



Town of Penetanguishene

Age-Friendly Community Plan

2022 – 2026





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Dear Residents,

As Chair of the Community Wellbeing Committee, it has been my pleasure to be part of the very worthwhile and needed Age-Friendly Community Plan for the Town of Penetanguishene, right from the beginning.

Between the coffee chats, online and in-person surveys, telephone interviews, community pop-ups, community visioning workshops lots of information was gathered, discussed, digested and presented.

We are very excited about the results gleaned from the study and are looking forward to the implementation of the plan.

A sincere thanks to our staff for their work on this initiative and to J Consulting Group for their professionalism in guiding us through the process and preparing the document we have in hand.

A Special thank you to the Community Wellbeing Committee for their involvement and to all the residents who participated in many of the activities that will help guide us into the future.

Sincerely,

Councillor Jill St. Amant
Chair
Community Well-Being Committee



Acknowledgements

The Town of Penetanguishene Age-Friendly Community Plan was developed with the shared insights and experiences from over 300 community residents and stakeholders.

Thank you to the residents, Town Staff and Members of Council, community organizations and service providers, and local clubs and networks for your input and ideas in shaping this first Age-Friendly Community Plan. Our gratitude to the members of the Community Wellbeing Committee for your guidance throughout all phases of this work.

- Beth Dubeau
- Bonita Desroches
- Bonnie Sherriff
- David Myers
- Fran Moreau
- Jill St. Amant
- Kaylee Heath
- Lisa Vallee
- Robbie Newburn

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Age-Friendly Community Plan – At A Glance

VISION

A community for all ages and abilities.

AGE-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES

- **Inclusive** – Respect and support for all residents at all stages of life.
- **Collaborative** – Committed partners working together with a shared responsibility to achieving the vision of this Plan.
- **Accessible** – An accessible system of supports meeting the diverse physical health, cognitive and mental health, and social needs of all individuals.
- **Accountable** – Responsible to report back to our community and responsive to changing needs and priorities.

ACTIONS

OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS



1. Enhance accessibility of the downtown
2. Develop a pedestrian strategy
3. Ensure age-friendly lens applied to new developments
4. Improve maintenance of sidewalks during winter months
5. Continue to ensure parks are accessible and provide opportunities for recreation

TRANSPORTATION



6. Create greater awareness of transit options
7. Support opportunities to expand options for alternative transportation modes
8. Work with other jurisdictions to enhance transportation options
9. Advocate for a transit subsidy to residents in need

HOUSING



10. Ensure municipal regulations support a range of housing options
11. Advocate for additional funding for affordable, transitional, and supportive housing
12. Explore opportunities to pilot a HomeShare program





RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION



13. Explore opportunities to expand intergenerational activities within the Town
14. Work with community partners to promote friendly-visiting programs
15. Expand age-friendly awareness among local businesses

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT



16. Engage with Community Wellbeing Committee as part of all community planning
17. Expand digital access and literacy among residents and seniors
18. Share information on volunteer and employment opportunities

COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION



19. Create an age-friendly communications check-list
20. Establish a virtual community service hub
21. Continue to host annual Seniors Day
22. Continue to provide communications materials that celebrate the Town's diversity
23. Further promote 211

COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES



24. Explore opportunities to create a satellite service hub
25. Support efforts to increase in-home supports
26. Establish Community and Health Services Provider 'Healthy Connections' Group
27. Establish caregiver 'Coffee Chat'

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



28. Continue to explore options to expand recreational program delivery
29. Create virtual learning workshop series
30. Continue to support efforts to ensure low-income residents have access to programs and services



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Importantly, realizing the age-friendly vision for the Town of Penetanguishene requires the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to implement the recommended actions and ultimately become a more age-friendly community to all residents.

To support the achievement of this Plan and the creation of an age-friendly Penetanguishene, it is further recommended that:

- An 'Age-Friendly Coordinator' role be created within the Town.
- The Community Wellbeing Committee continue to support the overall leadership and monitoring of the Town's Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.
- Town and the Community Wellbeing Committee lead the preparation of an annual Age-Friendly Report Card to share successes and identify continued priorities for the community.
- A full review of the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan be completed in 2026.
- The Town join Ontario's Network of Age-Friendly Community Initiatives.





1.0
Introduction



The Town of Penetanguishene is taking crucial steps to create a more age-friendly community, where all residents can be active and engaged members of the community at every stage of life. Age-friendly communities support aging with dignity, respect, and independence, and promote the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life. Importantly, by planning for the needs of the older-adult population, age-friendly communities are designed to better meet the needs of all residents.

As part of becoming an age-friendly community, the Town has created an Age-Friendly Community Plan, setting a vision and strategic framework to improve the overall well-being of residents and meet the needs of a growing, aging population.

This Plan identifies key strategies and priorities that the Town, along with community partners, can implement to help support residents' health and well-being as they age and by providing appropriate supports and community amenities, services, and programs.





2.0 Age-Friendly Communities

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an age-friendly community as one that “encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.” The WHO identifies eight key areas of community life in which communities can become more age-friendly¹:



Outdoor spaces and public buildings are pleasant, clean, secure, and physically accessible.



Public **transportation** is accessible and affordable, a variety of transportation options are available, and transportation-related infrastructure is designed with older adults in mind.



Housing is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure.



Opportunities exist for **social participation** in leisure, social, cultural, and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.



Older people are treated with **respect** and are **included in community life**.



There are opportunities for **employment and civic participation** that cater to older persons’ interests and abilities, and accessible workplaces are available.



Age-friendly **communication and information** on programs and services is available in appropriate formats.



Community support and health services are tailored to older persons’ needs and are well promoted.

In Ontario, the province developed an Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide, updated in February 2021, that is aligned with the WHO framework and that defines an age-friendly community as “one that responds to both the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population by creating physical and social environments that support independent active living and enable older people to continue contributing to all aspects of community life”.

¹ Source: Adapted from *Creating a More Inclusive Ontario. Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations* (2021), retrieved from <https://files.ontario.ca/msaa-age-friendly-community-planning-guide-municipalities-community-organizations-en-2021-01-01.pdf>



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

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

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

WHO

The Town of Penetanguishene’s Age-Friendly Community Plan is guided by the WHO framework and Ontario’s Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide.



3.0 Approach in Developing Our Plan



Engagement and input from current residents, community organizations and health partners, along with data analysis and a review of current policy and planning documents, as well as best practices research of initiatives other communities are undertaking, have been used to develop an Age-Friendly Community Plan for the Town of Penetanguishene.

There are two key components to the project. The first was the preparation of an Age-Friendly Current State Analysis Report. Data collection and analysis, review of existing Town policies and strategies, and feedback from residents and organizations were synthesized to identify key needs across the eight key areas of an age-friendly community.

