Meeting Date:	April 21, 2021
Contact:	Robert Tremblay, CAO
	rtremblay@whitewaterregion.ca
	613-646-2282, Ext. 126

Title:
Seniors Community Needs Assessment and Age Friendly Community Plan

Recommendation:
That Council of the Township of Whitewater Region adopt the Seniors Community Needs Assessment and Age Friendly Community Plan as a guiding document.

Background:
In 2019, the Township of Whitewater Region established a Seniors and Older Adults Task Force with an information gathering and advocacy role to provide recommendations and advice to Council regarding the development and provision of services by the Township or partner organizations to those over the age of fifty-five. The Task Force assists in moving forward various Council-approved initiatives involving seniors and older adults.

The Township was successful in receiving an Ontario Seniors Community Grant - Local Initiatives in the amount of $24,000. A Community Needs Assessment was completed seeking organizational information for seniors to seniors. Barnes Consulting assisted with this work. Public engagement included a survey, focus groups, outreach to providers, and a wrap up forum. The Needs Assessment and Age Friendly Plan have a rural lens.

Analysis:
The Needs Assessment found that Whitewater Region is an abundant community with many community assets. It identifies needs and issues, including access to primary health care, greater availability of home supports and services, and wait times for admission to long-term care facilities. Service integration, technology, and information sharing were also noted, along with service navigation, transportation, affordable housing, accessibility and social isolation.

The Age Friendly Community Plan identifies strategies around five priority themes built on communication and the future formation of a Whitewater

Region Seniors Council to eventually replace the Task Force. The strategic areas are:
- Engaging seniors
- Coordination of services
- Transportation
- Internet/cell phone services
- System level advocacy.

Guiding principles underpinning the plan are as follows:
- A community plan for all seniors building on existing community assets, capacities, and initiatives
- Commitment to Action learning - use expertise from the community for planning, evaluation, measuring impact
- Create and strengthen networks
- Keep it simple and practical
- View AFC as a triple bottom line activity - economic, social, and environmental for entire community
- It is essential that progression the AFC plan be shared with the community on a regular basis
  The AFC Plan is a living plan and as such will evolve over time.

Strategic Plan Departmental Workplan:
The AFC supports the following strategy in the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan: Support existing and new partnerships with regard to shared use and programming. In addition, it is in keeping with the Township's mission to deliver municipal services to a welcoming community.

This initiative was identified in the 2021 Departmental Workplan: Support Seniors Task Force on the development of an Age Friendly Community Plan. Liaise with programmers for program delivery.

Engagement Consultation:
This project included substantive engagement and consultation with seniors and service providers.

Financial Implications:
This project was completed with funding received from the Province of Ontario in the amount of $24,000. Any action items identified in the report will be subject to future budget consideration.

Next Steps:
The Task Force will review the document and report back with an Action Plan for Council's consideration.

Attachments:
Executive Summary, Project Report and Community Research and Engagement Report

Prepared by:	Robert Tremblay, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved by:	Sean Crozier, Treasurer/Deputy CAO

Barnes Management Group

Whitewater Region Seniors Needs Assessment and Age-Friendly Community Plan
Age in Place – Not Stuck in Place

Executive Summary

March 31ˢᵗ, 2021

Barnes Management Group Inc.

76 Victor Ave., M4k 1A8

Toronto, Ontario

I.   Age-Friendly Communities (AFC)
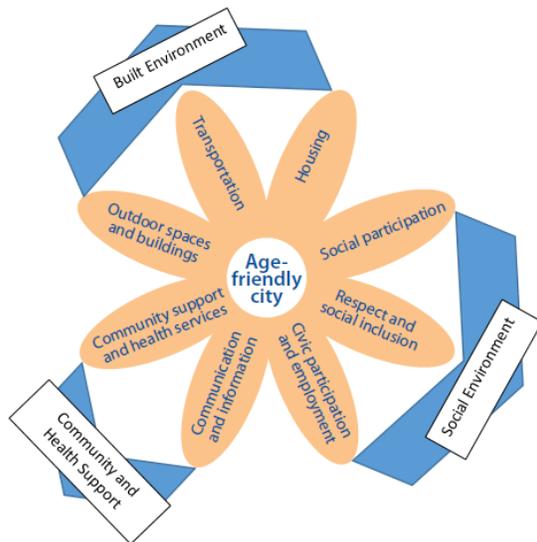
Seniors and older adults comprise a significant segment of the population in Whitewater Region and this segment is growing. In recognition of the challenges faced by seniors in the community, Whitewater Region created a Seniors and Older Adults Task Force to provide leadership in region-wide planning to address these needs. The Task Force's key goal is for seniors in Whitewater Region is "age in place", not be "stuck in place".

Figure 1: Black, Kathy & Badana, Adrian & Hyer, Kathryn. (2016). Caregivers' Considerations on Age-friendly Community Features. Annals of Gerontology and Geriatric Research. 3. 1041.

The eight domains of an Age-Friendly Communities provides a well-documented approach to considering the gaps, strengths, assets, and opportunities to support a community such as Whitewater, to create a community plan. Funding for the planning process was provided by the Ontario Seniors Community Grants Program.

II.   Whitewater Region Demographics

Highlights from a scan of plans and reports which incorporated demographic data show:

- As of the 2016 Census, there were 1490 Whitewater residents aged 65 and over. Seniors made up 21.27% of the population.

- In Renfrew County

    o   the senior's population is expected to grow to 27% of the overall population by 2026 and to more than 1/3 of the population within 20 years[1]

    o   elderly seniors (aged 80 and over) make up 8.27 % of the population. Projections suggest that by 2030, there will be 1100 seniors 80 and over. By 2040, this number is projected to rise to 1450.

    o   Approximately 33% of seniors identify as having a disability. This proportion increases as people age.

---

[1] County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report (December 2020)

- o Factors such as lower income, living alone and identifying with a "marginalized population" (e.g., immigrant, indigenous LGBQT+) contribute to the vulnerability of seniors [2]

III. Methodology

Phase I: Whitewater Region seniors needs assessment:

Building on the work of the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force[3], the Whitewater Region seniors needs assessment included:

Research/Document Review

- Review of the work of the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force to date

- Analysis of population/demographics

- Review of Whitewater Township initiatives (Active Transportation, Housing), and other rural AFC plans,

- Review of other sources of relevant literature

Engagement/Consultation

The Age-Friendly Communities framework was utilized in the development of the various engagement strategies. These strategies included:

- Community survey

- Seniors focus groups

- Survey/interviews with those providing services to seniors

The support of the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force[4] was instrumental in the success of the consultation phase.

Phase II: The development of an Age-Friendly plan

Based on findings from Phase I, a draft Age-Friendly Community Plan was developed. This plan includes principles, strategies, action plans. A key priority for the plan was to ensure that it focused on actions that can be taken by the community and builds on community strengths.

IV.   Taking Stock of Community Assets and Needs

More than 150 people participated in activities related to taking stock of what the community has to offer seniors and to identify needs and gaps.

---

[2] United Way of Eastern Ontario, A Profile of Vulnerable Seniors in the United Counties of Prescott Russell, Lanark County and Renfrew County) 2017) page 46
[3] https://www.whitewaterregion.ca/community/seniors-task-force/
[4] Please see Appendix E in the Project Report for complete list

Findings

Whitewater is an abundant community with many community assets

> *I am happy to live on my own and able to manage to take care of things. But I want to know what can be available to me should my needs change."*
> Seniors focus group participant

- ➢ In a great geographic location

- ➢ People experience a "small town feel"

- ➢ There are Extensive Recreation Opportunities and Resources

- ➢ There is a good base of Health and Community Services

Needs and Issues

- ➢ Access to Primary Health Care (family doctors and nurse practitioners)

- ➢ There is a need for greater availability of Home Supports and Services

- ➢ Wait times for admission to Long-Term Care facilities

- ➢ There is no "one stop" shop for information about services and community activities

- ➢ Internet Access and Technical Support

- ➢ Service Navigation is difficult and service system experienced is not coordinated or personalized

- ➢ Transportation and mobility are problems for people who don't drive and those who have difficulty making longer trips

- ➢ More Affordable Housing with Supports is required to support people to continue to live in the communities they call "home"

- ➢ Barriers to Accessibility limit community participation (parking, impact of snow/weather)

- ➢ Social Isolation and marginalization is a BIG driver of mental and physical health issues

Opportunities and Initiatives to Build on

- ➢ Local churches and Ministers provide a network of support for seniors and for a welcoming community

- ➢ Mennonite community within Whitewater

- ➢ Renfrew County and District Active Aging Network provides a structure to promote active living and wellness

3

- There have been two grants awarded recently for expanding and enriching community support services. Both should have a significant impact on Whitewater.

- The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) has submitted a proposal to the Federal Government "seeking support to deliver ultra-fast, Gig internet to homes and businesses across the Eastern Ontario Region."
https://www.eorn.ca/en/index.aspx

- The County of Renfrew Ride Share Program

- The County of Renfrew Housing Strategy

4

V. Whitewater Region AFC Plan

Whitewater Region

Age-Friendly Community Plan

Principles
- A community plan for all seniors building on existing community assets, capacities, and initiatives
- Commitment to Action Learning – use expertise from the community for planning, evaluation, measuring impact
- Create and strengthen networks
- Keep it simple and practical
- View AFC as a triple bottom line activity – economic, social, and environmental for entire community
- It is essential that progress on the AFC plan be shared with the community on a regular basis
- The AFC Plan is a living plan and as such will evolve over time

Strategies Priority Themes	Engaging Seniors	Coordination of Services	Transportation	Internet/cell phone services	System Level Advocacy
Action Plan	Launch AFC plan

Two annual events 1)Fall seniors expo 2)Spring AFC awards

Create strategies to ensure engagement of seniors in decision-making

Explore "circles of support" for isolated/vulnerable seniors

Encourage senior friendly businesses community | New community support satellite pilot in Whitewater – info and referral and seniors without walls options

Engage ConnectWell CHC

Work with 211 to ensure usefulness in Whitewater

Engage others involved in sharing information with seniors (churches, service clubs, newsletters) | New community support satellite pilot in Whitewater

Explore options for non-essential transportation models – e.g Renfrew County ride share program, grocery, and shopping buses

Work with local service clubs re funding opportunities | Encourage development of local training programs for seniors (library, seniors helping seniors)

Source grants funding supports for hardware, software, etc. | Create an advocacy plan

Some potential priorities include:

Internet/Cell service that is reliable and affordable

Housing

Transportation

Home Care

Ontario Health Teams

Primary Health Care |

Communication

Foundational Structure	Whitewater Region Seniors Council

5

Guiding Principles

The principles guiding this plan ensure that the plan (and its implementation) is "owned by the community". As such it is a plan for the entire community, builds and enhances the strengths of the community. And above all, the principles ensure that the plan focusses on priorities and actions that the community has the capacity to implement.

