

# Creating a city for all ages: Vaughan Age-Friendly Community Action Plan

April 2022



## Message from the Mayor



We are pleased to present the City of Vaughan's first Council-approved *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*, a document that reflects our shared commitment to foster a city where every person has opportunities to participate, regardless of their age.

The World Health Organization identifies an age-friendly community as one that provides opportunities for older adults to stay active and connected. With the senior population across

Canadian municipalities continuing to increase, it is more important now than ever to support the health and well-being of this rapidly expanding segment of society. As one of Canada's fastest growing cities, Vaughan is expected to reach a population of nearly 500,000 by 2041. In fact, it is projected that adults 55 years and older will represent the largest portion of Vaughan's population by 2031 – at more than 30 per cent. It is precisely with this in mind that we continue to advance a robust city-building agenda focused on ensuring the future health and well-being of our citizens and the overall community.

Our goal to create an age-friendly community is rooted in deep respect and appreciation for the immeasurable contributions older adults have made to our exceptional standard of living and quality of life. Through volunteer activity and encore careers across the government, nonprofit and private sectors, seniors continue to improve the lives of all generations, and for this, we are truly grateful.

I want to recognize and thank the work of the *Older Adult Task Force*, our community partners and residents for their meaningful contributions to this critical initiative. Together, we will continue to create an age-friendly city where everyone is valued, appreciated and encouraged to actively participate in every aspect of city life.

Sincerely,



Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, P.C.  
Mayor, City of Vaughan

## Message from the Deputy Mayor



As Chair of the *Older Adult Task Force*, I am pleased to recognize the contributions of our dedicated members and valued partners towards creating Vaughan's first *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*. The *Plan* reflects our mandate to promote the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life and our commitment to fostering Active, Safe and Diverse Communities, which is a key priority in the *2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan*.

The *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan* has been created by studying local data, key indicators, reviewing best practices and capturing insights from residents and community stakeholders. It outlines a strategy to continue guiding our efforts to achieve recognition as an Age-Friendly community, particularly as the senior population in Vaughan continues to increase. The goal of an age-friendly community is to ensure policies, services and built infrastructure – such as available housing, walkable and accessible public areas, local social services and programs – are designed to help seniors age actively, age in place, live safely, be engaged and enjoy overall good health.

Vaughan's older adult population plays a vital role in the City's continued success. Now more than ever, it is important to support the health and well-being of older adults to ensure they can age with dignity, respect and independence.

I want to thank my Council colleagues, Vice-Chair, *Older Adult Task Force*, Gerry O'Connor, City staff and Vaughan citizens for their efforts and support to develop this *Plan*. I look forward to continuing our important work to support an age-friendly community.



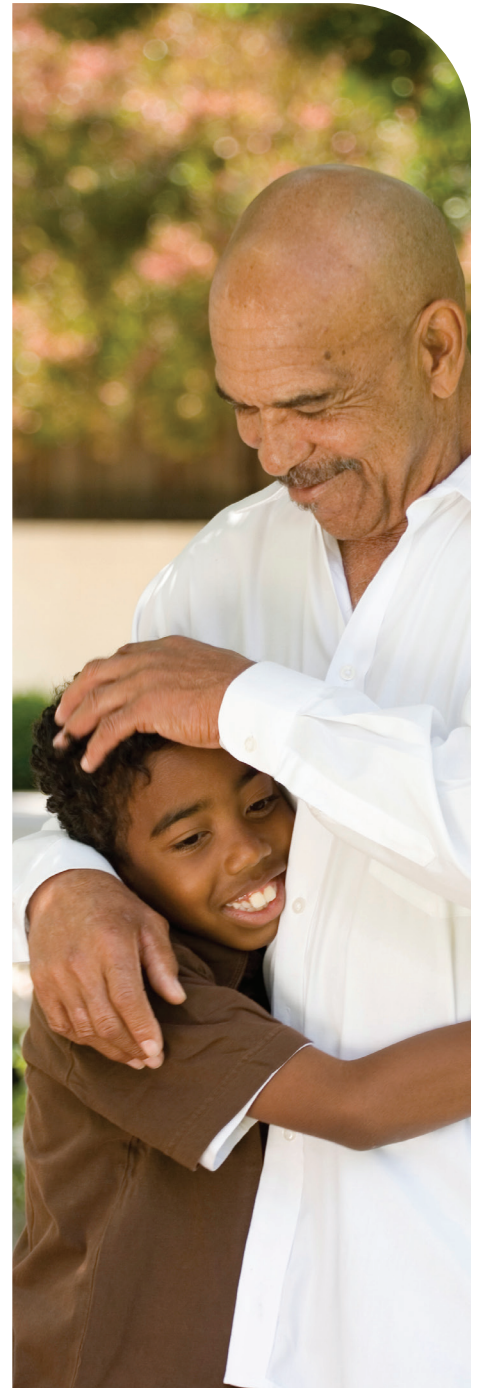
**Mario F. Ferri**

Deputy Mayor and Chair, Older Adult Task Force



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# Acknowledgements

We thank city of Vaughan residents, Mayor and Members of Council, City staff, and community stakeholders for taking the time to share experiences, wisdom, and provide guidance throughout the age-friendly community engagement activities.

We are very grateful to have the City of Vaughan *Older Adult Task Force* support in the age-friendly planning process and leadership in setting the vision and direction of the *Community Action Plan*.

Please visit our website for more information on the [Vaughan Older Adult Task Force](#).

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## Introduction

The City of Vaughan is taking important steps to create a more age-friendly community, where all residents can be active and engaged members of society at every stage of life.

Age-friendly communities support aging with dignity, respect and independence, and promote the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life. Importantly, by planning for the needs of the older-adult population, age-friendly communities are designed to better meet the needs of all residents.

As part of the City of Vaughan's Older Adult Recreation Strategy (2016), it was recommended that the City initiate actions towards becoming an age-friendly city. Additionally, as part of the [Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan \(2018-2022\)](#), the City outlines its commitment to ensuring active, safe, and diverse communities.

To achieve the goal of becoming an age-friendly community, the City has embarked on the process of developing an *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*. This ten-year action plan sets out a long-term vision, collective goals, and inclusive strategies to improve upon the ability of seniors within the city to age at home and live well in their communities. Importantly, by planning for our seniors and more vulnerable populations in mind, we will create a more age-friendly city for all.

Realizing the actions identified within this *Plan* requires the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to ultimately become a more age-friendly community to all residents. Implementation of this *Plan* will be with the leadership of an executive working group comprised of representatives from Community Services Portfolio, Office of Communications and Economic Development, and Office of Transformation and Strategy.





## Approach

The City of Vaughan's *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan* was developed through a range of research activities including a robust community engagement strategy.

The consultation process engaged over 850 individuals representing local residents, community service providers and organizations, community clubs and networks, City staff and Members of Council.

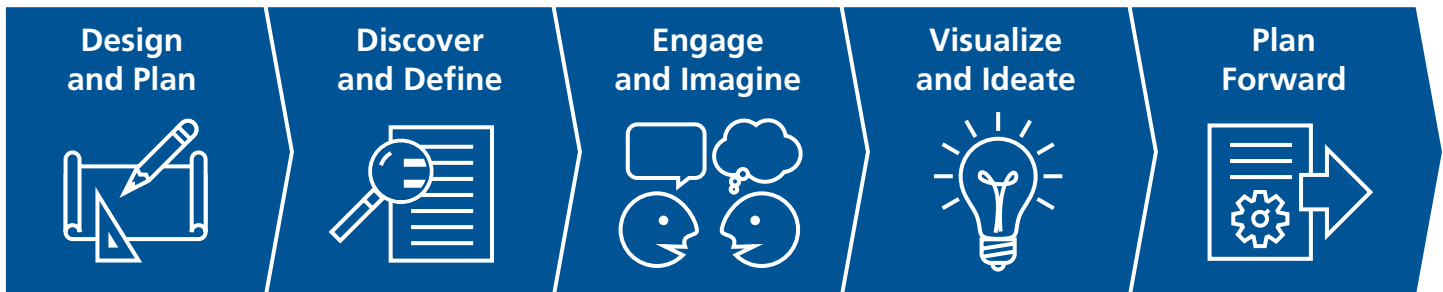
Our objectives in developing the best plan possible for the City of Vaughan:

- Bring people together and listen to all perspectives because all stakeholders have important insights
- Make sure all consultation activities are respectful and meaningful
- Use both creative and critical thinking
- Gather input and ideas in different ways, so that we get a full understanding of ideas, opinions, and opportunities
- Create recommendations that bring all the ideas together so decisions can be made confidently to grow age friendliness in Vaughan





The project was completed over five project phases.



