

Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Plan

VERSION 1.1



Acknowledgements

We acknowledge that this project was conducted within the traditional territory of the Syilx people of the Okanagan Nation.

Our work was made possible by BC Healthy Communities' Age-friendly Communities program and the Public Health Agency of Canada's Dementia Strategic Fund, which provided grants to the City of Vernon.



We acknowledge the members of our **Project Advisory Committee:**

Catherine Lord
Chairperson
Vernon Seniors Action Network

Pam Myers
Executive Director
Nexus BC

Mariam Larson
Consulting Gerontologist

For More Information Contact

Planning & Community Services
Email: planning@vernon.ca
Phone: 250-550-3634

We appreciate the support of the following community partners **Community Partners:**

Nexus BC Community Resource Centre is a community based, non-profit and charitable organization that offers programs, projects and services that serve and support seniors, vulnerable adults, jobs seekers, newcomers to Canada, and volunteers. Their mission is to connect people with resources that support a healthy community.

Vernon Seniors Action Network (VSAN) is a coalition of community representatives working together to share information and resources, and address priority issues that impact the health and wellness of Vernon seniors.

Interior Health works and partners for the health and wellbeing of everyone in the BC Interior.



This initiative has been possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed therein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Addressing Dementia Stigma in Vernon

On April 11, 2023, Council approved an innovative, 10-month project to address stigma around dementia and enrich our dementia-friendly community planning with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Dementia Strategic Fund. This project connects our city to our national dementia strategy: [A Dementia Strategy for Canada: Together We Aspire](#). The two main goals of the project are to reduce stigma around dementia and foster an inclusive and dementia-friendly city. The ideas and outcomes from this project have been included in this Plan, including the [Dementia-inclusive planning and design guidelines](#) published by Simon Fraser University’s Department of Gerontology’s DEMSCAPE project. Interior Health, the Vernon Seniors Action Network (VSAN) and Nexus BC were key partners in the implementation of this project. For more information, see our publication “Co-Creating the Dementia-Friendly Community: A Playbook for Local Governments”.

Table of Contents

How & When to Use this Plan	4
Introduction	
Age-Friendly Community	5
Dementia-Friendly Communities . . .	6
Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Goals	8
The Challenge.	9
Purpose	10
Planning Process	10
Strategic Directions	
City Places & Spaces	12
Housing & Transportation	15
Community & Health Services . . .	18
Communication & Information. . .	22
Social Inclusion	25
Recommendations	29
Plan Monitoring.	30
Conclusion	31

How and When to Use this Plan

The Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Plan is a supplement to the City's Official Community Plan. It focuses on meeting the needs of an important group of people in our community: older adults, people living with dementia and their care partners, and residents with accessibility needs. The term "age-friendly" is used within this Plan as short form to refer to accessibility and inclusion more broadly. In some cases, this Plan will need to be considered alongside plans for other demographics in our community.

The Plan provides policies and guidelines for the Planning & Community Services Division, and other divisions within the City responsible for improving and maintaining public spaces such as community buildings, streets and parks. There are also ideas and actions to make Vernon a more welcoming place for older adults and to enhance social inclusion, health and well-being.

In this Plan you will find the voices of community members, key statistics and information, and a set of recommendations. These are intended to help all divisions of the City bring age- and dementia-friendly considerations into the design and delivery of City services to more effective communications and engagement.



Introduction

The number of seniors living in Vernon is on the rise and this trend is expected to continue. Older adults are now a larger proportion of the population. This Plan was developed to ensure that the City of Vernon understands and accommodates the needs of seniors and people living with dementia and their caregivers as the community grows. Age- and dementia-friendly community planning is international in scope and based on the research and leadership of major organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Alzheimer's Disease International and the Alzheimer's Society of Canada.

Age-friendly communities empower seniors to live safely, enjoy good health, and stay actively connected with others. These communities value and respect older adults for their skills, abilities, and contributions. Age-friendly features, programs, and policies benefit individuals of all ages and abilities, making the city more inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Age-Friendly Communities

The WHO has developed an age-friendly community framework with eight interconnected domains:

- Civic Participation & Employment
- Communication & Information
- Community Support & Health Services
- Housing
- Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
- Respect & Social Inclusion
- Social Participation
- Transportation & Mobility

The City of Vernon has adapted the WHO framework to identify barriers and develop policies and recommendations to address them.

Dementia-Friendly Communities

Dementia is a broad term for a set of symptoms that may include memory loss, mood changes, and difficulty with thinking, problem solving and language. Dementia can be caused by strokes or a number of different diseases that change the function of the brain. While Alzheimer's disease is most common, there are many other types of dementia. All are progressive and symptoms become more severe over time.

