EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The need for the development of an Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County was identified as a recommendation in Strathcona County's Social Sustainability Framework (adopted in 2007). It recognized the need to prepare for the changing demographics. In 2007, Strathcona County residents aged 65 and older comprised 13 per cent of the total population. By 2031, as a result of the baby boomer generation becoming seniors, this number is expected to increase to 25 per cent of the total population.

All levels of government, community organizations, churches, neighbourhoods, families, and individuals have a role to play in supporting the healthy aging of our population. The strategies in this plan focus primarily on what Strathcona County can do over the next 15 years.

VISION

Strathcona County is an age-friendly and caring community that values the contributions and strengths of older adults, is responsive to their diverse needs and desire for choice, and provides a spectrum of opportunities for active and purposeful lives.

OBJECTIVES

The Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County has seven main objectives:

1. To explore the major issues facing older adults that include:
   - social determinants including social supports, social connections and life long learning opportunities
   - physical environment determinants including housing, transportation and mobility, accessibility and safety issues
   - economic determinants including income, employment and social protection
   - behavioural determinants including recreation and leisure, healthy lifestyles and volunteerism
   - health and social services determinants including health, long term care, mental health and outreach services

2. To recognize the strengths and assets that older adults contribute by developing a strength based approach

3. To identify gaps in services, currently and anticipated in the future

4. To recommend strategies/programs to address issues and gaps, in the short (1-3 years), mid (4 – 14 years) and long term (15+ years)

5. To identify respective roles for implementing the Older Adults Plan, recognizing that it requires a coordinated effort from all departments and senior serving organizations

6. To ensure the sustainability of programs for older adults

7. To maximize opportunities for older adults to contribute to their families, community and economy

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from Strathcona County departments and key external service providers, was formed. Its function was to provide guidance for the development of the Older Adults Plan.

An analysis of the older adult population was undertaken, along with a review of current programs and services (federal, provincial, municipal, community). A comparative review of services in other communities also took place.

Extensive community consultation was carried out using a variety of methods. Two surveys were administered. The first targeted adults in Strathcona County 55+ years, and provided information about current strengths and needs. The second survey was administered to 45-54 year olds. It provided valuable information that assisted in the planning for future needs of older adults. In addition, key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and roundtable discussions were held.

The Strathcona County Seniors Advisory Committee was instrumental in reviewing this project at all stages and providing input and guidance.

KEY ISSUES

The top issues identified during the consultation phase were:
1. Access to seniors housing
2. Access to health care
3. Rising living costs combined with fixed incomes
4. Availability of personal care and home services
5. Transportation
6. Outreach services
7. Information about programs and services

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following 15 goals and 65 strategies address the needs identified during the consultation phase.

Goals	Strategies	Lead Role	Resources Short Term (1 – 3 years)	Resources Mid Term (4 – 14 years)	Resources Long Term (15+ years)
Goal 1 Services for older adults in Strathcona County are coordinated and emerging needs are identified and addressed.	1. Establish an Older Adult Services Coordinating Committee for Strathcona County that will plan and coordinate services and programs across municipal departments and sectors.	FCS	Staffing		
	2. Ensure the Older Adult Services Coordinating Committee links with existing seniors organizations at the municipal and provincial levels, and in particular the Seniors Advisory Committee to gather input into trends and emerging needs of older adults.	FCS	None		
Goal 2 Older adults receive clear, user-friendly information about services and programs in a variety of formats.	1. Develop guidelines on an age-friendly format for communications materials and signage.	COMM	$10,000		
	2. Create and maintain a variety of print and media communication tools, resources and methods for informing older adults about municipal services and programs.	FCS	Staffing		
	3. Create and maintain a web based resource for comprehensive information on programs/services/information for older adults.	FCS	Staffing		
	4. Create and maintain a printed Seniors Resource Directory.	FCS	$5,000		
	5. Provide an identified resource person in locations utilized and accessible to older adults to assist with accessing information on programs and services, filling out government forms and providing simple assistance with accessing websites.	FCS	Staffing	Staffing	
Goal 3 Opportunities for social connection are encouraged and facilitated.	1. Provide older adult "gathering" space in community facilities as opposed to constructing additional "purpose built" facilities, for example, the new library "Community Living Room" concept.	Library, RPC, Facilities, EEP	None		
	2. Assist existing seniors centres in attracting new members, planning for the needs of older adults and promoting programs in their communities. (see also goal 11, strategy #2)	RPC	None		