### Design and Plan

- Preparation of detailed research, engagement, and communication strategy

### Discover and Define

- A scan of background reports, policies, and documentation from local and senior governments, and the World Health Organization
- Collection and synthesis of existing data on demographics, current services, and key age-friendly indicators
- Review of best and promising practices in age-friendly planning

### Engage and Imagine

- Community and stakeholder engagement
  - Online and telephone surveys with residents
  - Focus groups with community service providers and local clubs
  - Interviews with Members of Council, City staff, and other community leaders
  - Community workshops with resident and stakeholders
  - Community pop-up interviews

### Visualize and Ideate

- Define future direction for an age-friendly Vaughan including vision, principles, and actions
- Collect input and feedback from OATF, staff, residents, and community stakeholders
- Draft *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*

### Plan Forward

- Prepare Implementation Strategy outlining timelines and potential partnerships
- Finalize *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*
- Presentation of Final AF CAP to Council and Community

# Background

## Age-Friendly Communities

In Canada, people aged 65 years and over now represent Canada's fastest growing age group – a trend that is expected to continue for many years to come. The City of Vaughan is a growing municipality, expected to reach a population of approximately 500,000 by 2041. It is projected that older adults (55 years and older) will make up the largest portion of the population of Vaughan, representing more than 30 per cent of the total population, by 2031. Population aging has spurred calls locally, nationally and internationally to address the diverse needs of seniors and their desire to age as healthfully, independently and safely as possible, and where necessary, to receive care in their own home and communities as their physical, social and financial needs change and/or intensify.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

The concept of age-friendly communities was developed in 2006/2007 when the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Global Age-Friendly Cities Project. This project brought together cities from around the world that had an interest in supporting healthy aging by creating communities that were more age-friendly. The activities of this project helped to identify eight key areas of community life in which communities can become more age-friendly:

### Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings



When people view a neighbourhood as safe and accessible, it encourages participation in outdoor activities and engagement with the community. Accessibility involves removing barriers that limit opportunities for people with disabilities, including older adults with age-related limitations and/or disabilities.

### Transportation



The condition and design of transportation-related infrastructure, such as signage, traffic lights and sidewalks, affect personal mobility. Access to reliable, affordable public transit becomes increasingly important when driving becomes stressful or challenging, or when driving is no longer available as an option.

<sup>1</sup> Sinha S. Living longer, living well: Report submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister Responsible for Seniors on recommendations to Inform a Seniors Strategy for Ontario. Queens Printer for Ontario; 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Morton-Chang, F., Majumder, S. & Berta, W. Seniors' campus continuums: local solutions for broad spectrum seniors care. BMC Geriatr 21, 70 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-020-01781-8>

<sup>3</sup> van Bilsen PM, Hamers JP, Groot W, Spreeuwenberg C. The use of community-based social services by elderly people at risk of institutionalization: An evaluation. Health Policy. 2008 September; 87(3): p. 285-295.

## Housing



The availability of a range of appropriate, affordable, accessible and supportive housing options that incorporate flexibility through adaptive features, style and location choices, are essential for age-friendly communities.

## Respect and Social Inclusion



Community attitudes, such as a general feeling of respect and recognizing the role that older adults and people with disabilities play in our society, are critical factors for establishing an inclusive and age-friendly community.

## Civic Participation and Employment



Civic engagement includes the desire to be involved in aspects of community life that extend beyond day-to-day activities, such as volunteering, becoming politically active, voting or working on committees. The ability to continue working or find new employment provides economic security for older adults, as well as people of all ages and abilities. This includes having access to accessible environments, including accessible workplaces.

## Communication and Information



Age-friendly communities provide information about community events or important services that is both readily accessible and in formats that are appropriate for older adults and people with disabilities. An age-friendly community recognizes the diversity of its population and promotes initiatives to reach as many people as possible.

## Community Support and Health Services



Access to and awareness of community support services and mental and physical health programs contribute to quality of life and age-friendliness.

## Social Participation



Social participation involves the level of interaction that older adults and people with disabilities have with other members of their community and the extent that the community itself makes this interaction and inclusion possible.



The WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities was established in 2010 and now includes 100 cities and communities worldwide, including age-friendly initiatives across many communities in Canada.<sup>4</sup> In Ontario, the province developed an *Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide*, updated earlier this year, that is aligned with the WHO framework and that defines an age-friendly community as “one that responds to both the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population by creating physical and social environments that support independent active living and enable older people to continue contributing to all aspects of community life”.<sup>5</sup>

While Canada and many provinces have been promoting the development of age-friendly environments for the health and well-being of their older adult population, there is a growing awareness that local communities play an important, if not the most important, role in addressing the eight dimensions of healthy age-friendly cities.

“An age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.”  
– WHO

## Healthy Aging

Healthy aging as defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is an “ongoing process of optimizing opportunities to maintain and enhance physical, social and mental health, as well as independence and quality of life over the lifecourse” (PHAC, 2016). Many factors combine to affect optimizing these opportunities including, but not limited to, one’s own health (e.g., genetics, lifestyle choices, age related changes to body and cognition), their circumstances (e.g., income security, education level, social connections and/or family) and their local environment (e.g., safe neighbourhoods, accessible transportation, care services and amenities).

Given that most older persons live in cities, this places great responsibility on municipalities to not only address the diverse needs of aging populations but anticipate and adapt planning to changing local systems (e.g., social structures/networks, urban sprawl, public services, local businesses, workplaces) over time.



<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). About the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>

<sup>5</sup> Ontario (2021). Creating a more inclusive Ontario: age-friendly community planning guide for municipalities and community organizations. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/creating-more-inclusive-ontario-age-friendly-community-planning-guide-municipalities-and-community>

## Policy Landscape

At the local level, the City of Vaughan has a strong policy context for age-friendly planning including setting a direction within the [\*Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan \(2018-2022\)\*](#) to support active, safe, and diverse communities. Local planning initiatives and policy documents support various aspects of age-friendly planning including the support of active transportation, complete community design, accessibility and inclusion, physical activity and wellness, and safety.

The City's *Official Plan (2010 – Office Consolidation 2019)* outlines several goals and associated policies highlighting various age-friendly planning components such as developing of mix of housing including affordable and supportive housing options for seniors, support for pedestrian-friendly and active transportation, ensuring community centres are responsive to Vaughan's diversity and age appropriate, and emphasis on inclusive communities.



The *Transportation Master Plan, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, MoveSmart Mobility Management Strategy, and the Active Together Master Plan* reflect the City's commitment to provide safe, alternative, barrier-free transportation options. From an age-friendly lens, the synthesis of these three policies will create a transportation and mobility system that:

- Is predicated on an “all-ages” and “all-abilities” approach to planning and implementing transportation infrastructure.
- Integrates and coordinates multi-modal options to access goods, services, and amenities.
- Operates at a community and neighbourhood level to promote convenience and connectivity.
- Provides safe and accessible pathways that connect to rapid transit and bus services.
- Promotes a ‘complete communities’ approach to land development.

The City is currently preparing a *Vaughan Transportation Plan (VTP)* to establish a future vision and define improvements and policy directions to meet future transportation needs of residents.

The City's *Older Adult Recreation Strategy* provides recommendations that support physical activity and wellness through their partnership network. Two key strategies include increasing programming that supports more active and independent pursuits, and ensuring new facilities are accessible and on transit routes. The Strategy also recommended the City take steps towards becoming an age-friendly city.

A key document that connects these plans is the Council-adopted *Urban Design Guidelines* (UDG). It is a planning document that visualizes development blocks, how they should work, and how they interface with the public realm. Underlying principles of accessibility, universality and age-friendliness are embedded within all initiatives. It provides contextual analysis to ensure that city blocks, and developments are human scaled at the street level. The follow-up document *Complete Streets Guidelines Project* (current underway) will further operationalize the UDG by developing roadway design and standards at the neighbourhood level.

The City of Vaughan has also completed [Inclusive Design Standards](#) to further support efforts to be an inclusive and accessible community for all. In addition to ensuring Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities and Ontario Building Code requirements are met, these standards outline best practices in creating play spaces, washrooms, trails, service counters, office environments and places of workshop as inclusive as possible.

Vaughan Public Libraries (VPL) also have vital role in the delivery of programs and services to residents and contributing to creating an age-friendly community by reducing social isolation, reducing economic barriers, and through the commitment to digital literacy, accessibility and inclusion.

VPL's *Strategic Plan 2021-2025* outlines several directions that support age-friendly planning such as promoting community connections, providing life-long learning opportunities, and championing diversity equity and inclusion.

In 2021, the City initiated the creation of a *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan*. The goal of this plan is to foster a culture that is inclusive and respectful, where all citizens, employees, businesses, and visitors are provided with accessible opportunities to engage and participate.

### **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan**

The City recognizes that equity refers to achieving parity in policy, process and outcomes for historically and currently marginalized and underrepresented people and equity-seeking groups while accounting for diversity. The City is committed to working towards:

- Representational equity: the proportional participation at all levels of the City of Vaughan
- Resource equity: the distribution of resources to close equity gaps
- Equity-mindedness: the demonstration of an awareness of, and willingness to, address equity issues

A true sense of belonging is created when diversity, inclusion and equity combine to make all people feel welcome, included and part of the culture.



## A Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has added new challenges to addressing the age-friendliness of a city. As evidenced across the nation, COVID's deepest toll has been in long term care (LTC) facilities. However, in the community, lockdowns and service disruptions have increased social isolation and made essential everyday tasks such as grocery shopping and access to medical appointments and supports all the more difficult, and data reflects increases in elder abuse.<sup>6</sup> Further, that equity deserving populations have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.