Dementia affects everyone differently. What is most important to remember is that each person's dementia journey is unique.



Dementia-friendly communities are places where people living with dementia and their care partners are respected, included and supported. These communities have accessible physical and social environments that support people living with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible. An important part of a dementia-friendly community is education to promote understanding within the community and reduce social stigma and isolation for those living with dementia and their care partners. This work connects more broadly to neuro-inclusion and the creation of mind-friendly environments in the City.

There are four essential elements needed to support an age- and dementia-friendly community, as shown in the diagram below (adapted from Alzheimer's Disease International).



Dementia is not something that affects everyone as they age and aging does not cause dementia. However, the number of people living with dementia is rising along with the number of seniors. This is due, in part, to people experiencing more health-related, environmental, or lifestyle risk factors as they age. According to the World Health Organization, after 60 years of age, 5 to 8% of people will live with dementia at some point. Although they are different, aging and living with dementia share common challenges with inclusion and accessibility and that is why this Plan contains strategies and actions for both.



Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Goals

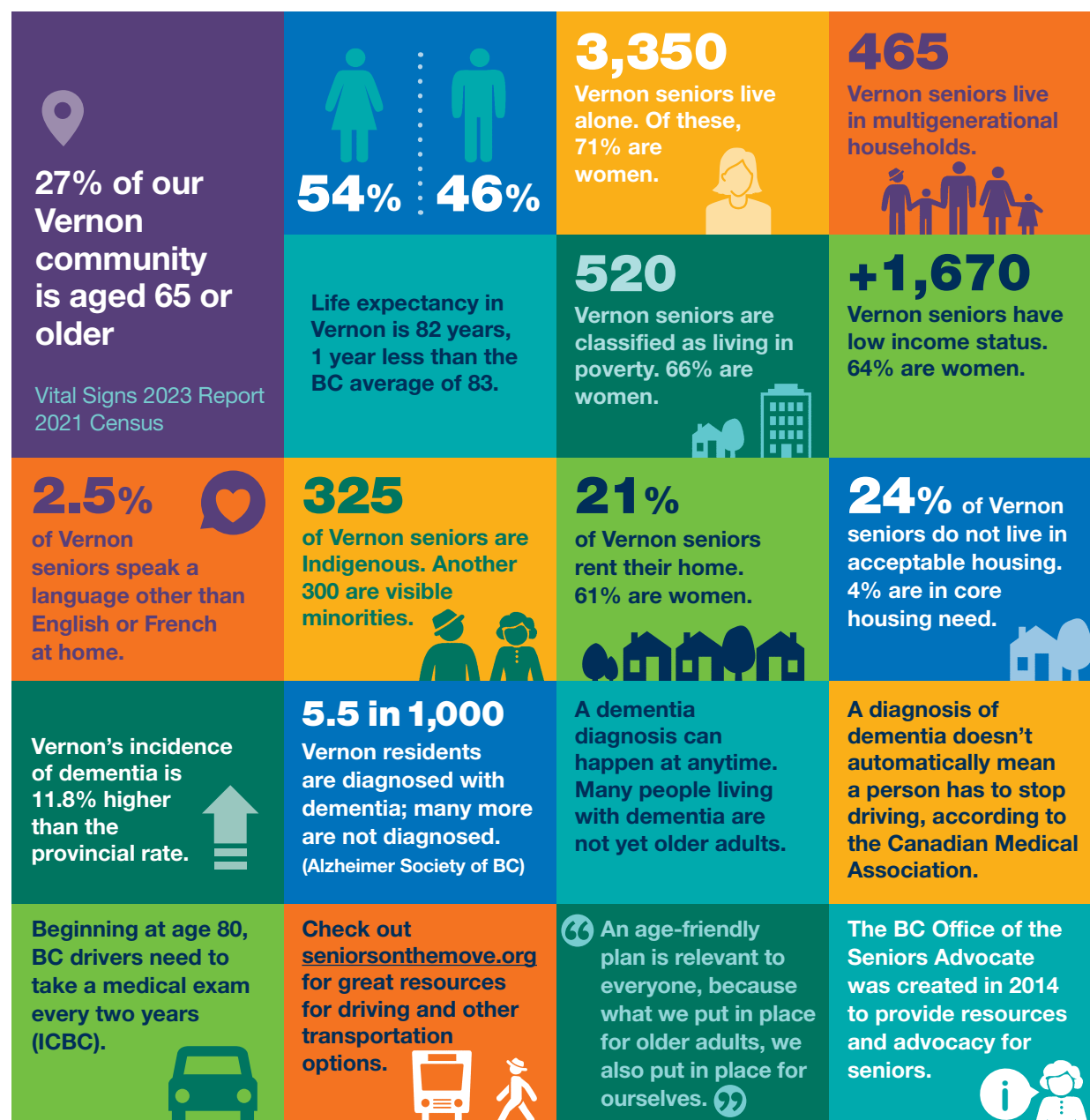


The City of Vernon commits to:

