



Town of
Amherstburg

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Needs
Assessment
and Action
Plan Report



Contents

Message from ICP Advisory Steering Committee	6
Introduction	7
Project Overview	9
Background	9
Town of Amherstburg	9
Demographics	10
Project Methodology	13
Supporting Information	14
Community Engagement	14
Community Survey:	14
Service Provider Survey:	15
Other Community Engagement Methods:	15
Survey Findings:	16
Community Survey Respondents	16
Provider Survey Respondents	16
Supporting Strategic Documents	16
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005	16
Amherstburg’s Official Plan	17
Amherstburg’s Multi-Year Accessibility Plan	18
Amherstburg Community Based Strategic Plan	19
The Parks Master Plan	20
Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS)	22
Windsor-Essex 2021 Vital Signs Report	24
Needs Assessment by WHO 8 Domains of Community Life	25
Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain	27
Introduction	27
Trends	28
Survey Findings	29
Supporting Documentation	30
Summary of Needs Findings	30

Domain 2: Transportation	31
Introduction	31
Trends	32
Survey Findings	32
Supporting Documentation	33
Transportation Provider	34
Customer	34
Funding Partners	34
Summary of Needs Findings	35
Domain 3: Housing	36
Introduction	36
Trends	36
Survey Findings	37
Supporting Documentation	38
Summary of Needs Findings	39
Domain 4: Community and Health Care Domain	40
Introduction	40
Trends	40
Supporting Documentation	42
Survey Findings	43
Summary of Needs Findings	44
Domain 5: Social Participation	45
Introduction	45
Trends	45
Survey Findings	47
Supporting Documentation	47
Summary of Needs Findings	48
Domain 6: Information and Communication	49
Introduction	49
Trends	49
Survey Findings	50

Summary of Needs Findings	50
Domain 7: Civic Participation and Employment	51
Introduction	51
Survey Findings	52
Summary of Needs Findings	52
Domain 8: Respect and Social Inclusion	53
Introduction	53
Trends	53
Survey Findings	54
Summary of Needs Findings	54
Conclusions and Summary	55
Action Plan Introduction	61
Needs Prioritization	62
Action Plan Items	62
Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	63
Medium-Term Initiatives (3-4 years)	63
Long Term Initiatives (5 years +)	63
Ongoing Initiatives	63
Domain 2: Transportation	63
Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	63
Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)	63
Long-term Initiatives (5 years +)	64
On-going Initiatives	64
Domain 3: Housing	64
Short-term (1-2 years)	64
Medium – Long Term Initiatives (3 years +)	64
Ongoing Initiatives	64
Domain 4: Community and Health Care	65
Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	65
Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)	65
Ongoing Initiatives	65

Domain 5: Social Participation	65
Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	65
Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)	65
Domain 6: Information and Communication	65
Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	65
Ongoing Initiatives	66
Domain 7: Civic Participation and Employment	66
Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	66
Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)	66
Ongoing Initiatives	66
Domain 8: Respect and Social Inclusion	66
Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	66
Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)	66
Funding Opportunities	67

Message from ICP Advisory Steering Committee

We are pleased to present our Inclusive Community Needs Assessment Report, which has been developed through local community input and collaboration. The Town of Amherstburg is emerging as one of the best places to live in Essex County and Ontario for persons of all ages and levels of ability. Population trends indicate that our community is aging, we recognize the importance of this shift and are working diligently to identify needs, priorities and strategies to make our community more inclusive and accessible for everybody. The main goal of our future work, and this project, is to ensure that all of our residents feel included and respected and have an opportunity to participate in planning and decision-making regarding the services and supports needed to continue and improve the quality of life in our region.

We thank the Ontario Ministry of Seniors Affairs for providing funding support, the Town of Amherstburg Council, the Inclusive Community Project Advisory Steering Committee, and the residents of Amherstburg for contributing to this project, the vision and future community improvement plans. We are excited to move the findings in this needs assessment report to action and are committed to helping our businesses, community partners and local champions to incorporate these positive inclusiveness directions.

Pauline Gemmell

Kathy DiBartolomeo

Christine Easterbrook

Shirley Curson-Prue

Monty Logan

Councillor Marc Renaud

Introduction

An Inclusive Community is one where policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environments are better designed to support and enable older adults, and people with different abilities to live in a safe and secure environment, enjoying good health and well-being and continuing to participate fully in their communities.

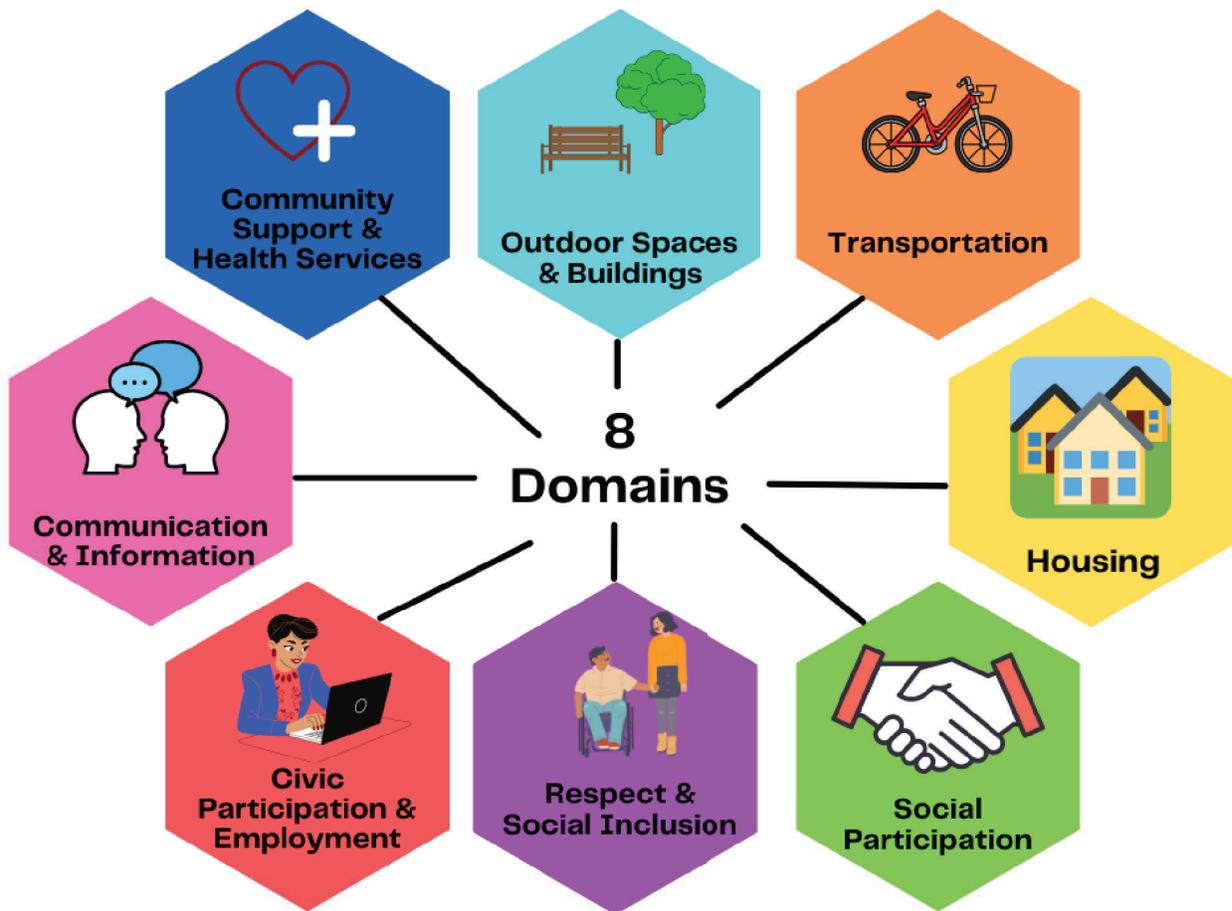
In late 2020, the Town of Amherstburg applied for funding to the Province of Ontario for \$60,000 under the Inclusive Community Grant Program (ICGP). The project, to be carried out over thirteen months, consisted of 2 Phases: an initial 'Needs Assessment' to identify the needs, wants and desires of older adults and persons with disabilities, and; development of an 'Action Plan' (with recommendations), both of which are intended to support our 'Vision' of improving the well-being and better promoting independence and active living for older adults and persons with disabilities in the Town of Amherstburg. On March 9, 2021, the Town of Amherstburg was advised by the Ontario Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility that the ICGP application had been successful for funding up to \$60,000, with the initiative to be completed by March 31, 2022.

This project was overseen by a community-based Advisory Steering Committee consisting of seven members drawn from the Town's Senior Advisory Committee, Accessibility Advisory Committee, Council and local service organizations.

A community engagement process was designed and implemented during the summer, extending into December 2021, to acquire information on community inclusivity needs. The community engagement process, resulted in a comprehensive Needs Assessment aligned with the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly and Inclusive Communities framework that considers 8 domains of quality community life that overlap and intersect to affect an individual's personal well-being, their independence and active living. The 8 domains through which community needs are assessed include:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Communication and Information
5. Social Participation
6. Civic Participation and Employment
7. Community Support and Health Services

8. Respect and Social Inclusion



This report describes the Inclusive Community Project Needs Assessment, outlines the methodology, presents background/trend information, the findings from the surveys' as well as offering priorities for improvement going forward for the Action Plan. To help ensure success, the findings and priorities identified for action in this report are closely linked to processes and plans already underway in the Town such as:

- Amherstburg Official Plan;
- Community Based Strategic Plan;
- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan;
- Parks Master Plan; and,
- Town of Amherstburg Cultural Strategy.

It is important to note that the Inclusive Community Initiative (Needs Assessment and Action Plan) is intended to serve as a strategic blueprint for ongoing community development and relationship building over the next five years.

Project Overview

On November 9, 2020, the *Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility* (the Ministry) announced the Ontario Government is committed to helping seniors and people with disabilities stay safe, active, and socially connected, especially during COVID-19. To this end, the government initiated the new Inclusive Community Program Grant (ICPG) for projects that foster inclusive community involvement for older adults aged 55 and over and people of all abilities, using the province’s “Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide.”

The ICPG prioritized small urban-rural communities and supported diverse populations of older adults, seniors, or persons with disabilities (including but not limited to, indigenous, immigrant, Francophone, racialized, and 2SLGBTQI+ population groups) and respond to the emerging needs of the target groups resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ICP program is directly aligned with the Ministry’s Advancing Accessibility in Ontario framework which aims to make the province more inclusive and accessible by focusing on four key areas:

1. Breaking down barriers in the built environment;
2. Government leading by example;
3. Increasing participation in the economy for people with disabilities; and,
4. Improving understanding and awareness about accessibility.

The main purpose of the inclusive community project is to help communities become age-friendly and inclusive by ensuring that the needs of residents of Amherstburg regardless of age or ability are considered at every stage of the community planning and development process.

Background

Town of Amherstburg

The Town of Amherstburg is a lower tier municipality located in Essex County, Ontario. The image below depicts the size and composition of the Town. The Town consists of densely populated urban settlement areas surrounded by rural lands and bordered by the Detroit River and Lake Erie. Initially, the Town of Amherstburg grew around a small fort and garrison used to defend this narrowing section of the Detroit River and the nearby Bois Blanc Island (Boblo Island). This area was inhabited long before the creation of a settlement and the Town recognizes that this land is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, (comprising the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie Peoples), and of the Huron-Wendat and Wyandotte Peoples. We

grown from 119.37 people per square kilometre in 2016 to 128 people per square kilometre in 2021. The 2021 Statistics Canada Census report also indicates the population in Amherstburg grew 7.2% from 21,936 in 2016 to 23,524 in 2021.

Note: Statistics Canada released a portion of the 2021 statistics in February 2022. Throughout this document, the 2016 Statistics Canada information will be used when the 2021 numbers are not available.

Additional demographic information includes:

- The vast majority of residents speak English at home (21,155), with a minority population (95 individuals) identifying French as their spoken language. Amherstburg is higher than Ontario with respect to the proportion of English speaking individuals (Amherstburg 96.7% vs. Ontario 78.2%).
- The average number of individuals residing in one dwelling is two and a half. The second greatest proportion (1,915) is one person living in a dwelling, followed by four people (1,405), and then three people (1,400). Interestingly, there are 700 people living in a dwelling of five or more people.
- The greatest proportion of Amherstburg residents are married or living in common law (11,560), compared to not married (6,810) and (1,075) individuals identified as widowed.
- The 2016 Census identified that there were 7,270 households that are owned, of those 1,255 are being used as rental properties. The 2021 Census has increased this figure to 9,548 private dwellings although at this time it is not known what proportion of those are rental properties.
- Approximately 17.2% of rental households are subsidized. This is higher than the provincial average of 15%. The average monthly rental shelter costs is \$837 compared to the provincial average of \$1,109.

