



A GUIDE TO BECOMING AN
AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY
IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



AGEFRIENDLY
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



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1.0 Introduction

Across the country and around the globe leading communities, organizations and businesses seeking to remain viable and responsive in a changing world are researching, planning, changing and monitoring the impact of a changing population demographic. This movement is called becoming 'age-friendly'.

Island communities are also growing and changing – socially, economically and culturally. The number of Islanders living longer lives is growing, more people are retiring on PEI, and many people are moving to PEI to attend school or join the growing workforce. With these changes comes the opportunity to work together to ensure that our communities are vital, supportive and responsive to the changing needs of today's and tomorrow's Islanders.

Age-friendly communities work to ensure that programs, policies and services are evolving to meet changing community needs. Development of age-friendly communities can be a part of a broader upstream approach to health and wellness.

The goal of an age-friendly community is to develop and maintain vibrant communities, businesses and organizations that support all citizens to live engaged, active lives to their full potential.

Did you know?

PEI has one of Canada's highest populations of seniors, many of whom live in rural communities.

PEI Age-friendly Communities:

"Great places to grow up and grow older in".

What is an age-friendly community?

Age-friendly communities take steps to continuously assess and change policies, programs, structures and services to best meet the needs of people of all ages, capacities and abilities. Though age-friendly communities are not only for older adults, they do tap into the potential of older adults as a valuable resource within the community and encourage active aging by optimizing opportunities for older people to be healthy, active and secure in their living environment.

A community may be a place – a neighborhood, village, town, city or region, but it is not limited to place. A community may also be an organization, a group of like-minded people, a culture or other group. Therefore there are many 'communities' and groups on PEI that could prepare to better support our changing population demographic by becoming age-friendly.

In an Age-Friendly Community, policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable older people to 'age actively'- that is, to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society. For example, public and private transportation is accessible, streets and buildings are hazard-free, and there are opportunities for seniors to participate in civic, cultural, educational and voluntary activities." (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011)

Age-friendly communities are great places to *grow up in and grow older in* because they treat people of all ages and abilities with **RESPECT**.

Recognizing and celebrating the diversity within Island communities

Encouraging healthy, active aging

Supporting people of all ages and abilities to contribute to community life

Promoting participation in Island life

Engaging Islanders to actively plan and build their community

Creating safe, accessible and enjoyable environments

Taking the time to reflect on what is working well and what can be improved for the benefit of all.

Age-Friendly Communities Across Canada and Around the Globe

In 2000 the World Health Organization invited cities to join a new project aimed at developing accessible inclusive communities. At that time 33 cities in 22 countries (including Halifax, Portage la Prairie, Saanich and Sherbrooke) participated in the *WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities Project*. The project reached out to older adults to learn more about the advantages and challenges of living in these cities and identified important lessons for community leaders, planners and organizers in supporting older adults' healthy active aging. Today the World Health Organization's Global Network has grown to involve 500 cities and communities in 37 countries.

Canada has taken a leadership role in promoting age-friendly communities through the Age-Friendly Community Rural and Remote Communities project. In 2006 this project worked with ten communities in eight provinces to learn how rural communities could better support older adults. Alberton, PEI was a participant in this project and contributed to the development of a useful guide (see *Resources*). Today, across Canada, over 1,000 communities have committed to becoming more age-friendly.

Why are communities, organizations and businesses interested in becoming age-friendly?

Each community has its own reasons for working to become more age-friendly. Here are some benefits that other communities have identified:

- Becoming age-friendly promotes good health, wellness and safety
- Increased participation by people of all ages in community life
- Stronger community connections
- Improved communications within the municipality
- Improved outdoor and indoor spaces
- Citizens stay in the community longer and choose to age in place
- Economic growth is stimulated as new services are developed and customer needs are better met
- Becoming age-friendly is a logical and systematic way to identify what is working well and what could be improved
- Community improvements for older adults tend to improve community life for all citizens
- Age-friendly work aligns well with other strategies (such as accessibility programs, health and wellness strategies and economic development strategies).

Building on the experiences of various Canadian communities who have been bringing about positive changes at the ground level the Public Health Agency of Canada recognizes five critical milestones for age-friendly communities. The AFC milestones are:

1. Establish an advisory committee that includes the active engagement of older adults
2. Secure local municipal council support through a resolution to actively support, promote and work toward becoming more age-friendly
3. Establish a robust and concrete plan of action that responds to the needs identified by older adults in the community
4. Demonstrate commitment to action by publicly posting the action plan
5. Commit to measuring activities, reviewing action plan outcomes and reporting on them publicly.