- 1 Creating welcoming, safe, accessible and age-friendly community buildings, public spaces, streets, parks, trails and active transportation pathways
- 2 Promoting social inclusion for older adults and people living with dementia and expanding opportunities for better health, recreation, social connections, and learning
- 3 Ensuring that public consultation opportunities are accessible and inclusive of older adults and people living with dementia and their care partners, and supporting their needs and communication and engagement preferences
- 4 Partnering with community organizations on age- and dementia-friendly city initiatives and promoting the wider adoption of these initiatives within the community
- 5 Collaborating with partners such as the Vernon Seniors Action Network, the Alzheimer's Society of British Columbia and other organizations serving older adults and people living with dementia and their care partners in implementing this Plan

The Challenge

Older adults are living longer than ever before. In Vernon, many older adults have a high quality of life which allows them enjoy their hobbies and provide valuable community services. However, some older adults in Vernon face significant challenges with affordable housing, home-based care, safe and reliable transportation, and access to needed health services. In particular, seniors renting their homes and living on fixed incomes are disproportionately impacted by the increasing cost of living for housing, food, mobility and medical equipment.



Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to strengthen community partnerships, programs and policies to improve the lives of older adults and people living with dementia in the City of Vernon. It focuses primarily on City roles and responsibilities, while including ideas and initiatives that require shared responsibility for implementation. The actions outlined in this Plan will ensure that all Vernon residents living with dementia and their care partners are included, supported and valued and continue to be active and engaged with their community. Finally, the Plan recognizes that older adults and people living with dementia are a diverse group in terms of age range, race, gender identity and sexual orientation and income. Honoring this diversity, the Plan strives to promote dignity, respect, social inclusion and cultural safety through its recommendations and the process of implementation.

Planning Process

This Age- and Dementia-Friendly Action Plan began with a participatory assessment of the social and physical environment for older adults and people living with dementia in Vernon. This was an opportunity for the community to highlight initiatives already in place, and identify priorities, needs and gaps that require further attention and support.

The community participated in the assessment from September 2022 to February 2023, and throughout the planning phase from March 2023 to September 2023. Additionally, City staff and community service providers participated in training and consultation on dementia stigma reduction and dementia-friendly planning from October 2023 to March 2024.

Altogether, community members and City personnel shared several hundred ideas and recommendations about what is working and what is needed to make Vernon more age- and dementia-friendly.

Strategic Directions

The Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Plan has five strategic directions (see inset below).

Each strategic direction begins with a vision and objectives outlining what an age- and dementia-friendly community should look and feel like. This is followed by a summary of what our community believes is already working well in Vernon. Finally, there is a summary of what the community feels is needed to make Vernon more age- and dementia-friendly, presented as development policy guidelines and actions for the City to implement as part of ongoing service delivery and program development.

5

STRATEGIC
DIRECTIONS

- 1 City Places & Spaces
- 2 Housing & Transportation
- 3 Community Support & Health Services
- 4 Communication & Information
- 5 Social Inclusion



1 City Places & Spaces

Vision

Public places and spaces in Vernon are age- and dementia-friendly, accessible, safe and welcoming. Being able to move freely through and within public buildings has a major impact on the mobility and independence of people with disabilities and older adults.

Access to parks, trails and other natural spaces provides recreation and leisure opportunities. Accessibility encourages people to come and enjoy public places and spaces, enhancing their health, quality of life and their ability to contribute to their community.



Objectives

- Places are well-lit, easy to find, and easy to navigate
- There are benches and other places to sit and rest
- There are quiet spaces available for refuge
- Public washrooms are available, accessible, and clean
- There are signs and landmarks to help people find their way around
- Signs in parks and public buildings are visible and easy to understand
- Parks and trails are easy to find and get to using public transportation
- People who use mobility aids can safely access parks, trails and pathways. These are designed to be even and free of obstacles

What the community feels is working well:

- Many parks and outdoor spaces, including Civic Memorial Park and Lakeshore Park
- Many active transportation and connected multi-use paths and trails
- Excellent spaces and programs at Halina Centre, Schubert Centre and the Friendship Centre
- The City's Special Parking Permit program for mobility impaired users
- New investments in sidewalk rehabilitation and enhanced snow-clearing service