This analysis provided a baseline for the development of the second component, the Age-Friendly Community Plan, which puts forwards a vision, key strategies, and priorities. Community engagement was then conducted to validate, prioritize, and gather further ideas for the age-friendly actions.

Figure 3.1. Age-Friendly Plan Process



PHASE 1 - CURRENT STATE ANALYSIS
MARCH - JULY 2021

- Review Town and County Policies and Strategies
- Research Best Practices
- Collect and Analyze Data
- Implement Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Prepare Current State Report



PHASE 2 - AGE-FRIENDLY PLAN
AUGUST 2021 - FEBRUARY 2022

- Implement Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Prepare Draft Age-Friendly Community Plan
- Host Call to Action Workshop
- Finalize Age-Friendly Community Plan and Implementation Plan



4.0 Policy Landscape



Town of Penetanguishene has strong policy context for age-friendly planning including support for increased programming, encouraging diversity of housing, support for active transportation, increasing engagement with community residents, and ensuring accessibility in various areas of community life (transportation, facilities, outdoor spaces).

The Town develops Community Strategic Plans every five years to guide municipal decision-making based on input and key priorities identified by residents. Many of the initiatives of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan support an age-friendly community as they aim to provide more variety and opportunities to meet the needs of all residents. In addition, the Town's Official Plan provides a framework for addressing future growth and development to 2031 and outlines how growth will be managed in a sustainable manner. One Official Plan objective is to ensure that there is good access to community facilities for residents to "age-in-place". Many of the Official Plan policies also inherently support an age-friendly community by:

- ensuring parks, recreation facilities, new buildings, active transportation networks, transit, etc. are accessible,
- supporting a full range of housing to meet all residents needs and respond to changing household composition and needs,
- ensuring access to services and amenities so older persons do not have to leave the community, and
- providing venues and opportunities for residents to remain active and engaged in their community.

Additional Town-wide policies and strategies that support the building of an age-friendly community include the Town's Recreation and Community Services Master Plan (2014), the Cycling Strategy (2019), and the Town's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2020-2024). These plans are intended to support the quality of life for all residents by increasing opportunities for recreation and programming, enhancing and promoting active transportation, and improving accessibility to Town services and building a more inclusive town.

The Town is also pursuing a new multi-use recreation centre which may provide future opportunities for increased programming and services to support an aging population. At the time of this Plan, no funding has been allocated to move forward on actions related to a new multi-use recreation centre.



5.0 Community Profile

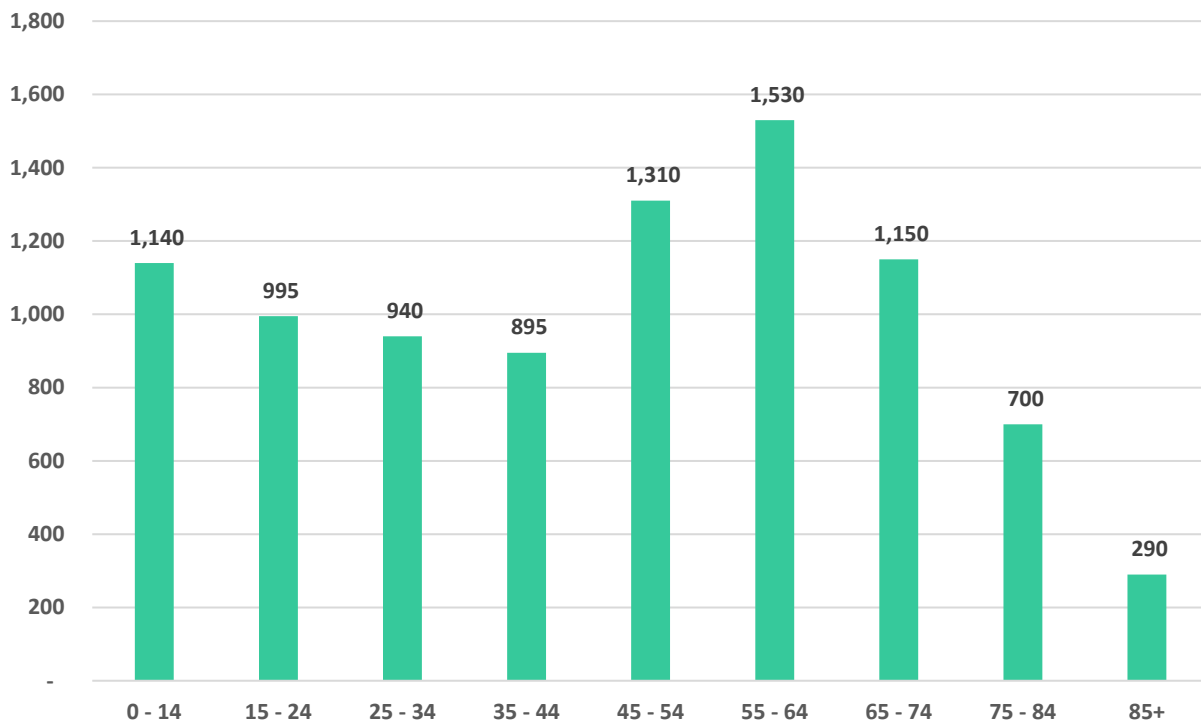


5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Seniors Make up a Large Share of Penetanguishene’s Population

As of 2016, Penetanguishene had 2,150 seniors (65+) (Statistics Canada, Census). People aged 65 and over made up 24.0% of Penetanguishene’s population, significantly higher than Simcoe County as a whole (18.0%) and the province (16.7%).

Figure 5.1. Population by Age, Penetanguishene, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016

The number of seniors living in Penetanguishene is anticipated to grow to 4,085 by 2031², at which time seniors are anticipated to account for 37.1% of Penetanguishene’s population. The prevalence of seniors would continue to be well above the rates for Simcoe County (24.6%) and Ontario (21.9%).

Penetanguishene has a Relatively High Number of Seniors who Speak French

Almost one quarter (24% or 475) of Penetanguishene’s seniors speak English and French. The other three quarters speak English only.

² Consultant’s estimates based on Ministry of Finance Population Projections by Age for Simcoe County and population projections for Simcoe County and Penetanguishene from the former Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.



Penetanguishene has a Relatively High Number of Indigenous Seniors

In 2016, Penetanguishene had 275 Indigenous elders (65+), the majority of which (240) were of Métis identity (Statistics Canada, Census). Indigenous seniors account for 12.8% of Penetanguishene's seniors.

