

**City of Victoria**  
**Seniors' Action Plan 2020:**  
***Roadmap for an Age-Friendly***  
***Community***

*November 2020*

## **Preamble**

Today we often hear reports of how the aging population is an economic drain, but this narrative ignores the enormous positive impact that seniors have on the economy and on the social ties that bind us together. Seniors have much to offer the community, including a wealth of skills and expertise and a lifetime of experience.

The City of Victoria Seniors' Action Plan 2020 is informed by the following values:

- Respect
- Inclusion
- Equity
- Diversity
- Interdependence among generations

This Action Plan is also informed by the World Health Organization's (WHO) description of Age-Friendly Communities:

- *"In an age-friendly community, policies, programs, services and infrastructure related to the physical and social environment are designed to enable older people to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate and contribute to society in a meaningful way.*
- *An age-friendly city takes into account the biological, psychological, behavioural, economic, social and environmental factors that operate over the course of a person's life to determine health and well-being in later years.*
- *An age-friendly community benefits people of all ages.*
- *Secure neighbourhoods are safe for children, youth, women and older adults.*
- *Families experience less worry and stress when their older relations have the services and supports they need.*
- *Barrier free buildings and streets enhance the mobility and independence of both younger and older persons living with disabilities.*
- *The whole community benefits from the participation of older persons in volunteer or paid work and civic activities.*
- *Making cities age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic aging."*

The WHO recommends building Age-Friendly Communities within the following topic areas:

1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Respect & Social Inclusion
5. Social Participation
6. Communication & Information
7. Civic Participation & Employment
8. Community Support & Health Services

Guided by these values, objectives and topic areas, the City of Victoria Seniors' Task Force prepared the Recommendations in this Action Plan for the City of Victoria.

## **Process**

In 2019 the City of Victoria established a Seniors' Task Force to develop a Seniors' Action Plan, enlisting the wisdom of community members, specialists, seniors-serving agencies and other stakeholders around the following question: "How can the City of Victoria promote healthy seniors and positive aging?"

Representatives from the following organizations participated in the work of the Seniors' Task Force:

- Cook Street Village Activity Centre
- Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
- James Bay Community Project
- James Bay New Horizons Society
- Our Place Seniors' Group
- Silver Threads Service
- Vancouver Island Health Authority
- University of Victoria Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health
- Victoria Community Association Network
- Victoria Disability Resource Centre
- Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Members-at-large
- City of Victoria

In the autumn of 2019 members of the Seniors' Task Force developed a draft Seniors' Action Plan. A series of public engagement events were then convened in January and February 2020 to receive input on the draft Seniors' Action Plan, including workshops at the James Bay New Horizons Centre, the Cook Street Village Activity Centre, the Silver Threads Centre and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. A Town Hall Meeting was convened at Victoria City Hall. Subsequently, members of the Task Force revised the recommendations based on this public input and on the experiences of seniors during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring and summer of 2020.

The City of Victoria Seniors' Action Plan 2020 is the product of this collaborative community process.

### ***How to view this report:***

These recommendations have been sorted by priority however the task force recognized there are budget implications for which need to be accounted. Some of the recommendations are the jurisdiction of the City, and others are for advocacy. Some represent the current situation with COVID, and some will be long-term issues.

## Recommendations

### 1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

*Does the natural and built environment help older persons get around easily and safely in the community and encourage active community participation?*

Action Items	Jurisdiction
<b>1.1. Public washrooms</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Retrofit washrooms at City-funded seniors centres first, and other civic buildings to accommodate mobility aids, gender neutrality and other accessibility needs</li> </ul>	City / City-funded seniors centres
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide more accessible public universal design washrooms, with particular consideration for Beacon Hill Park and downtown</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase the number of accessible portable toilets at public events. Add as a requirement to Special Event Permit</li> </ul>	City
<b>1.2. Public seating</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Install benches that are easier to get out of (e.g. add armrests) and review placement for accessibility and grouping for socializing. Consider materials like wood, as metal gets too hot and too cold</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide more benches in village cores and downtown</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider adding "talk to me" program with some benches</li> </ul>	City
<b>1.3. Accessibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Require wheelchair ramps and automatic door buttons to access privately owned commercial buildings and public facilities</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate for the improved flow in stores by keeping products out of the aisles</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to other levels of government to revisit Building Code for accessibility</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<b>1.4. Lighting</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure lighting is adequate for accessibility and safety. Lamp standards should be double-sided to shine on roadway and sidewalk. Include consideration of full spectrum lighting</li> </ul>	City
<b>1.5. Other recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add water stations in parks and major gathering places for refillable water bottles</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build new facilities and leverage existing facilities for inter-generational needs</li> </ul>	City