City Places and Spaces **Development Policies**

- 1.1 Designate seniors areas and corridors within the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan to ensure a holistic approach to planning for seniors' needs.
 - 1.2 Prioritize accessibility in the design of the public realm, parks and streets, which may include:
 - a. Accessible sidewalks
 - b. Safe pedestrian crossings
 - c. Safe parking and drop-off areas
 - d. Accessible seating and benches
 - e. Shaded or covered resting and gathering places
 - f. Easy-to-access and accessible public toilets
 - g. Safe ground treatment and paving
 - h. Gentle and clearly marked grade changes
 - i. Adequate lighting
 - 1.3 Build landmarks and placemaking features, including public art, into urban spaces, especially within the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan area, to assist with wayfinding and navigation.
 - 1.4 Encourage new developments to create distinctive building frontages with clearly marked entrances and exits to make wayfinding easier for people living with dementia.
 - 1.5 Improve signage in public parks
- and buildings with clear maps, symbols and landmarks to help with wayfinding and navigation. Place signage at lower levels so that people who use mobility aids can see them more easily.
- 1.6 Ensure that crosswalks are regularly maintained and visible 24 hours/day.
 - 1.7 Provide enhanced cues in parking areas to help people remember where they parked. For example, designate areas by colour or use naming protocols such as local animals, flowers, or trees.



Photo Credit: Cody Hammer

“ I would love to see more parks like Lakeshore Park with flat easy access and chairs available. This is one of the places in Vernon my partner and I are able to enjoy together. ”



City Places and Spaces **City Actions**

1. Design new civic facilities, parks and public spaces using universal design and accessibility principles, such as Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification.
2. Retrofit existing civic facilities and redevelop parks and public spaces using universal design and accessibility principles.
3. Increase the number of accessible, clean and safe public washrooms.
4. Enhance walkability by working towards a linked multi-use trail and pathway system connecting the City Centre to neighbourhoods, parks and other community recreational amenities.
5. Ensure multi-use paths are graded, paved, and, where needed, separated from higher speed users, so they are accessible to people of all abilities, including seniors and people living with dementia.
6. Ensure wide, paved, low grade, continuous and accessible looped walking paths in major parks suitable for wheelchairs, walkers, and individuals with mobility needs.
7. Enhance safety and security in outdoor parks, public washrooms and public areas.
8. Work with the Regional District of the North Okanagan to create accessible trail signage that indicates the terrain and difficulty of trail for all users.
9. Increase the number of accessible pedestrian signals and improve access by ensuring that the sidewalk extends all the way to the controls for a person in a wheelchair to reach.
10. Prioritize managing snow and ice in key areas where seniors need access. Increasing snow clearing in commercial areas, bus stops and from sidewalks to plowed street level. Improve sidewalk and ramp maintenance.
11. Highlight and increase safety features and options in community spaces and buildings and during community events, such as safe places for people to get help when they are confused, feeling unwell or needing quiet or rest.



“ Fear of being different can lead to not going out of the house, to social isolation. A welcoming community is a place where people can safely be themselves. ”



2 Housing & Transportation

Vision

Age- and dementia-friendly housing and transportation are readily available, accessible and affordable in Vernon. An age-friendly community includes support services that enable people to remain at home in the community as they age, such as housekeeping, meals, and activities, as well as nursing and other medical care. This can also allow partners to stay together instead of being separated in long-term care. Accessible, affordable and on demand transportation makes it possible for older adults and people living with dementia to participate in the social, cultural, and recreational life of our community. This decreases the risks of isolation and increases options for meaningful social interaction and physical well-being.



Objectives

- Seniors can age in the community for as long as possible—and can move to safe smaller size or supportive housing if needed
- Housing is near shops and services within walkable neighbourhoods
- A variety of affordable and accessible transportation options and support is available to get people where they want to go
- Transit stops have shelters and benches that allow shade and rest

What the community feels is working well:

- Rental housing and seniors' residences close to services and the City Centre
- City of Vernon's Housing Action Plan, which includes incentives and support for subsidized housing projects for lower income older adults and their families
- Coordinated action by a local Housing Action Team of non-profit housing providers, facilitated by the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan
- New zoning bylaw changes that permit secondary suites and carriage houses across the City in detached as well as semi-detached dwellings
- Public transit service increases and the HandyDART program
- City investments in active and accessible transportation, paths and trails
- The City's Special Parking Permit program for mobility impaired users

“ We need more transit!
Wheelchair users are
very socially isolated
and limited by the
availability of
HandyDART and taxi
costs. ”



Housing and Transportation Development Policies

- 2.1 Encourage mixed use residential and commercial development to build complete and walkable neighbourhoods, with a focus on Development District 1 and City Centre Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- 2.2 Encourage and incentivize the inclusion of studio and 1 bedroom units in subsidized and market rental housing projects, including those designated for older adults.
- 2.3 Encourage and incentivize the inclusion of accessible and/or adaptable housing units in rental housing projects.
- 2.4 Encourage and incentivize the inclusion of indoor and outdoor social gathering and amenity space in seniors' rental housing projects, accommodating cultural needs.
- 2.5 Develop and implement policy to ensure that low income seniors are not displaced from rental housing or lose access to housing through land redevelopment projects.
- 2.6 Support innovative seniors supportive living projects such as those with an intergenerational housing model or a dementia-friendly village.