Strategies/Priority Themes and Action plans[5]

1) Engaging Seniors

"Nothing about us without us" is the underlying theme for engaging seniors in the community. As the Whitewater AFC plan moves forward it is essential that the needs of seniors be recognized, and seniors be engaged as the community evolves.

The action plan offers steps that can be taken to heighten community awareness, support information sharing, and ensure seniors are involved in decision-making.

2) Coordination of Services[6]

There are many services and opportunities for seniors in Whitewater Region. The challenge is to navigate the various systems and as a result it is difficult to know about/find what is available and there are times when different groups may be doing similar things at the same time.

The action plans offer some options to improve coordination, navigation and access to services by building on existing services and initiatives.

3) Transportation

It was suggested that access to reliable, affordable, accessible transportation options is one of the most significant areas of concern for many seniors.

The action plans, as suggested, provide initial steps that may be taken to build a stronger transportation system for seniors who cannot drive for themselves.

4) Internet/Cell Phone Services

Increasingly, the easiest way to connect is by using technology. Many seniors who are interested in using this option face barriers including limited knowledge in how to use the technology and costs related to hardware/software.

The action plan suggests steps that may be taken to reduce these barriers.

5) System Level Advocacy

There are many issues that impact seniors living in Whitewater Region that are beyond the capacity of the community to address on its own. As the Age-Friendly

---

[5] Please see Appendix C in Project Report
[6] Please See Appendix B in Project Report for information regarding Circles of Support

Plan moves forward, there is an opportunity to examine the role that the community can play in advocating for the needs of Whitewater seniors. A list of some of the advocacy priorities is included in the plan. Successful advocacy requires a thoughtful strategic approach to be most effective. As such, some additional planning will be required to determine the most important opportunities.

6) **<u>Communication</u>**

The need for strong coordinated communication systems is a theme that cuts across all the priorities. This was identified as a priority for all seniors but even more challenging for seniors who are isolated, vulnerable and hard to read.

Communication strategies need to cover the full range of possibilities (websites, newsletters, hardcopy notices, public postings, radio, newspapers, churches, clubs and word of mouth).

As the six priorities are implemented, it will be important to consider how best to use the full range of communication options to "spread the word" and ensure that all seniors in the community can be connected to what the community has to offer.

7) **<u>Whitewater Region Seniors Council</u>**

The plan proposes the formation of a leadership group mandated to provide oversight as the plan is implemented. It is recommended that this group include seniors, elected officials, Whitewater Region staff and people who provide services to seniors.

This group would monitor the implementation of the plan, look for opportunities and synergies between initiatives, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and continue to evolve the plan over time.

VI.   Next Steps

This report will be presented to the Township of Whitewater Region council in the near future. Once the plan is approved, the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force will begin work to develop an implementation plan that will ensure that directions outlined in the AFC Plan becomes a reality.

VII.   Concluding remarks

Whitewater Region is an abundant community and there are many strengths and assets on which to build to move toward the vision of an Age-Friendly Community. This plan provides a realistic starting point for the community to move forward in tangible ways.

7

Whitewater Region Seniors Needs Assessment and Age-Friendly Community Plan

Age in Place – Not Stuck in Place

Project Report

March 31st, 2021

Barnes Management Group Inc.

76 Victor Ave., M4k 1A8

Toronto, Ontario

Table of Contents

I. Age-Friendly Communities (AFC)

What is an Age-Friendly Community?

In 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the **Global Age-Friendly Cities Project.** This project involved cities from around the world to gather information from seniors, senior-care providers and other groups and individuals with an interest in age-friendly communities. The conclusions from this project identified eight key domains of community life in which communities can become more" age-friendly". (see figure 1)
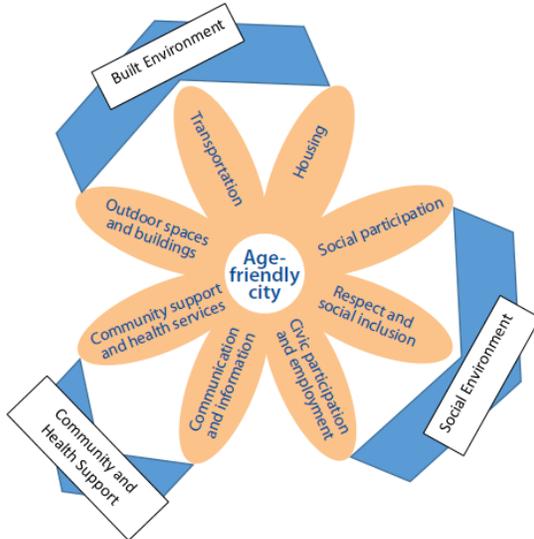
Since then, communities world-wide have engaged in community-based planning with the goal of becoming Age-Friendly Communities. These communities (as described by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariate) provide "supportive physical and social environments that enable older people to live active, safe and meaningful lives that continue to contribute in all areas of community life".

Figure 1: Black, Kathy & Badana, Adrian & Hyer, Kathryn. (2016). Caregivers' Considerations on Age-friendly Community Features. Annals of Gerontology and Geriatric Research. 3. 1041.

Why this is important for Whitewater Region?

The Township of Whitewater Region is committed to doing its part to ensure that it is a welcoming community and that residents can enjoy quality of life in a rural community.

Seniors and older adults comprise a significant segment of the local population and this segment is growing. In recognition of the challenges faced by seniors in the community, Whitewater Region created a Seniors and Older Adults Task Force to provide leadership in region-wide planning to address these needs. The Task Force's key goal is for seniors in Whitewater Region is "age in place", not be "stuck in place".

The Township of Whitewater Region delivers municipal services to a welcoming community.

What we strive for: The Township of Whitewater Region maintains a rural quality of life by balancing sustainability and growth.

(2020-2030 Strategic Plan)

The eight domains of an Age-Friendly Communities provides a well-documented approach to considering the gaps, strengths, assets, and opportunities to support a community such as Whitewater, to create a community plan. Funding for the planning process was provided by the Ontario Seniors Community Grants Program.

II.   Whitewater Region Demographics

The key points arising from a scan of plans and reports which incorporated demographic data relating to seniors in Whitewater.[1]

- As of the 2016 Census, there were 1490 Whitewater residents aged 65 and over. Seniors made up 21.27% of the population. There were slightly more female seniors (777) than male (725)[2]. In Ontario, 16.7% of the population are seniors.

In Renfrew County,

- the senior's population is expected to grow to 27% of the overall population by 2026 and to more than 1/3 of the population within 20 years[3]

- elderly seniors (aged 80 and over) make up 8.27 % of the population. Projections suggest that by 2030, there will be 1100 seniors 80 and over. By 2040, this number is projected to rise to 1450.

- Approximately 33% of seniors identify as having a disability. This proportion increases as people age. Disability affects mobility, social interactions and often, support required to undertake activities of daily living

- In addition to disability, factors such as lower income, living alone and identifying with a "marginalized population" (e.g., immigrant, indigenous LGBQT+) contribute to the vulnerability of seniors [4]

- The Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County estimates that there are approximately 3,000 people living with dementia in Renfrew County.

"Renfrew County has more seniors living on a low income, has older housing and is most affected by the density and distance form density dynamic facing rural communities[5]"

- Between 2012-2016, the **rate of emergency department (ED) visits for injuries caused by falls** (65 years and older) in Renfrew County and District (RCD) was 85.2 per 1,000 population, **which was significantly higher than**

---

[1] A summary of demographic data related to seniors can be found in Appendix D

[2] Whitewater Region Recreation Master Plan page 14

[3] County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report (December 2020)

[4] United Way of Eastern Ontario, A Profile of Vulnerable Seniors in the United Counties of Prescott Russell, Lanark County and Renfrew County) 2017) page 46

[5] County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report (December 2020)

2

the provincial rate of 58.7 per 1,000. Moreover, the rate of these ED visits for injuries caused by falls (65 years and older) differs across RCD and ranges from 40.1 per 1,000 population in the least disadvantaged areas of RCD to 129.6 per 1,000 in the most disadvantaged areas.

III. Methodology

Considerations:

- The methodology was grounded in the belief that for planning to be successful, all partners must "own the plan" and be strengthened by the planning process itself. For a partner to "own the plan" it is essential that everyone have opportunities to be engaged in its development.

- Whitewater Region is a rural community. As with most rural communities, factors such as distance and isolation create challenges for community engagement. In contrast, a strong commitment to taking care of each other and being good "neighbours" creates a powerful way to connect. Effective planning in rural communities must consider these factors.

- COVID-19 has created challenges to bringing people together for meaningful conversations in a safe way. It is essential that creative approaches to engagement be implemented to ensure that consultations captured the voice of seniors and those supporting seniors from across the entire region.

Phase I: Whitewater Region seniors needs assessment:

Building on the work of the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force[6], the Whitewater Region seniors needs assessment included:

Research/Document Review

- Review of the work of the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force to date

- Analysis of population/demographics

- Review of Whitewater Township initiatives (Active Transportation, Housing), and other rural AFC plans,

- Review of other sources of relevant literature

Engagement/Consultation

The Age-Friendly Communities framework was utilized in the development of the various engagement strategies. These strategies included:

- Community survey

---

[6] https://www.whitewaterregion.ca/community/seniors-task-force/

- Seniors focus groups

- Survey/interviews with those providing services to seniors

The support of the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force[7] was instrumental in the success of the consultation phase. Members of the Task Force ensure effective connections with seniors from across the region by

- Forwarding survey/focus group invitations to key groups (e.g., seniors groups)

- Distributing hard copies of surveys to local meeting places (e.g., businesses)

- Delivering hard copies of materials to seniors

- Assisting seniors to complete surveys

- Connecting consultants with key people in the community

Limitations

The Seniors Needs Assessment phase was completed in approximately four weeks. While there was significant engagement from across the entire region, there may be gaps in the data that will need to be considered in the future.

