A Community for All Ages

TOOLKIT FOR BECOMING
AN AGE-FRIENDLY NIAGARA

Whether you are a Niagara business owner, an employee serving customers, an organization leader or service provider, this ten-page tool kit will help to strengthen your work by planning through an Age-Friendly lens.

Becoming Age-Friendly is a journey. It embraces all of the 12 Living in Niagara Sectors, which align with the principles of a livable community: transportation, housing, prosperity, safety, health - principles important to people of all ages. When we make our communities more Age-Friendly, we improve quality of life for all residents!

This information is provided by the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Network (NAFCN), a group of people promoting local Age-Friendly activity across Niagara. The NAFCN appreciates funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

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Becoming an Age-Friendly Niagara - Overview

Why become Age-Friendly?
• Niagara's population is aging rapidly. A significant segment of Niagara's population is already over 65 years and will double by 2031. Soon there will be more seniors aged 65 than children under 14, more people leaving the workforce than entering it and more deaths than births.

What are the risks of not becoming Age-Friendly?
• The increase in older adults is already creating challenges for older adults and their community: there is a shortage of appropriate, affordable housing; limited flexibility within transportation sector; challenges to keeping seniors connected to their friends, family and community.
• Seniors contribute greatly to our community and economy; the loss will be felt if they are not able to remain connected.

How is the rest of Canada becoming Age-Friendly?
• The Provincial Governments in Manitoba and BC are taking a lead and Age-Friendly has been endorsed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat.
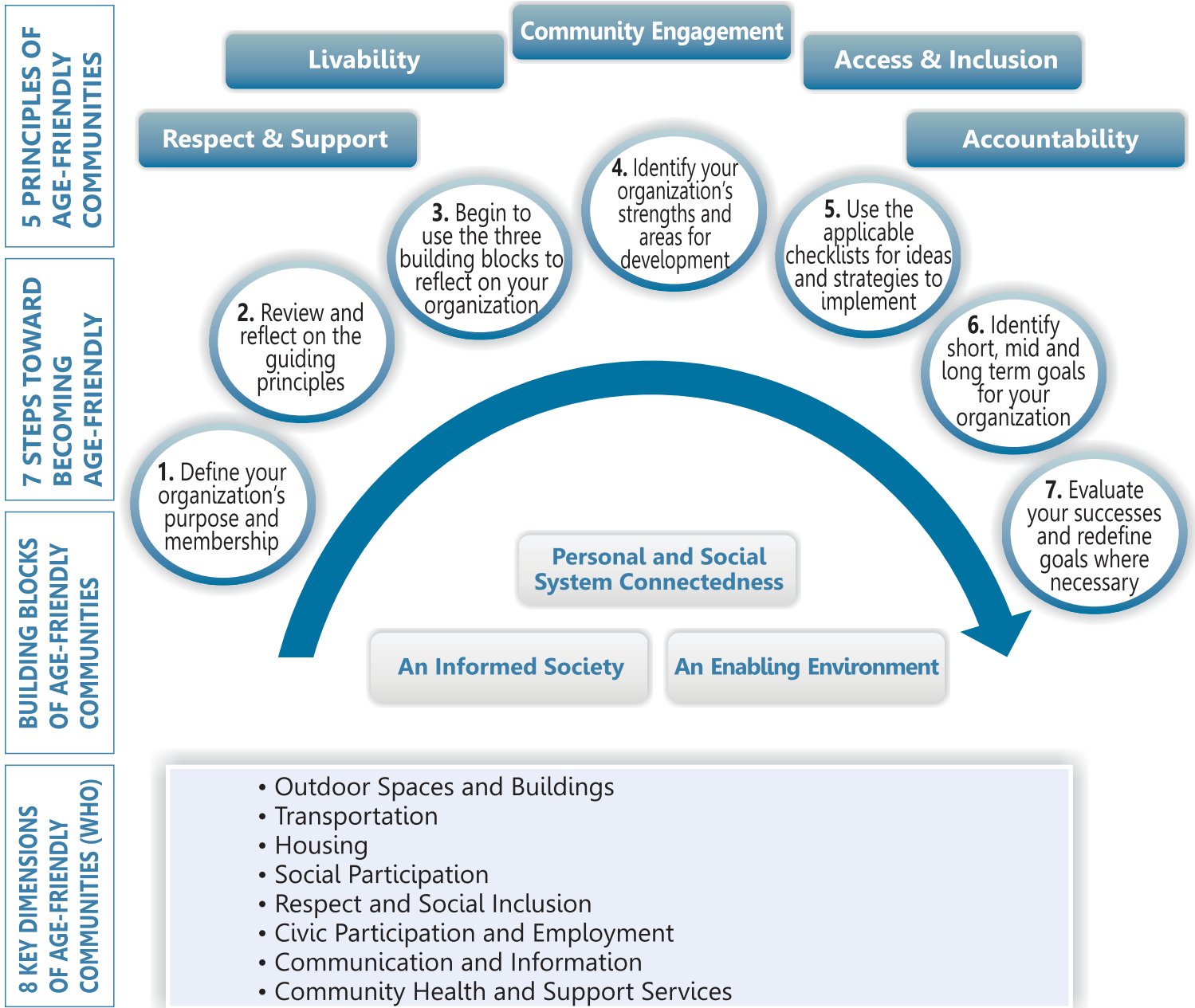
How is Niagara becoming Age-Friendly?
• Niagara Age-Friendly Community initiative (2010-2013) had three years of funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). Five organizations formed a Community Management Committee: Niagara Region, Niagara Connects, The City of Welland, Rose City Seniors Centre and Welland Senior Citizens Advisory Council.
• Over 200 older adults and care takers were engaged across Niagara to hear about their needs and lived experiences; feedback was communicated to over 800 individuals and organizations to help them become age-friendly.
• Evaluation for the initiative was led by Niagara Connects, on behalf of the Niagara-wide community. Three common themes for Age-Friendly action in Niagara emerged:
  ● Information Availability and Knowledge Transfer
  ● Accessibility and Mobility
  ● Respect and Appreciation
• The City of Welland and nine other local Niagara municipalities have endorsed Age-Friendly principles, with each municipality identifying their own approach.
• Organizations and businesses are strengthening their plans for programs and services by applying an Age-Friendly lens to help solve Age-Friendly challenges.
• In 2013, the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Network (NAFCN) was formed to sustain Age-Friendly developments in Niagara. NAFCN is leading construction of a Seniors' Strategy and Action Plan for Niagara, with support from the OTF.