Housing and Transportation City Actions

1. Increase awareness of housing resources and services that can help people age in the community, such as rent subsidies for low income seniors, e.g. BC Housing's Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER).
2. Work with the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan to monitor the housing needs of low income seniors, availability of subsidized housing designated for seniors, and coordination of seniors waitlisted for subsidized housing.
3. Work with organizations serving seniors to raise awareness of shared living options in which older adults and people living with dementia may choose to share a home with someone contracted to provide ongoing home-based support.
4. Collaborate with Interior Health to maintain and access information on the community's need for senior supportive housing, including assisted living and specialized care for people living with dementia.
5. Ensure that an adequate supply of land, especially near amenities, parks, and transportation is available and designated to meet the anticipated need for seniors supportive housing in the community.
6. Collaborate with BC Transit to improve transportation availability to major parks, beaches, the Recreation Centre, and major senior-serving organizations as well as to explore innovative ways of delivering more frequent and on demand bus service.
7. Advocate for better HandyDART coverage, especially on weekends and evenings.
8. Explore potential models for offering low cost, on demand ride hire and other transportation service in the City Centre.
9. Advocate for free transit for people 70+ and people living with dementia and disabilities.
10. Advocate for increased seniors' transportation services and accessible ride hire services during times when HandyDART services are not available, and out to rural areas not served by transit.

“Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the population living with houselessness, and this is partly because housing costs have increased dramatically but pensions have not.”

3 Community and Health Services

Vision

Age- and dementia-friendly community and health services are relevant, available and affordable. While the City does not provide healthcare services, the City participates in cross-sector collaboration work with community organizations and service providers to improve the well-being of older adults and people living with dementia and by providing recreation and fitness programs and community spaces.

Objectives

- A variety of services are available when and where seniors need them
- Service providers are available and reachable by phone
- Services are affordable and financial support is available if needed
- Service providers are trained to work with seniors and people living with dementia
- Transportation to and from services is available if needed



What the community feels is working well:

- Many great services are provided by senior serving community organizations
- Interior Health Palliative and Hospice Services work well
- Priority police response for high risk missing persons, such as people living with dementia

“ We have a ‘Listening Friends’ support group for carers every two weeks. All are welcome. ”

Trinity United Church (contact for registration)



2SLGBTQIA+ seniors often face challenges when transitioning into residential care, such as discrimination, re-closeting, and social isolation. Residential facilities can address these issues through management, staff training, and programming. Many helpful resources are available on the BC Care Providers Association's [Aging with Pride](#) website. In collaboration with partners, Aging with Pride works with senior living and wellness operators to enhance 2SLGBTQIA+ competency across the sector. [A Home for All: 2SLGBTQI+ Resources for Long-Term Care Homes](#) is a publication from the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, which outlines practices to help move long-term care homes towards becoming safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Local initiatives that create social spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults and people living with dementia can also help. QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver, BC that works to improve queer, trans, and Two-Spirit lives. They have extended their support to seniors in other areas of BC, including the North Okanagan. For more information, check out qmunity.ca.

Community and Health Services **City Actions**

1. Support community-based collaboration in the provision of services for seniors and people living with dementia. Continue partnering with Vernon Seniors Action Network to promote and implement this Plan and actions.
2. Train City staff and community service providers on age- and dementia-friendly principles and practices. Educate people about dementia and how to support people living with dementia to enhance awareness and reduce stigma around dementia in the community.
3. Refer community members to dementia and seniors serving organizations and resources, as well as to care partner support and education for seniors at home and in long-term care.

