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# Haldimand County



## Report CDP-07-2025 Seniors Advisory Committee Request – Development of an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan

For Consideration by Council in Committee on June 17, 2025

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### Objective:

To receive Council approval for Haldimand County's Seniors Advisory Committee (SAC) to initiate the development of a Haldimand County Age-Friendly Community Action Plan as a collaborative tool to advance the well-being, healthy aging in place and social inclusion of Haldimand County's older adults, and all who are aging.

### Recommendations:

1. THAT Report CDP-07-2025 Seniors Advisory Committee Request – Development of an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan, be received;
2. AND THAT the delegation presentation and associated recommendations regarding Haldimand County's support for the development of an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan be approved;
3. AND THAT Council support the Seniors Advisory Committee and County staff in investigating and applying for third-party funding, including the Mayor and Clerk executing any associated applications and/or agreements, to support the initiatives outlined in Report CDP-07-2025.

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**Reviewed by:** Katrina Schmitz, Manager, Community Development & Partnerships

**Respectfully submitted:** Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager, Community & Development Services

**Approved:** Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

### Executive Summary:

Haldimand County has a timely opportunity to develop its first Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Action Plan, a strategic framework to guide a coordinated, community-wide response improving the inclusion, health and well-being of its growing older adult population.

With Council's endorsement, Haldimand County will join more than 100 Ontario municipalities that are taking proactive steps to become more age-friendly through collaborative planning, public engagement and cross-sector partnerships. The plan will align with global, national and provincial age-friendly priorities while advancing the County in terms of forward-thinking community development.

The resulting plan will identify key community priorities and guide future policy, infrastructure and local program and service decisions within the municipality and broader community. The plan is evidence of a community-wide commitment: strengthening Council and agency advocacy for support, partnerships and funding. Though focused on older adults, age-friendly planning benefits all citizens by improving

accessibility, safety and quality of life and is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO), federal and provincial governments as a best practice in planning for our aging communities.

The Haldimand County Seniors Advisory Committee (SAC), staff and community partners are well prepared to facilitate and support this work, building on existing momentum and a shared commitment to a more inclusive Haldimand.

## **Background:**

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched a global project on Age-Friendly Cities in 2006, partnering with the Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in 2010 to promote healthy aging and social inclusion through municipal planning and policy. Canada was among the first countries to adopt the WHO's framework, with four Canadian cities participating in the original global pilot. Since then, Canada has continued to demonstrate leadership in advancing age-friendly principles, with support from the Public Health Agency of Canada and all provinces and territories.

In Ontario, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, in collaboration with Queen's University and the Centre for Studies and Aging and Health, provides resources and support for municipalities developing Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Plans (e.g. [Ontario Community Age-Friendly Planning Guide](#)). A review of the literature on AFCs provides an abundance of evidence of improved health outcomes for older adults and whole communities.

More than 100 Ontario municipalities have adopted or are developing AFC Plans (Attachment 2). These plans align with the WHO's eight domains of community life that influence the health and well-being of older adults, including: housing, social participation, respect and inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, health and community support services, outdoor spaces and buildings and transportation.

Currently, Haldimand County does not have a formal Age-Friendly Community Action Plan. The Seniors Advisory Committee (SAC) believes that now is an opportune time to engage the community in this collaborative work towards improving quality of life for Haldimand's aging population, in alignment with the current term of Council, Haldimand County's various strategic initiatives and community priorities.

## **Analysis:**

There is strong evidence in the academic and policy literature demonstrating that age-friendly community planning has meaningful impacts on health, equity, and social participation among older adults. Municipalities that adopt age-friendly frameworks report improved accessibility of public spaces, enhanced social connectedness, and increased civic engagement among seniors (Menec et. al., 2001; Plouffee & Kalache, 2010). The outcomes of age-friendly communities not only contribute to the wellbeing of older adults but also generate cross-generational benefits, supporting lovability for residents of all ages. Research also shows that coordinated age-friendly strategies can reduce long-term health system pressures by promoting preventative health, independent living, and community-based support (Government of Canada, 2016). By taking a collaborative, proactive approach now, Haldimand County can lay the foundation for a healthier, more inclusive, and economically resilient future.

Public awareness of aging demographics and related-issues is increasing with local organizations actively prioritizing the needs of older adults (e.g. Greater Hamilton Health Network – the Ontario Health Team that Haldimand is part of). There is a high degree of community readiness evidenced by community-driven initiatives currently undertaken to reduce barriers and improve quality of life for older adults in Haldimand County. One such example is the recent introduction of an annual Older Adult &

Caregiver Day - which the SAC has supported – that serves to connect Haldimand residents to various services, supports and resources to improve quality of life.

Developing an AFC Action Plan for Haldimand would provide a strategic, community-driven roadmap to support aging in place, improve quality of life for residents of all ages, and promote inclusive policy and service delivery across all Departments and throughout Haldimand County geographically. Benefits include:

- Identifying community needs;
- Supporting and strengthening Haldimand County experience in collaborative design and implementation of an AFC Action Plan in partnership with the broader community;
- Improves access to provincial and federal funding opportunities for Haldimand County and local, community-based organizations;
- Demonstrating Haldimand County's leadership and commitment to seniors;
- Enhancing capacity of the Corporation of Haldimand County, businesses, community-based organizations and health providers, and residents to work together towards becoming an Age-Friendly Community; a place where older adults and all citizens can live well.