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The Path To Become Age-Friendly

5 PRINCIPLES OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

7 STEPS TOWARD BECOMING AGE-FRIENDLY

BUILDING BLOCKS OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

8 KEY DIMENSIONS OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES (WHO)

Community Engagement

Livability

Access & Inclusion

Respect & Support

Accountability

4. Identify your organization's strengths and areas for development

3. Begin to use the three building blocks to reflect on your organization

5. Use the applicable checklists for ideas and strategies to implement

2. Review and reflect on the guiding principles

6. Identify short, mid and long term goals for your organization

1. Define your organization's purpose and membership

7. Evaluate your successes and redefine goals where necessary

Personal and Social System Connectedness

An Informed Society

An Enabling Environment

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

SOURCE: This diagram is an adaptation of information provide by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, University of Waterloo and the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Project (MAREP). The 8 Key Dimensions of Age-Friendly Communities were developed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

For more information: niagararegion.ca/living/seniors   **Contact Age Friendly:** agefriendly@niagararegion.ca

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Framework for Developing an Age-Friendly Community

VISION: A caring community that optimizes opportunities for overall well-being to enhance quality of life as people age.

Principles of Age-Friendly Communities:

1. Respect and Support of All Citizens:

Recognizes that all citizens are vital members of a community and have the right to self-determination, to fully engage in life across the life span, and to be treated with dignity and respect.

2. Livability:

Promotes and recognizes that health and well-being include the built environment, public spaces, community identity, and choices in transportation, housing options and other social programs.