The Majority of Seniors Own their Homes

About one quarter (24.2% or 325 households) of households with at least one senior rent their home (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016). Seventy-five senior-led households reported living in subsidized rental housing. The other three quarters (75.8%) of senior households own their home. Most seniors are mortgage-free; 26.6% have a mortgage.

Many Seniors Live Alone

There are 500 seniors in Penetanguishene who live alone, which places them at higher risk for things like loneliness (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016). Seniors living alone account for 37.3% of households with seniors. Most (800 or 59.7%) live in family households, some of which (160 or 11.9%) have their children living with them. Few seniors (20) live in multiple-family households.

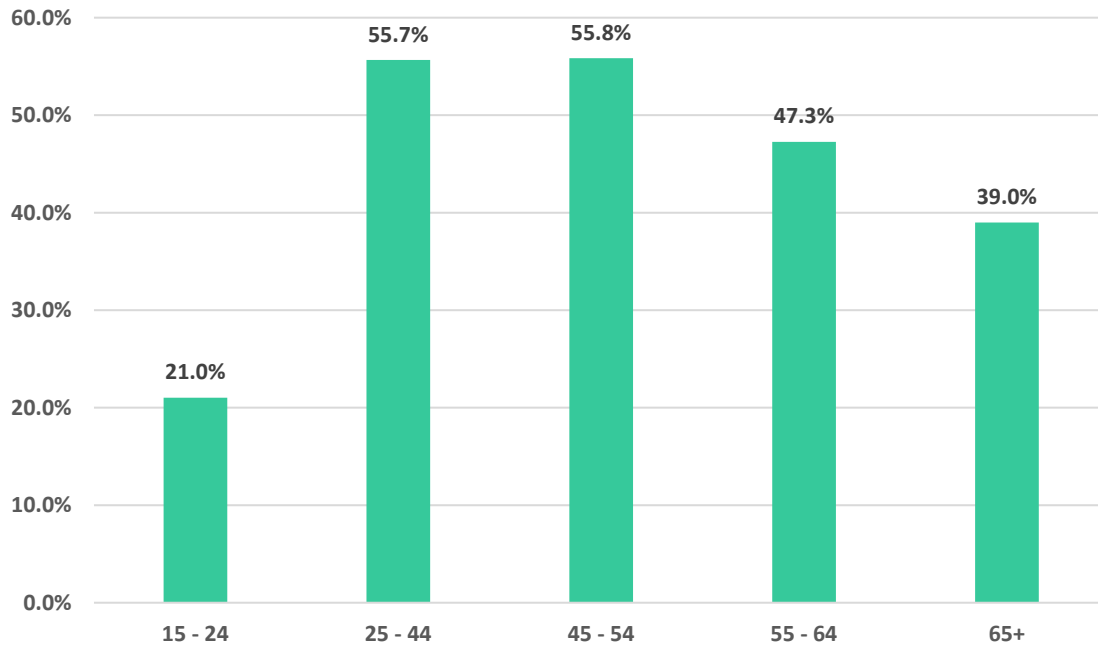
Relatively Few Seniors Still in the Labour Force

At the time of the 2016 Census, 1,975 seniors in Penetanguishene were working or looking for work – a labour force participation rate of 8.4% (Statistics Canada, Census). Penetanguishene's participation rate was lower than the provincial rate of 15.0%. The unemployment rate of seniors, at 12.1%, was higher than Ontario's seniors labour force at 5.1%.

Younger Cohorts Have Higher Education Levels Than Seniors

39% of seniors in Penetanguishene have at least a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016). This is lower than each of the younger age groups age 25 and over.

Figure 5.2. Proportion of Population with at Least a Postsecondary Certificate, Diploma or Degree by Age Group, Penetanguishene, 2016



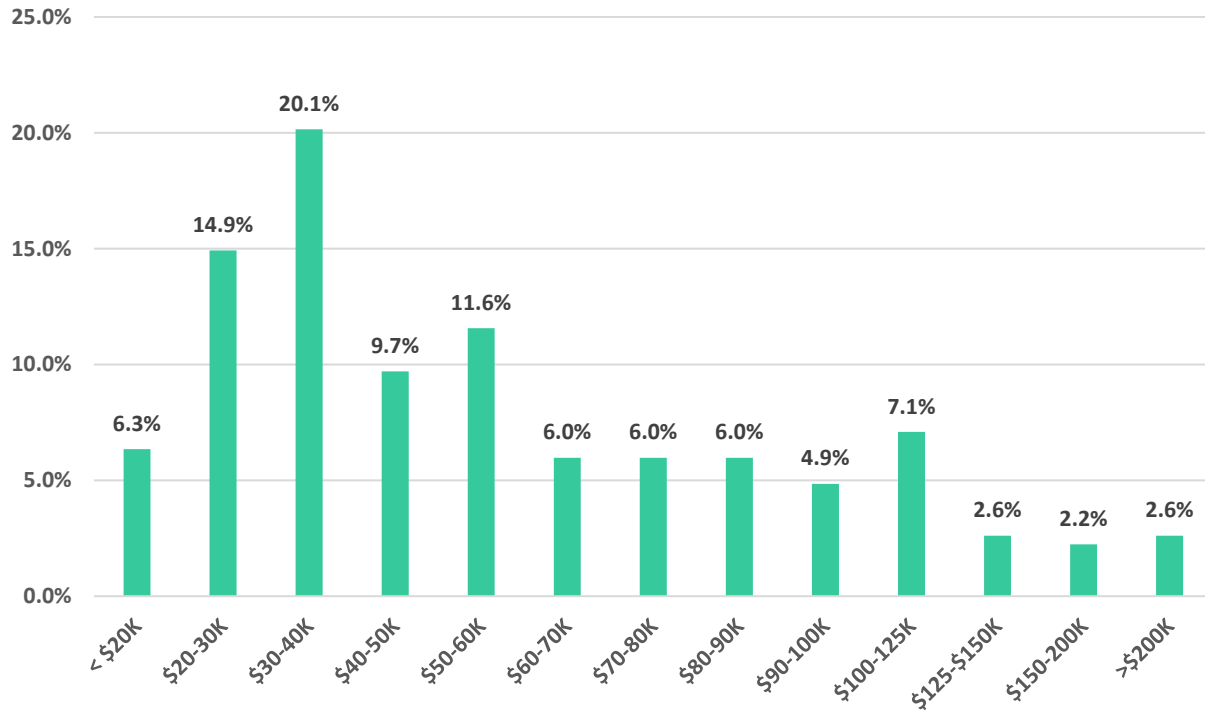
Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016

A Relatively High Number of Senior Households in Penetanguishene are Living in Low Income

The average household income of seniors in 2015 was \$63,623 and median was \$48,852 (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016). Household incomes were lower for seniors living alone – average of \$39,958 and median of \$29,712.