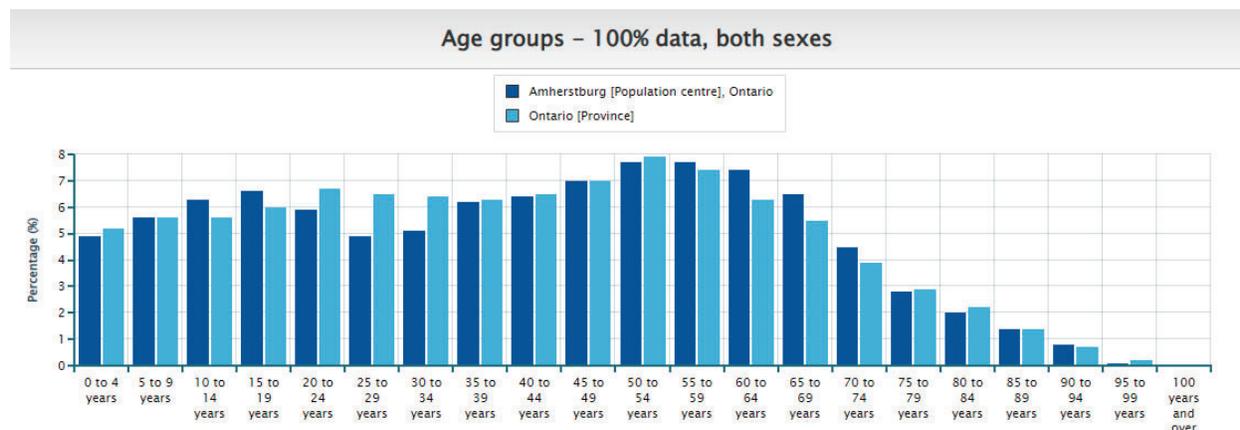


Figure 2: 2016 Amherstburg Age Groups Compared to Provincial Average (Source: Statistics Canada)

As you can see from the image above, the majority of Amherstburg residents' range in age from 25 to 74 years old. Interesting to note, there is a decline in residents starting at age 35 until age 49 when the population returns. This indicates a departure of young families, potentially for employment opportunities.

Amherstburg's population from age 65 and over is 18.1%, which is greater than the provincial calculation of 16.7%. In general, Amherstburg has a higher proportion of senior's than the provincial average. The median age in Amherstburg is 44.5, compared to Ontario at 41.3.

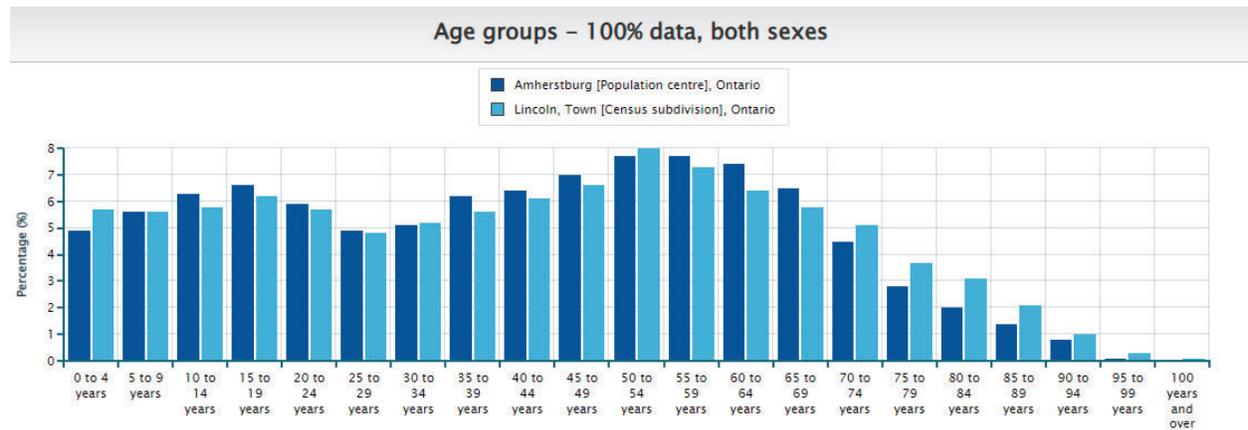


Figure 3: 2016 Amherstburg Age Groups Compared to the Town of Lincoln (Source: Statistics Canada).

The Town of Lincoln was selected as a comparator as it is similar in population and land area to the Town of Amherstburg. From Figure 3, the population is almost identical until ages 70 and older where the Town of Lincoln has a higher percentage of seniors in these age ranges.

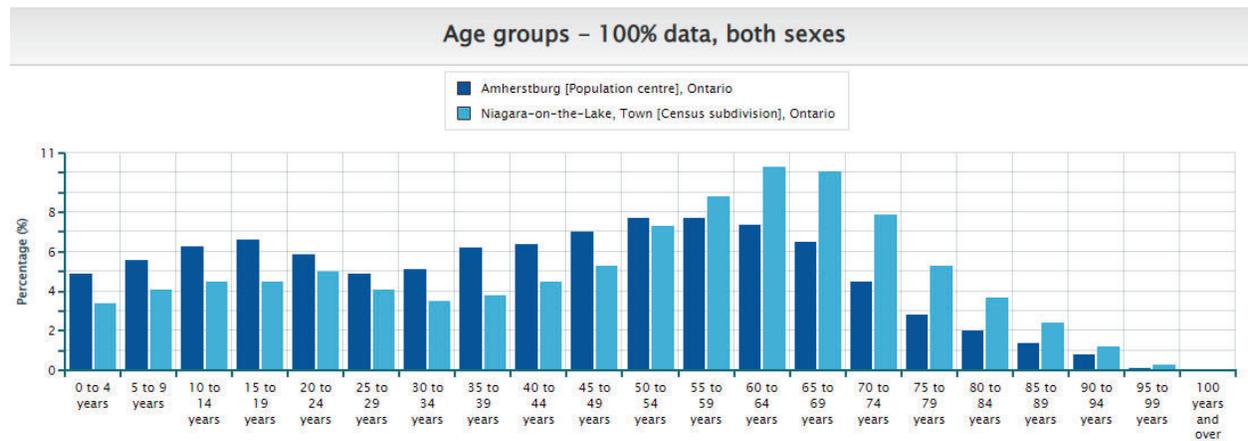


Figure 4: 2016 Amherstburg Age Groups Compared to the Municipality of Niagara-on-the-Lake (Source: Statistics Canada).

Akin to the Town of Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake was selected as a municipal comparator as it's population and land area are comparable to the Town of Amherstburg, but also, the Town has a heavy reliance on historical associations and investment in heritage conservation and tourism. The Town has a very different proportion to their population with a large number of individuals aged 55 and older.

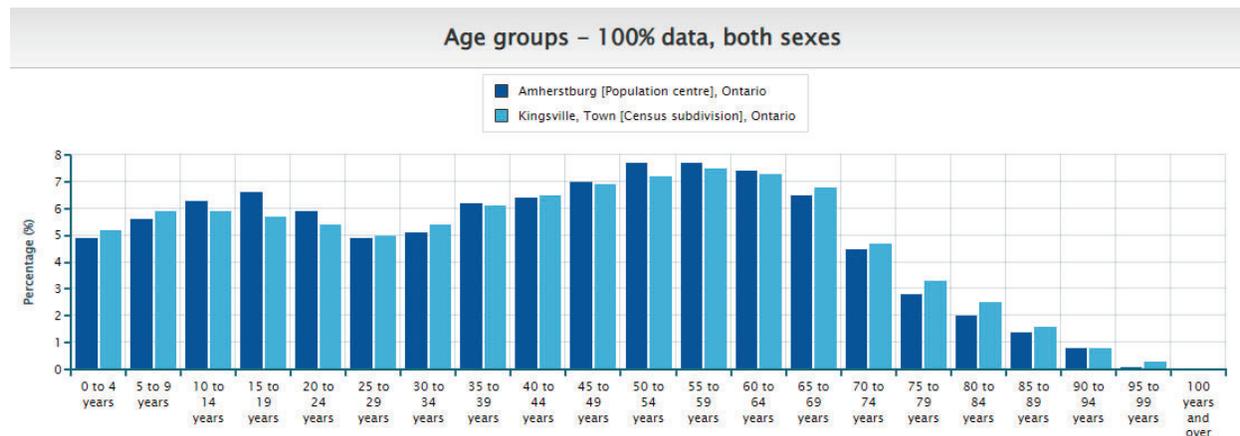


Figure 5: 2016 Amherstburg Age Groups Compared to the Town of Kingsville (Source: Statistics Canada).

Locally, the Town of Kingsville has again many similarities in terms of population, land area and an emphasis on tourism and heritage. The population mirrors the Town of Amherstburg in many areas but has a larger proportion of seniors aged 65 and older.

In summary, the age group data figures provided above show that the Town of Amherstburg is not unique. Comparative municipalities demonstrate similar trends with the senior population as well as the lower population of individuals ages 25 to 50. Historical trends in this area showcase a desire for economic and educational opportunities that drive young adults to seek larger urban centres, causing a demographic shift in rural areas towards an older adult population.

Project Methodology

This project made extensive use of the Ministry's 'Age Friendly Planning Tool Kit' checklists and assessment tools to support the community engagement process. The World Health Organization (WHO) Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide outlines 8 domains of community life that affect individual's personal well-being and their independent living in both the physical and social environments. This was used to assess needs and organize information. The WHO domain matrix also served as a useful guiding template for advancing recommendations for improvement. The following are the main methods employed throughout the project to gather information.

Supporting Information

At the beginning of the project, relevant support information was identified by the Inclusive Community Program Advisory Steering Committee members and Administration. This included WHO guidelines on age-friendly communities, leading practices locally and from other communities, provincial planning and policy documents, Amherstburg strategic documentation, plans, policies and reports, as well as information from community service providers.

A review of this background information provided initial information on trends, directions, current successes and work underway to improve and promote people's well-being and independence in the community. Key planning resources of note included:

- The Community Based Strategic Plan
- The 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- The Parks Master Plan
- The "Official Plan"
- Ministry's Age-Friendly Planning Guide and Tool Kit
- Age-Friendly Plans (Ottawa, Peel, Barrie, Windsor)
- The Vital Signs Windsor-Essex 2021 Report
- Erie St. Clair Health Links Data Report
- Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission Final Report
- Statistics Canada Census Data 2016 (Note: limited data from the 2021 Census is available and has been used where possible)

Community Engagement

The following methods were employed to gather information from the public and local service providers.

Community Survey:

A comprehensive survey questionnaire, based on the WHO Age-Friendly and Inclusive Community Domains was developed to obtain information from members of Amherstburg on their perceptions of the services and supports available.

To protect all participants and Administration from the COVID-19 pandemic, the preferred method of gathering information from the public was using an online survey format. The survey was advertised and promoted through a variety of mediums such as traditional print media and social media platforms as well as in printed format at various public locations. The survey was also distributed in hard copy format directly to various service providers such as the Amherstburg Community Services and the Nurse

Practitioner Led Clinic. Where required, assistance was available and provided in completing the surveys through the service providers.

Service Provider Survey:

Information was gathered directly from selected providers of services to seniors and people with disabilities through a comprehensive online survey. This grouping of service providers were identified by the Inclusive Community Program Advisory Steering Committee and Administration. Provider selection was based on either of three main criteria:

- Those known to be predominantly Amherstburg service providers;
- Those with service provision mandates for Windsor and Essex County; and,
- Other providers that expressed an interest in contributing to the project.

The survey questionnaire requested information on services and supports and asked respondents to identify where the greatest system pressures and gaps existed. To be consistent with the 'Community Survey,' the WHO Age-Friendly and Inclusive Community domain format was again utilized. Service providers were also asked to rate current services for effectiveness, indicate priorities for new funding (if/when available) and to identify/confirm the key obstacles or barriers to older adults and people with disabilities accessing service.

Other Community Engagement Methods:

Due to ongoing COVID restrictions and social distancing requirements, 'Focus Groups' were deemed to be non-viable and unsafe at this time. To ensure the maximum possible availability of public engagement, the initial survey period was extended by three weeks. Additionally, at that time printed surveys were also distributed to local health providers and pharmacies alongside a priority checklist for more expedient feedback which targeted those with less time available that were unable to complete the more comprehensive survey.

A consulting firm engaged for the project also completed telephone interviews with those who were socially isolated or felt unsafe to leave their homes during the pandemic. Direct supports were provided to people with disabilities living in assisted living facilities, where requested.

Survey Findings:

Community Survey Respondents

- Most community survey respondents self-identified that they lived in the urban core of the municipality (64%) with the remainder of responses provided from more rural settlement areas of the municipality.
- 40% of respondents self-identified as being a senior (aged 65 and over), while 29% identified as an older adult (aged 55 to 64). 14% of respondents self-identified as a person with a disability, 9% as a person with an invisible disability and 15% chose not to self-identify.
 - Note: these categories were not mutually exclusive.
- Approximately 20% of the sample identified themselves as a caregiver for a senior or person with a disability.

Provider Survey Respondents

Those providers who completed the survey represent organizations that service both seniors and people with disabilities.