Phase II: The development of an Age-Friendly Plan

Based on findings from Phase I, a draft Age-Friendly Community Plan was developed. This plan includes principles, strategies, action plans. A key priority for the plan was to ensure that it focused on actions that can be taken by the community and builds on community strengths.

This plan was reviewed first, by the Task Force and then validated by 33 participants in an on-line forum. In addition to validating the plan, important objectives of the on-line forum included gaining community support for the plan and commitment to engage in the implementation of the plan.

IV.   Taking Stock of Community Assets and Needs

Background:

Seniors (65+) are a significant segment of Whitewater Region's population (and growing). Whitewater is a destination for many, either as a place to return to or a place to retire. Most people have a desire to age in place if possible.

> **Community Involvement**
>
> Surveys completed – 121
>
> Three seniors focus groups
> 27 participants
>
> On-line Forum
> 33 participants

---

[7] Please see Appendix E for complete list

4

More than 150 people participated in activities related to taking stock of what the community has to offer seniors and to identify needs and gaps. This level of participation says something about how important older adults are in the life of this community. Also, it speaks to the energy and assets that are already at work and play in Whitewater.

Although one of the major thrusts of this project was to undertake a "needs analysis" as a basis for creating an "age-friendly" community building plan, we believe that successful community development starts with taking stock of community assets and then building on what is working. We have encouraged people to adopt an "abundant community" mind set (versus only focusing on needs)

The process of "taking stock" was actually a set of community development activities. The data gathered and subsequent analysis, are grounded in lived experience and the considerable insights of community members

- data regarding assets and needs were gathered through surveys, interviews and focus groups involving many people with different perspectives on Whitewater; most are seniors [8]

- Both data and analysis of key themes and patterns were validated through a community forum which engaged municipal officials, seniors and service providers

Data from taking stock activities and feedback from the community forum are grouped according to themes and presented in three sections: community assets; needs and issues; opportunities and initiatives to build on.

An Abundant Community – Community Assets [9]

Whitewater is in a great geographic location

- Proximity to Renfrew and Pembroke provides residents with access to specialized medical providers and other services e.g., entertainment, social activities and organizations; travel (airport, train); good highway access

- Nature, quiet, opportunity to participate in outdoor seasonal activities.

People experience a "small town feel" – very friendly communities

- Safe community, lower cost housing, many church communities,

---

[8] Separate reports on the Seniors Survey, Focus Groups and surveys/interviews done with service providers and community group representatives can be found in the Community Research and Engagement Report

[9] Increasingly, the literature on system change, collective impact and community development is encouraging people to adopt a positive attitude and approaches to community development. We are often encouraged to celebrate abundance (what we have and can create) vs being paralyzed by scarcity. Appendix A lists a few website references which relate to asset-based approaches. Among other things these web sites provide useful examples of community development and useful tools for citizen groups

5

- Small town amenities (bank, pharmacy, grocery store, library, coffee shop, hardware store, Cobden park, Cobden Legion, clean, attractive communities)

- Mix of housing

- Responsive community

- Access to fresh foods through markets and roadside sales

- There is a strong Mennonite community as well in the area

There are Extensive Recreation Opportunities and Resources

- Outdoor and varied recreation facilities (indoor and outdoor) e.g., Ottawa River and local lakes for fishing, boating, water activities; camping, curling, local service club participation, hiking trails, cross country skiing, kayaking, golf, several Senior Active Living Centres nearby

- Social activities available such as church lunches/suppers; card and music activities coordinated by the Cobden Legion; curling, bingo; annual fair; Taste of the Valley; etc.

There is a good base of Health and Community Services

- ConnectWell Community Health Centre provides much needed primary health care services

- Carefor and Renfrew Seniors Supports well respected

- While the organizations listed above are responding to community needs, more services are required

- Long-term care and retirement facilities in the community

- Renfrew paramedic services get "high marks" for innovation and seniors supports – of particular note are the Renfrew County Virtual Treatment and Assessment Centre and the Community Paramedic Program

Needs and Issues

It needs to be pointed out that:

- needs and issues are not in any order of priority.

- Needs and issues are based on qualitative data and the experience of community members and service providers

- Although this project focused on seniors, some of the themes /issues identified possibly apply to the population at large and present the opportunity for collective impact work (e.g., transportation; access to information; internet access; physician access; social isolation).

6

- **Age friendly community development can benefit the whole community**

Access to Primary Health Care (family doctors and nurse practitioners)

- Many family doctors are retiring. This was mentioned as a concern for people who have doctors in Pembroke in particular

- Physician recruitment is difficult

- Preference for face-to-face contact vs telemedicine

- Waiting lists for primary health care practitioners are long

I was without a doctor for two years. Now I'm connected with a Nurse Practitioner. It's terrific." Seniors focus group participant

- It was pointed out in focus groups that some seniors were adapting their expectations regarding medical care and saw that professionals other than MDs could meet their needs (e.g., nurse practitioners) and that telemedicine was sometimes more convenient and efficient

There is a need for greater availability of Home Supports and Services

- Paramedic Service gets high praise

- Caregivers are isolated and need support and backup/respite (especially where seniors are experiencing cognitive disabilities and other complex care requirements)

- Need for assisted living (personal supports) which is personalized

- Need for home help which is affordable and flexile based on individual situations (e.g., yard work; housekeeping; minor home repairs)- suggested as an area where volunteers and intergenerational effort might be coordinated on a local level

- Informal caregiving and neighbours helping neighbours is an important part of life in Whitewater. People require and benefit from formal and informal supports. Informal caregiving needs to be supported. For instance, "circles of support" might be an option for consideration. It has proven to be a popular tactic for supporting isolated people with disabilities and in palliative care situations.

7

"Gaps/emerging issues in seniors services"[10]

"In Renfrew County, there are a wide range of available supports and services that geared are to assisting seniors. Generally speaking, the population health in the county is consistent with other rural areas found in the Champlain LHIN.

There is a considerable supply of LTCH beds in the community and additional beds under development. However, a substantial wait list for beds still exists and there are lengthy wait times for accessing these beds based on typical placement rates. The beds also tend to be concentrated in larger population centres. Given the assessed needs of those on the LTCH wait lists, about 30% have lower priority needs and could be served at home with suitable supports. The supply of retirement homes beds in the county is also considerable but again, these tend to be concentrated mainly in larger centres, especially Pembroke, and there are barriers to affordability.

Residents of the County consume considerable community care services, especially seniors. The most common program within this suite of services is home care. Average wait times for many clients is considered satisfactory but there are some clients who encounter extended waits for service. Supported living programs are more modest in scale and there are limited options available within the county to address needs. Community support programs are well-subscribed and typically do not encounter wait times, although data is not centrally maintained for the service group. While there is a spectrum of formal services available, there is a high reliance on caregivers in the community to help maintain independence. Where these informal supports are not sustainable or unavailable, it falls to the formal system of supports and services to address these needs."

There is no "one stop" shop for information about services and community activities

- 211 not well known – no "go to" source for information re: services

- Lack of Internet access and tech literacy limits access

---

[10] County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report (December 2020) outlines "Gaps/emerging issues in housing" (section 3.3)

8

- Local events/activities known to locals but not regionally

> "It's hard for seniors to find out about what services are offered. It's especially hard for seniors living alone in the community and seniors who cannot access the internet." Seniors focus group participant

> "We accessed services while my husband was ill. It's good to know what is available." Seniors focus group participant

Internet Access and Technical Support

- "everything is on-line, but not everybody is on-line" Unavailability of affordable broadband

- Access to hardware (affordability; lack of tech experience to acquire)

- Need for education and support to use technology

- Some problems with 911 calls being routed to Quebec – potentially life threatening

- Alternate access to information for those who can't or won't go on-line

> "When COVID hit, our fitness program was offered on ZOOM. Many seniors figured out how to use ZOOM. But in reality, some seniors were excluded because they do not have computers or cannot afford it." Seniors focus group participant

Service Navigation is difficult and service system experienced is not coordinated or personalized

- Starts with limited access to information and extends to lack of proactive care/life planning

- System is daunting to many. Seniors need assistance on their terms, to help them think through what they require, how to access services and to establish "realistic" expectations re wait times and what services will be received.

9

- Where people have supports, lack of back up if a worker doesn't show up or isn't a good match for individual

Transportation and mobility are problems for people who don't drive and those who have difficulty making longer trips

- Carefor Transportation service for medical appointments is well respected;

- No transportation for non-medical travel and no "public transportation"

- Personal networks are important (informal) source of transportation. There is a potential to increase mobility if volunteer driving and ride sharing are supported

- Need for flexible and affordable transportation- lack of mobility reinforces isolation

More Affordable Housing with Supports is required to support people to continue to live in the communities they call "home"

- No transitional housing (between own home and care homes)

- There needs to be discussion of possibilities for pooling resources (e.g., co-housing or cooperative living)- could include: help getting organized and creating projects; property/real estate and property management + coordinated supports

    "I am happy to live on my own and able to manage to take care of things. But I want to know what can be available to me should my needs change." Seniors focus group participant

- Couples being separated when one requires intensive supports and the other doesn't

- No other options (e.g., intergenerational housing, home sharing, etc.) that are being explored in other communities
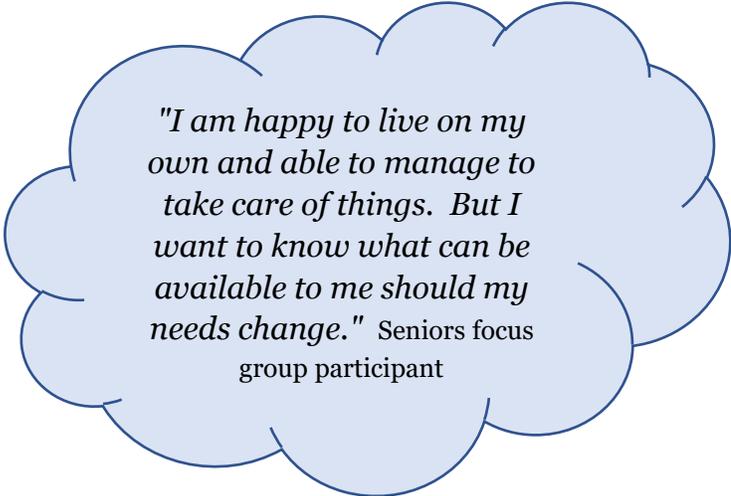
The County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report summarizes gaps/emerging issues in housing [11]

> "Based on the analysis of housing needs and current supply trends, there are some notable issues that seniors face. While the overall

---

[11] https://www.countyofrenfrew.on.ca/en/community-services/resources/Documents/SeniorsHousingStrategySummary.pdf
County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Summary Report (December 2020) (section 2.3)

10

population will only grow modestly, the number of seniors in the county will continue to grow over the next 20 years due to the general aging of the population. This will create an on-going demand for suitable housing options both in larger population centres in and in areas beyond where the share of seniors will continue to increase above 35%. Despite this need, the production of new units is not yet reflecting this shift as there are limited middle-market and rental housing options coming on-line. There is also a lack of purpose-built rental housing, as reflected by lower vacancy rates and rising rents. This has resulted in limited housing options for seniors wanting to downsize or rent.