<sup>6</sup> Makaroun LK, et al. Elder Abuse in the Time of COVID-19—Increased Risks for Older Adults and Their Caregivers. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*. 2020 Aug; 28(8): 876–880. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7234937/>

# Community Profile

## Vaughan’s population is aging.

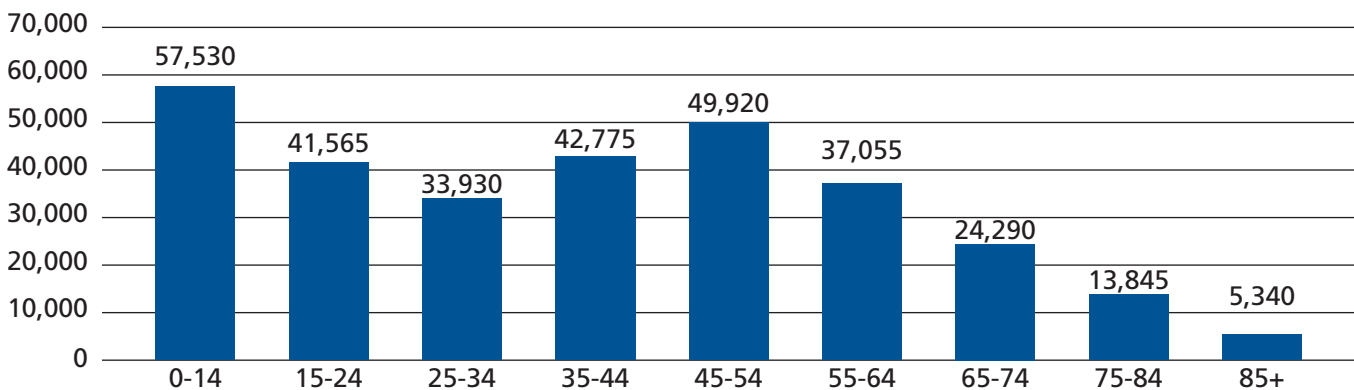
In Canada, people aged 65 years and over now represent Canada’s fastest growth age group, a trend that is expected to continue for many years. In Vaughan, the City’s total population grew by 6.2% between 2011 and 2016, while its seniors’ population grew by 35.1% (Statistics Canada, Census). Vaughan’s population of seniors aged 65 and over increased by 11,285 people between 2011 and 2016 to 43,475 seniors.

## Risks for social isolation among seniors.

Some demographic trends point to risks for social isolation among seniors in Vaughan:

- 5,395 seniors or 22.1% of seniors live alone.
- 7,790 seniors in Vaughan or 18.7% of seniors cannot speak English.
- National statistics show that 12% of Canadians age 65 and older feel socially isolated.

### Population by Age, Vaughan, 2016

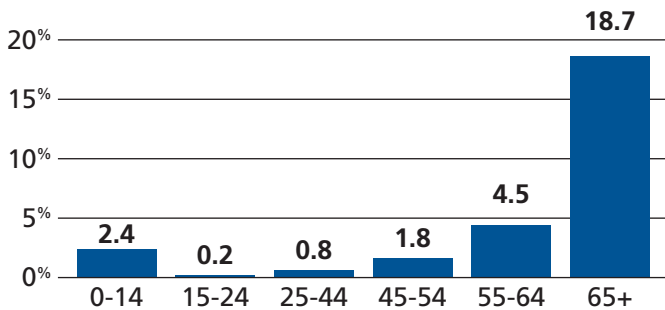


Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016

## Most seniors in Vaughan own their homes.

Only 2,265 or 9.3% of senior households rent their homes. Among seniors renting, 21.4% live in subsidized housing (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016).

### Proportion of Population Unable to Speak English by Age Group, Vaughan, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016

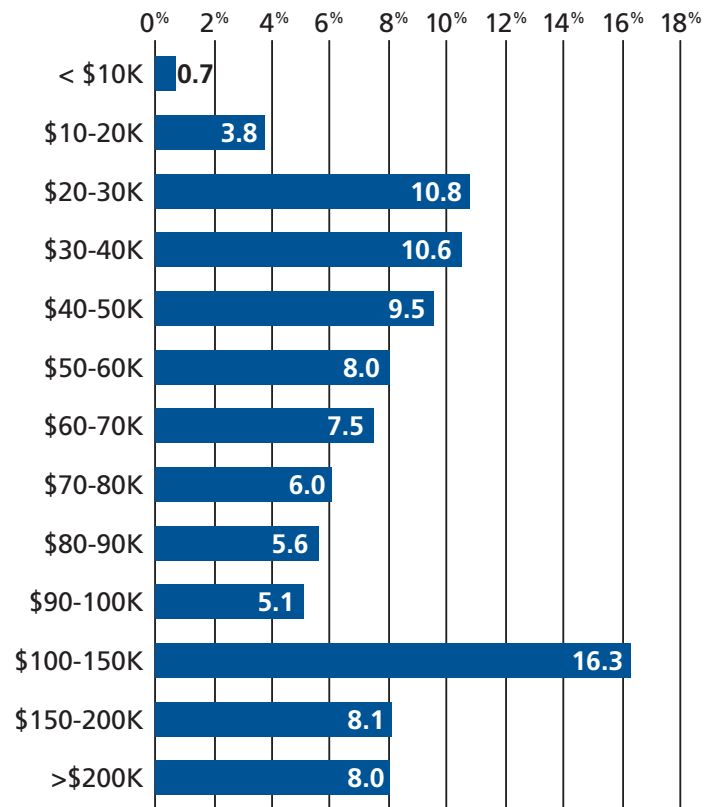
### Many seniors remain active in labour force.

Many seniors in Vaughan are continuing to work past the age of 65 years, with a total of 7,385 in the labour force in 2016, a labour force participation rate of 16.9%. Seniors also remain active volunteers.

### Average incomes are high, but seniors living alone have much lower incomes.

The average income of senior led households in 2015 in Vaughan was \$99,131 and the median was \$68,495. Incomes are substantially lower for seniors living alone, which had an average income of \$48,474 and median income of \$29,414. One quarter of senior led households have incomes below \$40,000. Some 3,080, or 7.4% of, seniors were in low income in 2016.<sup>7</sup> Low-income rates are higher among seniors not in an economic family, where the incidence of low income was 18.9%.

### Senior Households Income Distribution, Vaughan, 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016

### Seniors live in a mix of housing types.

The majority (63%) of seniors in Vaughan live in single-detached houses and about one-quarter (23%) live in apartment buildings. Other forms of housing include row houses (6%), semi-detached houses (5%), or secondary units (3%).

<sup>7</sup> Based on Statistics Canada's individual Market Basket Measure of low-income status. care home.



### **Housing affordability is an issue for many of Vaughan's seniors.**

Over one quarter (27.6%) of seniors spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs, including 8.6% who face severe affordability issues who are spending 50% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Affordability concerns are more common among seniors who rent their home, with 60.7% of these households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Some 4,295, or 17.6%, of Vaughan's senior households were in core housing need. Core housing need is defined by CMHC as housing that is inadequate, unaffordable, or unsuitable.

### **Demand for affordable housing is high.**

York Region's subsidized housing wait list was over 14,500 households in 2017 and seniors continue to be the largest group waiting, making up over half the wait list. Seniors waiting chronologically waited an average of 7.8 years.

In addition, as of January 31, 2020, there were 886 long-term care beds in Vaughan, and 2,493 people were waiting for basic beds, 517 people were waiting for semi-private beds and 2,081 were waiting for private beds<sup>8</sup> (Central LHIN, 2020).

### **Strong sense of community and life satisfaction.**

71.2% of York Region's seniors report a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to the local community. Almost 90% report their life satisfaction as satisfied or very satisfied.

### **Number of seniors facing health concerns and limits to activity.**

A number of indicators of physical activity highlight some concerns with physical health among seniors:

- 26.4% of York Region seniors perceived their health to be fair or poor.
- 30.9% of seniors in York Region have activity limitations.
- 16.2% of York Region seniors are obese.
- 52.2% of seniors in York Region report engaging in moderately active or activity physical activity.

### **Driving is the most common form of transportation for seniors.**

Driving is the primary mode of transportation for the majority of York Region employed boomers and seniors (Regional Municipality of York, 2014). About half of York Region boomers and seniors live within five minutes walking distance to public transit.

<sup>8</sup> These numbers may include double counting if individuals were waiting for a bed at more than one long-term care home.

# Results

Listening to and learning from the experiences of residents and community stakeholders is the core component in defining a direction forward and creating a more age-friendly community for all. An inclusive and robust community engagement plan was critical to the development of the *City's Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*.

Overall, approximately 850 residents and community stakeholders shared their insights and experiences and provided guidance in the development of this *Plan*.