Supporting Strategic Documents

The Amherstburg Inclusive Community Project is closely linked to current planning efforts, building on current legislation, the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the Community Based Strategic Plan, the Parks Master Plan and guiding documents in the areas governing Transportation, Tourism and Development Services.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), received royal assent in June of 2005. Under the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, this legislation is intended to benefit all Ontarians by establishing a goal of achieving accessibility for people with disabilities by 2025. The AODA applies to both the public and private sectors in various ways depending on classifications of organizations. It also applies to the legislative assembly. To achieve its goals, the AODA legislates the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards concerning goods, services, accommodation, facilities, buildings, employment and information and communication. The *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR), Ontario Regulation 191/11, under the AODA includes standards to address the following areas:

- Information and Communication Standards
- Employment Standards

- Transportation Standards
- Design of Public Spaces Standards
- Customer Service Standards

These standards address such areas as: accessible transportation services, barrier free routes of travel, accessible signage and accessible customer service standards.

Amherstburg's Official Plan

The Town's Official Plan review is ongoing at this time, and an update is expected outside of the timeline of this project. As such, the information herein is subject to change. The following excerpt is taken from the current Official Plan, which provides the Town's requirements in addition to those required by other pieces of legislation such as the AODA or the *Ontario Building Code (OBC)*:

The Official Plan identifies Barrier Free Access as a policy of this Plan that, in reviewing development applications and when the Town is undertaking public works, serious consideration be given to the creation of a barrier free environment. Encouragement will also be given to design standards that create a safe pedestrian environment.

Barrier free design will be applied to intersections, curb cuts, pedestrian activated signals, public buildings, all new institutional, recreational, commercial, industrial, or multi-unit structures. The Town will explore ways to eliminate barriers to wheelchairs and mobility aids on public lands and buildings. The Town will encourage developers to provide barrier free developments. Proposals for the installation of barrier free access involving heritage structures must demonstrate that the alteration will not adversely impact the heritage attributes.

The Town of Amherstburg encourages development and redevelopment that addresses the principles of "Smart Growth". The Ontario Smart Growth Initiative identified six strategic directions for the Western Zone of Ontario in which Amherstburg is located. The six strategic directions include:

1. Identify and invest in a system of service nodes and sectoral networks;
2. Protect the natural environment and resources and quality of life through more effective planning,
3. Co-ordination and co-operation across the zone;
4. Support a strong and viable agricultural sector;
5. Facilitate more efficient movement of people, goods and information;
6. Ensure a sustainable, reliable and affordable supply of energy and promote a strong and vibrant economy.

The Official Plan has incorporated these principles within the Land Use Management Strategy for Development and within the specific Land Use designation policies and Implementation methodologies.

As part of the Smart Growth approach and/or Community Improvement Plan directives, development standards may be incorporated into the Zoning By-law to permit increases in the height or density of development, where such development:

1. Provides a specific type of housing, such as housing for low or moderate income groups, senior citizens or persons with disabilities;
2. Preserves areas, sites, buildings or structures of cultural heritage value or environmental sensitivity;
3. Provides additional lands for park or other public recreational purposes over and above that required by the parkland dedication policies of this plan; and/or
4. Provides additional landscaping, setbacks, greenspace or other elements that enhance streetscape design in core urban areas.

In order to support the creation of a livable, sustainable community and in keeping with the County of Essex Affordable Housing Action Plan the Town of Amherstburg, through the Official Plan, will strive to ensure that there is an available mix of housing types for all household types, income levels and for persons with special needs. In approving development proposals, the housing needs, both type and tenure, shall be considered for low, medium and high-income groups and all age-related housing needs and all lifestyle needs of Amherstburg residents

The Town will also work toward providing a range of housing choices that are affordable to all income levels. Affordable for the purposes of the Official Plan shall mean:

- Affordable housing means housing that can be accessed by households whose income falls at or below the lowest 35th percentile of the income distribution of the community.
- Affordable rental housing is housing where monthly rent costs excluding utilities do not exceed 30 percent of the tenant gross monthly household income.
- Affordable ownership housing is housing where monthly housing expenses including mortgage principle, interest and property tax but excluding insurance or utilities do not exceed 30 percent of gross monthly household income.

Amherstburg's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee formed in 2002, supported by the Town Council and Administration, working together to identify, remove and prevent accessibility barriers. During the past years they have begun to make great strides and

are committed to building on that success by continuing to look for new ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities, whether they are residents, visitors or employees.

The Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee guided by the requirements and standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* completed a Multi-Year Accessibility plan. This plan outlines the many steps the Town has made to meet the AODA requirements and to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

Amherstburg Community Based Strategic Plan

The Town's Community Based Strategic Plan, among other goals, seeks to improve the quality of life for its residents and to safeguard inclusiveness by developing and improving infrastructure so that all individuals have equitable access to goods, services and facilities.

The strategic vision for the longer-term growth of the Town of Amherstburg is to:

- Ensure financial sustainability through a long-term financial plan and maintenance of adequate reserves. Improve, develop, and maintain existing and new infrastructure that supports a sustainable community, and ensures that individuals have equitable access to the Town's goods, services and facilities.
- Secure commercial and industrial business investment through the use of progressive land-use planning tools and incentives.
- Further promote the Town's reputation as an attractive place to live and where residents experience a high quality of life.
- Continue to promote the Town for the quality of its festivals, celebrations and historic character.

Values supports the Vision and Mission are:

- Collaboration – working together effectively within the organization and in collaboration with other governments, private entities and community partners.
- Service-oriented – listening and responding to our customers in a culturally responsive way and prioritizing their satisfaction as we do our work.
- Results-focused – establishing community driven goals, measuring our performance, and reporting to the public on our success in meeting those goals.
- Accountable – responsiveness and transparency to the public in our roles, functions and actions as individuals and as a government.
- Innovative – creatively learn from experiences and results and seek out new and efficient ways to solve problems and serve the public.

Amherstburg's Four Strategic Pillars:

Pillar #1 Marketing and Promotion Objective:

- Promote the Town as a destination for all demographics including young families and retirees.

Pillar #2 Economic Development Objective:

- Target the growth of the business community and cultural institutions and foster an attractive downtown core.

Pillar #3 Investment in Infrastructure Objective:

- Provide infrastructure that will facilitate growth and development.

Pillar #4 Fiscal Sustainability Objective:

- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and the efficient allocation of tax dollars.

The Parks Master Plan

The main goal of the Parks Master Plan is to maximize social, health, environmental and economic benefits of all the Town's residents by:

- Fostering accessibility and inclusivity through the provision of equitable access to barrier-free spaces and amenities for all ages and abilities are critical to enhancing the quality of life for our residents.
- Activating our waterfront and our locations on both a Canadian Heritage River and one of the Great Lakes, this being a unique part of our local identity.
- Encouraging participation through high levels of safety, user satisfaction, and physical and social activity.
- Celebrating the heritage, culture and rich history, making Amherstburg an attractive place to live, work, play and visit.
- Supporting tourism as a first-class destination in Southwestern Ontario, Amherstburg is committed to investing in the Tourism Sector.
- Engaging the community to ensure that the parks remain responsive to changing needs.
- Sustaining active transportation options such as walking and cycling for recreational or utilitarian purposes in order to improve the health of our resident sand our community.
- Connecting people with nature through Amherstburg's abundant and uncommon array of natural heritage features and ecological habitats.
- Promoting innovative design and management of the increasingly complex network of parks and open spaces.

Changing interests and activities are driven not only by leisure trends, but also by the aging population, community diversity, evolving lifestyle preferences, land use patterns, and new outlooks regarding physical activity. There is a desire to continue to diversify Amherstburg parks as well as the types of uses within parks.

Technical standards relating to the accessibility of parks facilities are governed by *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and its regulations, as well as local guidelines (Amherstburg has adopted Facility Accessibility Design Standards often referred to simply as FADS – see below). Standards for playgrounds, trails, and boardwalks are established by Ontario’s Design of Public Space Standard.

Examples of Amherstburg’s accessibility design standards are the rubber surfacing at Pat Thrasher Park, Toddy Jones Park as well as the accessible playground located at the Libro Credit Union Centre. Amherstburg is home to a Miracle League Diamond, which allows children and adults with disabilities to participate in baseball in a barrier-free environment.

The Parks Master Plan guiding principles:

1. Foster Accessibility and Inclusivity
2. Activate our Waterfront
3. Encourage Participation
4. Celebrate our Heritage and Culture
5. Support Tourism
6. Engage the Community
7. Sustain Active Transportation
8. Connect People with Nature
9. Promote Innovative Design and Management
10. Invest Responsibly

Amherstburg owns, maintains and/or has negotiated public access to approximately 113 hectares (266 acres) of developed and undeveloped parkland (except for Natural Parks). Based on the 2016 population of 21,936, this equates to a provision rate of 5.1 hectares per 1,000 residents. A review of parkland distribution finds that the Town’s parks system provides good geographic coverage in its urban areas, although small gaps exist based on 500-metre service area. Current parkland supply is adequate and additional parkland only be acquired to:

- Meet growth related needs;
- Enhance public access to the urban area’s riverfront;
- Protect natural habitat and cultural significant locations;

- Establish linear/trail connections vital to creating a comprehensive active transportation network; or
- Expand existing parks where necessary to install additional recreational amenities, based on demonstrated needs.

Key open space properties not included in the calculation include: Cypher Systems Group Greenway, Big Creek and Holiday Beach Conservation Area, Crystal Bay and White Sands Conservation Area and the Fort Malden National Historic Site.

Amherstburg’s parkland supply is above that of most comparable urban/rural municipalities which typically have provision rates in the range of 2.5 – 4.0 hectares per 1,000 residents. Waterfront communities tend to have high parkland supplies as they seek to connect their residents to the water, thus Amherstburg’s rate of provision can be expected to be higher than average.

Most Amherstburg park amenities are in moderate to good condition. Site furniture is generally rated good, however pathways range from very good (15%), good (31%) to moderate (38%) (15% were not rated). Pavilions were generally rated moderate to poor.

The County Wide Active Transportation System (CWATS) is a regional travel strategy to “Walk, Ride, County Wide.” The purpose of the trails system is to connect people with places of interest and facilities within the Windsor-Essex Region. The trail system includes paved shoulders, cycle paths, signed routes and off-road paths like multi-purpose trails for people to walk or ride on. Connectivity to this trail network is an integral part of encouraging active transportation within the community.

Trails within parks are an integral part of connecting residents with amenities in their neighbourhood. Amherstburg should consider establishing looped walking circuits in parks that support passive recreation.

Signage, wayfinding, and branding are key components of a successful trail network. The Town should prioritize provision of additional signage that can be used to indicate linkages and destinations throughout the Town. New roadway construction and improvements to existing roadways should include consideration of adequate and safe infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians where appropriate and feasible.

Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS)

The Facility Accessibility Design Standards will be adapted for use as a guidelines in Amherstburg from those already in place at the City of Windsor. The standard was compiled to assist architects, engineers, designers, builders and contractors in the construction and modification of barrier-free environments. It will also assist those who want to make their homes and businesses accessible to persons with disabilities. The

standard provides guidelines for the accommodation of a variety of disabilities. It is important to recognize that persons with disabilities each have their own unique abilities and needs as far as accessibility is concerned. The object of universal access is to apply standards from the perspective of a person with a disability, not assumptions about what a person with a disability might want or need. It is also important to note that as our community ages, the need for universal access will increase. Full participation through universal access is good for businesses and the community at large.

These design standards offer guidance for opportunities to increase access beyond that which is required in legislation like the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) or *Ontario Building Code* (OBC) and serve as a service level enhancement, where enacted. As legislative requirements are likely to continue to improve in future years, early investment in achieving a higher than required standard may offset the need to revisit projects to increase compliance in the future, thereby reducing future costs and providing greater access in the intervening period. Barrier-Free Design Standards are part of opening doors to the whole community. They are about independence, dignity, equality and justice. They are about good business.

The design standards include specific criteria to address such areas as:

- Outdoor public areas
- Accessible parking areas
- Accessible ramps, stairs, entrances, doors and hallways
- Accessible elevators, escalators, and platform lifts
- Accessible washroom facilities
- Accessible building features and amenities
- Accessible controls, systems and functions
- Accessible recreational facilities
- Additional facility-specific accessibility requirements

The Facility Accessibility Design Standards will be considered throughout the Facility Needs and Condition Assessment Study that is being undertaken. Where such standards are enacted there are increased expenses related to any renovation or new construction.

The regional Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2022-2026, was developed in accordance with provincial legislation and with guidance from area municipalities and community stakeholders with the goal of re-imagining how to address local crime and complex social issues through preventative and collective action. The plan takes advantage of the community's existing strengths, resources and best practices to create proactive approaches to address identified local risks. The Community and Safety Well-Being (CSWB) model acknowledges that an individual's housing and financial security,

educational opportunities, and physical and mental well-being are factors that can reduce the probability of harm and victimization. The factors impacting CSWB in Windsor Essex are:

- Mental health and well-being
- Crime and victimization
- Housing and neighbourhoods
- Financial security and employment

The following goals were identified in the report:

1. Improve collaboration between CSWB partners for better data and service outcomes.
2. Improve representation and inclusion of priority populations in collaborative decision-making processes for CSWB initiatives.
3. Increase access to safe and affordable housing.
4. Promote safe, healthy, and connected neighbourhoods and communities.
5. Increase frequency of preventative care and early interventions to reduce overall service need and crisis intervention.
6. Safe and effective emergency response to those in crisis.
7. Identify existing gaps in the social safety net for those facing income insecurity and poverty with a lens of equity and inclusion for priority populations.
8. Promote local employment and increase participation in local education and training.