Haldimand County is well positioned to undertake this work at this time. It will:

- Directly complement Haldimand County's Strategic Plan (2025-2045) by reinforcing key priorities such as community well-being, partnerships, responsive service delivery and inclusive growth;
- Build on a solid foundation of age-friendly programming, inclusive development projects and comprehensive accessibility efforts;
- Leverage the Seniors Advisory Committee's skills, knowledge and extensive community connections and empower SAC members to meaningfully achieve their mandate to support Council's priorities through the stewardship of this initiative;
- Engage staff expertise in community development and engagement, project management, establishing collaborative partnerships and interdepartmental coordination.

The Seniors Advisory Committee recommends a co-development approach that is:

- Informed by SAC's advisory role to Council;
- Supported by Haldimand County staff;
- Co-produced with residents, community organizations and partners.

Resourcing needs may include:

- Internal staff time (facilitation, coordination);
- SAC Advisory support and networking;
- Community engagement costs (e.g. venues, materials, accessibility);
- Consultants, facilitators and/or research support (if external funding is secured).

If endorsed by Council, the following development phases and deliverables are proposed:

1. Initiation (Q1- Q4 2025)

- Grant landscape analysis.
- Best practice review and expand strategic network to include joining the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Communities and the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) Outreach Program Network.
- Activities to secure required resources (e.g. funding applications, partnerships, expertise).
- Community Engagement Plan.

- Project Plan.
  - Communication Plan.
  - SAC Annual Progress Update Presentation to Council (Fall 2025).
2. Community Engagement and Needs Assessment (Q1 – Q2 2026)
 

Assuming resources have been secured:

    - Public launch;
    - Community engagement activities;
    - Analysis.
  3. AFC Action Plan Development (Q2 – Q3 2026)
    - Draft and finalize AFC Action Plan
  4. Council Endorsement and Public Launch (Q3-Q4 2026)
    - Final Age-Friendly Community Action Plan presented by SAC for Council endorsement.
    - Public launch.
  5. Implementation (2027-2030)
    - Plan promotion and coordination.
    - Tracking community progress, reporting and evaluation.
    - Planning for further development/amendments to the AFC Action Plan.

## **Financial Implications:**

Staff will pursue external grant funding to offset costs, including:

- Ontario Inclusive Community Grants (up to \$60,000);
- Federal New Horizons for Seniors Program;
- Other relevant funding as identified through grant landscape scan and new networks.

Initial staff coordination and Seniors Advisory Committee support would be absorbed within existing operational capacity.

Aside from the above grant opportunities listed above, there are no financial implications at this time. Future years' capital and operating budgets could be impacted as the action plan is developed, depending on the nature of the actions required by Haldimand County's involvement in the plan.

## **Legal Implications:**

There are no direct legal obligations or statutory requirements mandating the development of an Age-Friendly Community Plan in Ontario. However, the plan would support Haldimand County in aligning with provincial policy directions related to seniors, accessibility and public health, including Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2025.

Engaging in age-friendly planning demonstrates Haldimand County's proactive approach to reducing barriers and promoting equitable access to services for older adults, which may reduce future legal and compliance risks related to age-based discrimination or accessibility standards. It is also a valuable tool in bringing together like-minded community partners to support one another and collaborate on larger and more impactful initiatives.

Any data collection, public engagement or partnership activities will be carried out in accordance with applicable best practices and privacy legislation, municipal policies and procurement procedures.

## Stakeholder Impacts:

The development of an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan will require significant grassroots, cross-sector engagement to the benefit of multiple community stakeholder groups:

**Older Adults:** Will benefit from a more inclusive, accessible, and supportive community designed to meet the needs of aging residents.

**Families and Caregivers:** Will gain greater support through enhanced services, infrastructure, and opportunities for social inclusion.

**Businesses:** An age-friendly environment attracts more senior residents, visitors and their families to shop, dine and access services. Additionally, AFC plans can help businesses gain a marketing edge and recruit and retain older workers – a valuable yet often overlooked segment of the workforce.

**Community-based Organizations:** Will have greater opportunities to collaborate, align services with community needs, contribute to shared planning goals and improved access to funding opportunities.

**Seniors Advisory Committee:** Will be better positioned to make meaningful and impactful contributions to improving the quality of life for seniors and all residents in Haldimand County.

**Haldimand County Staff and Departments:** Will benefit from an integrated planning framework to consider needs and impacts through an Age-Friendly lens that supports service delivery, infrastructure planning, interdepartmental, and cross-advisory committee collaboration (e.g. Accessibility Advisory Committee, Diversity Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee). It will also further develop staff, building internal knowledge, expertise and capacity of the organization.

**Haldimand County Council:** Will be better positioned to make informed decisions and advocate for funding or partnerships to advance community well-being.

## Report Impacts:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

## References:

1. [Haldimand County Strategic Plan \(2025-2045\).](#)
2. [Population, Household & Employment Forecast Update: Haldimand County Final Report \(August 2024\).](#)
1. [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan \(2023-2027\).](#)
2. [Community & Recreation Facilities Strategy \(2024\).](#)
3. [Public Arts & Culture Strategy & Policy.](#)
4. [Community Partnership Program Policy \(2011-01\).](#)

5. [Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations.](#)

**Attachments:**

1. Presentation Slides – Age-Friendly Community Action Plan for Haldimand County.
2. Map – Age-Friendly Communities in Ontario