- 500 telephone surveys with adults 55+
- 141 online surveys with residents
- 7 focus groups with community service providers, networks, and local clubs
- 2 focus groups with persons with disabilities and support staff
- 1 visioning workshop with residents and stakeholders
- 30+ interviews with members of City Council, City staff, and community leaders
- 2 Age-Friendly Action Planning virtual workshops with residents and stakeholders
- 30 in-person community pop-up interviews



## Outreach

The COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges in meeting with people in person and so additional outreach methods were conducted to engage with the city's diverse communities. Outreach activities included:

- Website – [Vaughan.ca/AgeFriendly](http://Vaughan.ca/AgeFriendly)
- Public Service Announcements (2,400 subscribers)
- Media coverage (Vaughan Citizen, thestar.com, yorkregion.com, Toronto.com)
- Social media posts
- Digital signs (10)
- Mobile signs (5 –one in each ward)
- Radio ads in top 5 languages spoken in Vaughan
- Engagement newsletter (769 recipients)
- Vaughan Public Library Handouts (9,000)
- Dedicated phone line and email

Seniors in Vaughan are diverse and belong to many different communities. Reaching out to the city's diverse groups of seniors was a priority throughout the age-friendly planning process. Engagement activities took a person-centred approach; recognizing that people do not have the same access to participation or access to services, and further, that there are racial, ethnic and gender disparities within current systems. Collecting a range of experiences to better understand how existing infrastructure and policies are impacting residents and seniors differently was a core principle to engagement.

## Key Messages Heard from Residents and Stakeholders

### Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings



- Residents value the number parks, trails, and greenspaces across the city.
- There is a need to improve accessibility and safety in some areas with increased lighting, adequate rest spaces, and even surfaces.
- People would like to see more options for inter-generational activities such as play spaces in parks and community gardens.

“Blessed with our greenspace, conservation area”

### Transportation



- While the city has many transportation options for residents including accessible options, residents express the need to expand transportation options for people with disabilities.
- Other opportunities suggested by residents and stakeholders include creating greater awareness of the current transit system (i.e., pathways and options), improving lighting in some areas, integrating transit systems (across jurisdictions), and providing a subsidized transit option for seniors and caregivers.

### Housing



- The need for more affordable housing choices including more accessible and supportive housing options was a priority expressed throughout the engagement activities.
- More in-home support options are important for people’s health, independence, and well-being.

“Keeping people at home is important.”

### Respect and Social Inclusion



- Residents want to celebrate seniors and ensure they are valued members of the community.
- Need to reach out more to our vulnerable and isolated residents.
- Need to take steps to be an equitable and safe city.

“Want to make life meaningful to all people”

## Civic Participation and Employment



- There is positive civic engagement of seniors underway in the city.
- Residents and stakeholders would like to see greater awareness of volunteering and employment opportunities, creation of mentorship opportunities, and **“tapping into the wisdom”** of seniors.

## Communication and Information



- Recognition that the City has a number of platforms and approaches for communicating with residents.
- Need to increase the awareness of what is being offered across the city.
- Needs for more outreach to seniors who do not speak English and people who may be isolated.

“Everyone should be able to get the information they need.”

## Community Support and Health Services



- There are many health services within the city.
- Awareness of services and access to services (i.e., affordability, transportation) can be barriers.
- Residents and stakeholders would like to see a ‘one-stop’ access to services and information, increased mental health supports, caregiver supports, and leveraging technology to increase access to health services.

“There are seniors at home that have no support and end up in hospitals.”

## Social Participation



- The City has many recreational programs and activities for older adults and has strong support for the City’s Older Adult Clubs.
- Future programming and events need to continue to consider and respect the diversity of residents while also ensuring access (i.e., affordability, awareness, accessibility).

For further information on the consultation activities and feedback collected, please see the *What We Are Hearing Report* found at [Vaughan.ca/agefriendly](http://Vaughan.ca/agefriendly).



# Action Plan

## Vision

Vaughan is a community of choice for all generations.

## Principles

**Equity:** we are committed to ensure fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all residents.

**Collaboration:** we have a shared responsibility with our partners to realize the vision of this *Plan*.

**Accountability:** we are responsible to report back to our community and responsive to changing needs and priorities.

**Connection:** we pursue active participation and engagement in community planning.

**Inclusion:** we are committed to creating supportive and accessible places where residents of all ages feel a sense of belonging.

## Objectives

1. To recognize the diversity of Vaughan’s aging population not only in terms of age but also ability, gender, sexual orientation, culture, support needs, and income.
2. To support policies that create complete, accessible, and welcoming neighbourhoods.
3. To support independent, active, and healthy aging for all residents.
4. To realize a shared responsibility among community members and partners to fulfil the vision of this *Plan*.
5. To achieve recognition of the City of Vaughan as an Age-Friendly Community through Ontario’s Network of Age-Friendly Community Initiatives.

## Actions

Ideas for action have been grouped under each of the World Health Organization’s eight areas of an age-friendly community.



## Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings



### 1. Continue to explore opportunities to expand winter snow removal program for seniors.

In 2019 the City of Vaughan entered into a pilot partnership program with *Community and Home Assistance to Seniors* (CHATS) for a snow removal service for seniors. The project was originally funded through Mayor Bevilacqua's Spirit of Generosity. Based on its initial success, the pilot project was continued with additional funding from several sponsors for the 2021-2022 winter season.

The [CHATS Snow Removal Program](#) is a paid service that connects individuals with pre-approved service providers for winter snow clearance services. The cost is paid by the homeowner. Subsidies are available based on a financial assessment. The service is available to anyone aged 55 and older, or with age-related illness, who lives within the city. Services include clearing of driveway snow removal, walkway clearing to the front/main door and salting on walkways to the front/main door.

Stakeholders and residents praise the success of the program and emphasize the continued and growing need for this program. It is recommended that the City continue its partnership with CHATS to deliver the snow removal service and explore ways to expand the program to reach more residents in need (i.e., low-income seniors). Partnerships with youth organizations and schools could also be considered.



2. Through parks planning, continue to ensure that park and open space design incorporate spaces and amenities that are accessible and encourage physical activity, wellness, and recreational opportunities for all ages.

The [Active Together Master Plan](#) (2018) outlines principles and actions for designing, funding, constructing, and operating the City's parks and open spaces, and recreation and library facilities. The plan identifies several principles and actions that support age-friendly design including ensuring access to public spaces and ensuring that these spaces are designed with consideration for all ages and abilities.

Building on this, it is recommended that existing and future parks and open spaces throughout the city are designed to be accessible and encourage overall wellbeing for people of all ages and abilities. It is suggested that design consider the provision of washrooms, seating, lighting, shaded areas, accessible pathways, and gathering places as well as areas for physical activity.

Other considerations include:

- The development of park standards, including the provision and distribution of age-friendly amenities across the city.
- A further analysis of the provision of shade, seating, and washrooms within neighbourhood and district parks.
- A further analysis of existing trails, and urban pedestrian circulation route standards, to include age-friendly attributes, including signalized crossings, signage and wayfinding, and lighting.

3. Continue to make improvements to street lighting, pedestrian crossings and signal times, and overall community safety.

Through existing City initiatives such as the Complete Streets Guidelines Project (underway), the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#), the [MoveSmart Mobility Management Strategy](#), and through future urban design projects, it is recommended that the City continue to make improvements to overall pedestrian safety. It is recommended that the City develop age-friendly amenity standards that include standardized elements for seating, lighting, washrooms, shaded areas, roadway crossing and signal times, accessible pathways and gathering spaces. Design should consider surfaces and features to allow access for individuals using wheelchairs, scooters, and other assistive devices to reduce risk of falls. Design should continue to consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an approach of crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design, and the management of built and natural environments. CPTED strategies aim to reduce victimization, deter criminal acts, and build a sense of community among residents to reduce crime, and minimize fear of crime.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association. <https://www.cpted.net/>



**4. Expand opportunities to support the development of community gardens accessible to all ages and abilities.**

Community gardening can provide an opportunity for people of all ages to connect with their community, get physical activity, learn new skills, and increase access to healthy food. Community gardens are unique to the neighbourhood creating them and can include vegetables, fruits, herbs, and butterfly gardens. Stakeholders have expressed an interest in supporting the creation of accessible community gardens within the city. It is recommended that the City work in partnership with community organizations to explore this initiative further including investigating potential funding sources.

Design considerations to reduce barriers in community gardens include:

- Incorporating vertical gardening for ease of reach
- Providing raised beds for people in wheelchairs or those unable to garden at ground level
- Ensuring access to and around garden considering appropriate ground/path coverage
- Providing seating options
- Considering various colours and textures for people with visual impairments

Source: Evergreen (2001). Community Gardening Ideas. <https://www.evergreen.ca/downloads/pdfs/CG6-Community-Gardening-Ideas.pdf>

**5. Identify opportunities to create more walkable neighbourhoods.**

Through the engagement process, residents expressed the desire for neighbourhoods that are ‘walkable’, where they can walk to access local services, community facilities, stores and places to connect with family and friends. The ‘15-minute neighbourhood’ is a concept that aims to achieve neighbourhoods where people can walk to amenities and meet daily needs (i.e., food, education, outdoor space, transit) within 15 minutes from their home. York Region is currently exploring this concept in current planning initiatives. It is recommended that the City of Vaughan also consider this concept in the planning and design of community neighbourhoods and explore opportunities to create ‘15-minute neighbourhoods’.

The ‘15-minute neighbourhood’ is a concept that aims to achieve neighbourhoods where people can walk to amenities and meet daily needs (i.e., food, education, outdoor space, transit) within 15 minutes.