The CSWB plan is a first iteration of a process toward community safety and well-being that must involve residents, municipal and sector leaders, and collaborators from various backgrounds and levels of experience. The implementation principles are:

- Representation and inclusion
- Collective action
- Community engagement
- Data and evaluation
- Sustainable funding

Windsor-Essex 2021 Vital Signs Report

The Windsor Essex Community Foundation's 2021 Vital Signs Report is a snapshot of life in Windsor-Essex County that uses local research and data to measure the vitality of our community. By identifying trends and opportunities in eleven key issue areas, Vital

Signs touches on all aspects of our daily lives and focuses on our overall sense of belonging. Overall, the 2021 report states Windsor-Essex is doing Okay when it comes to quality of life, but there is still room for improvement.

Although the survey did not identify responses from specific municipalities, the responses are indicative of our region and can be used to reflect on the Town of Amherstburg. Of the survey respondents, 68% were in the age range of 45-65 and over and 86% indicated they lived more than 10 years in Windsor-Essex County.

Survey results:

- 47% improve access to mental health programs and services
- 27% access to health professionals and services needs to be improved
- 37% increase opportunities for people to feel included and connected
- 31% provide more initiatives to increase life satisfaction
- 40% expanding social programing for at-risk individuals
- 56% improving the affordability of housing
- 23% increasing the availability of housing with different levels of assisted care
- 82% improvement is needed for affordable housing
- 51% improvement is needed for available housing with different levels of assisted care
- 15% improve the amount of connected green space
- 37% Creating a regional transportation system connecting Windsor and Essex County
- 19% Improve and/or increase the number of bike pathways and/or pedestrian walkways
- 33% of survey respondents rated public transportation improvement is needed

Needs Assessment by WHO 8 Domains of Community Life

The Needs Assessment involved obtaining direct input from those most effected such as older adults aged 55 and over, persons with disabilities, and disenfranchised populations and service providers. The needs assessment collected information on the diverse needs of these areas from the context of what is working now, what should be expanded and identified areas of improvement. The Needs Assessment forms the basis for the Action Plan to outline specific project areas and tactics or strategies for implementation.

The goals of the Needs Assessment process were to bring forward a comprehensive needs assessment based upon ensuring the following were completed:

- Initiate and complete a comprehensive evaluation of demographic, comparator, and contextual information from the current service levels, facilities and service provisions of the Town of Amherstburg and local organizations, service providers and community stakeholders.
- Engage with older adults aged 55 and over, persons with disabilities, service providers and the wider community through an inclusive community engagement process that provides avenues to ensure those with differing abilities or access can be provided the ability to participate.
- Ensuring the public engagement process is representative of a diverse range of target populations including hard-to-serve isolated seniors, minority groups, those with limited access to services or technology and older populations that include those with chronic conditions, those in poor health and those in good/excellent health and are more active. This ensures that respondents are provided an opportunity to highlight their particular circumstances and needs confidentially.
- Increase awareness and information gathering among target populations about the variety of methods available for participation and the overall project process and expected timelines and results.
- Advance local prioritized short, medium and longer-term improvement projects which are derived from a critical reflection on the WHO 8 Domains of Age-Friendly and Inclusive Communities that will better the lives of those target populations in Amherstburg.

The community engagement survey asked respondents to provide information on their experiences within the community which were derived from the 8 Domains of WHO. A careful analysis of those survey results, in collaboration with the noted statistical and analytic review of current trends, demographics, comparator benchmarking, best practices and current service provisions resulted in the following needs assessment findings. While no means exhaustive, this needs assessment highlights those areas which were drawn out based on the public engagement process and through careful study and review of those areas. As the work of making the community more inclusive should always be considered an ongoing process, the following needs assessment findings represent the current targets for areas of enhancement, improvement or advocacy to support those needs identified at the moment.

Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain

Introduction

The external environment has a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives beyond the comfort of their homes. A clean community and well-maintained recreation centres with ample rest areas, well-developed and safe pedestrian and building infrastructure, and a secure atmosphere is the ideal environment for older adults to age-in-place in.

A needs assessment review for outdoor spaces and buildings focusses on several key areas that promote independence, foster social interaction and enable people to enjoy their lives at any age.

The mix of urban and rural areas in Amherstburg promotes community strength in that there are tremendous opportunities to invest and conserve natural environment areas that contribute to the health of the community. Amherstburg has repeatedly been noted as one of the safest communities in Ontario and it neighboured by other communities with similar distinctions.

The physical environment is an important determinant of physical and mental health for everyone. Creating supportive surroundings, including age-friendly and accessible outdoor spaces and building design, can enhance physical well-being and quality of life, accommodate individuality and independence, foster social interaction and enable people to conduct their daily activities.

A walkable community is one where it is easy and safe to walk to goods and services. It is one which encourages pedestrian activity, includes expanded transportation options and has a safe and inviting pedestrian infrastructure that meets or exceeds accessible guidelines and serves people of all ages and abilities. When sidewalks, parks and trails are accessible and pleasant to walk, all community members benefit.

Older adults and people with disabilities see an inclusive community as one which has a wide range of activities available to them in a facility which is designed and built with access in mind.

The Town of Amherstburg invested in the creation of the Libro Centre, a sports complex featuring a Barrier-Free design and Silver LEED designation for environmental impacts. The complex is home to the first Miracle League Field in Canada, an accessible baseball field designed with safety, accessibility and recreational programming for people with disabilities as its core elements. Additionally, the Libro Centre is home to the accessible sledge hockey league and offers other amenities such as an indoor accessible walking track open year-round and an indoor turf soccer field.

Other parkland amenities exist throughout the Town, having been established historically to provide services and amenities for the public or having been developed to respond to pressures driven by growth, such as that of neighbourhood parks. These parks tend to have individual strengths which can be drawn upon to further emphasize their importance in the park system and to encourage greater utilization and enjoyment of the areas. While these unique perspectives are reinforced, consideration must also be given to those common elements which contribute to the enjoyment of most park amenities, such as trail networks, shade structures, rest areas, green space and natural elements. All of these amenities should be crafted with accessibility top-of-mind so that rest areas or outdoor eating spaces are able to be used and enjoyed by everyone.

Trends

In Canada and Ontario, seniors and caregivers have been involved in numerous studies identifying important aspects of outdoor spaces and buildings. Older adults and service providers in rural and remote communities expressed that walkable sidewalks, pathways and trails are very important for older persons, not only because they support safety and physical activity, but also because they enable older adults to get around and take care of their personal and social needs. Participants also identified the importance of having amenities within close proximity of each other.

In addition to the importance of walking for such practical purposes as running errands, walking is a form of physical activity and recreational needs in this area have been on the rise to provide safe, well-lit and secure places to walk for exercise. Ensuring that paths, trails and walking routes are supported with sufficient washrooms and rest areas with shade structures and seating areas, makes these areas more usable by seniors.

Seasonal conditions clearly have an impact on the walkability of communities. Amherstburg By-laws to clean and maintain sidewalks in the winter help to ensure sidewalks can be used throughout the year. Survey responses indicate that Amherstburg does a good job clearing snow from such routes.

Buildings with few steps, push-button doors and wheelchair ramps are important for accessibility by all seniors. Aging buildings, however, are often cited as having accessibility problems. Inaccessible washrooms or toilet stalls, stairs and heavy doors are challenging for seniors and people with differing abilities.

Amherstburg does not have jurisdiction over older, privately owned buildings, however, can advocate for upper levels of government to provide grants and funds to encourage people and businesses to upgrade their buildings to address these issues. The Town can also consider supporting a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) which could encourage and support business façade upgrade plans and selected accessibility improvements.

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 191/11, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) details the standards in terms of the design of public spaces. These entail such elements as:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes;
- Outdoor public eating areas;
- Outdoor play spaces;
- Accessible parking;
- Exterior paths of travel;
- Maintenance and restoration of public spaces;
- Guidelines for service-related elements indoors like service counters, fixed queuing lines, and waiting areas with fixed seating.

Additionally, the *Ontario Building Code* has standards with regards to the design of buildings and the applicability of these standards on new construction or those buildings undergoing major renovations.

Survey Findings

- 95% of the respondents agreed that public spaces in the Town of Amherstburg are clean and pleasant.
- 57% of respondents felt that buildings are accessible for individuals with limited physical mobility (25% of respondents' disagreed, and 18% had no feeling either way).
- 70% agreed that green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in numbers and are well maintained and safe.
- 61% said they felt that sidewalks are in excellent/good condition and free of obstructions (21% of respondents disagreed, and 18% had no feeling either way).
- 75% of respondents felt that snow and ice clearing on sidewalks was effected in a timely and efficient manner.
- 63% of respondents felt that there were adequate accessible parking spaces for people with disabilities.
- 67% of people believed there are enough pedestrian crossings.
- Overall, most respondents (73%) agreed that it is easy for older adults to get around while walking in the Town.
- When respondents were asked about areas they would like to see for further investment they selected:
 - Accessible washrooms
 - Rest areas
 - Crosswalks and sidewalks

- Trails and walkways

Supporting Documentation

The Official Plan, sets out Amherstburg's vision and goals for the future. It ensures that new development and growth considers a broad range of interests and perspectives and that land use planning decisions reflect local value. The Official Plan is currently undergoing the five-year review and should include supportive visions and goals for Amherstburg's seniors and people with disabilities.

Amherstburg's Parks Master Plan develops the vision for improvements, uses, acquisitions, and planning of park projects in the Town of Amherstburg. It provides a framework for identifying and evaluating future park projects, including new opportunities and the redevelopment of existing assets. It lays the groundwork for future planning, policy development and grant securement.

The Town of Amherstburg is a welcoming, inclusive community that values diversity, accessibility and the essential dignity of all people. To ensure this, the Town adopted and annually engages the community, the Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee and people with disabilities on targeted objectives of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan of the Town of Amherstburg to eliminate barriers to full enjoyment and participation in our community.

Summary of Needs Findings

In order to ensure Amherstburg's outdoor spaces are accessible and meet the needs of the community, each park should have a master plan developed to guide any upgrades or enhancements required. Each Master Plan will include standard amenities such as park furniture and location as well as specific amenities for each park. Public consultation will be required to ensure each park is designed to meet the community needs. Several consultations are currently under way for parks such as Centennial Park, Jack Purdie Park, Briar Ridge Park, Ranta Memorial Park and Warren Mickle Park.

The Official Plan is currently undergoing the five-year review and should include supportive visions and goals for Amherstburg's seniors and people with disabilities that strengthen their enjoyment and active participation in society.

Domain 2: Transportation

Introduction

Accessible and affordable public transportation is key to ensuring older adults and people with disabilities remain engaged with their community and able to access health and social services facilities. Municipalities should always keep seniors in mind when considering transportation options.

Seniors and people with disabilities should ideally be able to navigate throughout the Town with ease, with a number of options available to them to assist in their transportation needs. Apart from affordability of such services, transportation services should cater to people with a range of mobility needs. In addition, helpful drivers sensitive to elderly needs are better able to assist older commuters. Information on age-friendly, accessible and affordable transport services should be made available to older people and people with disabilities to facilitate their increased usage.

Driving can be essential transportation, particularly in suburban and rural areas. Parking bays close to buildings and drop-off and pick-up bays are welcome by seniors as well as people with accessible needs.

Transportation Services available in Amherstburg include:

- Amherstburg Taxi Inc. (In addition to other Taxi services operated out of surrounding municipalities)
- Ride Sharing Services
- CareLink Health Transit Service
- St. Clair College Student Shuttle

Note: A public transit service is being contemplated to enter a pilot project period through the use of a neighbouring municipality for busing from Amherstburg through Windsor, and providing connections which can continue into Leamington.

Additionally, it should be noted that the current Amherstburg Taxi service does not provide access to accessible on-demand taxi services, although such services are provided by services in surrounding communities which may agree to taking on ridership, albeit only where such trips are likely to leave the municipality. Efforts to engage the community, the Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee and people with disabilities to identify the proportion of on-demand accessible taxi's are expected to be completed in 2022, with Administrative options provided based upon a multi-year review of industry standards and best practices to encourage and promote increases in the proportional rate available.

Trends

In reviewing trends in the transportation domain it was imperative that this be done with a perspective driven by the real world conditions affecting the Town of Amherstburg as a largely rural, lower tier municipality. Many trends affecting larger urban centres do not provide solutions that are workable in smaller towns with wide geographic spacing and comparatively low population density. To appropriately reflect the context of the Town of Amherstburg, this report utilized the extensive work of the Rural Ontario Institute and its findings in relation to rural transportation networks, namely, the “Towards Coordinated Rural Transportation” resource document. The report is a product of the Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions initiative; a collaboration between the Rural Ontario Institute and the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition. The purpose of that initiative was to enhance and strengthen the sharing of knowledge of effective models and emerging innovation in rural regional transportation funded from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ontario government. The document states that:

“Across Ontario, rural residents, employers and other stakeholders have been voicing concerns about the lack of adequate transportation services in rural areas for a long time. Many different types of organizations across rural and small town Ontario are working on improving transportation services within their regions. This includes both municipally-sponsored efforts and partnerships among diverse community service organizations.