Age- and Dementia-Friendly Advocacy for Improved Health Care Access

Community members shared a number of ideas about how health services could be improved in Vernon, many of which go above and beyond the role of the City. They would like to see:

- access to a family physician or health clinic
- healthcare hubs to centralize access to a variety of health services
- mobile health clinics for seniors
- more medical labs, with indoor areas to wait until labs open
- more support during transitions from hospital to home
- better respite care for caregivers
- residential care placements close to caregivers and social networks
- more long-term care and assisted living sites
- more care beds and private rooms in long-term care
- equitable home support services for people who use substances
- accessible, affordable rides to appointments, including to Kelowna
- transportation to Kelowna General Hospital from Vernon and area
- transportation to support visitation of family members in healthcare facilities
- free or low cost and priority parking at healthcare facilities
- funding to help low-income seniors obtain medical equipment to help them live well and independently longer, such as dentures, hearing aids, mobility aids and hygiene supplies



Age- and Dementia-Friendly Advocacy for Improved Services

Community members shared a number of ideas on how to improve community services in Vernon, many of which go beyond the City's responsibilities. They would like to see:

- more affordable in-home support such as light housekeeping
- assistance with financial planning, tax preparation, and wills
- education on available financial supports and federal benefit payments

“Nexus does an incredible job, but more community outreach is needed. Organizations like Nexus rely on seniors coming to them. We need to do a better job advocating for and potentially tracking seniors, so they don't fall off the radar in our community.”

“You need coordination of all services so that there is an entry at every door. Remember, there are a lot of us retired workers in this community that can help with this—we've been there.”

“We have seniors who have not filed taxes in multiple years or have not collected funds they are entitled to because they have no assistance or community connections that would flag these items for them. For some, the thought of trying to navigate the system is completely overwhelming so they often don't know they are entitled.”

4 Communication & Information

Vision

Age- and dementia-friendly communication is positive, inclusive and easy to find, read, and understand.

Objectives

- Key information is available on demand at the City website
- Wording and images are respectful of seniors and people living with dementia
- Materials use large print, easy-to-read text and plain language
- Materials are provided in both print and digital formats
- Different languages are used whenever possible
- Help is available for people with limited technology access or abilities



Photo Credit: Deb Treherne

“It’s important to look at an age- and dementia-friendly community as stage-related, not just age-related. One stage might be a period of time when a person is not working outside the home, which would include some seniors but also people from other walks of life who might be interested in services and activities that aren’t job-related.”

What the community feels is working well:

- [Engagevernon.ca](https://engagevernon.ca) provides a central resource for public consultation opportunities
- Citizens can subscribe online for City of Vernon news releases
- Citizens can subscribe online for Council meeting agendas and minutes and live stream meetings
- Great Recreation Guide and communication from the Recreation Centre
- Free tech support and digital literacy programs at the Vernon Branch of the Okanagan Regional Library and with the Literacy Society

Communication & Information **City Actions**

1. Improve the City website for older adult users and those with accessibility needs, including simplified navigation, and a more user friendly mobile interface.
2. Ensure that public consultation opportunities consider the needs of older adults and people living with dementia. Where possible, prioritize face-to-face engagement through workshops and open houses. Share information on consultation opportunities through senior-serving organizations as well as through City communications channels.
3. Consider accessibility needs and provide support and quiet spaces of refuge for people with cognitive, visual, or hearing needs when planning public events.
4. Encourage the creation of news and events boards on City property, including City Hall, and share information about public consultation opportunities and events on posters or in newspapers with an older adult readership.
5. Ensure that digital and print media is plain language, large print and follows best practices for accessibility and user friendliness. Consider translation into other languages as needed.
6. Provide in-person and telephone assistance with accessing and completing forms, especially if they are only available online. Make City telephone numbers publicly available online and provide in person and phone reception services.
7. Ensure that City messaging is inclusive and representative of community members from all walks of life, including older adults and people living with dementia. Show positive, diverse and respectful representations of older adults in all creative and written material. Wherever possible, promote imagery that shows intergenerational connections between seniors and other age categories, and encourage images that show diversity and challenge stereotypes about older adults.



On June 6, 2024, Vernon held its latest Seniors Fair at the Schubert Centre. The Fair offers a celebratory, in-person opportunity for seniors and their family members to recreate, socialize and visit a variety of booths featuring information about various services for seniors in the community — from residential facilities, medical suppliers, non-profit service providers, to Interior Health and City of Vernon representatives. The event was launched by Vernon Seniors Action Network and is now under the care of Nexus BC.



5 Social Inclusion

Vision

Age- and dementia-friendly social activities are respectful and inclusive. People are valued and supported, and participation enables older adults and people living with dementia to widen and deepen their social connections in the community. The City of Vernon fosters wellness and mental health by providing opportunities for all people to engage in community life and supporting those who are isolated, marginalized or at risk. The City strives to ensure seniors have the opportunity to access services and amenities that support a high quality of life.