Just over half (51.1%) of seniors receive the majority of their income from government transfers. 6.3% of senior households had incomes of less than \$20,000 and another 14.9% had incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000. One quarter of senior households (335) were living in low income (based on Statistics Canada’s Low-Income-Measure).

Figure 5.3. Senior Households Income Distribution, Penetanguishene, 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 2016



5.2 HOUSING INDICATORS

The Majority of Seniors in Penetanguishene Live in Single-Detached Houses

Most (60%) senior households live in single-detached homes, while one quarter (25.4%) live in apartment units (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016).

The Condition of Most of the Housing Seniors Live in is Good

Only 2.6% of senior households reported that their housing required major repairs (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016).

Seniors Renting Their Housing are Much More Likely to Face Affordability Issues

26.9% of households with seniors were spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs, including 115 households (8.6%) spending at least 50% of their income on shelter (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016). Affordability issues were significantly more common among renters (57.8%) than owners (17.2%).

Some Seniors are in Housing Need

190 senior households, or 14.1%, were in core housing need (Statistics Canada, Census, 2016). Core housing need is an indicator that helps to identify who needs housing assistance. Core housing need happens when:

1. major repairs are required, and residents don't have the means to move to a good unit in their community
2. there are not enough bedrooms for the residents, and they don't have the means to move
3. the current home costs more than the residents can afford, and they do not have the means to move or find an available affordable home in their community.

There are Long Waits for Subsidized Housing for Seniors

At the end of 2018, there were 1,067 seniors on the waitlist for subsidized housing (County of Simcoe, 2018 Centralized Waitlist Report, 2019). Seniors housed in 2018 had waited an average of just over five years to be housed.

Some Seniors in Simcoe County Find Themselves Homeless

Simcoe County's most recent homelessness enumeration was conducted in November 2020. The process identified 563 people experiencing homelessness (County of Simcoe, 2020 Simcoe County Homeless Enumeration Infographic, 2020). 22%, or 124 of the people experiencing homelessness were age 65 and over.



There is Some Availability of Seniors Housing That is Not Subsidized, But Rents are High

As of 2020, the latest available data from CMHC’s Seniors Housing Survey, Simcoe County had 3,014 seniors housing spaces, not including nursing homes and long-term care homes and units that are all subsidized. The number of spaces is equivalent to 35.0 spaces per 1,000 seniors aged 65 and over. This compares to 28.9 spaces per senior for Ontario. Rents range from an average of \$2,097 for a ward/semi-private to \$5,725 for a 2+ bedroom.

There are Long Wait Lists for Long Term Care

In North Simcoe in January 2021, there were 593 people on the waitlist for 396 beds in three long term care homes in the area: Georgian Manor (270), Hillcrest Village Care Centre (208), and The Villa Care Centre (115) (some may be on more than one list) (North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, Home and Community Care, April 2020). On average, only 13 beds become available per month. Wait times vary depending on the bed type and the facility, as outlined below.

Table 5.1. Long Term Care Waitlist Statistics, North Simcoe, January 2021

	Licensed Beds	Basic		Semi-Private		Private		Average # of beds that are available each month
		# On Waitlist	Days Waiting for 9/10 people	# On Waitlist	Days Waiting for 9/10 people	# On Waitlist	Days Waiting for 9/10 people	
Georgian Manor	136	270	*	93	*	176	*	4
Hillcrest Village Care Centre	164	208	1,530	N/A	N/A	127	929	6
The Villa Care Centre	96	115	308	39	227	80	*	3

Source: North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, Home and Community Care, January 2021

5.3 HEALTH STATUS AND OTHER INDICATORS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

A High Proportion of Seniors have a Disability

Some 45.3% of Simcoe County’s adults aged 65 and over reported a disability, based on Statistics Canada’s Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017³. In comparison, 22.1% of Simcoe’s population age 15 to 64 reported a disability.

³ Statistics Canada notes that because of the small sample size, this number should be used with caution.



The Majority of Seniors Rate Their Health as Very Good

In the area covered by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, which includes Penetanguishene, more than half (52.4%) of adults aged 65 and over perceive their health to be very good or excellent, while 22.9% reported fair or poor health (Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0113--01). This compares to the province where 46.8% reported very good or excellent health and 19.8% reported fair or poor health.

Most Seniors Rate Their Mental Health as Very Good

Perceived mental health was somewhat better than physical health, with 73.5% who reported their perceived mental health to be very good or excellent (Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0113-01). This is slightly higher than the provincial rate of 71.7%. Only 4.5% of Simcoe Muskoka adults aged 65 and over reported fair or poor mental health in 2017/2018. This compares to 5.5% for the province.

Some Seniors Experience High Levels of Life Stress

In Simcoe Muskoka, 12.3% of adults aged 65 and over reported that most days they had quite a bit or extremely stressful life stress (Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0113-01). This is similar to the province, where 12.0% reported quite a bit or extremely stressful life stress most days.

Physical Activity Rates of Seniors are Modest, but Similar to the Province

Simcoe Muskoka adults aged 65 and over reported similar rates of physical activity as their counterparts across the province (Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0113-01). In Simcoe Muskoka 38.7% reported that they were physically active for at least 150 minutes per week, compared to 38.0% for Ontario.

Almost All Seniors Have Access to a Regular Health Care Provider

Nearly 98% of adults aged 65 and over in Simcoe Muskoka reported that they had a regular healthcare provider (Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0113-01). This compared to 95.9% in Ontario.

Most Seniors Reported a Fairly Strong Sense of Belonging to the Local Community

Sense of belonging to the local community is higher among adults aged 65 and over in Simcoe Muskoka compared to Ontario. In Simcoe Muskoka, 88.3% reported a sense of belonging to the local community that was somewhat strong or very strong (Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0113-01). 79.3% reported a strong or very strong sense of belonging across Ontario.



The Rate of Volunteering Amongst Seniors in Simcoe County is Well Above the Provincial Average

In 2010, 44.8% of Simcoe County seniors reported volunteering in the past 12 months (Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010). This compares to the provincial average of 35%.

Most Seniors Report a Strong Sense of Life Satisfaction

In terms of life satisfaction, 90.6% of Simcoe Muskoka adults aged 65 and over reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied (Statistics Canada, Table 13-10-0113-01). This was similar to the provincial rate (90.5%).