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Goal 3 cont.	3. Develop and implement a friendly visitor and phone buddy (telephone reassurance) program.	FCS	Staffing		
	4. Ensure that opportunities for inter-generational interaction are maximized for all Strathcona County led activities.	Strathcona County Departments	None		
Goal 4 Older adults are provided with a variety of local choices for new learning opportunities and new skill development.	1. Expand the variety of life-long learning programs that are offered to include formal for credit, formal non-credit, and informal learning opportunities; formats should include classroom, workshop, conversation circles; affordability should be monitored.	Library, FCS, RPC, CALC	None		
	2. Explore Strathcona County being deemed a Designated Learning Community.	Library	NA	None	
	3. Increase English Language Learning opportunities.	CALC	NA	Staffing	
	4. Expand access to Strathcona County Library services and programs through outreach (bookmobile), distance learning (videoconferencing), e-books, or by offering programs outside of the library, such as in senior lodges.	Library	Staffing	Staffing	
	5. Organize an older adult conference once every two years.	FCS	None		
Goal 5 There is a range of affordable and accessible housing options appropriate for older adults.	1. Support Strathcona County's Affordable Housing Plan.	CPIA	None		
	2. Promote the development of flexible building designs (life-stage housing) and a variety of housing types to developers.	PDS	NA	None	
	3. Educate and influence developers regarding the optimum number of people with limited capability housed together who will require assistance during an emergency situation.	ES	NA	None	
	4. Include increased numbers of handicapped parking stalls (exceeding current building standards) in the Land Use Bylaw.	PDS	None		
	5. Encourage land use planning that combines commercial and residential uses so that services are closer to home for older adults.	PDS	NA	None	
	5. Develop a 15 year lodge and subsidized housing plan.	PHF	TBD		

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Goal 6 Transportation options are affordable, accessible, safe and address the diverse needs of older adults.	1. Improve local transit system to better access popular destinations (medical and recreational facilities, shopping areas, etc).	Transit	NA	TBD	
	2. Transit will strive to become barrier-free.	Transit	NA	TBD	
	3. Complete Strathcona County Accessible Transportation review.	Transit	None		
	4. Implement a volunteer Transit Buddy Program.	Transit	NA	Staffing	
	5. Implement a marketing campaign to encourage riders to use the public transit system, using tools such as a Customer Appreciation Day.	Transit	NA	$10,000	
	6. Develop a volunteer driver and car pool program.	FCS	NA	Staffing	
	7. Investigate Independent Transportation Network (ITN) operating in the Capital Region.	CPIA	None		
	8. Partner with local taxi companies for rider discounts and provide travel vouchers for financially vulnerable older adults.	FCS	NA	$50,000	
	9. Increase availability of older adult driver education programs in Strathcona County.	FCS / CPIA	None		
Goal 7 Strathcona County will follow the 'Principles of Universal Design' in the design and construction of new or renovated buildings.	1. Identify design issues that may enhance the effective use of indoor and outdoor public places by older adults, and recommend changes.	Strathcona County Departments	None		
	2. Educate the business community about the wide range of design disciplines including environments, products and communications, that are required to meet the needs of older adults.	EEP	TBD		
	3. Establish the requirement for the construction of new or renovated buildings to use the 'Principles of Universal Design'.	PDS	NA	None	
Goal 8 Crime prevention initiatives will reduce the incidence of older adults impacted by scams and crime.	1. Increase public education and awareness of scams and frauds targeting older adults in a comprehensive way (eg: Wise Owl program).	RCMP	None		
	2. Educate older adults about home security and crime prevention through physical design principles.	RCMP	TBD		