Objectives

- People can stay connected with their family and friends as they age
- Programs are affordable and designed for different skill and capacity levels
- Seniors and people living with dementia are invited, encouraged and supported in a variety of community activities, programs, and events
- Seniors have meaningful opportunities for employment, and their skills, experience and ideas are appreciated



Photo Credit: Deb Treherne



What the community feels is working well:

- An active senior community, with people ready and willing to help others
- Age-friendly and accessible social and recreational programs
- Walking at Kal Tire Place, especially during extreme weather events
- Minds in Motion, a special program for people living with dementia and their caregivers
- A variety of special interest programs and groups for seniors
- Vernon Seniors Action Network, a coalition platform for local advocacy
- A vibrant community of practice on climate action
- An emerging community of practice on equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation

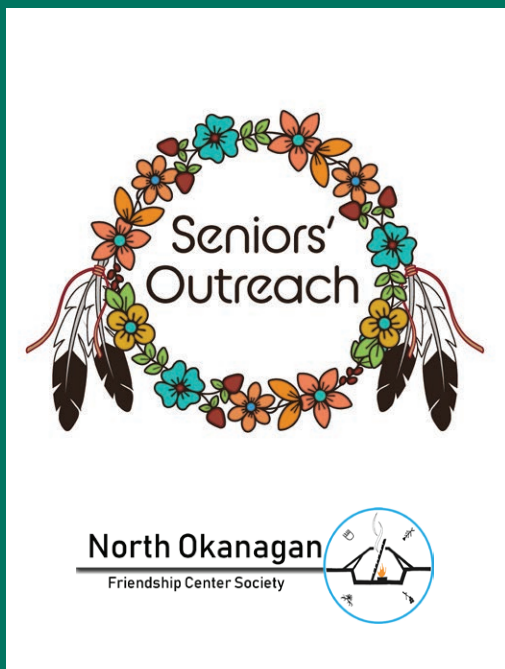
Social Inclusion City Actions

1. Design programs and services for older adults that are culturally relevant, accessible, available and inclusive of people with diverse abilities and people living with dementia. Whenever possible, offer a continuum of programs for older adults that will serve them well as they progress through various stages of aging and/or dementia where applicable.
2. Provide meaningful employment, civic participation and volunteering opportunities that utilize the wisdom and experience of older adults and people living with dementia.
3. Support programs and services for seniors' recreation, in addition to programs that offer opportunities for family recreation, intergenerational and intercultural connections. Consider using a sliding scale that offers programming at lower cost or free for low income seniors and transportation assistance for those who need it.
4. Encourage special programming for senior newcomers to Canada in the community, and encourage the inclusion of senior family members in existing newcomer social programs. Support programs to enable people from specific backgrounds, languages and identities who desire to recreate independently together.
5. Simplify booking for services and programs and promote non-digital registration options.
6. Support specific recreational programming for people living with dementia and their caregivers, such as dementia cafes, dementia walks, movie matinees, multi-family game time, picnics in the park, supportive buddy programs and other activities of interest to people living with dementia.
7. Ensure that emergency preparedness and climate resilience plans, programs and initiatives consider the special needs of seniors and people living with dementia.
8. Encourage and facilitate opportunities for groups to organize their own activities and entertainment or educational events on the basis of shared interests and activities. Encourage and promote the activities and initiatives of groups representing diverse communities in Vernon, as well as initiatives that deepen understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion in our community.
9. Support neighbourhood groups to improve intergenerational social connections and develop a program to specifically enhance information sharing, emergency preparedness, climate awareness, and climate response activities at the neighbourhood scale.

Spotlight on Men's Shed



Seniors have expressed a need for more programs and support for senior men in the community. One exciting local initiative that addresses this need is Men's Shed. This international movement, which began in Australia in 2007, now has a chapter in Vernon. The volunteer-based organization offers members opportunities to contribute their skills, knowledge, and experience through mentorship, skills training, and group projects that respond to emerging community needs. Recent projects include creating garden boxes, picnic tables, benches, and customized items for local community organizations. The Men's Shed movement has found that by sharing skills and knowledge, members form rewarding friendships and experience improved physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Vernon's Shed is open daily from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM for its members. For more information on becoming a member, visit mensshedvernon.ca.



The North Okanagan Friendship Centre runs an Elders Group for urban Indigenous Elders aged 55 and up that offers year-round programming. Within this program, the director works with a range of public, private and non-profit organizations to host fun and social experiences for the group at low or no cost to participants. The group meets to enjoy practical activities together such as cooking, canning, freezing or drying as well as participate in outings to local businesses. Staff shared that the participants love the support, opportunity to socialize and sense of adventure that the group provides. For more information, please go to www.vernonfirstnationsfriendshipcentre.com

Older Adults and Climate Resilience

In 2019, the Regional District of the North Okanagan commissioned a study to better understand how climate change will impact our region over the next 80 years. The study found that by 2050, May will feel more like August, and there will be twice as many days above 30 degrees Celsius each summer if we do not take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By 2080, it is anticipated that days above 30 degrees will more than triple and summer rainfall will drop by 20 percent. In short, Vernon will be at higher risk of drought, wildfire, and smoke.