Given the gradual increase in single person senior households and a general trending to smaller household sizes, there is a need for new housing supply to better address these needs. Affordability is also a concern for a number of seniors, especially those who are renters, and these issues tend to be even more pronounced for older seniors (75+). Lower average incomes, growing social assistance caseloads and longer wait times to access community housing further underscore this need. For those seniors needing access to special needs or care-oriented housing, there are also issues. The supply of special needs housing is limited and while there are a range of retirement and long-term care homes in the county, demand for this accommodation remains high. While additional beds are coming on- line, these represent a modest increase to the overall supply. There is also a tendency for these beds to be concentrated in larger population centres within Renfrew County. Affordability concerns also exist, especially for retirement home options. Additional care-oriented housing supply will need to increase to respond to these gaps, having regard for price and location."

Barriers to Accessibility limit community participation

- Safe and adequate parking near public facilities (e.g. arenas, banks)

- Paved road shoulders to encourage active transportation

- Snow and weather make Winter access to facilities and mobility more difficult

11

Social Isolation and marginalization is a BIG driver of mental and physical health issues

- Each community has its own events and networks. Need more local events to connect people and to connect between/among communities

> *"Isolation is hard for people. Even before COVID, some people were very isolated"*
> Seniors focus group participant

- Support for intergenerational activities

- Seniors have gifts to share- many are active volunteers

- Covid-19 has made social isolation worse BUT has also caused some seniors to "adapt" (e.g. – self-help; reach out to others; "go on-line")

- A focus group participant noted that there are 10 Single women, 90+ years old living alone (Cobden)

> *"There are LGBTQ seniors living rurally/isolated/privately by choice. When they need to access services in the home/they worry that the health care provider may not be aware of LGBTQ issues and may be judgmental".*
> Seniors focus group participant

- LGBTQ seniors =wary of the system – bad experiences with acceptance and understanding of the issues they face – may be marginalized by stigma

- End of life separation of couples

- Covid has exacerbated isolation of those living alone, those without good social networks and those who are not connected to internet

- Caregivers who are tired and isolated

Opportunities and Initiatives to Build on

Through interviews and the Community Forum we learned about some initiatives and opportunities for community development that may contribute to age friendly community work in Whitewater Region.

12

Local churches and Ministers provide a network of support for seniors and for a welcoming community

- Ministers from local churches have an informal network or ministerial group. Most ministers provide pastoral care to residents of local nursing homes

- Congregations tend to be made up primarily of older (60 +) adults; siloed by denomination and community; provide some informal outreach to elders within congregation

Possible Areas by which Ministerial and individual churches could contribute to an Age Friendly community:

- Promote awareness of/access to 211 Ontario information re health and social services

- Use existing newsletters, phone networks and communications tools to promote awareness of seniors' issues and activities

- Collaboration across denominations and communities to support volunteer ride sharing/transportation, support for social activities and friendly visiting or phone reassurance. recruit volunteers to help form support circles for isolated seniors

There is a Mennonite community within Whitewater. This Mennonite community has been wonderful in helping out with disaster relief and in enriching the broader community.

Several points worth attending to include:

- Respect and support informal volunteerism. Sometimes formal systems of helping create barriers and place artificial limits on community capacity

"One of our group members mentioned both formal and informal volunteerism. I understand that where the municipality or some other similar group is involved, liability requirements make it necessary to have some formal procedures in place for volunteers. However, too much formality can quickly stifle the volunteer spirit.

Given the right kind of structure, or central contact point, I believe we could find some Mennonite ladies who would be prepared to spend time with housebound seniors or do some driving for grocery shopping, or appointments. But we need a place to connect".

Participant at a seniors focus group – senior who is a Mennonite

- Having a central contact point and some coordination helps to "channel" community effort

13
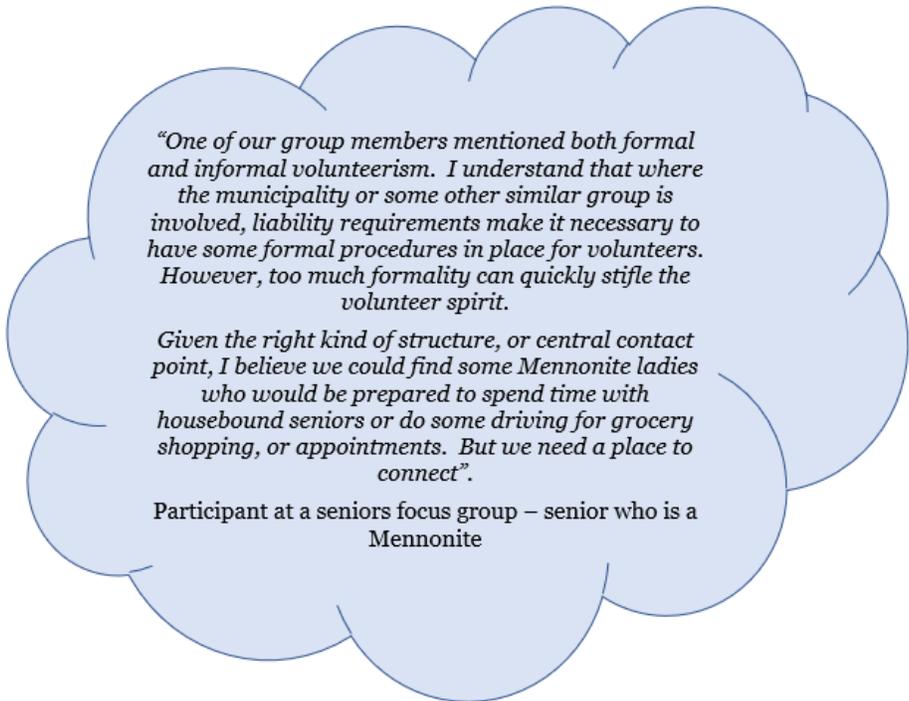
- "Welcoming" is natural BUT...Unconscious bias and community norms sometimes create barriers.

There is an existing structure to promote active living and wellness

Renfrew County and District Active Aging Network **(RCDAAN)** was initiated by Renfrew County District Health Unit in 2016 to collaborate, identify and promote effective strategies to support a coordinated approach to the planning and delivery of physical activity and falls prevention programs and services for older adults within Renfrew County and District.

RCDAAN is the "voice" for active aging in RCD, works with community partners to identify opportunities and potential areas for collaborative action for Active Aging in Renfrew County & District that could be done with the people/organizations and current capacity, to build on what was already working and propose potential next steps. Key priority areas include transportation (Active/Passive), infrastructure, communication, exercise programming**, and** access to programs.

There have been two grants awarded recently for expanding and enriching community support services. Both should have a significant impact on Whitewater.

- The County of Renfrew Caring Partners Grant is administered on behalf of several community support services (CSS) agencies by Renfrew & Area Seniors Home Support Inc. This initiative addresses 4 areas of need (referred to pillars of the initiative): Transportation, purchase of PPE acquisition and loan of computer tablets and promotion/support for seniors centers without walls (SCWW)

- The Inclusive Community Grants Program in relation to the Whitewater Region, Carefor Pembroke and Renfrew Home Support have been actively talking with the Whitewater Seniors and Older Adults Task Force about the possibility of both agencies overseeing a satellite office within Whitewater Region, specifically Beachburg. It is our understanding that a grant from the Provincial Government to support this initiative will be announced shortly.

Affordable broadband access is a big issue in all rural areas. The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) has submitted a proposal to the Federal Government "seeking support to deliver ultra-fast, Gig internet to homes and businesses across the Eastern Ontario Region." https://www.eorn.ca/en/index.aspx

14

Ride Share Program:

The County of Renfrew has recently announced a Ride Share Program which may help to create and coordinate opportunities for increased mobility in Whitewater[12]. A recent press release (February 26, 2021) provides an introduction:

"Ride Share Pilot Project to Launch in Renfrew County

'The County of Renfrew is collaborating on an exciting and pioneering pilot and demonstration project of a ride share system to solve rural and small-town transportation challenges affecting many people in Renfrew County and across Ontario. The County of Renfrew is collaborating with RideShark Corporation from Ottawa, to develop the world's first Winterized On-Demand Community Transit Network focused on improved mobility solutions for rural areas"

County of Renfrew Housing Strategy:

The County of Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy provides a basis for collective impact work across organizations and jurisdictions. Some descriptive excerpts from the recent Renfrew Seniors Housing Strategy Report (December 2020) indicate that the strategy incorporates many of the needs identified though this Whitewater project

"The strategy is *intended to help guide the County in the various roles it has with regards to supporting seniors needs. Seniors are served by a range of local organizations and agencies which collectively make up a housing and supports system. So while the County is an important partner within this system, it is one of many stakeholders. This continuum of housing and supports provides a range of housing options and related services for seniors, depending on the level of independence that they enjoy. And while the system would ideally address the needs of local seniors regardless of how their needs change over time, the reality is that needs are not always met.*

The Seniors Housing Strategy provides a unique opportunity for the County to articulate how it can contribute to solutions as a principal partner within the system. Based on the emerging issues from the study, a series of strategic directions were identified to help guide the strategy, namely:

- *Expanding suitable housing options for seniors*

---

[12] https://countyofrenfrew.on.ca/en/news/ride-share-pilot-project-to-launch-in-renfrew-county.aspx