## Transportation



### 6. Continue efforts to enhance bus stop accessibility, equity, comfort, and safety.

The location and design of transit stops is an important factor in creating greater access to local services and amenities. Stops should be designed to be easily accessible and provide comfort for people of all ages and abilities. The Ontario Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) provides guidelines for accessibility for transit stops. The Province also provides guidelines for enhancing access to transit through the location and design of transit stops. The Province also provides [guidelines for enhancing access to transit](#) through the location and design of transit stops. It is recommended that the City, through the *Vaughan Transportation Plan* (currently underway), work with York Region to assess existing transit stops for accessibility and comfort (i.e., benches) and make improvements as appropriate. Importantly, consideration should be given to ensure the location of transit stops are equitable across the city. Consideration should also be given to seating and appropriate lighting at all bus stops.



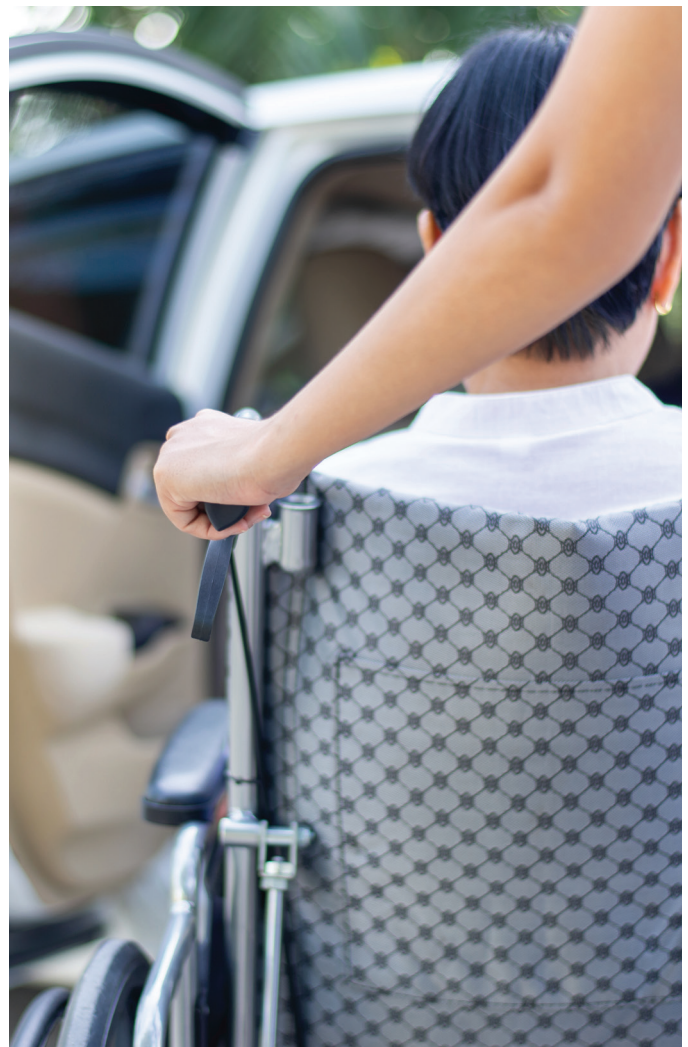
**7. Work with community partners to promote, and support opportunities to expand, alternative transportation modes such as ride sharing, volunteer drivers, and other options to increase access to amenities and services by residents with special needs including mobility impairments.**

For a variety of reasons many people are not able access, or experience significant barriers in accessing, public transit options. Several community partners, including York Region, provide support with transportation to appointments and amenities in the city of Vaughan. Feedback from stakeholders and residents highlight the need to expand such programs as our population continues to age, and the number of people living with disabilities increases. It is recommended that the City work with partners such as York Region Transit (Mobility On-Request Paratransit), CHATS, Human Endeavour and others to expand and promote alternative transportation options in the city. It is also recommended that the City advocate for programs to be provided at low to no cost for individuals in need.

**Community Highlight:** HOPE – Healthy Outcomes of Preventative Engagements is run by Human Endeavour, a non-profit organization serving York Region. HOPE is a wellness program for seniors that includes a wide variety of social, physical and psychological programs and includes a volunteer-driven transportation service that provides over 10,000 rides to seniors each year.

**Community Highlight:** Regulation of Private Ground Passenger Transportation

The City of Vaughan has established a set of regulations for the private ground passenger transportation industry. This framework is aimed at ensuring the health and safety of the public, the protection of consumers, and continuing efforts to promote the development and modernization of the city’s transportation network.



**8. Create greater awareness of all transportation options across the city.**

There are several transportation options within Vaughan including options for people with mobility challenges. Consultation feedback revealed that many people are not aware of these options and/or do not understand how to access them. It is recommended that the City share information on all transportation options available including information on transit schedules and stops (i.e., links to York Region Transit), transportation fees, community transportation and on-demand-type transportation options, options for cross-jurisdictional travel (i.e., PRESTO), contact information for booking appointments and information on any criteria for service. It is further recommended that the City share information on the Region's myRide program and further promote this service to residents and caregivers (including older adults) to support and encourage transit use among residents including older adults. The myRide program is a travel training program for customers of all ages and abilities who need additional knowledge and skills to use YRT independently.

**9. Explore opportunities to provide a needs-based transit subsidy for low-income residents.**

Affordability can be a barrier in residents' ability to access public transportation, and consequently may reduce access to services, amenities, programs, and the ability to connect with friends and family. As of January 2021, the Region is piloting the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) to help make transit more affordable for eligible residents. A TAP pass covers half the cost of a York Region Transit adult monthly pass (\$77/month).

It is recommended that the City of Vaughan support York Region to pursue a deeper transportation subsidy for residents in need (i.e., low-income) across the city. It is also recommended that the City advocate for options for reduced or no-cost transportation passes for caregivers accompanying a person in need.

York Region Transit offers local transit services to all nine York Region municipalities including the City of Vaughan. The Region also provides Mobility Plus, door-to-door, shared-ride, accessible public transit service for people with disabilities. For more information, [York Region Transit website](https://www.yrt.ca) or [yrt.ca](https://www.yrt.ca).



## Housing



### **10. In support of the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy, establish policies and identify opportunities to provide a range of housing forms that meet the diverse and changing needs of residents.**

The City of Vaughan is currently developing an Affordable Housing Strategy to better understand the current state of housing in the city and to strive for innovative solutions, through planning policy, financial tools, partnerships, and advocacy, to meet identified housing needs. As part of this work, it is recommended that the City:

- Ensure current and future planning policies encourage a mix of housing types and tenures and consider establishing targets for affordable, accessible, and supportive housing options. Housing types should consider various forms such as stacked townhouses, multiplexes, secondary suites, multi-residential as well as various ownership models such as life lease, co-operative, co-housing, and community land trusts.
- Investigate opportunities to provide financial incentives to further encourage the development of affordable housing. Incentives may include waiving fees, providing grants, providing land at a reduced cost, and inclusionary zoning.

- Continue to build an affordable housing reserve as a way of supporting the future creation of affordable housing.
- Work with York Region to continue to advocate for funding for affordable and supportive housing within the city.
- Encourage affordable and supportive housing options in areas near amenities, services, recreational opportunities, and transportation to avoid social isolation and loss of independence.
- Explore opportunities to establish ‘campus of care models’ of seniors housing where appropriate in place of stand-alone long-term care homes or retirement homes.
- Work with housing providers, including long-term care housing providers, to ensure safe and inclusive environments for the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Campuses of care, much like a community hub, co-locates a continuum of community support services, housing options and long-term care beds close to each other and to the people who need them most while also offering important and needed supports to the local community.



**11. Explore opportunities for funding and community partnerships to pilot a HomeShare program in Vaughan.**

HomeShare programs can provide an opportunity for someone who is 'overhoused' and in need of some form of support (i.e., light household tasks and/or financial support) to remain in their home and community. In Vaughan, 22 percent of people over the age of 65 live alone. Often HomeShare programs are a living arrangement between two or more people, usually unrelated, who reside together in the same residence. Typically, each person has their own private space with shared common areas such as kitchen and living room.<sup>10</sup> It is recommended that the City explore opportunities to work with community partners to create a HomeShare pilot program.

HomeShare programs can provide a form of affordable housing, reduce social isolation, and provide support for household responsibilities to help someone remain in their home longer.

**12. Share information and promote funding options for home adaptation, repair, and modification programs.**

As people age, and circumstances change people can experience increasing barriers within their homes. Sometimes home modifications and adaptations to the built form can mean that people can remain in their home, and community, longer while also maintaining independence and improving quality of life. Examples of modifications could include grab bars in bathrooms, modified door handles, removing tubs for walk in showers or modifying tubs to make them easier to get into, and making changes to entrance ways and counter levels to accommodate the use of mobility devices. In addition, sometimes homes may be older and in need of repairs to ensure continued safety. Examples of programs include the Ontario Home and Vehicle Modification Program, Ontario Renovates for Homeowners, Seniors Home Safety Tax Credit, and the York Region Home Repair Program. It is recommended that the City provide information on existing programs available to residents and seniors living in Vaughan.



<sup>10</sup> Halton HomeShare Toolkit (2019).

[https://cdhalton.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TheHaltonHomeShare\\_Toolkit\\_revised\\_2019.pdf](https://cdhalton.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TheHaltonHomeShare_Toolkit_revised_2019.pdf)

### 13. Support community partners in to promote and increase in-home supports for seniors and people with disabilities.

As noted above, as people age and circumstances change, the provision of support services in-home can mean that people can stay in their home and in their community longer. This, in turn, helps to support their social connectedness and independence. There are a number of community agencies providing a range of in-home supports (i.e., house keeping, personal support, yard maintenance, and friendly visiting) to people across the city. Stakeholders and residents identified the need to increase these service options for seniors and people with disabilities. It is recommended that the City promote existing programs and support community efforts to expand in-home support programs. Support may include advocating for increased funding, assisting with education and promotion of existing programs, and facilitating collaboration and partnerships.