The need for such collaboration is becoming more important as the implementation of other societal priorities such as "aging at home" strategies necessitate that these services be strengthened and improved. The typical older demographic in rural areas emphasizes the fact that our capacity to meet social, economic and health needs solely by relying on private cars and volunteerism is increasingly inadequate. Neighbours volunteering to assist neighbours through the provision of transportation may be exemplary but such efforts are also uneven in their reach and hard to sustain.”

Additionally, trends towards increasing numbers of people with disabilities and shifting demographics towards older adults and retirees on fixed incomes necessitate the need for accessible, affordable, reliable and sustainable models of transportation services across wider and more regionally interconnected transportation networks.

Survey Findings

- 45% of the respondents indicated that they would use public transit services if available.

- 48% of the respondents felt that there are currently sufficient specialized and public transit (care links) services available to meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.
- 93% of respondents indicated that traffic signs are easy to read and understand.
- 62% of respondents indicated that available taxi services are meeting their needs.
- 43% of those surveyed felt that current taxi services are affordable.
- 53% of responses indicated a need for increasing a demand on the proportion of on-demand taxi services offered.
- 45% of those surveyed indicated they felt roads were excellent/well maintained.
- 33% thought that there are good options for volunteers, shuttle and/or pooled driving resources.
- 47% of respondents agreed that there is enough information about transportation services available for seniors and people with disabilities in the Town of Amherstburg.

Supporting Documentation

The Rural Ontario Institute and the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition produced both a case study on ten public transit projects in rural communities which sought to leverage models of collaborative transportation solutions to address public transit needs in rural communities, and, the *Towards Coordinated Rural Transportation* resource document. The research they conducted identified three main challenges to the provision of transportation services to rural communities in Ontario, namely:

1. Low density and dispersed nature of population and employment and services makes it difficult to provide effective transportation that meets all the needs within the community at reasonable costs;
2. The long-distance nature of trips (often travel is to adjacent urban centres to access services) makes the per trip cost of rural transportation expensive;
3. A lower tax base makes available funds for transportation services scarce, particularly when competing with other municipal priorities and established provincial programs and budgets.

These works explored the opportunities and benefits provided by a coordinated transportation service model. This identified that there were three perspectives from which the benefits must be viewed, namely:

1. The organization providing transportation services (transportation provider);
 2. The clients and residents that require the transportation services (customers);
- and,

3. The funding agencies that provide the revenues necessary to deliver the transportation services (funding partner).

These benefits were then summarized for each area, as noted below:

Transportation Provider

- Access new funding sources that were previously unavailable to an individual organization – For example, new funding programs linked to the coordination mandate; access to provincial gas tax funds; or access to other funds through the partnership.
- Stretch scarce resources through better overall resource management – An example would be reducing the workload of staff responsible for reservation/dispatch by creating a centralized position within the coordinated network. This, in turn, can free local staff to do other work important to the organization or to reinvest the savings into additional transportation services.
- Enhance purchasing power and use economies of scale to upgrade transportation capital and other resources – An example would be the ability for a group of service providers to purchase a scheduling software program that would be unaffordable and ineffective to an individual transportation provider.
- Increase the potential for shared rides, which in turn increases trip making capacity by reducing duplication of service – For example, a centralized scheduler/dispatcher could allocate passenger trips based on the closest available vehicle within the coordinated network rather than limiting them to a vehicle owned by the agency/organization they are registered to.

Customer

- Enhance their mobility through the availability of transportation services – This may include increased service hours, service provision in new areas or the ability to make more trips.
- Reduce confusion concerning “who to call” for transportation services – This can be achieved by providing and communicating one phone number to call for all transportation services within the county/region.
- Expand the eligibility criteria for service – With the objective of making transportation services more inclusive for all residents (e.g. many community care agencies that are funded by their Local Health Integration Network restrict eligibility to seniors and adults with disabilities).

Funding Partners

- Coordinated transportation services provide a service which addresses needs for many different people, such as:

- Seniors (with the objective of enhancing their ability to age at home and reduce provincial spending on hospitals and long-term care facilities).
- Employees and those seeking employment (providing access to employment opportunities locally or in adjacent communities).
- Students (the ability for students that are bused to school by a student transportation service to participate in after school activities and/or part-time employment).
- Persons using social assistance programs (provides clients with the ability to access services and employment opportunities).
- Persons with health related issues (promotes independent living for persons with a chronic health related issue or with a disability. An example is the Canadian Cancer Society or the CNIB).
- Make better use of the funding through more efficient resource management (and the delivery of a more effective service).
- Reach a greater number of customers and provide a better level of service (by taking the savings gained through greater cost effectiveness of the service delivery and reinvesting the savings in service improvements).

Summary of Needs Findings

Given the needs identified herein, opportunities should be explored to connect the Town of Amherstburg to a wider transit network to ensure that the cost of providing those services considers the per trip cost from Amherstburg to other areas in the County and to ensure that riders have the widest possible access to interconnected networks of accessible, reliable and affordable transit services.



Domain 3: Housing

Introduction

The housing conditions of older people and people with disabilities are often linked to their quality of life and whether they can age independently and actively in their community. Appropriate housing design and its proximity to community and social services allow residents to live comfortably and safely, while housing affordability provides peace of mind.

The cost of housing and related utilities influences where vulnerable populations live. High housing costs can discourage both older people and people with disabilities from moving to more appropriate, accessible and age-friendly housing. A home with accessible, age-friendly features; such as elevators, wide passages to accommodate wheelchairs (etc.), allows residents to live comfortably. Conversely, a home layout impeding mobility, such as stairs and uneven floors, can be a barrier. In these cases, the ability to modify one's home through affordable and accessible home modifications would ensure that people are able to continue living well in their current place of residence. It is important that seniors and people with disabilities feel safe and secure in their own homes.

Locating social and health facilities close to the homes of seniors and people with disabilities is crucial in ensuring accessibility to such services when they need it. People also wish to remain close to their family, friends and community, so providing a range of housing options would cater to diverse needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

Trends

Canada's nearly seven million seniors (as per 2021 Statistics Canada report) represent a complex and dynamic cohort, with diverse living arrangements and housing needs. Within this context, it is generally understood that most seniors desire to age in community. However, as individuals age their needs and capabilities can change and they may experience challenges in finding suitable housing to accommodate their changing needs and services. These challenges may include:

- Difficulty in finding affordable housing;
- Ability to afford necessary adaptive changes;
- Limited access, or barriers to, mobility aids; and/or,
- Potential gaps in availability of appropriate supportive services such as home care.

Seniors (those 65 and over) are the fastest growing age group in Canada. In 2016, there were 5.9 million seniors, who represented 16.9% of the total population in Canada

and this percentage is expected to increase, as per Statistics Canada's forecast to 24% by 2036.

As seniors age, they are more likely to face disability, to find that their disability creates difficulties for them, and that they need help. Without informal and formal support (for example homecare), older people with disabilities are among those who are most likely to want or need to find alternative forms of housing. Modifications can enhance seniors' overall functioning and well-being. Home modifications can help seniors age at home and may prevent the need to move. Home modifications can also benefit people who may have, or who may develop, a disability.

In 2017 it was reported that 15.5% of Ontarians, or 1.86 million persons lived with a disability. More recent data from 2020 identifies that this figure has grown to over 2.6 million people. This means that nearly one in four people in Ontario are living with a disability.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous lives as they age. As such, in an accessible, age-friendly community, the physical and social aspects of a community are designed to improve the health and well-being of older adults and people with disabilities.

Survey Findings

- 54% of respondents felt that more local retirement home options may be needed in the Town of Amherstburg.
- 48% of the responses felt that the amount of subsidized (geared to income) accommodations in Amherstburg was inadequate.
- 54% believed that housing options for seniors and people with differing abilities were lacking.
- 55% of respondents felt that sufficient supports exist in the community for seniors to remain in their homes if desired (e.g. meal delivery, housekeeping, personal care).
- 49% of responses felt that information on available housing options was lacking.
- When respondents were asked about areas they would like to see for further investment they selected:
 - Rent subsidies and geared to income housing for seniors and people living with disabilities.
 - Age-Friendly, affordable, accessible housing.
 - Increased aging in place options.
 - More affordable housing generally.

Supporting Documentation

The Association of Municipalities in Ontario (AMO), in their *Blueprint for Action: An Integrated Approach to Address the Ontario Housing Crisis* document, identified 12 municipal actions that can be taken to facilitate more housing affordability options as a result of the planning and financial tools at their disposal.

1. Work with developers to encourage innovative housing while still conforming to the standards of the *Ontario Building Code*.
2. Advocate for the province to fund municipalities to accelerate the development of new housing supply by supporting new technology and methods as well as the dissemination of best practices that could assist in more efficient planning and development approval processes while respecting sound planning practices.
3. Consider whether adopting a Community Planning permit system would meet the needs of their local communities, and advocate for provincial funding to implement and review how this would impact the Ontario Land Tribunal.
4. Revisit zoning best practices to explore planning solutions that could include zero-lot-line housing, community improvement plan (CIP), reduced parking minimums, tiny homes, laneway housing, flex housing, shared housing, and other types that reduce land costs and increase density.
5. Work with the province to raise awareness among municipalities about the potential benefits of as-of-right zoning and inclusionary zoning bylaw that reflects a diverse mix of housing.
6. Ensure that zoning bylaws are up to date with official plans and reflect best practices for development that respects local decision making while prioritizing housing development that best meets local needs.
7. Have the flexibility to attract development in accordance with local municipal objectives without prescribed one size fits all solutions that don't work.
8. Ensure their zoning by-law and planning processes reflect the requirement under Bill 108 to permit additional residential units (secondary suites) in single, semi-detached and row homes and in accessory buildings or structures, for a total of three residential units on a property.
9. Consider and implement as-of-right zoning where feasible to facilitate 'missing middle' housing.
10. Consider and implement inclusionary zoning by-laws to increase housing affordability, including in places outside of major transit station areas.
11. Consider and implement local vacant homes tax if feasible and desirable to ensure units are available to residents in a reasonable amount of time.
12. Consider municipal succession management strategies to ensure that qualified building inspectors and planning staff are attracted and retained.

Summary of Needs Findings

Municipalities can advocate for change and where possible, support development for the following types of projects:

- Mixed-use developments with housing located near services and amenities to reduce some of the accessibility and transportation barriers that currently exist;
- Develop housing suitable for intergenerational living; and,
- Construction of affordable rental units especially in suburban settings.

Amherstburg does not have oversight to the following however can advocate to upper levels of government to provide:

- Retrofitting of existing homes to improve accessibility;
- Coordinate housing adaptations and community supportive services delivery to increase availability of supportive living options as a viable alternative to Long Term Care.

Overall, addressing the core housing need and integrated housing needs of seniors and people with disabilities will require adaptations and transformation with respect to home design, neighbourhood design, urban planning, transportation, and health and home-care services, in consultation with seniors and stakeholders.

Amherstburg currently has the following housing options for seniors and/or people with disabilities:

- Seasons Amherstburg Senior Retirement home and long-term care facility
- Wesview Apartment Seniors Building
- Richmond Terrace Long-Term Care Home
- Shevchenko Senior Citizens Apartments
- Victoria Manor Supportive Housing
- Blue Haven Assisted Living Facility (primarily provides care to people with disabilities)
- Frank Long Co-Operative Homes Inc.
- Rosewood Crescent Co-Op Housing Inc.
- Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation

Note: An additional 160 long-term care beds have been approved following the conclusion of the sale of land to the east of the Community Hub building at 320 Richmond Street by Arch Corporation.

Domain 4: Community and Health Care Domain

Introduction

Accessible and affordable community-based health care services are crucial in keeping seniors and people with disabilities healthy, independent, and active. This involves an appropriate study of care services conveniently located close to where people live and where trained health and social workers provide these services.

A wide range of accessible and affordable services along the continuum of care is an ideal environment. Seniors and people with disabilities have different and varied health care needs and preferences. A range of services along the continuum of aged care, such as preventative care, geriatric clinics, hospitals, adult day centres, respite care, rehabilitation, residential nursing home care, home care and palliative care, would meet these diverse needs. These services should be easily accessible at locations convenient for seniors and people with disabilities to reach. Assisting living facilities and residential care services (such as nursing homes) located within residential areas would allow older residents and people with disabilities being cared for there to remain connected to their familiar surroundings. Education on the health system and available health services would raise awareness among seniors of the areas of care available to them. Health services should also be affordable or support available to cover the costs, to provide seniors with peace of mind that they will be able to receive care regardless of the ability to pay.

Trends

Today, older Canadians are living longer and leading healthier lives. At the same time, the majority of seniors have at least one chronic disease or condition. It is estimated that by 2036, the number of seniors could reach between 9.9 and 10.9 million people in Ontario. Ontario's Health Care Plan focuses on:

- Better Access;
- Better Quality; and,
- Better Value of Health Care.