15

- *Improving on support options that enable seniors to age in place appropriately*

- *Increasing the supply of higher-level care facilities within the county*

- *Creating the right environment to identify, facilitate and capitalize on opportunities*

- *Making the seniors housing and supports system more responsive and intuitive*

V.   Whitewater Region AFC Plan
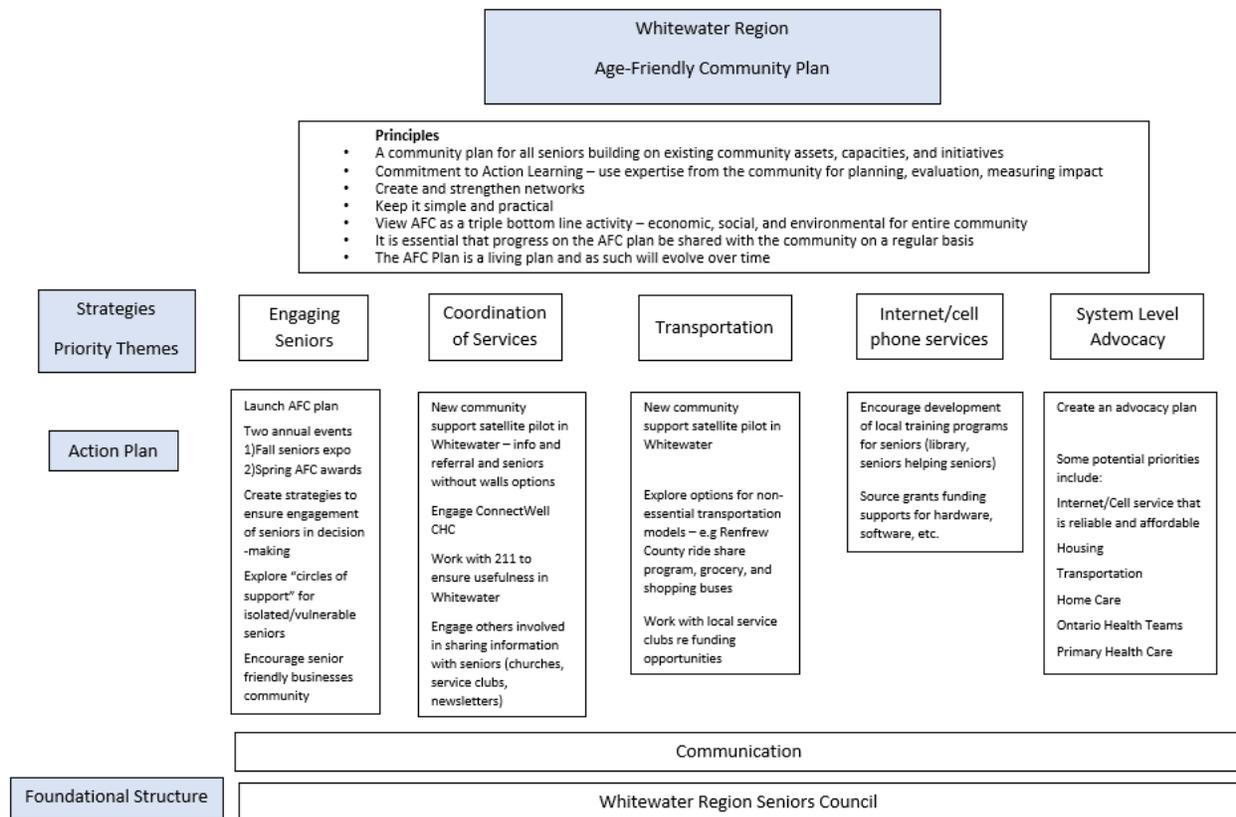
Guiding principles

The principles guiding this plan ensure that the plan (and its implementation) is "owned by the community". As such it is a plan for the entire community, builds and enhances the strengths of the community. Above all, the principles ensure that the plan focusses on priorities and actions that the community has the capacity to implement.

16

Strategies/Priority Themes and Action Plans[13]

1. Engaging Seniors

"Nothing about us without us" is the underlying theme for the engaging seniors in the community. As the Whitewater AFC plan moves forward it is essential that the needs of seniors be recognized, and seniors be engaged as the community evolves.

The action plans offer steps that can be taken to heighten community awareness, support information sharing, ensure seniors are involved in decision-making

2. Coordination of Services[14]

There are many services and opportunities for seniors in Whitewater Region. The challenge is to navigate the various systems and as a result it is difficult to know about/find what is available and there are times when different groups may be doing the similar things at the same time.

The action plans offer some options to improve coordination, navigation and access to services by building on existing services and initiatives.

3. Transportation

It was suggested that access to reliable, affordable, accessible transportation options is one of the most significant areas of concern for many seniors.

The action plans, as suggested, provide initial steps that may be taken to build a stronger transportation system for seniors who cannot drive for themselves.

4. Internet/cell phone services

Increasingly, the easiest way to connect is by using technology. Many seniors who are interested in using this option face barriers including limited knowledge in how to use the technology and costs related to hardware/software.

The action plan suggests steps that may be taken to reduce these barriers.

5. System Level Advocacy

There are many issues that impact seniors living in Whitewater Region that are beyond the capacity of the community to address on its own. As the Age-Friendly Plan moves forward, there is an opportunity to examine the role that the community can play in advocating for the needs of Whitewater seniors. A list of some of the advocacy priorities is included in the plan. Successful advocacy requires a thoughtful strategic approach to be most effective. As such, some additional planning will be required to determine the most important opportunities.

---

[13] Please see Appendix C
[14] See Appendix B for information regarding Circles of Support

17

6. Communication

The need for strong coordinated communication systems is a theme that cuts across all the priorities. This was identified as a priority for all seniors but even more challenging for seniors who are isolated, vulnerable and hard to read.

Communication strategies need to cover the full range of possibilities (websites, newsletters, hardcopy notices, public postings, radio, newspapers, churches, clubs and word of mouth).

As the six priorities are implemented, it will be important to consider how best to use the full range of communication options to "spread the word" and ensure that all seniors in the community can be connected to what the community has to offer.

7. Whitewater Region Seniors Council

The plan proposes the formation of a leadership group mandated to provide oversight as the plan is implemented. It is recommended that this group include seniors, elected officials, Whitewater Region staff and people who provide services to seniors.

This group would monitor the implementation of the plan, look for new opportunities, synergies between initiatives, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and continue to evolve the plan over time.

Parking lot

During the planning process, there were a few themes that were identified that are not included in the plan. In particular, the needs of caregivers and the need to consider strengthening active living programs were raised several times. As the plan is implemented, it will be important to be aware of these themes and when the time is right to consider how they might be incorporated into the plan.

VI.   Next Steps

This report will be presented to the Township of Whitewater Region council in the near future. Once the plan is approved, the Seniors and Older Adults Task Force will begin work to develop an implementation plan that will ensure that directions outlined in the AFC Plan becomes a reality.

VII.   Concluding remarks

Whitewater Region is an abundant community and there are many strengths and assets on which to build to move toward the vision of an Age-Friendly Community. This plan provides a realistic starting point for the community to move forward in tangible ways.

18

Appendices

Appendix A – Community Development: Creating a welcoming and abundant Community

Most community benefit organizations are challenged by external forces (e.g., the impact of Covid 19; system "modernizations" and Government funding limits and the complexity of the barriers to welcoming community) AND internal resource limitations, leadership successions and the capacity to influence sustainable change in their communities.

Organizational leaders need to examine how they think about the work that they do and to explore opportunities for creating greater impact through intentional collaboration and strategic restructuring.

This document provides:

1. A few ideas to think about in crafting community development and collective plans

2. Suggestions regarding resources that support collaboration and restructuring so that we can do, "Better Together"

1. Some Thoughts regarding Community Development

- Communities are not broken BUT barriers to welcoming communities cannot be solved through service systems alone.

- Consider your core work is co-creating "Abundant Community"

- Complex issues and dispersion of resources call for collective impact work   See Stanford Social Innovation Review (By John Kania & Mark Kramer Winter 2011 FSG Video Clip: http://www.fsg.org/publications/collective-impact#download-area

- Creating the Future https://creatingthefuture.org/ encourages us to "Change the questions, change the world". They provide three catalytic questions to launch community building dialogue:

    o What do we want life to be like?

    o Who else cares About this?

    o What could we have together that none of us has on our own?

- Organizational Identity can be limiting factor /inhibitor

    o *Historically Heroic:* stand-alone – self-sufficient & self-protecting institutions

- - Mental models and defensive routines are often so much a part of who we are, that we are often unaware of them
  - *Like Minded* – We associate with and trust those who are most like us and who think like us
- *Cultivating an "Abundant Community" Mindset & Orientation*
  - Bowling Alone – institutions, systems and programmes have weakened community
  - Being "part of" vs "community is out there"
  - community building is a core activity vs supplemental or simply a means to "build our brand"
  - ABCD – scarcity vs abundance (gift) orientation / "collective enoughness"
- *Sharing is Untidy, complex, often inefficient and full of surprises*
  - not necessarily 50-50
  - messy and time consuming
  - requires "change-ability"
  - Trust relationships take time
- **Invest, Intentionally in Capacity Building**
  - **Stewardship of Network –** intentional and strategic management of relationships
  - Risk assessment and management
  - Succession planning and gift assessment
  - Embrace the three unwelcome teachers "fallibility, ignorance and error" (organizational learning)
- **Explore "The Power of Possibility"** Think about how changing circumstances can provide opportunities for strategic restructuring / integration with other organizations to produce greater community impact

2. **A Few Useful Resources For collaboration and community building**

- **Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement** http://tamarackcommunity.ca/index.php
- **Rural Ontario Institute** http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/
- **Creating the Future** https://creatingthefuture.org/
- **Nurture Development** https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/blog/

20

- **Abundant Community** https://www.abundantcommunity.com/

- **Project for Public Spaces** https://www.pps.org/about

- ***RISE** – Established to support the formation and development of Ontario Health Teams. Lots of resources and practical tools which can be used in interagency work, regardless of the service sector /across sectors https://www.mcmasterforum.org/rise/access-resources/key-resources*

21

Appendix B – Building Community and Reducing Socialization through Circles of Support

Circles of support -what are they?