#### **Community Highlight:**

##### **CHATS Home Help Program**

The Home Help Program provides in-home support services to assist clients with routine household activities and activities of daily living such as light housekeeping, household management tasks, shopping, and meal preparation.





## Respect and Social Inclusion



### 14. Celebrate the contributions of seniors and youth through a local art exhibition.

Celebrating the achievements of seniors and youth across communities is an opportunity to bring residents together and acknowledge the positive impact people are having on the community. The City of Vaughan has initiatives to celebrate residents (i.e., Volunteer Recognition Awards Ceremony, Senior's Month and National Seniors Day, Youth Week). It is recommended that the City continue to seek out ways to celebrate all residents and recognize seniors and youth. It is recommended that the City consider hosting an 'Art for All Ages' Exhibition. An art exhibition could be an opportunity to feature and celebrate local artists including senior artists from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Artists and community members can engage in sharing diverse local perspectives on aging across all the World Health Organization eight domains of age-friendly communities. It is suggested that the City explore this opportunity with local organizations.





**15. Work with community partners to increase awareness and share resources to combat ageism and elder abuse.**

Ageism refers to stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination towards others based on age.<sup>11</sup> Greater public awareness can help prevent ageism by dispelling common stereotypes and misconceptions. Elder abuse is any action or inaction by a person in a position of trust which jeopardizes the health and well-being of an older adult.<sup>12</sup> It is recommended that the City support existing community partners (such as York Regional Police and CHATS) to identify ways to increase awareness of both ageism and elder abuse, and to explore solutions to prevent elder abuse throughout the city. Consideration might be given to having resources available on the City's website and promoted through local channels and offering training to staff where appropriate.

**Community Highlight:**

**Vaughan Inclusion Charter**

The City is committed to taking action to achieve the vision of the Charter in the organization and in the community. The Charter promotes and celebrates human rights and accessibility and strengthens a sense of belonging for everybody in the community to ensure they all have access to the same opportunities.

**16. Work with local seniors' clubs to explore opportunities for integrated programs and activities.**

Vaughan has many active seniors' clubs providing a number of programs and opportunities for seniors to connect. There are over 5500 senior club members across approximately twenty organized clubs. Seniors Association of Vaughan Initiatives (SAVI), formally instituted in 2003, is a volunteer umbrella association for local clubs dedicated to advocate for better services for seniors. The City provides clubs with approved spaces in which to deliver programming. In addition, City staff are assigned to each club and act as a liaison. Stakeholders and club representatives praise the City for the ongoing support to their organizations and members. One of the messages to emerge from the consultation activities was the desire to bring clubs together and to explore opportunities for integrating various programs and events with people from a range of cultural backgrounds and experiences.

It is further recommended that opportunities to include additional diverse clubs and community organizations in need of programming and meeting space across the city be explored.

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, Ageing-Ageism.  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>

<sup>12</sup> York Regional Police. Recognizing Elder Abuse.  
<https://www.yrp.ca/en/crime-prevention/recognizing-elder-abuse.asp>

**17. Engage and partner with community organizations to identify and develop programming opportunities that support the diverse needs of residents and older adults.**

In January 2021, the City of Vaughan hired a Diversity and Inclusion Officer and initiated the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. It is vital that the City’s age-friendly planning align with the goals and objectives of this strategy to work towards a more fair and equitable community. It is recommended that as part of this work, and through the City’s Diversity and Inclusion Officer and Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, the City engage with diverse partners and community organizations, including individuals with lived experience to further identify program and support needs of residents including older adults. This includes, but not limited to, 2SLGBTQ+ community, persons living with dementia, new Canadians, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, Indigenous people, as well as Black, Asian and other racialized communities. Results from this action should inform programming initiatives outlined in Action 26.

**Community Highlight:**

**Rainbow Space Program**

Rainbow Space is aimed at building safer, inclusive social and recreational spaces for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in York Region. Rainbow Space provides peer-led and peer-directed programs including recreational activities, referral services, harm reduction education and resources, sexual health education, a lending library, volunteering and leadership opportunities, and wellness promotion groups.





## Civic Participation and Employment



### 18. Explore and promote City and community volunteer and employment opportunities.

Many older adults and youth are volunteering in Vaughan, contributing hundreds of hours towards the local economy. Many residents and older adults identified the desire to continue to develop skills and to contribute to their community and to society in general through volunteering. It was also highlighted in the consultations that knowing ‘where to volunteer’ could be a challenge. Many seniors are also continuing to work past the age of 65 and may be interested in working part time or starting their own business. It is recommended that the City of Vaughan work with community partners to explore opportunities to share information on volunteer and employment placements.



### 19. Expand age-friendly awareness among local businesses.

Providing age-friendly customer service and business spaces will help reduce barriers for residents who want to access local retail and service locations. Changes could include adding ramps, improving lighting and seating, removing physical obstacles, ensuring safe and inclusive spaces, and providing product information in accessible formats. It is recommended that the City partner with stakeholders to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and age-friendliness of local businesses. It is suggested that an age-friendly self assessment checklist be created so that local businesses can identify opportunities to be more age-friendly. Further, once guidelines are established, it is recommended that the City develop a program to recognize businesses that provides exceptional age-friendly customer service. Considerations include comfort, safety and accessibility, and respect and inclusion.

### 20. Engage with the *Older Adult Task Force (OATF)* as part of City planning initiatives.

The City of Vaughan’s *Older Adult Task Force* is a valuable resource that provides an age-friendly lens to current planning initiatives. It is recommended that major city-wide planning initiatives (i.e., master plan development) include engagement with the OATF as part of broader public participation activities.

## Communication and Information



### 21. Expand digital access and literacy among residents and seniors.

Access to technology is increasingly impacting people’s overall health and wellbeing. Access to technology can provide connection to health services, amenities, and loved ones. It is recommended that the City work with Vaughan Public Libraries and community partners to expand and promote the opportunities for older adults and residents to learn how to use new technology devices. It is further recommended that the City support the exploration of future funding opportunities to continue to provide devices to people in need.

#### **Community Highlight:** Vaughan Public Libraries

[Health 1-on-1](#) is a personal virtual session to help people learn how to find, navigate, and evaluate health information online with a Health Literacies Specialist.

[Memory Lab @ Woodbridge Library](#) offers the equipment and instruction to bring to life cherished memories. The Memory Lab can help turn photos, film and slides into high resolution files, transfer cassette tapes to digital files, and has a scanner for things like scrapbooks and recipes.

### 22. Enhance online presence of community information and services.

Vaughan is well served by local service clubs, community service organizations and health service providers. Several residents and stakeholders, however, noted that many people are not aware of what services and programs are offered and how to access them. The importance of ensuring the City’s website includes multi-lingual options was noted by many residents. It is recommended that the City explore opportunities to enhance its online presence of community information and services for seniors in order to increase awareness of what is offered across the city. Considerations could include:

- Engaging diverse community organizations, service providers, local business, and others in the further development of an online service presence.
- Consider creating a monthly feature of local community service organizations.
- Providing a broad range of local information including, but not limited to community events; sport, recreation and cultural programming; housing and homelessness options and supports; health and community supports (i.e., mental health supports, primary care, in-home supports, friendly visiting); employment services and volunteer opportunities; languages services; healthy food programs and services; income support services; transportation services; health information (such as York Region’s Health Connection and TeleHealth Ontario), City parks and amenities, and so on.



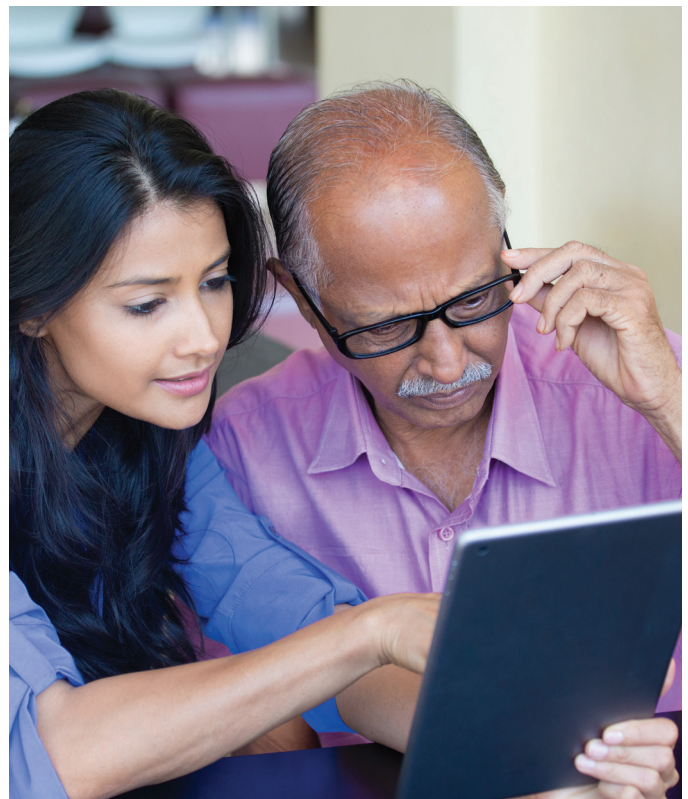
- Offering ‘youth’ and ‘senior’ search options and/or unique pages.
- Providing a ‘Community Board’ option where local partners have a space to promote local events and activities.
- Creating a communication strategy to broadly promote the online resource.
- Exploring opportunities to expand the City’s presence in community spaces (i.e., libraries and community centres).
- Exploring multi-lingual options.
- Providing messaging and information in user-friendly formats (usage of pictures, large text options, and aphasia friendly).
- Providing options for printable version of the online service platform.