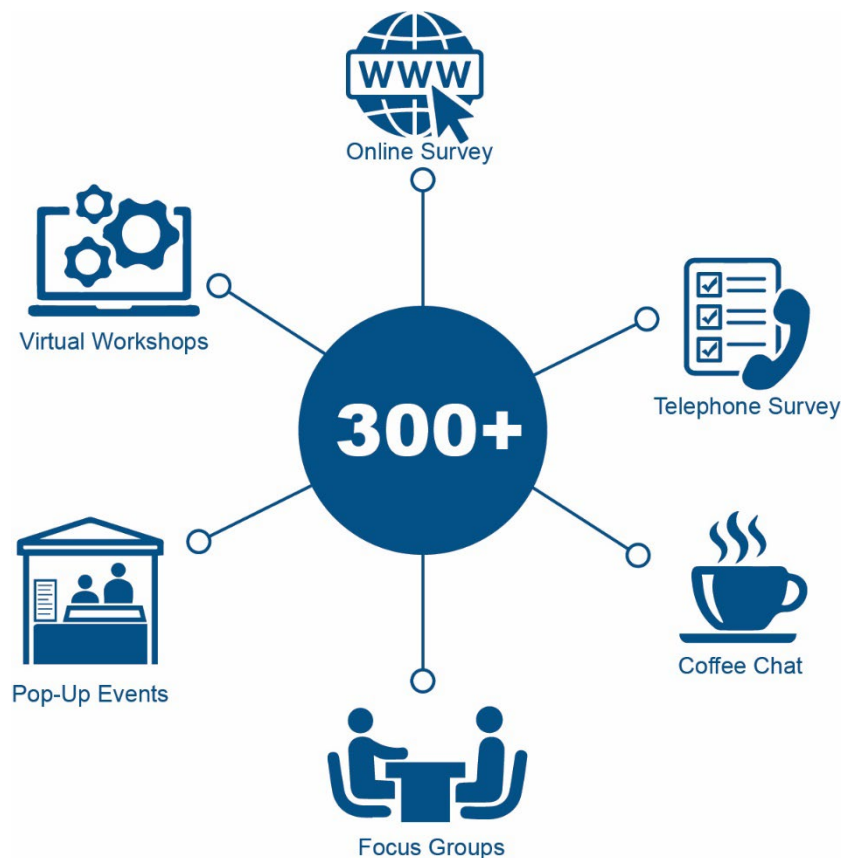




6.0
Key Messages

Listening to and learning from the experiences of residents and community stakeholders is vital in creating a more age-friendly community for all.

As part of developing this Plan, a series of community engagement activities were carried out from May to November 2021 with residents, community service providers and organizations, Town staff and Members of Council, and the Community Wellbeing Committee. Overall, over **300 people were engaged** in the creation of the Plan. Engagement activities included online and telephone surveys, community coffee chats, stakeholder focus groups, community pop-up events, and virtual community workshops.



During the engagement process, we heard a variety of perspectives and thoughts related to current strengths, challenges, and opportunities in age-friendly planning in Penetanguishene. These views have been organized by the eight (8) areas of age-friendly communities. Key messages are summarized below with further details provided in [Appendix A](#).



Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Residents praised Penetanguishene for its walking trails, parks, and waterfront area. **“Parks are wonderful”** People expressed a need for greater maintenance of sidewalks and greater accessibility in the downtown. Residents and stakeholders also noted the need for more lighting and rest areas in some areas.



Transportation

While residents and stakeholders are pleased with the transportation options in Town, there is a desire to see more routes and greater collaboration with nearby communities. Greater awareness of transportation options was also expressed. Ensuring accessibility of roadways and sidewalks in winter months also emerged as a need throughout the consultations.



Housing

One of the key messages heard was the need for more affordable housing. People expressed the need for a greater diversity of housing options to better support people to age in place and providing a mix of housing options for people of all ages and abilities.



Respect & Social Inclusion

Residents complimented the opportunities to be engaged in Town activities and want to ensure the Town is welcoming and inclusive for all. **“Everyone’s invited, no one is excluded”**



Civic Engagement & Employment

Residents would like to see greater community engagement in events and planning initiatives. Suggestions to have volunteer and employment postings in a central location and provided in multiple formats was also suggested.



Communication & Information

Some residents and stakeholders expressed the need for greater awareness of existing services and are seeking information in multiple accessible formats. Having information in one location, both online and through a telephone number, was emphasized. In addition, ensuring access to technology and internet was also expressed as an important need in the Town.



Community & Health Supports

Access to primary care was noted as a key challenge for many in the area. Residents and stakeholders also expressed the need for more in-home care options, affordable dental care, and greater awareness and access to existing services.



Social Participation

Residents celebrated the many activities in the Town (museum, theatre, arena, curling club, churches). **“Lots of activities here”** Residents would like to see a multi-use facility, and some expressed the need for a dedicated seniors’ space. More diversity in programming was also expressed such as evening programming for seniors, more activities for youth/teens, Indigenous programming, and offering free programming to low-income people and families.

A full summary of the survey results by question is provided in **Appendix B**.





7.0
Our Community Plan

7.1 VISION

A community for all ages and abilities.

7.2 AGE-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES

- **Inclusive** – Respect and support for all residents at all stages of life.
- **Collaborative** – Committed partners working together with a shared responsibility to achieving the vision of this Plan.
- **Accessible** – An accessible system of supports meeting the diverse physical health, cognitive and mental health, and social needs of all individuals.
- **Accountable** – Responsible to report back to our community and responsive to changing needs and priorities.

7.3 ACTIONS



OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

1. Enhance accessibility of the downtown

There are currently some barriers in accessing downtown businesses, and community residents expressed the need to continue to look at options to make shops and restaurants accessible for people in wheelchairs, and people with mobility impairments. It is recommended that through the Community Improvement Plan, the Town continue efforts to improve accessibility in the downtown. The [Community Improvement Plan](#) is aimed at improving and revitalizing Downtown Penetanguishene. One of the core goals of the Plan is to “Create a safe, inviting and pedestrian-friendly community that is accessible for all”. The Plan further identifies a number of programs to encourage greater accessibility including the Building Façade Improvement Program which can include making improvements for accessibility to a building exterior such as improvements to stairs/entrances or automatic doors.

Promising Practice:
Stop the Gap has developed ramps to improve accessibility into single-step buildings, often in downtown settings. Local businesses can explore **Stop the Gap** as an opportunity to improve accessibility into downtown shops, restaurants, and other businesses.



Through the Town's Community Wellbeing Committee, it is further recommended that the Town explore opportunities for local initiatives such as Stop the Gap to as an opportunity to improve accessibility into local businesses and shops.