Ontario Health

Older adults and people with disabilities can live longer, healthier lives by staying socially connected, increasing their levels of physical activity, eating in a healthy way, taking steps to minimize their risks of falls, and, by refraining from smoking.

Communities of all sizes are striving to meet the needs of their residents, including older adults. These communities recognize that people with disabilities and seniors, as well as the community as a whole, benefit when healthy aging and accessible, age-friendly features become one of their trademarks. Healthy aging is a lifelong process of optimizing opportunities for improving and preserving all aspects of health, promoting quality of life and enhancing successful life-course transitions.

Health promotion and disease prevention strategies help seniors and people with disabilities age well. Moreover, promoting healthy aging is part of a life-course approach aimed at reducing inequalities and supporting vulnerable people to improve well-being at all ages. Many of the policies and actions that promote an accessible, age-friendly community usually benefit all citizens at the same time. As the population ages, it makes more sense to create accessible physical and social environments that support all citizens to be active and productive members of the community. For seniors and people with disabilities, it may make the difference between their social isolation or their continued contributions to family, friends, neighbours and the economy well into old age.

Across Ontario, there is a need to plan for how to organize a health and social care system that is accessible to everyone and that takes into account the wide and varied needs of people with disabilities and older adults. As the demographics show that the population on average continues to age, this need grows as the number of people with disabilities and those with specific needs relating to their age result in increased chronic conditions and requiring both healthcare and community supports. The current care system provides selected programs and services to support older adults and people with disabilities to lead healthy and independent lives in their own homes.

Community Support and Health Services Accessible and Age-Friendly considerations include:

- Supporting older adults and their families in ways that support healthy aging.
- Supporting people with disabilities and their families in ways that recognize their specific needs to live healthy and active lives.
- Coordinating and integrating healthcare services that are built around the needs of older adults and people with disabilities, supporting healthy aging for everyone.
- Designing accessible, age-friendly environments specifically to encourage physical activity intended to improve health and lower health care expenditures.

- Re-orienting health and social services to better promote healthy aging through enhanced efforts in health promotion and disease prevention and control.
- There are many seniors and people with disabilities who are actively engaged in healthy aging initiatives and seen as leaders in their communities and advocate for increased awareness and support for healthy aging. Amherstburg can encourage and promote community initiatives designed to enhance the quality of life and opportunities available for older adults.

Supporting Documentation

As noted in the demographics section at the beginning of this report, comprehensive work has been conducted by Statistics Canada to collect and compare statistical information on the proportion of Canadians who are people with disabilities through the *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017*. When viewing these statistics with a lens for those affected by disabilities as age increases, it provides a clear image of the need in those areas, as noted in the table below.

Age Group	Total Population (Number)	Persons without disabilities (Number)	Persons with disabilities (Number)	Prevalence of disability (Percentage)
Total – aged 15 years and over	28,008,860	21,762,230	6,246,640	22.3
15 to 24 years	4,155,440	3,609,040	546,410	13.1
25 to 64 years	18,636,250	14,908,330	3,727,920	20.0
25 to 44 years	8,940,410	7,572,150	1,368,270	15.3
45 to 64 years	9,695,840	7,336,190	2,359,650	24.3
65 years and over	5,217,160	3,244,860	1,972,310	37.8
65 to 74 years	3,241,250	2,204,670	1,036,580	32.0
75 years and over	1,975,920	1,040,190	935,730	47.4

Figure 6: *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017* (Source: Statistics Canada).

The findings of this report identified that seniors are almost twice as likely to have a disability as those of working age. The prevalence of disability increased with age. Disability ranged from 13% among youth aged 15 to 24 years to almost half (47%) among persons aged 75 years and over. Among working age adults aged 25 to 64 years, 20% had a disability; for seniors aged 65 years and over, this figure was almost double at 38%.

Further, the report identified that 1 in 5 Canadians were classified as have a “very severe” disability. The report states:

“A global severity score was developed for the CSD, which was calculated for each person using the number of disability types that a person has, the level of difficulty experienced in performing certain tasks, and the frequency of activity limitations. To simplify the concept of severity, four severity classes were established: mild, moderate, severe and very severe. Of the 6.2 million Canadians aged 15 years and over with a disability, 37% were classified as having a mild disability; 20%, a moderate disability; 21% a severe disability; and 22% a very severe disability.”

Global Severity Class	Number	Percent
Total	6,246,640	100.0
Mild	2,324,430	37.2
Moderate	1,242,910	19.9
Severe	1,295,660	20.7
Very Severe	1,383,630	22.1

Figure 7: Canadian Population aged 15 years and over with a disability by severity (Source: Statistics Canada).

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.

Survey Findings

- 86% of respondents rated their health as average to above average.
- 68% of the respondents thought that medical services in the Town were adequate.
- 88% of respondents rated their mental well-being as good to excellent.
- 67% of the responses stated their healthcare services were available to them when they were needed.
- 65% of those surveyed indicated health care was well coordinated.
- When asked to generally rate the overall services provided to older adults and people living with disabilities in Amherstburg, 77% of those surveyed indicated they felt they were average to above average.
- When respondents were asked about areas they would like to see for further investment the area primarily noted was:
 - Accessible local memory care/dementia support.

Summary of Needs Findings

Community Support and Health Services considerations for upper levels of government are listed below. The Town of Amherstburg does not have control of these services however the Town can advocate for:

- Improving access to health care and social services;
- Addressing specific conditions such as falls, dementia and depression;
- Reducing isolation and improving safety and social supports;
- Using home visits to reduce admissions to healthcare institutions;
- Providing end-of-life care in the home;
- Providing self-management supports;
- Providing information to patients and their families at lower reading levels;
- Using telehealth to reduce unnecessary hospital visits and service use;
- Providing specialist outreach to improve access to services and outcomes;
- Providing flexible and responsive respite care for caregivers;
- Using comprehensive geriatric assessments to improve health outcomes; and,
- Providing customized rehabilitation and disease management to prevent admissions to long-term care facilities and re-admissions to the hospital.

As a lower-tier municipality the Town of Amherstburg can:

- Ensure that neighbourhoods are developed that encourage pedestrian activity that consider walkability and connectivity;
- Assist in the communication of local services and supports available;
- Encourage the support of local service providers, such as Amherstburg Community Services (ACS); and,
- Encourage development of senior residences and services that meet or exceed legislative minimums.

The implementation of these elements requires coordination and consensus building between multiple sectors and levels of government, as well as having providers and organizations modify existing roles and/or expand their typical scope of proactive and activities, most of which are out of scope for a lower tier municipality of this size. This information is included to bring awareness to Amherstburg's Council for advocacy purposes only.

Domain 5: Social Participation

Introduction

Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community fosters continued integration with society that helps everyone stay engaged and informed. The participation of seniors and people with disabilities is directly affected by access to transportation and the accessibility of the facilities, along with their awareness of the activities and their affordability.

People with disabilities and older populations have a broad range of interests and needs. A variety of social activities would cater to such diverse interests. Such opportunities should also be accessible to everyone by being designed with the needs of people with disabilities and older adults in mind. Activities taking place within hours suitable for older people and at convenient and accessible locations served by transport options would encourage greater participation. Hence, costs should be considered when planning the activities. Lastly, awareness of such activities must be raised among seniors and people with disabilities to keep them informed of the opportunities available.

The participation of both seniors and people with disabilities in social activities helps to prevent social isolation. Everyone wants to socialize and integrate with other age groups and cultures in their communities. Intergenerational activities are mutually enriching and fulfilling for all ages, with older people passing on knowledge, traditions and experience while the young may help seniors with new technologies and practices. Further, activities which ensure the participation of people with disabilities help to promote integration into the community that prevents social isolation and reduces stigma, breaking down barriers.

Trends

The latest trends in the Town of Amherstburg have been towards centralization and updates to existing recreational amenities, commencing in 2008 with the investment in the Libro Credit Union Centre and the subsequent development of the Miracle League Baseball Diamond, a first in Canada. Since that time, investment has targeted renewal of asset infrastructure and centralization, where economies of scale and programming use indicated it would be efficient and more effective to do so. The Libro Centre was built with considerations for environmental and accessible, age-friendly design. Interior elements boast the widely utilized indoor walking track and turf field, as well as Community rooms. The grounds a large walking trail and a recently approved nature trail to be completed later in 2022, as well as soccer fields, a premier baseball diamond and a lit, turf football field. The grounds include a much higher proportion of accessible parking spaces to promote ease of access and even include such amenities as electric vehicle charging stations.

The trend in the recreational services area to provide programming for seniors and people with disabilities helps promote the active living and engagement of those target audiences to prevent social isolation and to encourage development of social networks and friendships. Novel recreational programming such as cooking classes, ballroom dancing, and low impact activities like adult indoor golf, chair yoga or walking groups help generate new and renewed membership. These trends are also being embraced by community partners and organizations such as the Amherstburg Community Services with demonstration kitchen classes and low impact activities like drumming. Community organizations like the Fighting Island Boxing Club offer programming designed to assist people with disabilities and older adults in staying active and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, traditional groups like the Fort Malden Golden Age Club promote integration and social connectedness which is essential to mental acuity and adroitness.

The Town has also been the recipient of a number of awards and recognition regarding its festivals and events. As an established leader in the field of Tourism, the Town of Amherstburg secures considerable funding support from grant applications that enable events and activities that greatly contribute to an enhanced quality of life for the Town's residents and visitors. For example, in 2022 the Tourism Division has secured over \$162,000 in funding contributions towards events and festivals held in the Town, with projected contributions exceeding \$250,000 for the year. The variety and ingenuity with which Amherstburg promotes arts and cultural activities belies what comparator municipalities are able to achieve. For example, the Town has developed and launched two Augmented Reality Mobile App and historic walking tour promotions, in addition to the seasonal slate of events planned. Each event, whether Town sponsored or independently established, is developed with Town input that accounts for safety, security, and accessibility, ensuring that the plans for such events promote equal access for all.

Recent trends in recreation have also focused on exploiting the natural beauty and enjoyment of environmental areas. Participation in activities such as bird watching, passive recreation like reading and enjoying natural vistas, and through outdoor group activities like walking or hiking along nature trails and networks.

Social participation is also impacted by the ability for seniors and people with disabilities to discover, share and engage in group discussions of social events. Recognition of the existing barriers to entry in these areas for seniors and people with disabilities is important to encourage greater understanding of, and enjoyment of, existing and future offerings. Encouraging social participation also entails removing barriers to participation through continuing education. Education does not merely serve the purpose of addressing barriers to participation though, it can also serve as a tool to promote social participation and enjoyment as an end unto itself. Such offerings exist to promote the

principle of lifelong learning, and the documented benefits of continuing to be engaged and stimulated by lifelong learning concepts is widely acknowledged to be a tool to encourage greater retention of mental faculties as people age. Continuing education opportunities exist to promote lifelong learning, such as through the Elder College program offered by Canterbury College of the University of Windsor. Other programs serve to eliminate barriers as noted, such as those offered by the Essex County Library system to address digital literacy and access.

Survey Findings

- 38% of respondents felt that there are sufficient recreational opportunities for seniors and people with differing abilities in Amherstburg.
- 65% thought that activities and events in the Town are affordable.
- 60% agreed that Amherstburg has a good variety of activities and social clubs and groups available to older adults.
- 68% of those surveyed felt Amherstburg provided a good variety of shopping options for seniors.
- 88% surveyed said that service staff are courteous and helpful for seniors and people with disabilities.
- 43% of respondents felt that there should be more employment opportunities for people with disabilities and seniors in the Town.
- 52% said that there is enough information about social, educational, and recreational activities for seniors in the Town.
- When respondents were asked about areas they would like to see for further investment they selected:
 - A need for affordable senior's recreational programming and social clubs.
 - Cultural and spiritual activities for people of all ages.
 - Further arts and cultural opportunities.

Supporting Documentation

In addition to the number and variety of programming available for seniors and people with disabilities, affordability of such recreation is also something which can be central to whether vulnerable populations can gain access to these services. The Town of Amherstburg offers free access to the majority of its events and festivals, encouraging the widest possible access to the largest possible groups. Such activities as Open Air or the River Lights are designed to encourage walkability and access to everyone, promoting accessible and inclusive activities to be enjoyed freely.

With its commitment to affordability and access, Amherstburg has an *Access to Affordable Recreation Services Policy* that recognizes and promotes the full participation of all Amherstburg residents in recreational programs and services

regardless of financial circumstances. This service is rendered through community partners and ensures confidentiality of those beneficiaries.

In recognition that people with disabilities are sometimes assisted by others, Amherstburg also has an *Accessible Customer Service Standards Policy* which states that the Town will endeavour to provide goods, services and programming to support persons accompanying a person with a disability at either a reduced rate or free of charge, wherever possible.

