



Creating an Age-Friendly Business

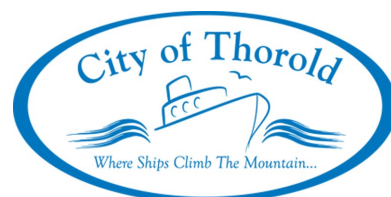


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Thorold aims to be an age-friendly city as it:

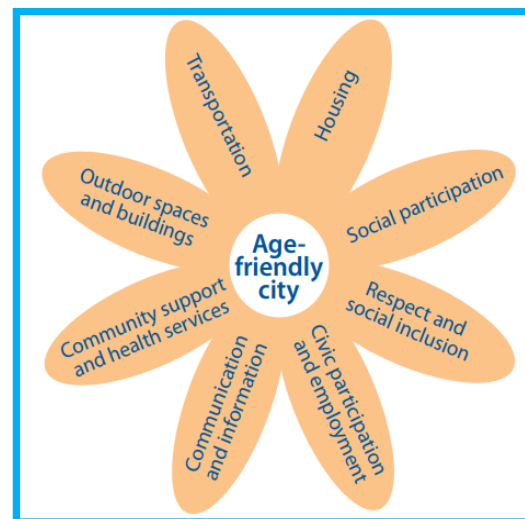
- Benefits everyone: older adults (55+), families children, people with disabilities
- Recognizes the great diversity among older adults
- Promotes the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life
- Respects decisions and lifestyle choices of older adults
- Anticipates and responds to flexibility to aging-related needs and preferences

What is an age-friendly community?

An age-friendly community encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age-friendly community adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified eight dimensions of community friendliness:

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



What does an age-friendly community encompass?

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 their life span, and to be treated with respect and dignity.

Livability

Promotes many of the values of “livable communities” recognizing that health and well-being include many aspects of community living such as vibrant public spaces, strong community identity and a variety of choices in transportation, housing options, and social programs.



Access and Inclusion for All

Responds to the needs of all citizens ensuring equal access to flexible resources, supports, and spaces not negatively influenced by diversity and responds to their needs across their lifespan.

Accountability

Demonstrates that programs, services, and the overall planning of communities are delivered in a manner that respects these principles, is effective and efficient, and considers the voices of all citizens including older adults.

Community Engagement in Decision-Making

Values relationships that actively include older adults in all aspects of decision making and program development.

This community engagement is based on mutual respect and inclusion of multiple, diverse, and equally valuable perspectives and experiences.

Why have an age-friendly community?

An age-friendly community enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easier for older people to stay connected to people that are important to them. It helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

According to the 2016 Census released by Statistics Canada:

- 14.36% of Thorold's population and 15.12% of Niagara's population is aged 55-64
- 16.01% of Thorold's population and 21.39% of Niagara's population is over the age of 65
- Niagara's population aged 65 years and older is projected to double by 2031

- The population of people 65 and older in Canada is now larger than the number of children under 15
- If current population trends continue, seniors (65+) are projected to outnumber children in Canada by a factor of three to two in 20 years' time

Why have an age-friendly business?

Today's older adults are different than yesteryear's seniors as they are increasingly:

- Well and active, living longer and healthier
- Contributing to our community with expertise, life experience, and volunteer time
- Providing valued support to their families

• Consumers in the local economy

Age-friendly related economic opportunities of an aging boomer population (from Environics Analytics):

- Economically, the younger generation will no longer represent the biggest growth market

• In the coming decades, Baby Boomers (ages 50– 69) will control the bulk of wealth and spending

- Boomer households spend 66% more on goods and services than Millennial households (ages 15 to 34)
- Older adults are generally loyal to businesses and services that provide good experiences

An age-friendly business is people-friendly

An age-friendly business is of value to everyone.

It is not just elder-friendly but has benefits for the broader community and its members.