Age-friendly projects have also spread to include **organizations** that are seeking to serve older clients more effectively and attract and retain volunteers; **businesses** that recognize a significant number of their customers are older adults and **health services** that are interested in improving the efficiency and effectiveness for people of all ages.

How to use this guide

This guide has been designed for people who are interested in working within their community to make it an age-friendly place to live. This may include:

- **Seniors**
- **Youth and young adults**
- **Interested citizens**
- **Mayors and elected community leaders**
- **City or town planners**
- **Community groups and organizations**
- **Business owners**

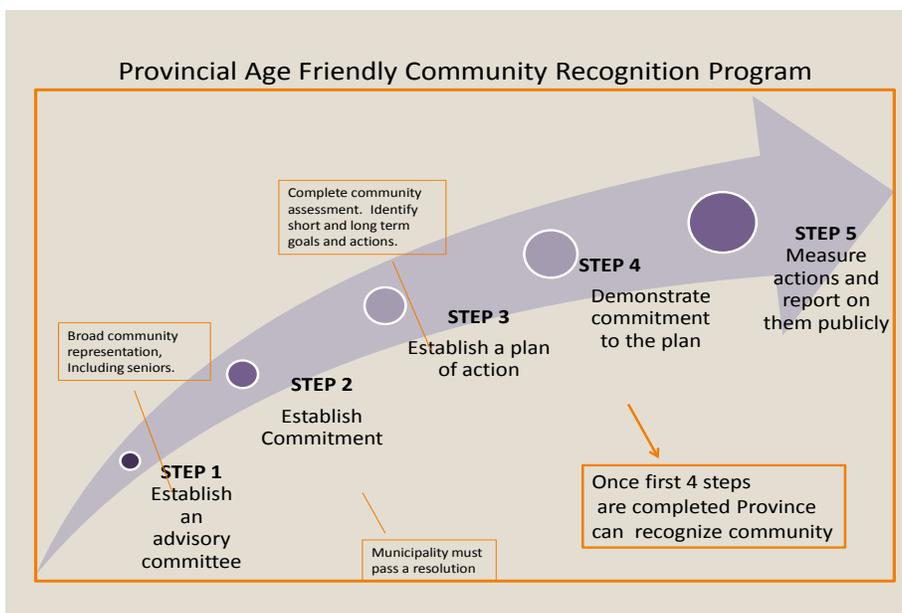
You can use this guide to learn more about age-friendly communities, inspire your neighbours, friends and family members to become involved, set goals for change, develop an action plan, carry out the plan and check your community's progress. Other organizations, provinces and municipalities have also created useful guides and resources.

A sample of these resources are included in section **5.0 Age-Friendly Toolkit**

2.0 Becoming an age-friendly community

The next section presents a series of five milestones (steps) that communities across Canada and around the world have taken in order to increase the age-friendliness of their communities. Although each community's journey to becoming more age-friendly is unique these five steps have been well researched and confirmed by the experiences of communities, both large and small, as being practical steps that work.

Whether your community wishes to apply for future recognition as an age-friendly community or is seeking a process for making improvements for older citizens these steps are a helpful approach. These five steps are:



1. Establish an advisory committee
2. Establish commitment ie pass a municipal resolution
3. Establish a plan of action
4. Demonstrate commitment to the plan
5. Measure and report on actions publicly

Steps to becoming an age-friendly community

Step 1: Establish an advisory committee

Beginning the conversation

Each community is unique and may be at a different stage of readiness to take action on becoming more age-friendly:

- *perhaps the needs of older adults in your community have been a frequent agenda item for discussion at meetings;*
- *perhaps municipal leaders may have attended information sessions on becoming age-friendly and have expressed an interest in work in this area;*
- *your community may already have a committee that focuses on the needs of older citizens; or*
- *perhaps this is the first time that you are learning about age-friendly communities.*

Regardless of where you are starting this guide can help you move forward to involve leaders, community members, businesses and organizations in steps to become an age-friendly community.

Developing support

- **Start with the support of community leaders.** Because becoming an age-friendly community is long term work and may require resources it is important to have the support of municipal leaders. Many communities have found that passing a resolution is an important step to securing and confirming the support of community leaders.
- **Identify a champion.** Leaders from the volunteer, business, faith or service sectors also play important roles in helping to develop an age-friendly community by sharing their ideas, encouraging community members' participation in assessment activities and providing practical advice on how to accomplish goals. A dedicated champion, or small group of champions, are instrumental in ensuring that momentum is maintained over time.

Inviting participation

Your age-friendly community committee should include a range of people, of all ages and abilities, who are willing to:

- *help promote awareness of age-friendly communities*
- *work together*
- *promote community involvement and support of age-friendly activities*
- *share ideas*
- *propose possible solutions to challenges*
- *share decision making*

Did you know?