A circle of support involves a group of people coming together to help formulate, promote and support the goals of a person with disability. The circle acts as a community of friendship and support around the person at the centre. It is a means of providing practical advice, solving problems and generating creative ideas to contribute positively to the person's life.

Circles of support can be known by other names, such as networks of support or a circle of friends. The name doesn't matter but in this manual a circle of support refers to people gathering in a voluntary and intentional way to progress the interests of an individual person with disability.

Circles of support are based on an understanding of the importance of relationships in our life and the need for strong support networks. This is especially important for someone who might be vulnerable because of disability. Many of us have friends or informal networks that we rely on when we need advice, when we are in crisis and when we want to share our triumphs. For many people with disability, these typical connections may not exist automatically and need facilitation.

The people who participate in the circle, how often they come together, the topics that are discussed and the formality of the meetings can vary between circles of support, but they are all made up of people who care about the person and want to actively grow his or her life opportunities.

<u>Some Resources:</u>

Circles of Support: A Manual for Getting Started:

> https://www.ric.org.au/assets/Uploads/circles-of-support/fc67c032b4/Circles-of-Support-Manual-2019.pdf

Community Circles:

> http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/about/hsa-foundation/community-circles/

Connections with Purpose and Meaning: Making a reality of asset-based approaches:

> https://www.community-circles.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Course-options-with-links.pdf

22

Appendix C – Useful Links to Information/Examples Relating to Action Plans

Advisory Councils

- Arnprior completed an Age-Friendly Community Plan in 2016 and subsequently created the "Greater Arnprior Seniors Council. The Terms of Reference for the Council can be found at:

  http://www.agefriendlyarnprior.ca/uploads/1/0/5/8/105825339/gasc_terms_of_reference_rev_jan_2018.pdf

- Board Source is an excellent source of practical information regarding non-profit governance. One of their resource documents ADVISORY COUNCILS- NINE KEYS TO SUCCESS may be a useful reference if Whitewater proceeds with a Seniors Council https://boardsource.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/9-Keys-Success-Advisory-Council.pdf?hsCtaTracking=8dacd2d1-12a2-4281-a6db-b5b03cca42de%7C57e67e8d-6a50-48a8-937c-96f7ffc7558d

Community Engagement and Information

Two of the suggestions made regarding providing information to seniors and engaging the community in sharing what's available are a Seniors Expo and an Information Package or Seniors Directory. Examples of both of these activities can be found in neighboring Lanark County. Carebridge Community Support (https://www.carebridge.ca/ https://www.carebridge.ca/) has spearheaded the Seniors Expo for several years.

https://www.insideottawavalley.com/community-story/9590331-over-800-seniors-attend-north-lanark-seniors-expo-in-almonte/

The Directory is a collaborative project, supported by the Municipality of Mississippi Mills and a network of organizations. It is well supported by local businesses:

https://www.toronto.com/news-story/10339882-do-you-offer-a-senior-friendly-service-new-survey-to-help-build-north-lanark-seniors-directory/

Community Transportation

The Rural Ontario Institute has supported capacity building and knowledge sharing among communities attempting to create greater mobility and local transportation resources. Although the **Ontario Community Transportation Network (OCTN)** (http://www.octn.ca/about) initiative was not sustainable it was a very good effort and is an example to learn from:

23

"The [Rural Ontario Institute (ROI)](#) and the [Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC)](#) with funding support from the [Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO)](#) have collaborated to develop the **Ontario Community Transportation Network (OCTN)**. The OCTN connects individuals, organizations, and transportation providers interested in exchanging information, experiences and best practices about community transportation services in Ontario. Through this Network, you will be able to connect with other communities who have implemented or are in the process of developing community transportation services"

Sustaining Age Friendly Community Development

- Elizabeth Russell, Mark W. Skinner & Ken Fowler (2019) Emergent Challenges and Opportunities to Sustaining Age-friendly Initiatives: Qualitative Findings from a Canadian Age-friendly Funding Program

  https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5da87442cb7dea389b1d0007/t/5dc485de2aaaec02ca970e7e/1573160418643/Russell+Skinner+Fowler+%282019%29.pdf

Abstract: *Age-friendly initiatives often are motivated by a single funding injection from national or sub-national governments, frequently challenging human and financial resources at the community level. To address this problem, this paper examines the challenges and opportunities to sustaining age-friendly programs in the context of a Canadian age-friendly funding program. Based on a qualitative thematic content analysis of interview data with 35 age-friendly committee members drawn from 11 communities, results show that age-friendly sustainability may be conceptualized as an implementation gap between early development stages and long-term viability. Consistent over-dependence on volunteers and on committees' limited capacity may create burnout, limiting sustainability and the extent to which communities can truly become "age-friendly". To close this implementation gap while still remaining true to the grass-roots intention of the global age-friendly agenda, sustainable initiatives should include community champions, multi-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations, and systemic municipal involvement.*

Ontario Government Finding the Right Fit: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide:

https://www.ontario.ca/document/finding-right-fit-age-friendly-community-planning

"*Creating an age-friendly province takes all of us: residents, community groups, governments, the business community and the non-profit sector working together. A wealth of knowledge and resources from universities, the government and non-governmental organizations supports age-friendly community planning initiatives. We have designed this guide to discuss questions about Ontario communities and*

24

affected stakeholders undertaking or contemplating AFC initiatives. The Ontario Seniors' Secretariat (OSS), the University of Waterloo, McMaster University and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario have developed this guide to introduce age-friendly principles. It also provides a framework for selecting from a range of tools and community assessment measures to inform your age-friendly community action plan. This guide:

- *Explains the characteristics of an age-friendly community and how it can respond to the opportunities and challenges of Ontario's aging population*

- *Provides a 'one-stop shop' for a broad range of existing AFC resources"*

- *Recognizes that collecting information that reflects or captures the characteristics of your community as broadly as possible is critical to a successful AFC initiative*

- *Offers those working on AFC initiatives a framework for making informed choices from among several flexible community assessment tools that can be tailored and adapted to local circumstances*

Appendix D – Demographics

Characteristic	Whitewater Region Township	Renfrew County and District Health Unit	Ontario
Population and Age Distribution			
Population	7,009	103,593	13,448,494
Average age	43.5	43.3	41.0
Number of individuals (%) aged 65+	1,490 (21.3%)	21,650 (20.9%)	2,251,655 (16.7%)
Gender			
Male	49.1%	49.9%	48.8%
Female	50.9%	50.1%	51.2%
Sociodemographic Information			
Immigrants (born outside Canada)	4.6%	5.5%	29.1%
Visible minority	0.6%	2.6%	29.3%
Average household size	2.5 people	2.3 people	2.6 people
Indigenous Identity			
Number of individuals Registered or Treaty Indian (%)	140 (2.1%)	2,703 (2.7%)	170,895 (1.3%)
Number of individuals with Indigenous Identity (%)	515 (7.5%)	8,705 (8.7%)	374,395 (2.8%)
Language			
English only	88.2%	87.3%	86.0%
French only	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%
English and French	11.3%	12.2%	11.2%
Neither English nor French	0.4%	0.2%	2.5%
Income			
Average total income of individuals age 15+, 2015	$40,688	$42,424	$47,915
Median total income of households, 2015	$67,157	$67,421	$74,287
Main mode of transportation to work			
Car, truck or van	95.4%	92.3%	77.9%
Walk or bicycle	4.4%	6.3%	6.5%
Public Transit	<0.5%	0.5%	14.6%
Other	<0.5%	0.9%	1.0%

Citation: Statistics Canada. 2017. Whitewater Region Township [Census subdivision], Renfrew County and District Health Unit, [Health region, December 2017], and Ontario [Province]. Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Released November 29, 2017. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed March 18, 2021)

Appendix E – Community Participation

Whitewater Region Seniors and Older Adults Task Force

1. Councillor Neil Nicholson (chair)
2. Reeve Cathy Regier
3. Bonny Johnson
4. Bev Buchanan
5. Will Patterson
6. Sheila O'Brien
7. Gwen Bennett
8. Moira D'Aoust
9. Robert Tremblay CAO
10. Ivan Burton Planner/ Economic Development Officer

Providers and Community Organizations Responding to AFC Survey

1. ConnectWell Community Health Centre
2. County of Renfrew   Community Services and Property & Development Departments
3. CareFor Health and Community Services
4. Renfrew and District Seniors Home Support
5. Renfrew County District Health Unit
6. Whitewater Ministerial
7. Champlain Community Support Network (CCSN) Capacity Developer
8. 211 Ontario
9. Cobden Civitan Club
10. Renfrew Victoria Hospital

Whitewater Region Seniors Needs Assessment and Age-Friendly Community Plan

Age in Place – Not Stuck in Place

Community Research and Engagement Report

March 31st, 2021

Barnes Management Group Inc.

76 Victor Ave., M4k 1A8

Toronto, Ontario

Table of Contents

ii

Community Research Report
Whitewater Age Friendly Community Initiative
(March, 2021)

In February and March 2021 Barnes Management Group (BMG) provided consulting support to the Whitewater Seniors and Older Adults Task Force in preparing for the development of an Age Friendly Community Plan. Phase I of this project included taking stock of community assets, needs gaps and opportunities for development. Based on this information, Phase II led to the development of guiding principles and strategic directions

This document consolidates reports of three data gathering/community engagement activities which took place in February 2021:

1. **Summary of Survey Results**
2. **Summary of Focus Group**
3. **Composite – Whitewater Age Friendly Communities Service Providers Survey**

I. Senior Needs Analysis Summary of Survey Results Whitewater Region

Background

- The survey was developed using the AFC Needs Assessment Survey as a guide

- Available for 2 weeks

- 121 surveys completed by a wide range of individuals 80% of whom were seniors (see Appendix A)

- Some respondents indicated that the use of open-ended questions was a challenge and would have preferred numeric rating scales

- While there are clearly trends and themes that appeared in the responses (most common ones highlighted in this summary), the information collected is very rich data that may be of value to return to as initiatives develop.