2. Develop a pedestrian strategy

It is recommended that the Town consider developing a Pedestrian Strategy to continue efforts to ensure existing and future parks and open spaces, and trails throughout the town continue to be designed to be accessible and encourage overall well-being for people of all ages. It is recommended that, through a Pedestrian Strategy, designs consider the provision of seating, lighting, washrooms, shaded areas, accessible pathways, and gathering spaces. Design should consider surfaces and features to allow access for individuals using wheelchairs, scooters, and other assistive devices to reduce risk of falls. It is recommended that the Pedestrian Strategy be complementary to the recently completed Cycling Strategy to provide a comprehensive alternative transportation network. The Strategy would:

- Adopt AODA standards for all public walkways, including cross slope, grades, curb cuts, and appropriate surface materials.
- Encourage separation between motorized and non-motorized transportation.
- Encourage age-friendly safety concerns for pedestrians including, increased lighting, improved roadway crossing and signal times.
- Consider trails standards for new trails or infrastructure upgrades which include circuit routes that can be maintained and accessed throughout the year.

3. Ensure age-friendly lens applied to new developments

The Community Design Manual considers the need to establish planning initiatives that support aging-in-place. It recommends the development of connected neighbourhoods, transportation systems, and land use patterns. These aspects (among others) lead to an increase in walkability for neighbourhoods and the community at large.

Based on the Community Design Manual, it is recommended that as part of the development application process, developments:

- Are assessed for walkability.
- Include aging-in-place elements.
- Include the connection of parks and trails.
- Land development includes mixed-use nodes, and a variety of services can be located within neighbourhoods.

4. Identify opportunities to improve maintenance of sidewalks during winter months

Feedback from community engagement activities point to accessibility challenges related to existing sidewalks which are heightened in winter months. It is recommended that the Town examine sidewalk maintenance in winter month and identify options to enhance existing snow removal services as appropriate.

It is also recommended that the Town, explore with community partners opportunities to create a volunteer snow shoveling program for individuals in need such as older adults and people with disabilities.

Promising Practice:
Snow Angel programs operate in cities and towns across Canada. They are volunteer-driven snow removal services for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Programs match volunteers from the community with residents in their neighborhoods who require assistance.

5. Continue efforts to ensure community parks are accessible and encourage recreational and wellness opportunities for all ages.

The Town’s Recreation and Community Services Master Plan outlines several goals to increase the quality of indoor and outdoor facilities across the Town, including the provision of high-quality outdoor spaces for seniors through parks planning design standards. As part of this work, it is recommended that the Town consider the following elements in parks planning:

- The needs of a diverse and aging population through further analysis of the provision of washrooms, seating, lighting, shade, pathways, picnic areas and pavilions, and outdoor play/fitness equipment.
- AODA compliant structures which can be accessed with mobility devices (i.e., ramped glider swing).
- Designated activity areas for passive or quiet reflection (i.e., tai chi zone, meditative gardens, labyrinth walk).
- Spaces and equipment that promote group interactions (i.e., shaded, conversational seating arrangements, table games – table tennis, chess, checkers).



TRANSPORTATION

6. Create greater awareness of transit options

There are some transportation options within the Town of Penetanguishene including options for people with mobility challenges. Consultation feedback revealed that some people are not aware of these options and/or are unsure how to access them. It is recommended that the Town continue to provide and enhance transit information on its website and further promote transit options internally and with community partners.

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

For a variety of reasons, many people are not able to access, or experience significant barriers in accessing public transit options. Feedback from stakeholders and residents highlight the need to provide accessible transportation options to residents especially given the continued aging of the population and more people living with disabilities. It is recommended that the Town work with partners such as Community Reach, and others to promote, and identify opportunities to expand, alternative transportation options in the town. Support may include advocating for increased funding, assisting with education and promotion of existing programs, and facilitating collaboration and partnerships. Consideration could also be given to establishing a volunteer network of drivers.

Promising Practice:

Community Reach is a program that connects people living in North Simcoe to programs and services through barrier-free transportation options. The Transportation Linking Communities (TLC) program offers rides for people in North Simcoe that do not have access to transportation or have limited income. The program uses volunteer drivers and their vehicles or accessible vans to take people to their medical appointments, shopping, and social events.

8. Explore options to work with other jurisdictions to enhance transportation options.

Stakeholders and residents point out the need for greater collaboration among service providers to reduce barriers to accessing services and connecting with family and social supports. It is recommended that the Town continue to work with partners such as the Town of Midland and County of Simcoe to identify options to expand transportation service in Penetanguishene.

9. Advocate for a transit subsidy to residents in need.

Affordability can be a barrier in residents' ability to access public transportation, and consequently may reduce access to services, amenities, programs, and the ability to connect with friends and family. Many communities have initiated low or no cost programs or reduced fare days for seniors and residents in need (i.e., Burlington, Brampton, Kingston, London).

It is recommended that the Town of Penetanguishene advocate to and support the County of Simcoe to pursue a transportation subsidy for residents in need (i.e., low-income) across the area. The subsidy could be in the form of a direct subsidy to an individual or in the form of a voucher (i.e., taxi, Uber). It is also recommended that the Town encourage options for reduced or no-cost transportation passes for caregivers accompanying a person in need.





HOUSING

10. Ensure municipal policies and regulations support a range of housing options to meet the diverse needs of residents

It is recommended that the Town review existing policies and regulations to:

- Ensure current and future planning policies encourage a mix of housing types and tenures, including affordable housing options. Housing types should consider various forms such as smaller unit sizes, secondary suites, multi-residential as well as various ownership models such as life lease, co-operative, and co-housing.
- Ensure existing regulations do not restrict and/or create barriers to providing a range of housing options.
- Continue the Town's commitment to an affordable housing reserve as a way of supporting the future creation of affordable housing.
- Investigate other opportunities to provide financial incentives to further encourage the development of affordable housing. Incentives may include waiving fees, providing grants, providing land at a reduced cost, and expediting approvals.
- Explore opportunities to partner with non-profit and private housing developers, and the County of Simcoe in the development of future affordable housing.

11. Advocate for additional funding for affordable, transitional, and supportive housing

Senior levels of government are vital partners in increasing the supply of affordable, transitional, and supportive housing options in Penetanguishene. It is recommended, that the Town support the County of Simcoe in advocating to senior levels of government for increased funding to support the development of more affordable, accessible, and supportive housing options across the town.

Supportive housing: A type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently (e.g., mental health supports, lifeskills training, meals)

Transitional housing: Housing that is intended to offer a supportive living environment for its residents, including offering them the experience, tools, knowledge, and opportunities for social and skill development to become more independent. It is considered an intermediate step between emergency shelter and supportive housing and typically has limits on how long an individual or family can stay. Stays are often between three months and three years.