## **2. Transportation**

*Can older persons travel where they want to go in the community, conveniently and safely?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>2.1. Sidewalks</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Repair/maintain sidewalks to reduce tripping hazards and remove mobility obstacles including greenery extending over sidewalks. Add wider and smoother curb cuts</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure sidewalks are the minimum accessible width</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build visual aids into sidewalks e.g. textured surfaces to assist the visually impaired</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create Sidewalk Mindfulness public outreach program. Include guidelines for wheeled pedestrians, and benefits of high visibility clothing</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<b>2.2. Crosswalks</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase crossing time for timed crosswalks. Test different corners with people of different abilities. Improve visibility at crosswalks</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add medians in the middle of roads to provide safe space to wait where appropriate</li> </ul>	City
<b>2.3. Transit</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an awareness program for seniors transportation services - transit pass, Handy Dart, taxi vouchers etc. Promote BC Transit Travel Training program</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate for increased Handy Dart funding to meet current and future needs</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to the province to review eligibility requirements for low income seniors for transit passes. Advocate for a second level income test for annual bus pass program</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to BC Transit to improve seating for lumbar support in the reserved seating section of the bus, and increase wheelchair accessible spaces (add more straps)</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add shelters, (solar) lighting and/or seating at bus stops including a review of locations</li> </ul>	City / BC Transit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an engaging handout using humour, on being a responsible transit rider</li> </ul>	City / BC Transit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate for better and more frequent service from BC Transit</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<b>2.4. Other recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review streets for potholes in areas of new construction</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to stores selling e-bikes, scooters and other e-mobility aids to seniors to provide education on safety and rules of the road</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add electric charging stations for e-mobility aids at libraries, community centres, parks and other civic facilities</li> </ul>	City

### **3. Housing**

*Do older persons have housing that is safe and affordable and which allows them to stay independent as their needs change?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>3.1. Ensure Housing Policy addresses economic, physical accessibility and social/emotional requirements for seniors</b>	City
<b>3.1.a. Economic</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a wider range of affordable housing options through zoning and other tools. Look at other countries to learn how they manage public and private housing</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review definition of affordable housing</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage partnerships and incentives between government and private developers to build more purpose-built affordable rentals for seniors and Indigenous Old Ones</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to the province for a review of seniors housing subsidy policies to make them more accessible</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to the province to add rent control on seniors rental housing. Rent increases are more than pension increases</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use Housing First approach / provide financial literacy programs for seniors</li> </ul>	Partner
<b>3.1.b. Physical Accessibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a program to retrofit houses with ramps and other accessibility items to enable quality of life and more aging in place</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate that new builds should automatically include accessibility for mobility aids</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate for the creation of transition homes for previously unhoused seniors being discharged from hospital until permanent housing can be found</li> </ul>	Advocacy
<b>3.1.c. Social/Emotional</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce a house-sharing program matching older people living alone with housing insecure people</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build inter-generational housing with cultural-based community spaces and kitchens</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support more pet friendly rentals</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expand supportive housing options for seniors with mental illness</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expand wet/low barrier housing for vulnerable seniors</li> </ul>	Partner
<b>3.2. Other recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a dementia-friendly village with street level homes, stores, lanes and walkways</li> </ul>	Partner

## **4. Respect & Social Inclusion**

*Are public services, media, commercial services, faith communities and civil society respectful of the diversity of needs among older persons and willing to accommodate them in all aspects of society?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>4.1. Pursue Age Friendly policies</b> and connect with existing World Health Organization (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Community Network	City / Partner
<b>4.2. Create a public campaign on Ageism</b> - what it is and the impact on the city. Incorporate age-positive messaging in advertising	City / Partner
<b>4.3. Re-establish a staff function in the City to oversee seniors issues and programs</b>	City
<b>4.4. Other recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote Emergency Preparedness program training for seniors (e.g. hard of hearing, visually impaired, mobility and other disabilities)</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add captioning services and loop systems at city events</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an Indigenous Advisory position within the City with consideration of appointing Elders in Residence</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a Cultural Competency awareness and practices program with our Indigenous population / host Indigenous Cultural Competency Training for City Council and staff. Repeat the same with our immigrant population</li> </ul>	City / Partner/ ICA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expand Seniors Reassurance program across the city (daily calls to seniors who live alone)</li> </ul>	James Bay New Horizons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create space for outreach workers in public libraries to help seniors access the services they need</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improve programs to promote social inclusion, including funding to promote active socialization between neighbours</li> </ul>	All stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make Victoria more welcoming and accessible for people who are hard of hearing and/or visually impaired. Review noise bylaw in context of city soundscapes</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review and implement dementia-friendly guidelines from Alzheimer Society of Canada and World Health Organization</li> </ul>	City / Partner