The City of Vernon's Climate Action Plan was endorsed by Council on April 12, 2021. Its Health and Well-Being goal is that members of the community, especially the most at risk and vulnerable, have equitable access to information, support and resources related to preparing for climate readiness. Actions include 1) identifying populations vulnerable to climate change and developing strategies to build their adaptive capacity, and 2) developing a program to facilitate social connection, information sharing, climate awareness, and climate response activities amongst city residents at the neighbourhood scale.

As an age- and dementia-friendly community, the City recognizes that older adults and people living with dementia may be more vulnerable to both extreme heat and cold, due to:

- physical or mental health conditions
- disability or mobility challenges
- medications
- income, housing type, or transportation options
- social connections
- the ability to pay for or access resources and services.



Seniors may need specialized, affordable services during extreme conditions such as heat waves, cold snaps, wildfires and smoky conditions. It is important for them to know the services that are available and how to access them.

The City of Vernon, the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan, the Vernon Seniors Action Network and Nexus BC are developing extreme heat response plans, programs and initiatives such as access to cooling centres. Awareness, affordability and accessibility are important considerations for all response plans and options.

In addition the Climate Action Plan calls on all community members, including older adults, to act individually and collectively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and help the City reach no net GHGs by 2050.

Recommendations for Plan Implementation

1. Continue designating a Council representative and staff liaison to participate in regular meetings and activities of the Vernon Senior's Action Network to support coordinated cross-sectoral action on implementing this Plan.
2. Consider inviting representatives with lived experience as an older adult or person living with dementia, or a person with relevant professional experience, to serve on Council committees, relevant working groups and project advisory committees.
3. Prioritize City actions from this Plan in each annual budgeting cycle and ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to completing them.
4. Support community organizations serving older adults and people living with dementia in securing third-party funding resources to implement initiatives that fulfill and complement this Plan.
5. Provide an annual report to Council that provides an update on plan performance and progress monitoring that reflects progress on Plan implementation and the state of age- and dementia-friendliness in Vernon.
6. Ensure that relevant age- and dementia-friendly strategies and actions are included in the update of other major City Plans: the Official Community Plan, Master Transportation Plan, Parks Master Plan, Recreation Master Plan, Housing Action Plan, Climate Action Plan, and others.
7. Ensure that this Plan is reviewed concurrently with the Official Community Plan.



“What we put in place for our elders, we put in place for ourselves.”

Plan Progress Monitoring

This section provides a framework for an annual progress report on the implementation of this Plan and improvements to the state of the age- and dementia-friendliness of the community. The list of indicators below is intended to serve as a guide for City staff in the preparation of annual progress reports to Council.

CITY PLACES & SPACES

- Accessibility improvements to existing City spaces, buildings and transportation infrastructure
- New City-owned spaces, buildings and transportation infrastructure with accessibility features

HOUSING & TRANSPORTATION

- New residential housing projects for seniors
- Number of approved subsidized housing units designated for older adults, accessible units and adaptable units
- Number of approved accessible and/or adaptable rental housing units
- Advocacy to BC Transit and HandyDart for service improvements for older adults, people living with dementia, and people living with disabilities and/or requiring enhanced accessibility

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

- Accessibility improvements to City events, communications and engagement methods and materials

COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

- Staff training on the Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Plan and related topics
- Advocacy initiatives to other government agencies on community support and health service needs that relate to core services provided by the City

SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Number age-friendly representatives on Council Committees & Working Groups
- Number new City plans and policies or plan updates reflecting age- and dementia-friendly goals
- Number new City recreational programs for seniors and people living with dementia, including special events hosted or supported by the City
- Number new programs and services available in the community for older adults and people living with dementia and their caregivers
- Number cross-sectoral or inter-governmental planning or engagement initiatives attended by City staff



Conclusion

With this first Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community Plan, Vernon is becoming part of an active international movement focused on improving the quality of life for older adults, as well as those living with dementia and disabilities. We also know that fulfilling the strategies and actions of this Plan will make Vernon a better place for everyone. For example, paved and connected pathways makes active transportation easier and safer for many users of all ages and abilities. Plain language and accessible communications materials are more easily read and understood by everyone. In some cases, this Plan will need to be considered alongside plans for other demographics in our community with unique needs, such as the Youthful Vernon Strategy. Most of all, the hope is that this Plan helps to inspire and create more opportunities for people of different ages and diverse backgrounds to live, work, play and serve as active citizens and involved community members together.

“ I have a deep appreciation for the wide range of expertise, programs and services that are available for seniors in Vernon. ”



CITY OF
Vernon

Photo Credit: Vernon Tourism