**Community Highlight: Access Vaughan**

Access Vaughan is the contact centre for the City of Vaughan providing information, by phone or email, on City programs and services. Services including Textnet and UbiDuo enable people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired to more easily access the service. Language Line is also available. Language Line is an over the phone interpretation system that provides verbal translation in over 150 languages and is available free of charge to residents.

**23. Continue efforts to ensure communication and promotional materials create positive and inclusive images celebrating the city’s diversity.**

The city of Vaughan is comprised of people of all ages with over one-third comprised of people over the age of 65 and another third under the age of 24. The city is also comprised of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures who speak various languages, have varying income levels, and who have a range of abilities. It is important that everyone “see themselves” in the city of Vaughan. It is recommended that the City continue to expand communication and promotional material to reflect the city’s diversity and in a way that celebrates all residents.



## Community Support and Health Services

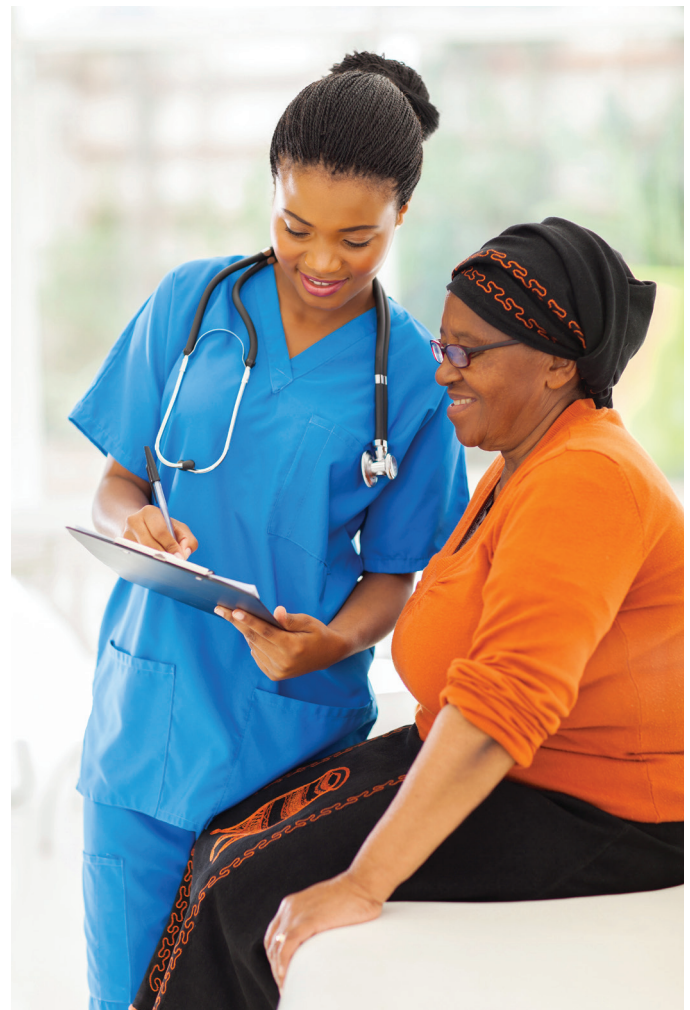


### 24. Explore opportunities to develop a Community Hub.

To complement information and services available online, physical community hubs can provide an opportunity to enhance, coordinate and integrate service delivery in a community. A community hub can create space for people to access information and services, participate in community activities, and connect people with service providers or family and friends. The co-location of services can also result in efficiencies. A key finding from the engagement activities was the need to provide access to information and services in one location (physical and virtual) that can direct people to supports and services people need without multiple handoffs. It is recommended that the City of Vaughan explore the development of a community service hub(s) in collaboration with community partners (i.e. local service providers, the Region of York, community clubs and networks). The hub(s) could be developed by expanding and/or repurposing existing space or may require new building. Considerations for the space could include community meeting space, space for health care and service providers, exercise space, a community kitchen, community garden, and information and referral space. Potential office space and/or housing located on upper floors could also be explored.

#### Other considerations:

- Collaborating with Seniors Focus Vaughan (who has prepared an initial strategy for a service hub)
- Incorporating broad community consultation with community partners, and stakeholders, and residents into the planning and design of these spaces
- Exploring various funding opportunities and collaborations with other levels of government
- Considering locations in close proximity to transit





**25. Develop relationship with the Western York Region Ontario Health Team to further advocate for health services in Vaughan.**

Launched in 2019, Ontario Health Teams are a relatively new model of health care delivery across the province. The model is based on health care providers working together to provide a more coordinated continuum of care for patients. It is recommended that the City of Vaughan consider pursuing a relationship with the Western York Region Ontario Health Team to better understand the needs of seniors and residents across the city and to collaborate on education and advocacy efforts to improve health services in Vaughan. As a starting point, it is recommended that the local health team be invited to meeting with OATF with the purpose of exploring any opportunities for collaboration.

**Community Highlight: Cognitive Care Kits, Vaughan Public Libraries**

Vaughan Public Libraries' Cognitive Care Kits have been built to be used by caregivers with their loved ones who are suffering from Dementia. Cognitive Care Kits are intended to stimulate skills that the disease has not yet affected including fine and gross motor skills, reading, and speaking, memory, spelling, and sorting. Kits contain a variety of activities such as simple word searches and puzzles, simple reading books, conversation and memory tools, and activity books.





## Social Participation



**26. Continue to explore options to expand recreational program delivery including more options for intergenerational programs, programs for people living with dementia, programs that meets the needs of diverse ethno-cultural groups, programs in other languages, and outdoor and virtual programing.**

The City of Vaughan offers a wide range of recreational and social programming. It is recommended that the City continue to explore options to expand service delivery to residents. Consideration should be provided for intergenerational programs, programs for persons living with dementia, continued inclusion of virtual options (incorporating technical support as needed), programing that meets needs of diverse ethno-cultural groups, programing in other languages and outdoor programing options. It is also suggested that youth, seniors, and caregivers are engaged in the planning of new programs.

Some examples of programs that could be considered include:

- Healing Through Art (art therapy)
- Gentle Walks and Talks
- Intergenerational music and cooking
- Multicultural dance
- Pen-Pal program
- Exercise for people living with dementia

**27. Explore opportunities for additional training for front-line staff to support seniors.**

As we age, there are several age-related changes that can affect our sensory and motor skills that may impact our ability to access and utilize public services. Additionally, there are many people who have lived with vision or hearing loss prior to becoming an older adult. Changes in vision, hearing, mobility and even cognition are important areas for municipal staff, such as Access Vaughan, to be aware of and address. Training in these areas may include simple behavioural strategies around speaking clearly and reducing background noise where possible. It is recommended that the City consider pursuing additional training for front line staff to support seniors in accessing and participating in City programs in collaboration with other ongoing changes in service delivery resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.



## 28. Work with community organizations to coordinate monthly 'Coffee Connections'.

A key theme heard throughout the consultations was a desire to meet and connect with people. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened our awareness of social isolation and more than ever people are expressing a desire to meet, share and connect. It is recommended that the City work with community partners such as SAVI to establish a monthly seniors coffee chat. Feedback from stakeholders suggest that this could take place at a community location with support from the City and perhaps local business (i.e., providing refreshments and/or donating space).

**Community Highlight:** Activate!Vaughan Activate!Vaughan is a program that calls on start-ups and scale-ups to propose innovative solutions that leverage smart city technology to enhance quality of life in Vaughan. The City of Vaughan's Economic Development department delivered four Activate!Vaughan pitch challenges from 2019-2021, each focused on a specific opportunity for innovation. In 2021, age-friendly communities was an area of focus. Presented by Mackenzie Health and Vaughan Public Libraries, high-potential start-ups were asked how they would leverage smart city technologies to improve access to healthcare and enhance social participation opportunities for our aging population.