Summary of Needs Findings

The Town of Amherstburg has great potential to increase available offerings of recreational and social activities for people with disabilities and older adults at its existing facilities and to build upon the strength of existing offerings. Support for community organizations in terms of promotion and the use of Town facilities can help facilitate enjoyment of recreational amenities to vulnerable populations. Continuation of existing offerings to do so in an affordable manner can ensure that access is provided to people with reduced means while ensuring confidentiality to respect the dignity of all persons. The needs assessment supports the finding that the Town of Amherstburg is a leader in the arts and cultural event area, drawing participation from residents and visitors alike in its many tourism led festivals and events, and through promotion and support for the Town's galleries, museums, historical organizations and service leagues. Reinforcing this strength through ensuring commitments to accessibility, affordability and the frequency and variety of events, festivals and activities is encouraged as a long term goal to increase and enhance social participation for seniors and people with disabilities. Expansion of the spaces available, and the amenities offered can serve to increase uptake for programming designed to be offered to these areas. Cross-promotion of events held by other entities such as the Fighting Island Boxing Club, the Miracle League, the Sledge Hockey League, the Essex County Heroes Athletic Club, Amherstburg Community Services, the Golden Age Club and new and emerging recreational groups can help ensure that residents are aware of and take advantage of existing offerings.

Domain 6: Information and Communication

Introduction

Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active aging. Technology can be utilized to spread information quickly, but also plays a role in social exclusion. Municipalities are required to provide access to information in an accessible format, and to bear in mind the wide range of needs and resources older adults and people with disabilities may have.

The media are instrumental in communicating information to the wider community. Older people tend to receive information through traditional print and broadcast media, and through direct personal contact such as telephone calls and interacting with people in service centres of community facilities and clinics. People with disabilities can also consume information in a variety of ways, some of which may be non-traditional. This balance of ensuring access to all must also ensure that access to information is kept affordable so that cost does not become a prohibitive factor. Unlike larger urban centres, in Amherstburg the local newspaper (the River Town Times) is free, so advertising in print media can be an affordable and effective means of reaching older adults. At the same time, people with disabilities tend to welcome other forms of information sharing, such as through social media and accessible web content. A diverse range of tools exist, and need to be used to reach people. For example, older adults may not be as familiar with technology and information shared exclusively on digital platforms which can lead to social exclusion, especially where there are either financial or digital literacy barriers.

As the municipality is obligated to provide information in an accessible manner, the options utilized tend to vary, providing alternatives for those whose preferred means of communication differs from digital only offerings. As most of these methods are temporary in nature, sometimes repeated broadcasts are required to ensure that messages have the best chance of reaching target audiences. Recently, the Town of Amherstburg created a position for a Communication Officer. Such a position can be helpful in ensuring these lines of communication are accessible, routine and expected.

Trends

Recent trends in this area emphasize the greater use of accessible and integrated electronic communication methods, spanning multiple platforms to reach users where they are. While this increasing focus on the digital realm remains a trend, use of and focuses on traditional media such as print media, also ensure that communication methods anticipate those who are not digital natives and/or prefer other forms of information media. Municipalities must be prepared to communicate in a variety of means and through a variety of methods, placing accessibility as well as convenience

into anything that is done. This increases public trust and promotes greater involvement, accountability and transparency, leading to higher confidence and respect for established institutions.

The use of public engagement platforms, such as “Talk the Burg,” alongside more traditional forms of engagement tools can be effective in providing consistent and reliable means of securing resident perspectives that can highlight the needs and wants of user groups and ratepayers. As the Town seeks to ensure that it reaches users where they are, it must also anticipate the need for point-of-contact interactions and support to ensure the delivery of highly satisfying customer experiences. The Town provides ready access to live-person interactions and ensures that activities such as completing online applications or interactions have in-person components and support.

Survey Findings

- 60% of respondents indicated that they could be better informed about the services programs and activities provided in Amherstburg and the surrounding areas.
- 67% of the providers surveyed indicated that they felt assistance for seniors and people with disabilities to fill out online forms was most needed.
- 50% identified a need for materials for the public to be produced in a larger print and to have the ability to provide a live-person option for telephone calls.
- 33% indicated a need for materials being provided to the public to be written in plain language.

Summary of Needs Findings

While the survey findings suggest the possibility for a disconnect between what services the Town currently provides and how knowledgeable the public may be about their availability, the creation of a Communications Officer position is likely to affect this identified need. Greater consistency, reliability and a higher level of interaction with the public can be expected with a position dedicated to ensuring open lines of communication exist, and a higher degree of promotion of the service levels provided.

The findings support the continued use of multiple platforms and traditional/non-traditional forums for the dissemination of information. These services are legislatively required to be provided in an accessible format, and the availability of further supports and tools to assist end users are designed to reduce or remove barriers to accessing information. Continued investment and focus on communication methods and methodology supports ensuring access to older adults and people with disabilities.

Domain 7: Civic Participation and Employment

Introduction

Older adults are an asset to the community, and they contribute to their communities even after retirement. Similarly, the contributions of persons with disabilities cannot be understated. An accessible, age-friendly community provides ample opportunities for older people and those with disabilities to do so, be it through voluntary or paid employment, and keeps them engaged in the political process.

Older people and those with disabilities, can gain fulfilment from active involvement in voluntary activities or work, as it provides satisfaction and keeps them socially engaged. A wide range of volunteer and employment opportunities caters to the diverse preferences, needs and skill sets, and awareness on the vacancies available connects seniors and those with disabilities to these opportunities. Urban and transportation infrastructure that is age-friendly and accessible, removes any physical barriers faced in accessing the volunteer or job opportunity. Continued training for seniors and those with disabilities also helps them remain relevant and connected. Entrepreneurial opportunities are another way to support their participation in the workforce and ensure their sustained self-sufficiency.

Current trends for the equal opportunity employment of older adults are to build up employers' positive attitude towards retaining and recruiting older workers. This would help to ensure employment opportunities for seniors. The workplace can continue to be made more welcoming for seniors to put their experience and expertise to good use.

Amherstburg can strive towards increased participation of seniors and individuals with disabilities in the political process. The availability of platforms to voice concerns and views to government officials, or through participating in interest groups are ideal venues. Amherstburg's Talk the Burg platform provides awareness of municipal projects as well as opportunity to offer input.

Discrimination and barriers to employment exist for seniors and people with disabilities in society. Recognition of these barriers and the need to bring them down has led to creation of *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations* with regards to employment, necessitating that employers be equal opportunity, and that there be notice provided of the availability of supports. These regulations are having an impact on the number of people who are finding employment, but attitudinal barriers and discrimination are likely to persist if they are not actively combated. Opportunities to create employment openings for people of differing abilities should be created and workplaces rendered barrier free to preserve the dignity and respect of every member of the workforce.

Survey Findings

- 88% of respondents indicated that seniors are welcomed at community events, activities and settings.
- 68% felt that there are enough opportunities for volunteers to participate in the Town.
- Half of the respondents indicated that older adults and people with disabilities are recognized by the community for their past and present contributions.
- When respondents were asked about areas they would like to see for further investment they selected:
 - Employment and training opportunities in Amherstburg for seniors and people living with a disability was identified as a need by every survey respondent.
 - A need for more accessible public venues and buildings to increase overall participation.
 - More support, such as training and appreciation, for volunteers.

Summary of Needs Findings

Civic participation, volunteering and employment opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities are commensurately affected by the level of engagement, support and recognition put into them. The Needs Assessment found that although seniors felt welcome at community events and settings, often opportunities for further engagement were lacking. Activities that promote membership can help strengthen the sense of community derived from participation and lead to greater turnout in the future. Additionally, greater positive recognition and support for community contributions encourages further positive contributions, and engagement with the community. For people with disabilities, support persons, advocates and caregivers, community recognition can ensure greater visibility for those works and promote and spur on other such contributions in the future. This positive reinforcement can also have the benefit of ensuring that those communities' needs are highlighted, promoted and known, as well as ensuring open lines of communication. For older adults reaching retirement age, opportunities to remain engaged and to give back to the community are essential to physical and mental well-being, and for both older adults and people with disabilities, employment opportunities regardless of age or ability, are essential. The Needs Findings support a renewal of the Town's volunteer recognition program, and of encouraging open forums for seniors and people with disabilities to become engaged in civic life.

Domain 8: Respect and Social Inclusion

Introduction

An accessible, age-friendly society encourages older people and people with disabilities to participate in their communities' social, civic, and economic life. This, in turn, promotes active aging and healthy living. While deference to those older adults can still be seen prominently, many negative preconceptions about the impacts of aging still persist in society affecting impressions of older adults. Similarly, people with disabilities also find respect and social inclusion to continue to be a barrier to the full appreciation of their life. There is a need to facilitate both intergenerational interactions and involvement of people with disabilities to dispel stigma and discrimination. Education about aging and disabilities should also begin early to raise awareness on associated issues.

Social engagement can contribute to a person's sense of self worth and esteem. Age-friendly initiatives to involve all people in activities where they have experience can keep them engaged with the community, even as they age or face new life challenges. This in turn, builds a sense of contributing back to the community and pride in having given back. Older people and people with disabilities should always be consulted on decisions concerning them.

Trends

The older adult and accessibility communities in Ontario and Amherstburg have diverse and varied needs and interests. A range of parks, recreation and cultural programs and opportunities are required to meet these varying needs. Some older adults are very active and healthy. Others are frail, have disabilities or health conditions that require special programs and services to be located in facilities that have specialized staff and dedicated spaces. Similarly, people with disabilities have a range of differing abilities and levels of activity, which must be taken into account.

Active living, as identified by the World Health Organization, is "a way of life where physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual activities are valued and are integrated into daily living." Physical activity is generally associated with positive outcomes, such as; improved physical health, support to disease prevention, control or management, improved mental health, enhanced emotional and social well-being, increased autonomy and independence. Providing a wide array of parks, recreation and cultural programs and services to older adults gives them opportunities to live, connect and grow. Through involvement in parks, recreation and cultural programs and services, older adults and people with disabilities can continue to be an integral part of community life. Staying actively involved in their community can help residents to remain living in

their homes and neighbourhoods as they grow older, a concept known as ‘aging-in-place.’

Survey Findings

- 52% of respondents felt that the Town could be doing more to promote inclusivity.
- 85% of people surveyed indicated that diversity is respected in the community.
- 57% of surveys indicated that decision-making bodies welcomed and valued input from seniors and people with disabilities.
- 88% of responses indicated that the community is safe and secure for older adults and people with disabilities.
- When respondents were asked about areas they would like to see for further investment they selected:
 - Intergenerational recreation and social programs.
 - Cultural activities for all ages and abilities that promote a greater sense of belonging to the community.

Summary of Needs Findings

Social Recreation and Cultural Participation Age-Friendly and Accessible considerations include:

- Availability of services which are specifically geared to older adults or people with disabilities.
- Affordability of programs and services provided to older adults and people with disabilities (and waiving of fees for caregivers/support persons).
- Need for coordination of services to older adults and people with disabilities.
- Venues for events and activities that are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit and within easy travelling distance such as the Libro Credit Union Centre or Community Hub.
- Events held at times that are convenient for older adults.

Conclusions and Summary

Overall, the needs assessment found that older adults and people with disabilities consider the Town of Amherstburg a positive place to live. The community was viewed as friendly, safe, secure, clean and pleasant. The Town and community partners have made significant efforts to improve the environment for older adults and people with disabilities including: the provision and maintenance of green spaces and trails, making the Town more walkable, provision of specialized transportation services, advancing a housing strategy, fostering the provision of healthcare services close to home with appropriate age-friendly and accessible support services, ensuring that there are a good variety of activities and social opportunities available, and keeping residents informed, including seniors and people with disabilities at community events, activities and settings. Most people of Amherstburg, consulted in this project, reported feeling respected, their opinions valued, and that seniors and people with disabilities are welcome in the Town. The needs assessment process received wide-ranging feedback including identification of existing strengths and areas that could be improved upon.

Amherstburg has limited resources and cannot afford to undertake every project identified nor is the Town bound to implement recommendations. Implementation of the features of this document and the subsequent Action Plan must be measured against priorities and annual budget considerations.

This material is summarized in the table below across the 8 Domains of Age-Friendly and Inclusive Communities as identified by the World Health Organization.