3. Community Engagement in Decision Making:

Values relationships that actively include older adults in all aspects of decision making and program development relevant to them. It is based upon mutual respect and inclusion of multiple, diverse and equally valuable perspectives and experiences.

4. Access and Inclusion for All:

Responds to the needs of all citizens ensuring fair access to flexible resources and responds to the needs across the life span.

5. Accountability:

Demonstrates that the delivery of these programs, services and the overall planning of communities respects these principles – it is effective, efficient and considers the voices of all citizens.

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Building Blocks of Age-Friendly Communities

AN INFORMED SOCIETY

• Continually learns about the needs and interests of older adults by asking and involving them directly
• Ensures all older adults are provided with the information they need to be engaged and included
• Shares information and provides appropriate training for staff members, volunteers and decision makers at all levels within an organization
• Shares information with the greater community in a way that respects the real lives of older adults

AN ENABLING AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

• Ensures the physical environment is built in accordance with legally mandated accessibility standards and enables older adults to navigate within the environment in a way that is inclusive
• Ensures that the social environment provides programs, services and support necessary for older adults to remain engaged
• Promotes meaningful participation

PERSONAL SOCIAL AND SYSTEM CONNECTEDNESS

• Provides opportunity for older adults to be engaged in their community through programs, services and spaces
• Encourages meaningful partnerships between older adults and service providers through means such as collaboration, consultation or advisory roles
• Knowing and connecting those within and outside of your organization/community to break down the silos that often exist

Source: The Age-Friendly Principles and Building Blocks are an adaptation of the information provided by the by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, University of Waterloo and Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program (MAREP). Key Dimensions of Age-Friendly Communities is an adaptation of the World Health Organization's (WHO) 8 Key Dimensions for Age-Friendly Cities.

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Self-Assessment Checklist, Tip Sheet & Resources

The following tools are intended as a guide to stimulate discussion and action, to help you contribute to making your community more Age-Friendly.

Checklist for Self-Assessment – Take a moment and see how "age-friendly" you are.

Communications with Older Adults Tip Sheet – There are tips that will help you when talking to or serving a senior.

Path for an Organization to Become Age-Friendly – There are seven simple steps to becoming Age-Friendly.

The following resources will take you to sites where you can learn more about becoming age-friendly and will help you on your journey. They have been invaluable to building an age-friendly community in Niagara.

Niagara Connects
www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com, built on 12 Living in Niagara Quality of Life Sectors

Niagara Region
www.niagararegion.ca/living/seniors/agefriendly/default.aspx

Niagara Community Observatory at Brock University
www.brocku.ca/nco

World Health Organization
www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_network/en

Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Programs, University of Waterloo
www.uwaterloo.ca/murray-alzheimer-research-and-education-program

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Checklist for Self-Assessment

How Age-Friendly am I? How Age-Friendly is my organization?

You can make the difference, whether you work for a neighbourhood pharmacy or the biggest box store; whether you are a volunteer of a service agency or the owner of a business; whether you are a bus driver or owner of a taxi company.

Please take a moment and complete the assessment checklist. As an employee, employer or customer, this can help you start a discussion with your employer, employee or business owner on how to be more Age-Friendly, or just help to make you more informed about ways to make your community Age-Friendly.

YES	NO	**An Informed Society**
☐	☐	Training to interact with older adults and understand issues concerning older adults
☐	☐	Continually learn about the needs and interests of older adults by asking and involving them directly
☐	☐	Regularly consult our older adults on how to serve them better
☐	☐	Intergenerational services, programs and ideas such as visiting with a senior or seniors sharing knowledge with youth
☐	☐	Regularly consult with older adults on how best to serve them, e.g. conducting surveys or interviews, focus groups, creating an advisory committee
		Personal and Social System Connectedness
☐	☐	Telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tells callers how to repeat the message at any time
☐	☐	Friendly service is provided, person to person, on request
☐	☐	Printed information has large lettering and the main ideas are shown by clear headings and bold face type
☐	☐	Electronic equipment have large buttons and big lettering
☐	☐	Contributions of skills and experiences of older adults are welcome in paid and unpaid work
☐	☐	Recruit and hire older workers and volunteers