Summary – Strengths, Challenges, Suggestions for Improvement

A. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Respondents identified many strengths in the Whitewater Region including

➢ Safety, low crime rates

1

- Local amenities (churches, library, township building, businesses, arenas, service clubs)
- Rural beauty and access to nature

Identified challenges were related to

- Locations that were difficult to access for people with disabilities
- Difficulties during winter conditions where snow clearing was an issue
- Access to public washrooms

Suggested improvements included:

- Continuing to find ways to remove barriers for people with disabilities
- Enhance attention to snow clearing
- Exploring options to increase access to public washrooms

B. Transportation

Many strengths were identified including:

- Parking that provides easy access to destination locations
- Road signage
- Good roads
- Access to drives by volunteers, friends/family

Transportation challenges were a recurring theme across several domains in this survey

- Living in a rural community means that residents must have access to some form of transportation
- Public transportation services are not an option
- Several did not know what other formal options were available
- Others spoke to limitations of existing transportation programs – limited access to non-essential drives, affordability of drives – especially when travelling long distances (e.g., to Ottawa for medical care), options for seniors with disabilities (e.g., using wheelchairs)

Suggested improvements included:

- Consideration of a weekly bus service to larger communities
- See suggestions in section 6 – Communication and information

C. Housing

Several community strengths were identified including

- Retirement Homes and Long Term Care Homes

- Access to supports to remain at home – lawn care, snow removal

- Access to health services in the home – CCAC, Carefor, Renfrew County Virtual Treatment and Assessment Centre

- Many of the challenges and suggestions are included in section 6 - Communication and Information

- While some respondents noted the availability of rentals, affordable housing, many noted that there were limited options

Additional suggestions for improvement included:

- Exploring options to increase access to rental/affordable housing within the region

- Ensuring increased access to affordable services to support seniors to remain in their own homes

- Explore subsidies to support informal caregivers and home repairs

- Need to plan for smooth transitions to different levels of housing

D. Respect and Social Inclusion

- There are a broad range of activities for seniors across Whitewater Region – offered by churches, service clubs, seniors groups and local not-for-profits and many run by volunteers

- Several respondents suggested the need to ensure meaningful ways for seniors to engage in planning initiatives – this was particularly noted in discussions related to community support and health services

- This needs assessment survey, and the work of the Task Force was identified as a good example of consultation

E. Social Participation

- There are many opportunities for social participation in Whitewater Region – many options offered by seniors' groups, churches, library, service clubs, etc.

- Many of the challenges and suggestions are included in sections 2 – Transportation and 6 – Communication and Information

F. Communication and Information

- Multiple sources were identified – newsletters, friends/family, local notice boards, business/service clubs/churches, newspaper, township website

- Challenges most commonly identified barriers related to access to technology (internet, cell service), affordability of services, capacity of seniors

3

> A recurring theme across most of the domains in the survey related to challenges to access information and know what is available, where and when

Suggested improvements included:

> Continued use of hard copy options for information.

> Improved and more affordable cell and internet services

> Computer training for seniors

> A centralized coordinated approach to sharing information – using multiple options – notice boards, web page, Facebook, electronic and hard copy communication

> Offering system navigation support

> Sharing information through regular meetings e.g., Town Halls

G. Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

> There are many options for seniors who wish to volunteer their time – churches, seniors groups, service clubs, not-for-profits, etc.

> However, there are few options for seniors who wish to find employment

> Many of the challenges and suggestions are included in section 6 – Communication and Information

Suggestions for improvement included:

> Focusing on volunteer recruitment, training perhaps through a centralized database

H. Community Support and Health Services

Respondents spoke highly of the various services available in Whitewater Region including:

> The medical clinic/CHC

> Paramed wellness checks

> Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre

> Community support services

Many of the challenges and suggestions are included in the sections 2 - Transportation and 6 - Communication and Information. Other challenges included:

> The need for more doctors/long wait times to be accepted into existing practices

> Inability to access CHC services if not a registered patient

4

II. Seniors Needs Analysis Focus Groups Whitewater Region

<u>Background</u>

- ➢ 3 x 1 hour Zoom sessions
- ➢ 28 community members (total)+ several members of the AFC Task Force participated in each group
- ➢ AFC Needs Assessment Survey was used as a guide. Participants were polled to determine conversation priorities. Top 3-4 areas of concern were identified and discussed
- ➢ Wide range of backgrounds- many retired health care and education professionals; most participants are active community volunteers and about 25-30% self-identified as caregivers or past caregivers (spouse or parents now deceased)

Summary – Issues and Ideas arising from conversations

A. Access to Primary Health Care (family doctors and nurse practitioners)

- ➢ Many family doctors are retiring. This was mentioned as a concern for people who have doctors in Pembroke in particular
- ➢ Physician recruitment is difficult
- ➢ Preference for face-to-face contact vs telemedicine
- ➢ Waiting lists for primary health care practitioners are long

B. Information about services and community Activities

- ➢ 211 not well known – no 'go to" source for information re services
- ➢ Lack of Internet access and tech literacy limits access
- ➢ Local events /activities known to locals but not regionally

C. Service Navigation is difficult and service system experienced as not coordinated, nor personalized

- ➢ Starts with limited access to information and extends to lack of proactive care/life planning
- ➢ System is daunting to many – need assistance on their terms in thinking through what they require, how to access and to establish "realistic" expectations re wait times and what services will actually be like
- ➢ Where people have supports, lack of back up if a worker doesn't show up or isn't a good match for individual

5

D. Transportation and mobility are problems for people who don't drive and those who have difficulty making longer trips

➢ Carefor Transportation respected; no "public" transportation

➢ Personal networks important source of transportation

➢ Need for flexible and affordable transportation- lack of mobility reinforces isolation

➢ Ride sharing and local coordinated network of local drivers mentioned several times as a necessary strategy –mentioned that Civitan has money set aside to "help move people"

E. Internet Access and Technical Support

➢ "everything is on-line, but not everybody is on-line" Unavailability of affordable broadband

➢ Access to hardware (affordability; lack of tech experience to acquire)

➢ Need for education and support to use technology

➢ Some problems with 911 calls being routed to Quebec – potentially life threatening

➢ Alternate access to information for those who cannot or won't go on-line

F. Housing

➢ No transitional housing (between own home and care homes)

➢ Possibility of pooling resources – (e.g., cohousing or cooperative living)- could include property /real estate and property management + coordinated supports

➢ Couples being separated when one requires intensive supports and the other doesn't

G. Home Supports and Services

➢ Paramedic Service gets high praise

➢ Caregivers are isolated and need support and backup/respite -especially where seniors are experiencing cognitive disabilities and other complex care requirements)

➢ Need for assisted living (personal supports) which is personalized

➢ Need for home help which is affordable and flexile/based on individual situations (e.g., yard work; housekeeping; minor home repairs)- suggested as an area where volunteers and intergenerational effort might be coordinated on a local level

6

> "circles of support" might be strategy (popular tactic for supporting isolated people with disabilities)

H. Social Participation

> Each community has its own events and networks. Need more local events to connect people and to connect between/among communities

> Support for intergenerational activities

> Seniors have gifts to share- many are active volunteers

> Covid 19 has made social isolation worse BUT has also caused some seniors to "adapt" (e.g. – self-help; reach out to others; "go on-line")

I. Accessibility and Public Safety

> Safe and adequate parking near public facilities (e.g., arenas)

> Paved road shoulders to encourage active transportation

J. Social Isolation and Marginalization

> Big driver of mental and physical health issues

> Ten single women 90+ years old living alone (Cobden)

> LGBTQ seniors = wary of the system – bad experiences with acceptance and understanding of the issues they face – may be marginalized by stigma

> End of life separation of couples

> Covid has exacerbated isolation of those living alone, those without good social networks and those who are not connected to internet

> Caregivers who are tired and isolated

III. Composite – Whitewater Age Friendly Communities Service Providers Survey

Background

Representatives from 10 community organizations and service providers either responded to a survey (8) or participated in telephone/video interviews. A list of organizations responding is appended.

Response was stronger from agencies/service providers than from local groups. Service providers consistently expressed:

> Support for the age friendly initiative in Whitewater

> A willingness to support further planning activities and to be involved in the implementation of community development activities

7

Community Assets:

What are the factors/things/community assets in Whitewater that attract seniors and make it a good place for seniors to live?

A. Location

  ➢ Proximity to city and specialized medical providers and other services e.g., entertainment, social activities and organizations; travel (airport, train); good highway access

  ➢ Nature, quiet, opportunity to participate in outdoor seasonal activities

B. Recreation

  ➢ Outdoor and varied recreation facilities (indoor and outdoor) e.g. Ottawa River and local lakes for fishing, boating, water activities; camping, curling, local service club participation, hiking trails, cross country skiing, kayaking, golf, several Senior Active Living Centres nearby

  ➢ social activities available such as church lunches/suppers; card and music activities coordinated by the Cobden Legion; curling, bingo; annual fair; Taste of the Valley; etc.

C. Small town feel – Very Friendly Communities

  ➢ Safe community, lower cost housing, many church communities

  ➢ Small town amenities (bank, pharmacy, grocery store, library, coffee shop, hardware store, Cobden park, Cobden Legion, Clean, attractive communities

  ➢ Mix of housing

  ➢ Responsive community

  ➢ Access to fresh foods through markets and roadside sales

  ➢ There is a strong Mennonite community as well in the area

D. Health Services

  ➢ ConnectWell Community Health Centre (However at this time the CHC is at maximum capacity and unable to expand to meet additional community needs within existing resources. Long-Term Care and retirement facilities in the community

  ➢ Paramedic services

E. Other

  ➢ When residents are in their 'younger' senior years, they are attracted to the Whitewater region, because of its natural beauty, waterways, and distance from

8

the 'hustle & bustle' often associated with life in larger centres. However, the same things that may keep them/bring them to the area, can pose challenges as their health changes. If they have found 'community' with others, this supports them in maintaining their health and well being. If not, the features that once attracted them to the area, could become quite isolating.

- Health care access, Community Paramedic Services, Community Programs, Local Pharmacies, Church groups, Home and Community Care, Exercise and various programs that support independence.

- Whitewater Region is a farming community with many generations of families operating farms. This connection to family and community is a factor for seniors aging in place.