12. Explore opportunities for funding and community partnerships to pilot a Penetanguishene HomeShare program

HomeShare programs can provide an opportunity for someone who is ‘over housed’ and in need of some form of support (i.e., light household tasks and/or financial support) to remain in their home and community. In Penetanguishene, just under half of people over the age of 65 live alone. Often HomeShare programs are a living arrangement between two or more people, usually unrelated, who reside together in the same residence. Typically, each person has their own private space with shared common areas such as a kitchen and living room.⁴ HomeShare programs can provide a form of affordable housing, reduce social isolation, and provide support for household responsibilities to help someone remain in their home longer. It is recommended that the Town, through the Community Wellbeing Committee, explore opportunities to work with community partners to create a HomeShare pilot program.

Promising Practice:

Halton HomeShare Program

is a partnership between Halton Region, Halton Housing Help and the Burlington Age-Friendly Council. This program works to match older adults with renters who can help with household responsibilities.

Halton Housing Help screens applicants and provides follow-up monitoring services.

The Halton HomeShare Toolkit can be found at [LINK](#). Similar projects are located across Canada including in Fredericton and Kingston.



⁴ Halton HomeShare Toolkit (2019). https://cdhalton.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2021/04/TheHaltonHomeShare_Toolkit_revised_2019.pdf



RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

13. Explore opportunities to expand intergenerational activities within the Town

Intergenerational programs can have a positive impact on seniors, youth, and all involved. They can help reduce stigma and ageism, support lifelong learning and skill development, and reduce isolation and loneliness. It is recommended that the Town, with community partners, explore opportunities to expand intergenerational activities across the Town. Examples of intergenerational programs include pen-pal programs, music and cooking activities, as well as literacy and technology programs.

As an example, a local art exhibition could be an opportunity to feature and celebrate local senior and youth artists from the town's diverse populations. Artists and community members can engage in sharing diverse local perspectives on aging.

Promising Practice:

GrandPals is an intergenerational program that connects middle school students with older adults (55+) for mutual learning, storytelling and meaningful friendships. GrandPals was first implemented in 2010 in Orangeville, Ontario with the support of the local age-friendly community initiative (AFCI) and has since been implemented in 55 classes at 9 elementary schools.

14. Work with community partners to promote friendly-visiting programs.

Friendly visiting programs are meaningful programs that connect volunteers with people who may not have immediate supports such as family and friends, and who may be isolated. There are community organizations in Penetanguishene and surrounding area who do provide friendly visiting programs. It is recommended that the Town work with community partners, such as the Red Cross and VON, to identify such programs and identify strategies to further promote and connect individuals to such programs.

15. Expand age-friendly awareness among local businesses.

Providing age-friendly customer service and business spaces will help reduce barriers for residents who want to access local retail and service locations. It is recommended that the Town partner with community organizations (i.e., Chamber of Commerce) to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and age-friendliness of local businesses. Part of this work should include promotion of the Town's Building Improvement and Renovation Program and Building Façade Improvement Program as a means of making buildings more accessible. It is also suggested that the town adopt the recognition program created by Simcoe County.

Promising Practice:

The County of Simcoe has developed a business/organization award to help business assess whether their environment is set up to serve everyone. The program provides several tools and resources to help business owners and operators identify, promote, and improve their age-friendly features.





CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT

16. Engage with Community Wellbeing Committee (CWC) as part of all community planning initiatives.

The CWC is a great resource to provide an age-friendly lens to current planning initiatives. It is recommended that Town of Penetanguishene planning initiatives (i.e., development of Town Master Plans) include engagement with the CWC as part of broader public participation activities. Further it is suggested that the Town continue to seek out opportunities to engage with the Town's diverse population, in particular with older adults, people with disabilities and youth as part of local planning initiatives.

17. Expand digital access and literacy among residents and seniors

Access to technology is increasingly impacting people's overall health and wellbeing. Access to technology can provide connection to health services, amenities, and loved ones. It is recommended that the Town work with the Penetanguishene Library and other community partners to promote existing programs and support opportunities to expand and enhance programming for older adults and residents to learn how to use new technology devices.

18. Share information on volunteer and employment opportunities and services.

Many older adults and youth are volunteering, continuing to develop skills, and seeking employment opportunities. As part of consultation activities, stakeholders expressed the desire to better connect people with volunteer and employment opportunities. It is recommended that Penetanguishene work with community partners to explore opportunities to share information on volunteer opportunities, skill building, and employment placements.



COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

19. Create age-friendly communications check-list

As part of existing communications strategies, it is recommended that the Town create a check-list for making communications age-friendly. This may include guidelines for print and online communication text, choosing appropriate media, as well as considerations for other formats (such as Braille, large print or audio) and languages in the distribution of information. The checklist may also include considerations for community outreach for participation in local events and initiatives. This checklist may be developed as part of a larger communications and/or engagement strategy.

20. Establish a virtual community service hub

The Town of Penetanguishene provides a range of community services and supports. Consultation feedback highlighted that often people are not aware of what services are provided directly in Penetanguishene and also what services are available from the surrounding area. It is recommended that the Town engage community organizations, service providers, local businesses and others in the development of an online 'Service Hub' with a direct weblink, email, and telephone number to increase awareness of what is offered in the Town. Considerations should include:

- Including information on local activities and events, programs and services, housing and homelessness options and supports, health services (including specialized geriatric services), employment services, food security, income support services, transportation, health information, and so on.
- Providing messaging and information in user-friendly formats (usage of pictures, large text options, and aphasia friendly).
- Including 'youth' and 'senior' search options and/or unique pages.
- Provide dedicated page/section to promote free local activities and events.
- Creating a communication strategy to broadly promote the Service Hub.
- Exploring options for a printable version of Hub (directory).

In support of expanding the online information hub, it is recommended that a broad promotional strategy be developed to increase awareness of the Virtual Service Hub as the 'go to' place for information on community services, programs, and events.



21. Continue to host annual Seniors Day

As part of creating greater awareness of local age-friendly services and programs, it is recommended that the Town continue to host the annual Seniors Day in June as part of Seniors month. This local event provides an opportunity for local organizations and service providers to showcase their services, provides an opportunity for residents to learn more about age-friendly activities and initiatives, and provides opportunities for residents and service providers to connect with one another.

22. Continue to provide communication and promotional materials that create positive and inclusive images celebrating the Town's diversity.

The Town of Penetanguishene is comprised of people of all ages and from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures, sexual orientation, with varying income levels, and a variety of abilities. It is important that everyone "see themselves" in the Town of Penetanguishene. It is recommended that the Town continue to expand communication and promotional material to reflect the Town's diversity and celebrates all residents.