- People with injuries
- Pregnant women
- People with English or French as a second language
- People with sight, hearing, speech or mobility limitations
- Parents with children in strollers
- People with mental illness

Steps to creating an age-friendly business

Take a look around your business

What if you had a walker? What if you couldn't see or hear well? What if it was painful to stand for more than a few minutes? Would you be comfortable patronizing this business?

Ask for input from an older person.

Look outside

- Are there steps without railings?
- Slippery or uneven patches or cluttered walkways?
- Are there curb cuts or ramps for walkers, wheelchairs and strollers?
- At night, is the lighting even or are there dark areas that hide hazards?

Review your advertising, information materials and website

- Do you use print with good contrast?
- Do you have a community bulletin board on which to post information?
- Can a customer enlarge the font on your website?
- Can a customer easily navigate your website?

Walk around inside

- Do staff members greet customers?
- Are the floors shiny? Slippery? Well-maintained? Are there obstacles preventing a clear pathway?
- Is signage clear and legible?
- Are the most frequently selected items within easy reach?
- Are staff friendly and respectful?
- Are wheelchair accessible washrooms with safety bars available?
- If your business is large, are scooters made available?



Additional Considerations

- Magnifying glasses available to help read fine print
- Clear and uncluttered aisles
- Easy to read signage
- Automatic doors
- Places for people to sit
- Discounts for Seniors
- Packaging food products in a range of sizes
- Pricing and advertising in legible print
- Available staff to carry purchases to cars
- Staff trained to identify signs of possible financial abuse or people needing care.
- Hiring staff who are in the senior age range
- Licensed service animals are welcome
- Clip boards are available for filling in forms or when a signature is required

How can you better serve older customers?

Most older people are healthy, independent individuals but changes can occur at any time. Attending to some of the most common age related issues will increase the age-friendliness of your business.

Consider the following points contributing to customer service:

Safety

Consider how people with mobility limitations access your place of business.

They will find it easier if you have:

- No stairs, sturdy railings, and non-slip surfaces
- Parking lots and sidewalks clear of ice, snow and puddles
- Wider aisles, uncluttered pathways to accommodate walkers, wheelchairs and scooters
- Easily opened, preferably levered or automatic doors
- In-store scooters for mobility impaired shoppers.

Respect

A business shows that it promotes respect when:

- Older adults are not treated impatiently or dismissively
- Customers are addressed in an appropriate manner (not being too familiar or using endearing phrases such as “dear”)
- Staff know how to address people’s needs without stereotyping or drawing conclusions about people based on their age or other characteristics
- Staff are trained to handle incidents like a fall, outburst or medical emergency while preserving the customer’s dignity
- Staff respond to errors and complaints promptly and courteously
- Staff are sensitive of physical contact for cultural and safety reasons

Comfort

Consider places to rest and refresh such as:

- A place to sit while waiting, and a place to put packages down
- Chairs that are sturdy and stable with arms for people who need to push themselves up and that are not too low or too soft
- An easy to locate accessible customer washroom with safety bars
- People with disabilities consider their equipment to be part of their personal space. Avoid touching a person’s wheelchair, walker, scooter or cane

Visibility and Clarity

People are able to see you and hear what you are saying when:

- Lighting is adequate and glare-free
- Signage has good contrast, uses large print, and wording is easy to follow
- Phones are answered by people
- The service desk is clearly visible so people can ask for help
- There is no loud background music or machine noise which can be distracting, uncomfortable and interfere with hearing or taking part in discussions
- Staff speak clearly and at an appropriate speed while looking directly at the person
- Staff are trained to assist customers with vision or hearing challenges
- A quiet space is available to discuss concerns in private

Age-Friendly Business Assessment Tool

Use the following pages to help you get started in making your business more safe, comfortable and attractive for older customers and for others who would benefit.