# Summary of Actions



## Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

1. Continue to explore opportunities to expand winter snow removal program
2. Continue to ensure park and open space design incorporate accessibility, safety, and recreational opportunities
3. Continue to make improvements to age-friendly street design
4. Support accessible community gardens
5. Identify opportunities to create more walkable neighbourhoods



## Transportation

6. Continue to enhance bus stop accessibility, comfort and safety
7. Promote alternative transportation options
8. Increase awareness of transit options
9. Explore opportunities for needs-based transit subsidy



## Housing

10. Establish policies to support a range of affordable and accessible housing options
11. Explore HomeShare program options
12. Increase awareness of home adaptation programs
13. Promote and support in-home support options



## Respect and Social Inclusion

14. Celebrate seniors and youth through art
15. Increase awareness to help combat ageism and elder abuse
16. Explore integration of some local club events/programs
17. Engage and partner with community organizations to identify unique and diverse needs of older adults



## Civic Participation and Employment

18. Promote and share volunteer and employment opportunities
19. Expand age-friendly awareness among local businesses
20. Engage with OATF in community planning



## Communication and Information

21. Expand digital access and literacy
22. Enhance online presence of community information and services
23. Continue to create positive and inclusive messaging and promotional material



## Community Support and Health Services

24. Explore opportunities to develop a community hub
25. Encourage partnerships with local health care agencies



## Social Participation

26. Continue to expand diversity of recreational programs and inter-generational programs
27. Explore opportunities for additional training for front line staff to support seniors
28. In partnership with community organizations, coordinate monthly 'Coffee Connections' for older adults



## Creating an Age-Friendly System

To further support the age-friendly actions identified in this plan, and as part of the *Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan's* commitment to ensuring active, safe, and diverse communities, it is recommended that the City's *Older Adult Task Force* be established as the Age-Friendly Vaughan Advisory Committee (AFVAC) to support the overall leadership and monitoring of the City's *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan*. Membership of the AFVAC should continue to expand to include a diverse range of experiences and voices.

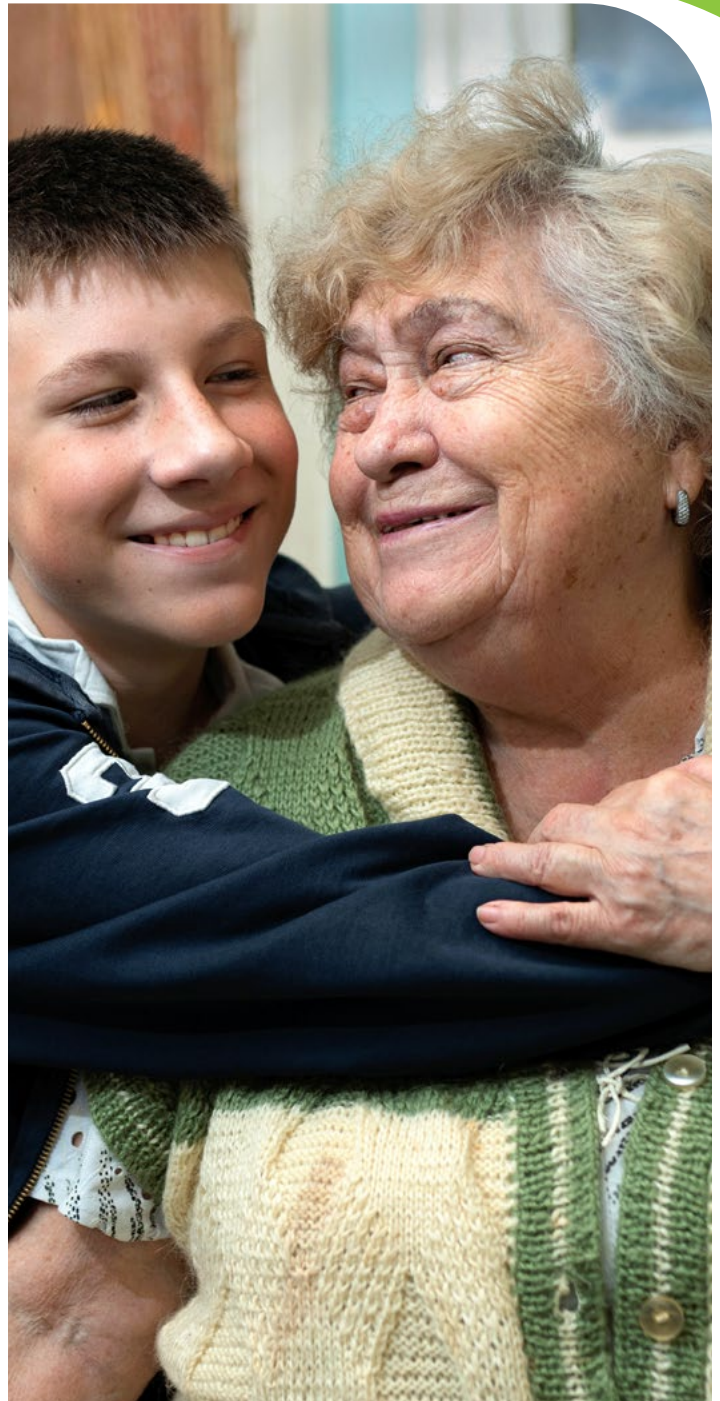
It is anticipated that this role include:

- **Advising** City staff as part of updating or developing new City master plans, providing an age-friendly lens to all future City planning initiatives to support inclusive and age-friendly policies.
- **Aligning** with senior levels of government to support age-friendly planning in Vaughan.
- **Educating** staff, community partners, and residents on the importance of age-friendly planning and promoting the vision of the *Age-Friendly Plan*.
- **Monitoring and reporting** on an annual basis on the achievements of the *Age-Friendly Plan*.
- **Supporting** community partners in local age-friendly initiatives.

In addition to the role of the AFVAC, additional recommendations to support the creation of an age-friendly system at the City of Vaughan include:

1. Developing a 'checklist' or decision-making framework. The goal of this decision-making framework is to provide a structure to guide decision making through an age-friendly lens across municipal departments. The framework could include considerations and principles that may be built into plans, policies, and daily work at the City. This framework should also be developed in consultation with the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force.
2. Establishing the requirement, through the procurement process, that consultants who deliver work for the City demonstrate a commitment to the principles and vision of this *Plan*.
3. Examining opportunities to establish an Age-Friendly Coordinator role at the City. Role of the Coordinator could include attending regular AFVAC meetings and acting as a liaison with AFVAC and community partners including, other levels of government; assisting in preparing communication and promotion materials; coordinating and monitoring implementation of plan actions; seeking out funding opportunities; and assisting in planning and coordinating local events and activities.
4. Joining Ontario's Network of Age-Friendly Community Initiatives.
5. Exploring membership to the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

6. Supporting the work underway to establish an Intergovernmental Age-Friendly Working Group to further support the initiatives of this plan through partnerships with other levels of government.
7. Considering the priorities identified in the *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan* for inclusion in the 2022-2026 *Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan* and reporting back on a yearly basis through the *Strategic Plan Oversight Teams (SPOTS)*.
8. Preparing, and sharing, annual age-friendly community progress reports. These reports would list each recommendation and whether it is fully, partially, or not implemented yet.
9. Conducting a full review of the *Community Action Plan* in 2026.



## Collective Accountability

Realizing the age-friendly vision for the City of Vaughan requires the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to implement the recommended actions and ultimately become a more age-friendly community to all residents.

**City of Vaughan** has taken on a leadership role in the coordination and facilitation of the actions outlined within the plan. Various departments within the City play a significant role in setting policy that supports the principles and actions outlined within the plan and supports the continued growth of the municipality through an age-friendly lens. The City also has an important role in collaboration, communication, education and advocacy. Implementation of this *Plan* will be with the leadership of an executive working group comprised of representatives from Community Services Portfolio, Office of Communications and Economic Development, and Office of Transformation and Strategy.

**Regional Municipality of York** fulfils a number of roles in creating age-friendly communities including through various planning tools (i.e., *Official Plan, Seniors Strategy, Transportation Master Plan, Housing and Homelessness Plan*). York Region is responsible for facilitating affordable housing, administering and funding various community programs, the provision of transportation and policing, as well as regional land use and development. York Region is also an important partner in advocacy and collaboration with community organizations and service providers.

**Government of Ontario** has a broad role in age-friendly planning. The province has established a framework, [Creating a more inclusive Ontario: age-friendly community planning guide for municipalities and community organizations](#) (2021), and provides funding for age-friendly initiatives. The Ontario Government also sets a policy framework for growth across the province. The Province also has a significant role as a funder of many services, infrastructure, and programs across communities and across the 8 key areas of age-friendly communities.

**Government of Canada** also provides a policy direction for age-friendly planning, [Age-Friendly Communities in Canada – Community Implementation Guide](#), and provides funding that shapes how our communities grow.

**Community Organizations and Service Providers** assume a number of roles in age-friendly planning including the direct provision of health services (primary care, in-home supports, emergency care, mental health), support programs (accessible transportation, friendly visiting, food banks, literacy and language), housing (social housing, long-term care, supportive housing), and social connection (local clubs and networks).

**Private Sector** also has a responsibility in age-friendly planning by ensuring safe and inclusive spaces for residents to live, work, shop, visit, and play.



The **Vaughan Community** has an important role in supporting the vision of this *Plan* by being welcoming and inclusive of all people of all ages and abilities. Communities can also support the development of an age-friendly city through advocacy and education.

In addition to the recommendations aimed at establishing a system of age-friendly planning outlined above, a supporting

Implementation Strategy has been developed outlining timelines and potential partners for each action. As the *Plan* moves forward, City Staff, through the newly established age-friendly executive working group, will operationalize this *Plan* by incorporating the actions and principles within existing strategic planning initiatives and through appropriate department plans.



Of note, the City of Vaughan does have a [Corporate Partnership Policy](#).