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Goal 9 Opportunities exist for meaningful paid and volunteer work for older adults.	1. Promote the benefits of older adult volunteerism to both older adults and community agencies.	IVC	None		
	2. Adapt retirement planning courses to include post-retirement employment planning.	HR / CALC	None	None	
	3. Educate business/ employers regarding the benefits of hiring the mature worker.	EDT	NA		
Goal 10 Older adults have the means to support themselves financially through retirement.	1. Provide education on financial planning.	HR / CALC	None		
	2. Provide information for older adults regarding municipal, provincial, federal subsidies and assistance in filling out forms.	FCS	None		
	3. Implement further municipal subsidy programs for vulnerable seniors as needed and continue with the Recreation Access Program, transit subsidies, and property tax rebates.	Strathcona County Departments	TBD		
Goal 11 A variety of opportunities are available for social, recreational and cultural activities.	1. Support the Strathcona County Open Spaces and Recreation Facility Strategy (OSRFS).	RPC / EEP	None		
	2. Develop a program plan in partnership with senior centres that addresses the needs of older adults while exploring the sharing of resources. (see goal 3, strategy #2)	RPC	None		
	3. Expand the partnership with Sherwood Park Primary Care Network and explore additional opportunities with other health service providers to support at-risk older adults with healthy living options.	RPC	None		
	4. Develop partnerships with seniors housing complexes to deliver recreation programs on site (including both resident and non-resident participants).	RPC	None	None	
	5. Develop and provide no-cost wellness programs to vulnerable adults in neighbourhoods and community centres while investigating potential grants or contributions from the business community to maintain programs.	RPC	NA		

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Goal 11 cont.	6. Provide integrated/flexible programming space and specialized equipment for older adults.	RPC	NA	None	
	7. Ensure adequate opportunities for older adult oriented programs in the evenings.	RPC	None		
	8. Implement a marketing campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of active living, and opportunities for active living throughout the community (including information about low-cost/subsidized programs).	RPC	None		
	9. Promote the Ambassador Program to encourage older adult card holders to be role models and support new participants.	RPC	None		
	10. Examine the use of schools (e.g.: Emerald Hills) and community centres as service hubs for delivery of programs and spontaneous use.	RPC	None	None	
	11. Investigate installing a therapeutic warm pool when a new recreation facility is built. (The Aquatics Strategy to be developed as part of the OSRFS in 2012).	RPC	NA		
Goal 12 A spectrum of health and wellness programs is available to older adults.	1. Integrate health promotion activities such as recreation, health clinics, education and socialization into "one-stop" shopping, wherever possible.	RPC	None		
	2. Expand the falls prevention project to include additional locations and provide education to caregivers.	ES	None		
	2. Advocate to Alberta Health Services for mobile health clinics, increased funding for geriatric care, increased beds in Facility Living, increased adult day program funding, increase in number of family doctors.	Strathcona County	NA	None	
Goal 13 Older adults are provided necessary supports to remain in their homes as long as it is safe and appropriate	1. Develop a range of home services support including: (a) a volunteer matching program that promotes and coordinates able persons to assist elderly and disabled individuals with snow removal and yard maintenance.	FCS	Staffing $10,000		

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Goal 13 cont.	(b) a County provided home maintenance/home adaptation service for older adults who meet eligibility requirements (sliding fee scale) using volunteer and/or contracted staff.	FCS	NA	Staffing Supplies TBD	
	2. Create and maintain a database of interested groups, businesses and individuals with a variety of needed skills who are willing to volunteer to assist older adults.	FCS	Staffing		
	3. Increase the capacity of the Home Support Program (homemakers and health care aides) by developing an employee attraction and retention plan.	FCS / HR	None		
	4. Expand the subsidized homemaking services to accommodate additional hours of light housekeeping support.	FCS	NA	TBD	
Goal 14

Vulnerable older adults and their families receive the emotional supports/interventions and advocacy they require to adjust to the changes they experience. | 1. Develop an outreach program for at-risk older adults (economic, social, health) that provides psycho-social supports, interventions, case planning and coordination of services. | FCS | Staffing | Staffing | Staffing |
| | 2. Establish a caregiver support service that provides emotional support and coordination of support groups for caregivers. | FCS | Staffing | Staffing | |
| Goal 15

The incidence and prevalence of elder abuse is reduced; services and supports are available to assist those who are affected. | 1. Implement a community awareness campaign regarding elder abuse. | FCS | Staffing $5,000 | | |
| | 2. Create a coordinated response to elder abuse consisting of key service providers. | FCS | Staffing | Staffing | |
| | 3. Provide caregiver supports to reduce the risk of elder abuse. | FCS | (included in goal 14, strategy #2) | | |

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