1. Safety: Outside Space

Access to your business is free of hazards

- _____ Sidewalk access and parking areas are level and well-maintained, with curb cuts where needed
- _____ Pick-up/drop-off areas are convenient and clearly marked and sheltered (where possible)
- _____ Entrances, sidewalks and parking lots are well and evenly lit
- _____ Accessible parking spaces are designated and located close to the building entrances
- _____ Parking lot and sidewalks are promptly cleared of hazards (e.g. snow, puddles)
- _____ Entrances are kept clear of street furniture and obstructions
- _____ Entrance doors open automatically or have power buttons. Ensure the automatic doors stay open long enough to get through comfortably and safely.
- _____ Ensure the accessible electric door opener is turned on
- _____ Doors are wide enough for wheelchairs/scooters
- _____ There is clearance by the door for a person waiting with a wheelchair or walker

2. Safety: Inside Space

Customers can navigate without obstructions and distractions

- _____ Stairways have sturdy handrails on both sides, stair edges and changes in floor levels are clearly marked
- _____ Floor surfaces are stable, firm, slip resistant and non-shiny
- _____ Necessary mats are securely fastened
- _____ Elevators are available to access other floors and there are ramps for change of levels
- _____ Obstacles or hazards are clearly marked (e.g. step up)
- _____ Aisles are approximately 4 feet wide and uncluttered
- _____ Locations of elevators, washrooms, customer services and other amenities and services are clearly posted. A store layout map is visible near the entrance
- _____ Most popular items are shelved at medium height
- _____ Emergency training of staff addresses warning and evacuation of the elderly or disabled

RATING GUIDE

1= Needs improvement **2** = Fair **3** = Good **4** = Excellent **N/A** = Does not apply

Age-Friendly Business Assessment Tool

3. Comfort: Provide for people with limited strength and stamina

Sturdy, regular height seating is placed in waiting or line-up areas

At least one service or checkout counter is at a lower height to accommodate wheelchair/scooter accessible. If a lowered checkout counter is not in place, staff walks around counter to assist the customer

There is space by the entrance for customers to park scooters

In areas where customers sit for some time (e.g. restaurant tables), temperature is held at comfortable level with no chilly air currents

An online or phone-in ordering delivery service is available

Customer washrooms are found on all service floors (if possible)

Washrooms contain at least one wheelchair-accessible toilet cubicle, safety bars and hand-washing area

Customers are offered assistance when taking items to their vehicles



4. Comfort: Provide for people with poor sight or hearing

Premises are evenly and well lit

Signage has clear and legible font with good contrast (Arial 14 or 16 is recommended)

Promotional materials have good contrast and readable font sizes and are printed on matte or non-glossy paper

Staff speak clearly, and at an appropriate speed, while looking directly at the person

Staff are trained to assist customers who have vision or hearing challenges (e.g. reading labels and locating items)

Sound systems for public announcements are loud enough, distortion-free and not overused

A quiet space; background music is absent or low in volume.

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Age-Friendly Business Assessment Tool

5. Respect: Ensure all customers are treated with respect

Staff are trained to be friendly and patient with all customers, and try to meet their needs

Staff are sensitized to avoid condescending behaviours (e.g. speaking too loudly, speaking too familiarly as in calling someone “dear”, or showing visible impatience)

Staff are encouraged to move to an area where they can more comfortably serve someone who may have trouble seeing, hearing, understanding, or making their requests known

Errors and customer complaints are addressed promptly and courteously

Staff are trained in managing situations such as a fall or an outburst while preserving a person’s dignity

Staff are able to identify if a person is experiencing a medical emergency and will notify the appropriate service or authority while preserving the customer’s dignity.

6. A few extras that will increase the attractiveness of your business for older customers

Promotional material includes depiction of older people

Consumer research includes older people

Products and services are equally designed for smaller households, small incomes and smaller appetites



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Acknowledgements

This guide, *Creating an Age-Friendly Business*, was adapted by the Thorold Age-Friendly Committee from the following guides: *Creating an Age-Friendly Business in Welland/Pelham* and *Age-Friendly Thunder Bay Business Guide*.

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