PEI population growth rate exceeds the rate of growth for Canada.

As you begin to invite people to join your committee it's helpful to know what has worked in other communities. Having representation from a broad cross section of the community to participate will enrich the discussions and planning processes. An age friendly community will include:

- *older adults*
- *seniors organizations*
- *municipal government*
- *people with disabilities*
- *volunteer organizations*
- *local business*
- *local health services*

Step 2: Pass a resolution

Becoming an age-friendly community requires a long term commitment. Municipal councils have the ability, through bylaws, zoning and planning processes to set an agenda and framework for promoting, development and maintaining age-friendly communities.

- **Becoming an age-friendly community takes time.** Rather than a short term project becoming an age-friendly community is a process and the changes within a community can be done over time depending on the priorities, interests and available resources of your community. The keys to becoming an age-friendly community are to have a municipal plan for change, to implement the plan, and to measure progress over time.
- **Where possible, dedicate staff resources.** Just as key community volunteer champions can help maintain focus and momentum for change it is helpful to have a municipal staff member with age-friendly communities as part of their responsibilities. While this may not be possible in every community, where possible, dedicating staff resources helps to affirm your community's commitment and helps to ensure that important progress is achieved.

Step 3: Establish a plan of action

A community assessment will be required to guide the plan of action. The assessment will include a detailed inventory of both infrastructure and social supports which exist within the community. The eight dimensions of age-friendly communities can be used as a framework for comparison and consideration.

Information collected during this step will help to create an action plan using the criteria set forth by an assessment of the community can inform action plans which will allow the plan to be monitored in the future. Completing the assessment and formulating the plan both provide opportunities to engage citizens and business owners.

A robust and concrete plan of action that responds to the needs identified will help to improve the long term sustainability of the community for all.

What will success look like? This is an important question to ask when establishing a plan of action. Identifying desired outcomes and methods of measurement are important components of an action plan. Keeping good records of pre and post surveys, interviews, photographs, focus groups, and details of participants will aid in the assessment.

- **Small changes can make a big difference.** After assessing your community you may have a lengthy list of ideas for improvement – this is a great opportunity to identify priorities and the resources that these changes might require. Don't be discouraged, becoming an age-friendly community is a process. Be encouraged, that communities across Canada have found that even seemingly small changes, such as adding in a rest bench in a key location, can improve community life.
- **Seek funding.** Some community improvements and age-friendly projects may be eligible for funding from provincial (such as the Seniors' Secretariat community grants, Wellness grant program) and/or federal grant opportunities (such as the New Horizons for Seniors program).

There are eight areas where communities can become more age-friendly:



1) Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

What is it like to step outside your home, to go for a walk, to run errands or to visit in your community?

- Are sidewalks, pathways and trails well maintained?
- Are areas well lit?
- Is parking available and safe?
- Are there enough accessible parking spaces?
- Do you feel safe when you are walking or crossing the street?

What is it like to go into buildings?

- Are entrance doors easy to open by someone in a wheelchair or walker?
- Are there no or as few stairs as possible, inside and outside public buildings?
- Are elevators and/or ramps available?
- Are floors non-slip?
- Are washrooms on the main floor and large enough for a walker, wheelchair or stroller?
- Are signs in buildings easy to read?
- Are there enough rest areas?

2) Transportation

What is it like to drive in your community?

- Are traffic signs and intersections visible?
- Are roads well maintained and lit?
- Are roads and parking areas promptly cleared of snow and ice?
- Are there community transportation services?
- Is there assisted transportation for people with disabilities?

3) Housing

Is where you live convenient for your needs and what you want to do?

If your needs change, what are your choices for housing in the community?

- Is there a choice of affordable housing, for sale or rent?
- Are there supports available to help you maintain your home?
- Do you feel comfortable and safe in your home?
- Is long term care available?

4) Respect and Social Inclusion

In what ways does your community show respect for older people?

- Are seniors treated respectfully by the community including: being addressed with appropriate titles?
- Are seniors invited to provide input on community issues?
- Are service providers courteous?
- Are there activities that bring generations together?
- Are older people involved in local school activities?
- In what ways does your community include older people in events?

5) Social Participation

How easily can you socialize in your community?

- Are there a range of activities for people of all ages?
- Are activities and events affordable?
- Are friendly visiting programs available for those who are home bound?
- Are events well publicized?
- Are details of accessibility and transportation options given?

6) Communication and Information

What is your experience in getting the information you need in your community about services?

- Is information easy to find?
- Is information easy to understand?
- Is printed information provided with large lettering, clear headings?
- Is regular and reliable information about events and programs widely circulated?
- Are new technologies easy to use?
- Is there internet access in public places, like the library?

7) Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

How easily can seniors participate in volunteer work, community associations, councils and paid work?

- Are seniors encouraged to volunteer and remain active in community life through flexible and accessible activities?
- Are there a range of volunteer opportunities?
- Do volunteer activities allow for intergenerational involvement?
- Are there paid employment opportunities for people of all ages?
- Are seniors represented on councils, boards and committees?
- Are people with disabilities accommodated in volunteer or paid work?

8) Community Support and Health Services

What is your experience with the services in your community to help older people?

- Are health care providers respectful, helpful and trained to serve older people?
- Are home supports available?
- Are there delivery services (groceries, medicines, meal delivery) available?
- Can caregivers take a break in your community?
- Are seniors considered and informed on emergency preparedness?

Step 4: Demonstrate commitment to the action plan

Once the plan is developed and adopted it is important to ensure it remains a living piece of work; the plan must adapt to the needs of the community in order to develop and sustain an age-friendly community.

Celebrate

Start with a celebration to acknowledge the work that has gone into formulating the plan. A lot of people have contributed and deserve to be recognized for their efforts. This launch provides an opportunity to further engage the community, to publicly recognize actions and benefits. If funding has been secured to assist with age friendly community development this is a good time to advertise and publicize your partners.

Outreach & Timeline

How will you communicate the plan and the timeline for implementation to the broader community. Many communication models are inexpensive yet impactful- media releases, social media, community newsletters, and websites can all be utilized.

A timeline for implementing the action plan will further demonstrate to the community that the commitment is real and will allow for residents to track progress.

Step 5: Commit to measure activities

In order to ensure that the plan is on track toward meeting the desired objectives it is important to both measure progress, but also to report on progress.

Methods to measure and report should be identified in the action plan and use of media releases, social media, community newsletters, and websites are all effective ways to communicate the results.

3.0 Age-friendly PEI Recognition Program

Becoming more age-friendly is a journey that happens over time as your community changes in response to its population needs.

We want to recognize your accomplishments along this path.

PEI's age-friendly recognition program celebrates the progress made by communities towards becoming more age-friendly.

Steps to achieving recognition

To be recognized as a PEI Age-Friendly Community you will complete an application form demonstrating that your community has accomplished four key steps:

1. An advisory committee has been established.
2. A community resolution has been passed which supports the intention to become an age-friendly community.
3. An action plan has been developed which includes an assessment of the community.
4. Public commitment has been made to the action plan.

4.0 What Does Recognition Look Like?

Recognition of your community's leadership and commitment to become age-friendly will include an Age-Friendly Recognition Award for public display in your community. This award will be presented during a public ceremony to celebrate your success in achieving age-friendly recognition and promoting healthy, active aging.

When your community has been recognized by the Province of PEI as achieving age-friendly recognition status, you will also be recognized at the national and international levels. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) will automatically process a joint recognition letter on behalf of PHAC and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Maintaining Age-Friendly Status:

To maintain recognition status, communities will need to show evidence of continued implementation and monitoring of age-friendly initiatives. Communities wishing to retain their status will be asked to provide published age-friendly assessments, action plans, and an evaluation report. Communities will be assessed for continued recognition status every few years.

5.0 Age-Friendly Guides and Resources

The following guides provide additional information and resources to help your community become age-friendly.

Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide.

Published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012.

This guide presents background information and practical ideas on assessing your community and developing plans to make your community more age-friendly.

Link: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/

Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide – Toolbox.

Published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012.

This guide contains many practical samples, work plans, checklists and ideas to support communities developing an age-friendly plan.

Link: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/

Age-Friendly Communities Evaluation Guide: Using indicators to measure progress.

Published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, 2015.

This document provides information on measuring your community's progress towards becoming age-friendly.

Link: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/

Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide

Published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, 2009.

This guide provides an introduction to planning for an age-friendly community with a special focus on rural and remote communities and features stories from community members in these settings.

Link: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/

Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide – World Health Organizations

Published by the World Health Organization, 2007.

This booklet provides an introduction to the World Health Organization's age-friendly cities initiatives in 33 international urban areas.

Link: http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_guide/en/



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Identify a champion.

Leaders from the volunteer, business, faith or service sectors also play important roles in helping to develop an age-friendly community by sharing their ideas, encouraging community members' participation in assessment activities and providing practical advice on how to accomplish goals. A dedicated champion, or small group of champions, are instrumental in ensuring that momentum is maintained over time.





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Island communities
are also **growing
and changing** -
socially,
economically and
culturally.

The number of
Islanders living longer
lives is growing, more
people are retiring
on PEI, and many
people are moving to
PEI to attend school
or join the growing
workforce.



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