackenzie Health Long-Term Care Home, Mariann Home, and Mon Sheong Foundation Long-Term Care Centre.

Memory Lane Home Living Inc.

Memory Lane Home Living provides a home environment for women with dementia who can no longer be alone in their own homes but are sufficiently independent to participate in the management of their own life. Women are provided with 24/7 supports and are supported to participate in regular activities to live well in the community.

M.L. McConaghy Centre

The M.L. McConaghy Centre is Richmond Hill's standalone activity centre for adults 55 years of age and older. Programs and activities include yoga, seniors' fitness classes, language lessons, musical instrument classes, choir, art programs. The Centre also hosts special community events for older adults including health clinics, dinners, snooker tournaments, and other workshops.

Oakridges Community Centre and Pool

Oakridges Community Centre and Pool has a designated 55+ space for the delivery of City programs and activities. The pool and other recreation activities for adults 55+ are integrated with other multi-purpose spaces.

Reena Homes – David and Luba Smuschkowitz Elder Home

As part of its residential services, Reena Homes provides 10 supportive independent living apartment units for seniors with developmental disabilities in Richmond Hill. Seniors can have access to 24/7 staff supports and services depending on capacity and specific care needs.

Richmond Hill Mobility Accessibility Foundation

Offers assistive devices and a range of activities and programs that remove barriers so that everyone can enjoy life to the fullest in Richmond Hill.

Richmond Hill Recreation & Culture Activities

The City offers a variety of registered and drop-in recreation programs to adults 55+ at five different community centres. Programs include Fitness classes, aquatics, fall prevention, board and card games, badminton, crafts, pickleball and table tennis.

Social Services Network

The Social Services Network (SSN) serves diverse seniors living in the GTA and York Region. SSN works with community partners, funders, and caregivers to ensure seniors feel integrated in their community. The SSN offers a range of social services aimed at reducing isolation and social exclusion. SSN also provides community training workshops to ensure seniors can safely age in place.

Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care

The community-center provides counselling, education, case management, group and social activities and educational workshops for caregivers and offers information and resources on aging issues for older adults within the community. The program is aimed at providing services to allow individuals to live at home. Programs include Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, Chronic Pain Self-Management and Diabetes Pain Management Program.

York Region Seniors Housing

York Region subsidizes five apartment buildings for adults 55+ in Richmond Hill. Subsidized housing is offered to low-to-moderate income seniors who may not be able to afford market rent. Rent for seniors housing is calculated at 30 percent of the total household's income. Seniors living in York Region housing are expected to be able to live independently and be able to perform the essential activities of day-to-day living or with the aid of a support service such as home care.

York Regional Transit – Mobility On-Request

Mobility On-Request is a ride-sharing service that allows adults 65+ to request travel services on-demand within a 5 km radius of their home. Transportation services can include trips to the grocery store, doctors' offices, pharmacy, or a community or social event.

Information about each of these organizations was determined through their respective websites.