WHO Dimension	Existing Strengths	Suggested Improvement Areas
1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public spaces clean and pleasant • Green spaces, outdoor seating sufficient and well maintained • Waterfront • Walkability • FADS • Parks Master Plan • Sufficient accessible parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the interconnectivity and usability of dedicated lanes for bicycles, scooters and wheelchairs • Improved delineation and safety between roadways and active transportation networks • Continue sidewalk upgrades and maintenance • Continue to add benches in parks, on trails • Review the location, suitability

WHO Dimension	Existing Strengths	Suggested Improvement Areas
		<p>and accessibility of washrooms in parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for businesses to improve accessibility • Incorporate age-friendly and accessible options in the Amherstburg Design Manual • Investigate options for improved lighting on paths (such as: solar lighting) • Create a master plan for each park • Reconfirm the direction, priorities and accomplishments of the Parks Master Plan as scheduled for 2023 • Explore possibilities to work with community partners for accessible community enhancements • Support the Draft Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and consider including accessibility improvements • Consider the connectivity and safety of amenities and commit to enhance services where budgets allow
2. Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good traffic signage • Information about transportation services • Accessible transportation services available via CareLink Health Transit • Active Transportation Network (CWATS) in Essex County • Communication through multiple media options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Road repairs/maintenance (infrastructure improvements) • Investigate expanded transit options especially special accessible transit • Investigate options for discounts for seniors and people with disabilities • Develop transportation mapping on what is

WHO Dimension	Existing Strengths	Suggested Improvement Areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating options for transit opportunities with neighbouring municipalities 	<p>available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider creating a 'Senior Sensitive' / 'Accessible Sensitive' course/ certification for transportation providers Continue to enhance the connections to the CWATS network in Amherstburg Consider public communication about being considerate, helpful drivers (with a senior/accessibility focus)
3. Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town encourages a broad range of housing types, supply to meet needs and opportunities for people in need of specialized care. Town support for mixed-use developments with housing located near services and amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider adoption of AMO recommendations as identified in A Blueprint for Action: An integrated approach to address Ontario's housing crisis, to increase housing supply Town advocate for more affordable, accessible and senior housing options, rent subsidies and geared to income housing Advocate upper levels of government to provide grants to upgrade accessibility in private residences to encourage aging-in-place Encourage construction of affordable rental units, retirement homes Provide communication, where possible on available housing options Evaluate inclusion of additional age friendly and universal design elements through the Official Plan review

WHO Dimension	Existing Strengths	Suggested Improvement Areas
4. Community and Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical services in the Town • Health care services available when needed • Health care services well-coordinated • Majority of respondents rating their health, including mental health as average to above average • Overall service provided to seniors and those with disabilities is average to above average • Accessible transportation services available via CareLink Health Transit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on community services / supports available • Provide a drop-in location for service information • Continue to advocate for urgent care • Advocate for additional medical services (such as podiatry, dialysis, and PSW). • Continue to support local service providers • Advocate for local memory care/dementia support and mental health supports • Advocate for additional investment of medical transportation supports
5. Social Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable activities and events • Good variety of recreation programs • Social Clubs such as the Golden Age Club • Variety of shopping options and courteous staff • Libro Recreation Centre • Sufficient information on social, educational and recreational activities • Affordable Recreation Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a variety of programs/ activities for seniors and people with disabilities as per the recreation survey • Make use of the new 'HUB' for dedicated seniors social/activities • Continue to enhance Arts and cultural programming/ events

WHO Dimension	Existing Strengths	Suggested Improvement Areas
6. Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Newspaper • Town publications and web-site • Talk the Burg community engagement platform • Staffed telephones • Assistance filling out municipal online forms • Addition of a Communication Officer position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on services, programs, activities, events • Communicate assistance is available for municipal services • Continue to communicate through multiple information formats for those technology challenged
7. Civic Participation and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming community events, activities, and settings • Volunteering opportunities available • Recognition of seniors and people with disabilities for their past and present contributions • ‘Talk the Burg’ civic engagement platform • Equal opportunity employer • Amherstburg administration provided enhanced training on accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop senior programming as identified in the Recreation Needs Assessment • Support civic participation in open forums such as Seniors Expo • Enhanced training support for volunteers • Explore possibilities for ‘membership’ program for recreation activities
8. Respect and Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming, friendly, courteous town • Valued input from seniors and people with disabilities • Safe and secure community • Seeking input from the community through surveys and public engagement in planning and implementation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support intergenerational recreation and social programs • Explore the creation of a formal recognition or award program for people with disabilities, caregivers and community volunteering with nominations from the community • Re-establish the Volunteer appreciation luncheon



TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

ICP ACTION PLAN



Action Plan Introduction

The Inclusive Community Project (ICP) Action Plan, building directly on the ICP Needs Assessment exercise, is a series of actions that Amherstburg can take to help make the Town a more safe, inclusive and engaging community for seniors and people with disabilities. This plan, over time, seeks to provide guidelines to the improvement of facilities and services for older adults and people with disabilities across the full spectrum, from fully independent older adults and seniors, to those who are more vulnerable and need additional support. It is built on what we learned from engaging directly with seniors, people with disabilities, caregivers, service providers and community leaders. The findings, identified needs and actionable strategies within this report are consistent with other communities in Ontario and across Canada, as well as best practice research on improving and making communities more inclusive for seniors and people with disabilities. The ICP Action Plan is contingent on the availability of funding opportunities and should seek opportunities for grant and funding partnerships to offset the cost of the recommendations wherever possible. The recommendations within the Action Plan supplement the investment the Town of Amherstburg routinely makes to improve access to goods and services and to ensure a barrier free and age-friendly community for people with disabilities and older adults.

The action plan is comprehensive, covering all 8 domains of age-friendly communities identified by the World Health Organization:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Community Support and Health Services
5. Social Participation
6. Information and Communication
7. Civic Participation and Employment
8. Respect and Social Inclusion

The Action Plan development process involved the following steps:

- Completion of a seniors and people with disabilities community needs assessment
- Amherstburg ICP Steering Committee reviewed the information/needs identified through the community engagement process, using specific criteria as noted in Table 1 below;
- Short term needs were described as goal statements;
- The goals, strategies, responsibilities, timelines, and tactics to complete the goals were then gathered into Action Items.

Throughout the Needs Assessment, numerous needs (and areas for improvement) were identified. Thus, it was important to engage the ICP Steering Committee to provide input into the process.

Needs Prioritization

The prioritization criteria below allow the findings of the Needs Assessment to be identified as either a short-term need (quick wins to be addressed within the next 1-2 years), medium-term need (to be addressed in the next 3-4 years), or longer term wants (to be addressed 5 years plus). The main purpose is to determine an appropriate starting point for initiating improvement actions and reduce the long list of needs into a more manageable approach with some of the needs to be addressed strategically over a timeframe of up to 5 years or more.

Table 1: Prioritization Criteria

Priority Temporal Range	Decision Making Criteria
Short-term needs (quick wins within 2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost, minimal resource requirements • Builds on past successes (expansion) • Has been recognized and is supported by the community • Good fit with Amherstburg’s vision and strategic plan • Can be done within next year or the following year’s budget
Medium term need: Initiate action within 3-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently under consideration • Requires more planning – research before final decision is made • Requires more community consultation • Will fit within future budget projections • It is achievable – can be done in a timely manner
Longer-term need: Initiate action 5 years +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires more extensive time and planning • Significant budget required • Needs more community input and support

Action Plan Items

The Action Plan Items are broken down into the 8 domains of Age-Friendly, Accessible and Inclusive Communities as set down by the World Health Organization.

Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Medium-Term Initiatives (3-4 years)

- Review and update the Parks Master Plan, as scheduled, for 2023.

Long Term Initiatives (5 years +)

- Evaluate opportunities for improvements to the connectivity and/or safety along active transportation, trail and pedestrian coordinators.
- Review the potential for improvement to the delineation between roadways and active transportation networks which may contribute to greater confidence and feelings of safety in their use.
- Evaluate opportunities for additional age-friendly and accessible design options in the Amherstburg Development Manual.
- Review the park plan in relation to each park to ensure common elements of accessibility and age-friendly considerations are included.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Sidewalk upgrades and maintenance.
- Review parks and trail networks for additional opportunities for rest areas.
- Review the location, suitability and accessibility of washrooms in parks.
- Advocate for businesses to improve accessibility.
- Investigation of options for improved lighting on paths (such as solar lighting).
- Exploring possibilities to work with community partners for accessible community enhancements.
- Supporting the introduction of a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) which includes funding considerations for the provision of accessibility upgrades.

Domain 2: Transportation

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)

- Review options available for a Public Transit Pilot Project to enhance the affordable transportation options available to older adults and people with disabilities. This should be done with due consideration given to integration into a wider Regional Transit Network to maximize potential connectivity and access provision while ensuring affordability.

Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)

- Review the effectiveness of the Public Transit Pilot project to determine viability as a more permanent service level enhancement for the community based.

- Develop transportation mapping inclusive of all options available, such as walking trails and paths, active transportation routes, public transit, etc.

Long-term Initiatives (5 years +)

- Explore possibilities for the creation of a ‘Senior Sensitive’ / ‘Accessible Sensitive’ course or certification program for licensed taxi service providers.

On-going Initiatives

- Road repairs and maintenance (infrastructure improvements).
- Support or encourage discounted pricing, where possible, for transportation options available to seniors and people with disabilities.
- In keeping with the Town of Amherstburg Accessible Customer Service Standards Policy, endeavour to provide Public Transit services to support persons accompanying a person with a disability at either a reduced rate or free of charge.
- Advocate for enhancements and ensure continued support for the County Wide Active Transportation System (CWATS) network in Amherstburg to promote healthy and active lifestyles.

Domain 3: Housing

Short-term (1-2 years)

- Evaluate applicability of AMO recommendations identified in “A Blueprint for Action: An Integrated Approach to Address Ontario’s Housing Crisis,” to increase available housing supply.

Medium – Long Term Initiatives (3 years +)

- Evaluate age friendly and universal design elements during the Official Plan review.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Advocate upper levels of government to support for more affordable, accessible and senior housing options, such as through rent subsidies and geared to income housing opportunities.
- Advocate upper levels of government to provide grants to upgrade accessibility in private residences and those designed to enhance opportunities for aging-in-place.
- Encourage construction of affordable rental units and retirement homes.
- Provide communication, where possible, on available housing options.

Domain 4: Community and Health Care

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)

- Provide information on community services / supports available

Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)

- Provide a drop-in location for information on resources, goods and services available to residents.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Continue to advocate for urgent care services to be located in the Town of Amherstburg to supplement existing health care service options.
- Continue to support local service providers
- Advocate for local memory care/dementia support and mental health supports
- Advocate for additional medical services, where necessary (such as podiatry, dialysis, and PSW services)
- Advocate for additional investment of upper levels of government for the provision of more affordable medical transportation options

Domain 5: Social Participation

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)

- Trial additional programming and activities that offer an increased variety of available opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities in the community.

Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)

- Expand service offerings to take advantage of existing facilities and locations for programming which is provided for seniors and people with disabilities, such as dedicated space in the Community Hub for seniors' social activities.
- Support the investment in and enhancement of existing and new Arts and Cultural Programming, especially those with a focus on inclusive and accessible programming for people with disabilities and experiences geared to the senior community.

Domain 6: Information and Communication

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)

- Explore avenues to increase the availability and access to information on services, programs, activities, and events for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Communicate assistance is available for municipal services.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Continue to utilize various methods of providing access to information to account for the different ways in which people receive information.
- Utilize municipal comparators and best practices to inform service delivery such as those identified by the Needs Assessment, the Town's of Lincoln, Kingsville, and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Domain 7: Civic Participation and Employment

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)

- Develop new and enhance existing senior recreational programming, as identified in the Recreation Needs Assessment.

Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)

- Consider 'membership' program for activities.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Support civic participation in open forums such as Senior's Expo.
- Enhanced training support for volunteers.

Domain 8: Respect and Social Inclusion

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)

- Adopt the ICP Needs Assessment and Action Plan, ensuring it is publicly available.

Medium-term Initiatives (3-4 years)

- Support the creation of new and funding for existing intergenerational recreation and social programs.
- Explore the possibility for creating a formal recognition or award program that allows for community nominations of people with disabilities who have given back to their community. Similarly, explore the creation of a formal recognition or award

program for caregivers, support persons and advocates for people with disabilities in the community driven by nominations from the community.

- Re-establish the Volunteer appreciation luncheon once it is safe to do so following the impacts of COVID-19.
- Seek recognition as an 'Age-friendly Inclusive Community' from the Province of Ontario Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. This award has been established to celebrate the work of Ontario communities that are striving to become age-friendly and to showcase promising practices across the province. Communities selected for the award demonstrate a strong commitment to key principle for creating age-friendly communities, including engagement with local seniors, collaboration with a diverse group of community partners, and significant impact on the local community. As a recipient of this award, the community and its initiatives will also be showcased on the websites of both the provincial government and the Age-Friendly communities Planning Outreach Initiative.

Funding Opportunities

The Inclusive Community Program Action Plan for the Town of Amherstburg will require the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to implement the recommended actions and ultimately become a more inclusive community to all residents. To support the implementation of the goals, strategies and tactics identified in the ICP Action Plan, the Town of Amherstburg should explore additional grant-funding opportunities that target action items. Numerous grants and funding opportunities could be available at provincial and federal levels of government, many specifically available to target the removal of barriers and the creation of a more Age-Friendly and Inclusive Community. Additional consideration should be given to seeking grant opportunities that generally enrich the quality of life for residents of the Town of Amherstburg and that encourage more fulfilling and active lives for older adults and people with disabilities. Targeted funding for the enhancement to existing and new recreational programming or amenities that service these populations over and above those direct recommendations of the Action Plan should also be pursued, where reasonable to do so.

As noted in the Action Plan, seeking recognition from the Province of Ontario as an Age-Friendly Inclusive Community will strengthen further appeals for additional grant funding and ensure that the efforts to achieve a more accessible and inclusive community can be recognized and shared broadly, which in turn may drive greater investment, development in the Town, and participation in Town led events and festivals.

The ICP Action Plan (2023-2028) serves as a guiding document for the Town of Amherstburg, encouraging investment of resources and budget contributions to meet the needs identified in the Needs Assessment and to bring forward Action Plan Items for consideration to future budgets.