## **5. Social Participation**

*Do older persons have opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful social networks in their neighbourhoods? Are the needs and preferences of older persons considered in planning by a diverse range of agencies and institutions?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>5.1. Seniors Centres Operations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review core funding and operating agreements of City-owned seniors centres to sustain and enhance operations both during and after the pandemic</li> </ul>	City
<b>5.2. Seniors Programming</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop accessible and diverse programs to build stronger connections between seniors and Indigenous Old Ones</li> </ul>	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diversify outreach through expanded partnerships to deliver more neighbourhood-based programs at seniors rental housing facilities</li> </ul>	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop programs that focus on reducing isolation of men and LGBTQ2S+ e.g. Men's Sheds, carving sheds</li> </ul>	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider the distinct abilities and capacities of seniors when creating programs</li> </ul>	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support organizations to develop partnerships to deliver multiple services e.g. health, food security, housing etc.</li> </ul>	Partners
<b>5.3. Transportation Needs</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expand transportation programs to get seniors to/from specific activities and events. Examine strategies to provide mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers</li> </ul>	Partners
<b>5.4. Other Recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage more inclusive age-friendly performances at public events</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purchase a new bus for use at the Crystal Pool prioritized for the existing seniors excursions program</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase intergenerational engagement by encouraging youth volunteerism in a variety of seniors organizations</li> </ul>	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a Social Access Pass or Gold Card program for lower income seniors to increase access to museums, galleries, music events etc.</li> </ul>	City/Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage companion services for seniors</li> </ul>	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordinate seasonal gatherings and annual workshop of seniors/elder based organizations in the city (post COVID)</li> </ul>	Partners



## **6. Communication & Information**

*Are older persons aware of the diverse range of programs and services available within their community? Is information readily available, appropriately designed and delivered to meet the needs of older persons?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>6.1. Ensure equitable access for all communications</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review Best Practice for font, size, and use of graphics in publications, signage and wayfinding. Use illustrations to assist with comprehension. Ensure all communication takes into account visual and hearing impairments and consider translation services for other prominent languages in Victoria</li> </ul>	City / partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make the City website more user friendly, for example font size and development of a seniors portal</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Send print copies of major city documents to seniors centres, community centres, public libraries and other public facilities</li> </ul>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strengthen information dissemination support at the seniors centres e.g. encourage development of a section in the Blue Book for low and no-cost seniors services</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enhance information dissemination strategies to seniors and encourage such things like the revival of a cable tv community bulletin board, poster boards, mail notices etc.</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to the CRD to update their Seniors Asset Map</li> </ul>	Advocate
<b>6.2. Accommodate additional needs for access</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the development of training programs for volunteer coaches to help navigate seniors programs e.g. transportation, health care</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invite the restaurant association to create a list of restaurants who cater to sound sensitive people, quiet dining times and seniors tables</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify and support partners to advocate for seniors needing extra help, especially with paperwork and computers</li> </ul>	Advocacy/ City

## **7. Civic Participation & Employment**

*Do older persons have opportunities to participate in community decision making? Do older persons have opportunities to contribute their experience and skills to the community in paid or unpaid work?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>7.1. Seniors Oversight at City Hall</b>	City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an inclusive and diverse (including Indigenous Old Ones, immigrants, and other marginalized populations) City of Victoria Seniors Advisory Committee to provide oversight and a lens on seniors issues</li> </ul>	
<b>7.2. Elections</b>	City / Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support seniors in the election process e.g. create signage at polling stations at eye level for people in scooters, directional lines on floors, organize drop-off points (seniors centres) for ballots etc.</li> </ul>	City / Partner
<b>7.3. Validate and promote the experience and skills of seniors</b>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage the creation of a skills bank of expertise, experience and skills to support volunteering and mentoring</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the development of a volunteer and employment fair for seniors</li> </ul>	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage the creation of a mentor program to connect retirees with young people in similar industries</li> </ul>	Partner

## **8. Community Support & Health Services**

*Do older persons have access to social and health services they need to stay healthy and independent?*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
<b>8.1. Establish a joint committee with Island Health to review new initiatives, and share ideas, programs and concerns</b>	City
• Create a Lunch 'n Learn program on social determinants of health	City / Partner
• Share existing and new initiatives amongst different levels and areas of government, and external agencies serving seniors	City / Partner
<b>8.2. Food security</b>	City / Partner
• Review food security measures and programs to ensure seniors have access to nutrition programs, and healthy affordable food including access to stores, delivery services and other reliable food sources	City / Partner
• Add more community gardens with accessible beds	City / Partner
<b>8.3. Share recommendations from Task Force public engagement with Island Health for improved access to health and homecare services</b>	City / Partner
• Pursue partnerships for awareness of advanced care directives and other end-of-life preparation (e.g. wills)	Partner
• Advocate for the creation of incentives to attract and retain physicians and nurse practitioners to Victoria	Advocacy
• Advocate for the reduction of financial barriers for dental care, pharmaceuticals, mobility, visual and hearing aids and complementary health providers (i.e. naturopath, physiotherapy, acupuncture etc.)	Advocacy
• Advocate for the introduction of homecare visits by health personnel, mobile clinics and a seniors-only block of time at walk-in clinics	Advocacy
• Advocate for the provision of safe sex brochures and facilitated workshops on healthy relationships in the senior years	Advocacy
<b>8.4. Other recommendations</b>	
• Increase access to recreation services by seniors including reviewing Life Pass criteria	City
• Advocate for the creation of a safe place for seniors who are being abused, like battered women centres	Advocacy
• Advocate for improved access and create more long-term care facilities for lower and middle income seniors, including options for improving affordability through the rezoning process	City / Advocacy
• Advocate and acknowledge the additional vulnerability and ensure support services are available to LGBTQ2S+ seniors	Advocacy