Needs and Gaps: Aging in Place

What are the factors/community assets that support seniors to "age in place"? (e.g.to live a good life and a safe life in their own homes)

A. Community Support - Health and Support Services

- Dental care for seniors whose income may be only slightly above eligibility limits for programs e.g., Seniors Dental Care Program and who still struggle to afford dental care

- Medication costs – some have incomes in low-to-moderate range that makes Ontario Drug Benefit excluded meds a challenge to afford

- further access and availability at the Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre (WBCHC) for the growing needs in the community

- Increased healthcare access especially in Cobden, Rehabilitation services closer to home, affordable and nutritious grocery items locally

- Suitable volunteer support based on the type of service and circumstance

- Access to services if you no longer drive. In-home supports if you need help with personal care, housekeeping, laundry, etc. Accessible housing

- Whitewater Region does not have a home support agency with a physical presence within the community. As a result, many residences do not know how to access services from Carefor or Renfrew Home Support

- Family physician and specialists nearby

- Provincial funding to expand the Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre in Cobden to meet the current demand and the continuous growth that is occurring in the community

9

- ➢ Educational sessions with seniors to help them plan to age in place
- ➢ Community support services e.g., Carefor Transportation that can assist with travel
- ➢ Informal supports; neighbors, friends, church community, etc. Participants noted that Whitewater Region is a safe place to live and neighbours look out for neighbours
- ➢ Having a variety of services available in the community that would support seniors (especially those with no family members close by or who have family members who work that can't be full time caregiver) such as personal care, household work, etc.

B. Information and Communications

- ➢ centralized hub with information on how to access various services. A hub that is easily accessible by phone or in person, not just totally relying on internet/computer access for the aging population
- ➢ better methods of communication based on the aging community
- ➢ Internet and broadband is limited
- ➢ Having the infrastructure, devices and knowledge, to access and use technology effectively

C. Transportation

- ➢ transportation service at a reasonable cost to attend medical appointments, get groceries, etc. Transportation is available but within limits and for a cost, some cannot afford even this supplementary cost while living on fixed income; if a senior is unable to drive this creates isolation
- ➢ Some do not have close family or strong connections and may not reach out for help; very proud and reluctant to admit and request assistance even if needed
- ➢ Access to affordable transportation, meals services, forms assistance, income tax
- ➢ transportation services to get to medical appointments, groceries, etc. when no longer able to drive but can still be independent

D. Recreation and Active Living

- ➢ A fitness centre with pool locally
- ➢ Active seniors' network
- ➢ Centres, activities, cafes
- ➢ Walkable and safe communities
- ➢ Access to enriching recreational activities

10

E. Affordable, Accessible (Supportive) Housing

➢ More availability of subsidized accommodations

➢ When one spouse requires admission to a Long-Term Care Home, there are added expenses that often stretch the other spouse's income beyond affordability on a fixed income

➢ Having access to affordable food, housing, clothing, and health care, including affordable transportation to enable access

➢ Access to a mix of housing options (so that as people age and their needs increase that they do not have to leave their community to access higher levels of care)

F. Community Involvement

➢ Needs to have an active senior's council or group to promote seniors needs and wants

➢ Having a sense of belonging and purpose within their community, and opportunities to engage with others

➢ Having a voice or input into local planning

➢ Neighbourhood and neighbours' connections e.g., many support each other to stay well, do recreation together and provide assistance when there is a family or personal need

Tactics:

What advice can you offer the Seniors & Older Adults Task Force in its effort to support the development of Whitewater as an "Age Friendly Community"?

A. Supportive Housing

➢ "I believe Fairfields was built by local investors and they also ensure their fees are affordable. Care is offered through a partnership with Marianhill Community Services, so perhaps explore other options that can be done locally" (seniors focus group participant)

B. Home Support

➢ Carefor and Renfrew Home support are working with the Task Force in a funding application that would result in a physical presence (the former bank of Nova Scotia in Beachburg) in the community. Both agencies would offer satellite programs where staff and volunteers can work together to promote programs and services. (e.g., lunch and learn or drop-in programming)

➢ Launch with a Seniors day in Whitewater Region and engage the local business to help promote the day

- Engage local older adults in the community for all phases/steps of planning not just "providers of service" to older adults

- Hold local public input forums. Seniors and older adults should be consulted so that they can make suggestions. They have the knowledge of what would make their area and age friendly community

- Offer a peer support program for local visiting, calling

- Support intergenerational program development to connect local youth and older adults to exchange skills/gifts

- Provide or improve subsidies for organizations that provide support services for seniors staying in the home

- Offer subsidies for those seniors that may require assistance

- More regulated home care service

- Whitewater Region is a large rural area so need to find ways to keep a connection and support

C. Resource Development

- Resource for home modification to support older adults to age in place; renovations/materials expensive

- Sidewalks and well- maintained walking paths, increased virtual programming

- Access to affordable nutrition,

- Volunteer buddy program similar to Big Sister/Big Brother program for socially isolated seniors. Ease of access to events/programs that promote connection.

- Affordable transportation service geared to income.

- Incorporate libraries, service clubs, seniors' clubs into program planning; Riverview Senior Social Club has been successful in engaging older adults in Westmeath/LaPasse and includes older adults from other areas, could this be extended/replicated for events/activities offered across the Region on a schedule to minimize travel for some or can travel be arranged to engage more older adults across the Region

- Have dedicated resources and paid staff (at least 1) in the Municipality with volunteers to support and implement the senior strategy

D. Collaboration across Boundaries/Siloes

- There is a lot of good work going on within local municipalities on this topic. Connecting together and forming a list of priorities that are achievable and desired within all communities (could be the rural communities or include the

urban centres as well) and forming a larger, fully represented group could be helpful in lobbying local and provincial and even federal governments. If ideas involve infrastructure, which is costly, then a united front would be more effective.

➢ Additionally, there may be supports/services etc. that do not exist in your area but exist in other areas and there may be opportunities to create access to these.

➢ Economies of scale and the 3P's (private-public partnerships) are becoming more of the reality today. Working together can open access to more.

➢ Form a committee of service providers, municipal representative, youth representatives that would ensure the Age Friendly Community Plan that you have created remains a living document and that items of concern or items that have been identified are worked on by this committee. The Greater Arnprior Seniors Council would be a wonderful resource as they have taken their Age Friendly Plan and have accomplished many items that were identified within the plan.

  o Establish a Senior's Forum/Committee (like a Youth Council)
  o Engage regularly at Senior's Centres meetings
  o Communicate messaging
  o Engage them in volunteering and mentoring opportunities
  o Acknowledge their efforts

➢ Duplication or extension of current programs provided for seniors such as an example the Killaloe Resource Centre or Pembroke 50+ Active Living centre. Ensure we are not reinventing the wheel.

➢ share best practices amongst other local communities and platforms that could be cost – effective and more efficient use of resources/volunteers.

E. Advocacy

➢ It also helps to have a champion who is willing to be the voice/face of the topic.

➢ Advocacy for continued investment in older adults either via Age Friendly Community strategy or with other partners e.g., Seniors Home Support Services; Older Adult Centre Association of Ontario (OACAO).

➢ Advocacy to ensure rural older adults interests/needs considered e.g., transportation, cost, proximity to physical services etc. is included in grant proposals, projects etc. as these differ than reality of older adults in urban areas and planning is often urban-centric.

13

- Ensure older adults are prioritized in local, County plans given the anticipated increase in this demographic locally and beyond.

- Increase funding for infrastructure to provide increased and a variety of healthcare.

- Lobby for increased funding for common community centre, walking track, pool, and ensure it is not all in one location, e.g., store front presence in various areas.

F. Community Engagement

- continue to engage members in the community for their feedback/input which includes seniors, caregivers/family members and local service organizations.

- To ask their residents what's working for them and what's not as they age and ensure that they have diverse representation of both those who will receive benefit from Task Force recommendations and those who will be involved in providing services of benefit to residents, as they seek solutions to address the things that challenge Whitewater in being an Age Friendly Community.

G. Improve Access to Information

- This pandemic has shown some of the service shortfalls needed to support seniors in the community like a support/contact line they could call to get information on non-medical services (for example, how to get grocery delivery, etc.). This age group was at higher risk for this virus and was asked to stay at home. A FB page Connecting Community-Whitewater Region and surrounding area was created by WBCHC to help provide support for all residents including seniors. It has some good information and a place to identify non-medical support needs and services. However, not everyone is on FB but as there was no one (1) point of contact to go to this was developed to try to help provide some support. (Also, with this pandemic, for those healthy 60+ aged volunteers that normally helped with non-medical support, needs had to curtail what activities they could help with.)

- Offer a variety of safe communication mechanisms to communicate/reach all seniors. As seniors age there can be challenges for some communicating only in a technical world.

H. Other

- Renfrew and Area Seniors Home Support has received a "Relief Phase 2" grant from County of Renfrew Social Services. This grant is being administered by Renfrew Home Support on behalf of Community support agencies in the County. There are 4 'pillars' to this initiative: 1) Transportation; 2) Personal Protective Equipment; 3) Tablet lending library and 4) Seniors Center Without Walls. This

14

grant and the collaborative work of CSS agencies will help to address issues/needs identified in Whitewater Region.

➢ Although the grant needs to be spent within a fixed time period, the Task Force needs to consider how grant funding can support AFC priorities.

➢ In 2013, The Renfrew County District Health Unit initiated the Renfrew County and District Active Aging Network (RCDAAN) to support a coordinated approach to the planning and delivery of physical activity and falls prevention programs and services for older adults.

The Task Force needs to engage with The Renfrew County District Health Unit's Health Promoter to ensure Whitewater Region is represented on and active as a member of the RCDANN.

➢ Consider engaging local churches, via the Ministerial Group, in information sharing, volunteer-based support services and initiatives related to promoting community connecting, circles of support and other approaches to reducing social isolation.

IV. Providers and Community Organizations Responding to AFC Survey

1. Whitewater -Bromley Community Health Center
2. County of Renfrew   x 2: Community Services and Property & Development
3. CareFor Health and Community Services
4. Renfrew and District Seniors Home Support
5. Renfrew County District Health Unit
6. Whitewater Ministerial
7. Champlain Community Support Network (CCSN) Capacity Developer
8. 211 Ontario
9. Cobden Civitan Club
10. Renfrew Victoria Hospital

15

V. Appendix A

Survey Respondents – Profile

Gender:	Age:
26% male 73% female 1% other	6% under 55 25% 55-65 55% 66-80 14% 80+
Respondents have lived in Whitewater Region for:	**Where respondents live:**
3% Less than one year 10% 1-5 years 42% 6-10 years 36% 11-30 years 46% More than 31years	24% Cobden 19% Westmeath 23% Beachburg 10% Forester's Falls 8% Haley Station 12% Lapasse 5% Other