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Checklist for Self-Assessment continued

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Support retirement as a choice, not mandatory
☐	☐	There are flexible opportunities for employment, with options for part-time or seasonal
☐	☐	Retraining opportunities such as training in new technologies is available to our older adult employees
☐	☐	Service staff are courteous and helpful, creating trust through a respectful and careful manner
☐	☐	There is a range of flexible and suitable volunteer options for older adults in our organization
		An Enabling Environment
☐	☐	Physical environment is built in accordance with legally mandated standards and enables older adults to navigate in a way that accommodates their needs – eg. aisles are wide, products on shelves are accessible.
☐	☐	Workplace has been adapted to be accessible
☐	☐	Organization is well-developed with infrastructure, training programs and a workforce of older adult volunteers
☐	☐	The outside physical environment is considerate of the needs of older adults by including such things as a bench by the taxi stand, clear signage, few stairs, sturdy railings and non-slip surfaces, wider aisles and uncluttered pathways, easy to open doors or automatic doors, good lighting
☐	☐	Service counters are at an appropriate height to serve people in a wheelchair or standing with a walker & service stair edges are clearly marked
☐	☐	Non slip floor surfaces with secured floor mats if mats are used obstacles such as wet floor, step up/step down are marked
☐	☐	Parking is close by and designated parking is available and appropriate use enforced
☐	☐	Outside walkways are cleared in winter
☐	☐	Sidewalks are level
☐	☐	Bicycle racks for cyclists
☐	☐	Curb cuts for walkers and strollers

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Communicating with Older Adults Tip-Sheet

Communication and information are vitally important to older adults. Growing older is a process of adjustment and information helps in the transition. Older adults require information about housing, transportation, employment, legal matters, retirement planning, etc. They want to know about health, nutrition, illness prevention and the effects of medication. They're eager for information about programs, services, policies, products as well as leisure, volunteer and cultural activities.

The way that programs, service agencies and business choose to communicate with older adults can have profound implications for all aspects of older adults lives' and well-being. It's important to realize that older adults, because of their numbers, purchasing power and amount of discretionary time can have a significant impact on the success of many businesses and programs.

The following tips are suggested by Health Canada when communicating with older adults:

In person:
• evaluate your attitudes
• create trust through a respectful and caring manner
• practice active listening and effective questioning
• take time
• use "seniors", "older persons" or "older adults" if you need to indicate the age group
• keep in mind that older adults are generally wise shoppers whose lifelong experience comes in handy in detecting flattery and insincerity

By telephone:
• ensure callers can talk to a real person
• train staff to recognize hearing loss and respond appropriately
• reduce echoes through landscaping, carpeting and furnishings
• limit or suppress background noise

In print:
• design print layout to make reading easier
• use 12 plus point type serif fonts such as Times New Roman or headings and subheadings; use bold type to emphasize key words
• use conversational style – take out as much jargon and technical language as possible
• use pictures to help explain the messages in the text
• maximize white space
• add the option to make text larger
• give headings a consistent look

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Communicating with Older Adults Tip-Sheet continued

On-line:
• use medium or bold face type
• use easy-to-scan format: double spaced and lined up evenly on left edge
• add a button to make text larger
• use available space economically
• use clean background in high contrast to text
• provide clear, non-threatening information
• avoid jargon

Navigation Links:
• try to fit all information on one screen
• give headings a consistent look
• use high contrast large text for navigation tools
• require only single mouse clicks
• protect buttons for navigating site from moving with page
• use blue, bold underlined text for links
• make links include any graphics
• make clickable area around link even bigger
• link to specific content, not home page

Other helpful resources for Communicating with Older Adults:

211 Information Niagara
www.informationniagara.com

National Institute on Aging and the National Library of Medicine
www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/checklist.pdf

Health Canada Communicating with Seniors: Advice tips and techniques
www.publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H88-3-30-2001/pdfs/com/comsen_e.pdf

World Health Organization
www.who.int/ageing/publications/PPCommunicationwithOlderPeople.pdf