23. Further promote 211

Ontario 211 is a helpline and website that provides information on and referrals to Ontario's community, social, health-related, and government services. The purpose is to help residents in communities across Ontario find services they need. It is recommended that the Town further promote 211 to residents as a point of contact for local services. It is also recommended that the Town work with community partners and 211 Ontario to improve access to community and social services for people in Penetanguishene. This could include updating existing listings and engaging a 211 Ambassador.





COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES

24. Explore opportunities to create a satellite service hub in Penetanguishene

A key finding from the engagement activities was the desire to provide access to information and services in one location (physical and virtual). It is recommended that the Town of Penetanguishene explore opportunities to create dedicated community space that would support increased access to community and health services. Providing dedicated community space facilitates opportunities for people to access information and services, participate in community programming (provided by the Town as well as community partners), and connect with service providers and community supports. One opportunity for the location of the space may be within a future recreation centre (currently being explored by the Town). It is further recommended that the Town explore a partnership with the Askennonnia Seniors Centre to provide some additional programming and services directly in the Town of Penetanguishene.

25. Support community partners in efforts to increase in-home supports for seniors and people with disabilities.

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

26. Establish Community and Health Service Provider 'Healthy Connections' Group

Penetanguishene has many community and health services for residents, located either directly within the Town or surrounding municipalities. It is recommended that the Town in collaboration with the North Simcoe Age-Friendly Collaborative, explore opportunities with community service providers to create a monthly 'Healthy Connections' group. The focus of such meetings would be to bring together various community and health service providers to create greater awareness of local service offerings, further identify current needs and gaps, explore ideas and initiatives, and advocate for Penetanguishene.

27. Establish caregiver 'Coffee Chat'

With the increasing need for support in the home, often this is provided, at least in part, by family and loved ones. This informal care can be intense and demanding and as such it is important to support the health and wellbeing of caregivers. One such strategy is to provide space (virtual and/or in-person) for caregivers to connect with one another to share experiences and emotions. It is recommended that the Town support community partners in establishing a space for caregivers to meet, connect, and share stories. The Town can support such a program through promotion and outreach, as well as through the provision of programming space.





SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

28. Continue to explore options to expand recreational program delivery

The Town of Penetanguishene offers a wide range of recreational programming. It is recommended that the Town continue to explore options to expand service delivery to residents. In addition to intergenerational programming (Action #13), consideration should be provided for programs for youth, programs for persons living with dementia and for people with disabilities, continued inclusion of virtual options (incorporating technical support as needed), programming that meets needs of diverse ethno-cultural groups, programming in other languages (i.e., French), and outdoor programming options.

Promising Practice:

Bridges is an intergenerational and intercultural learning program in Waterloo focused on building cultural connections by inviting residents to experience cultural knowledge and traditions from seniors who are affiliated with the areas many ethnic and immigrant communities. It also aims to empower Waterloo's elders as teachers, mentors, and leaders for youth.

29. Create virtual learning workshop series

Learning helps to keep the mind and body active and is a big part of people's well-being. It is recommended that the Town work with community partners to create an online workshop series. Topics may include refuting ageism, dementia friendly design, nutrition, languages, and navigating the health care system.

30. Continue to support efforts to ensure low-income residents have access to social programs and services

The Town of Penetanguishene has an 'Access to Affordable Recreation Policy' as a way of promoting full participation of all residents in recreational programs and service regardless of financial circumstances. It is recommended that the Town continue this program and further promote the availability of the subsidy to residents.



7.4 SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Importantly, realizing the age-friendly vision for the Town of Penetanguishene requires the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to implement the recommended actions and ultimately become a more age-friendly community to all residents.

To support the achievement of this Plan and the creation of an age-friendly Penetanguishene, it is further recommended that:

- An 'Age-Friendly Coordinator' role be created within the Town.
 - This role may be established as a new part-time or contract position or as part of an existing municipal role.
 - This coordinator role would include:
 - Acting as a liaison with staff, the Community Wellbeing Committee, and community partners, including neighbouring municipalities and the County of Simcoe, in the implementation of the actions identified in this Plan.
 - Supporting communication of the Age-Friendly Community Plan and local age-friendly initiatives.
 - Pursuing funding opportunities and conducting research as appropriate.
 - Assisting in the planning and coordination of age-friendly events and activities.
- The Community Wellbeing Committee continue to support the overall leadership and monitoring of the Town's Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.
- Town and the Community Wellbeing Committee lead the preparation of an annual Age-Friendly Report Card to share successes and identify continued priorities for the community.
- A full review of the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan be completed in 2026.
- The Town join Ontario's Network of Age-Friendly Community Initiatives.

As part of carrying out this plan, a complete Implementation Plan has been developed to support the achievement of this Plan. The Implementation Plan puts forward action leads, partners, timelines, and resource considerations to support the vision of this Plan.

Age-Friendly Theme

Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities
OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking trails along waterfront. Library is a great facility and resource. Waterfront is a great public space. Sidewalks cleared in winter. "Parks are wonderful". Splash Park is great facility. Parks generally accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storefronts and downtown generally inaccessible, "lots of stores I can't get into". Need improved sidewalk maintenance. Need more lighting in some park areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More resting places along key walking trails. Need greater accessibility in built environment (i.e., restaurants/shops, sidewalks, curb cuts, pathways). More public washrooms. Need for more shops and restaurants in downtown and waterfront. Look for opportunities to expand tourism. New community centre that is all-inclusive and all ages. Need to look at increased safety and comfort (lighting, rest areas). Look through lens of age-friendly in development projects. Age-Friendly playgrounds.
TRANSPORTATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transit options are available. Accessible transportation options available (Community Reach, Red Cross). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees can be a barrier to accessible transportation. Shortage of bus drivers, no high school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve collaboration with other communities (i.e., Midland). Need bus stops with benches and times posted. More promotion of transit options. Need to maintain accessibility (roads/sidewalks) during winter months. More funding for transportation. Link transit with other jurisdictions.
HOUSING		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some senior living options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Very difficult to age in place when there is no housing available". Need for support with general outdoor maintenance. Need more information/data on housing affordability in Town. Long waiting lists for long-term care. Long waiting lists for affordable housing. No emergency shelter. Some people living in unsafe housing conditions as a result of lack of affordable housing. "We are looking at moving because we can't afford to buy here". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing options for all ages. Need housing subsidies. More rental housing. Unique housing options (i.e., granny flats, multi-generational, shared housing). Need more in-home supports. Smaller unit sizes.

APPENDIX A – Community Engagement Key Themes

Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities
RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for residents to be engaged in Town activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative stigma towards people with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information packages for new residents. All people should feel welcomed and included. “Everyone’s invited, no one is excluded”.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town working with residents to improve accessibility. Ability for people to work remotely has improved employment options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of employment options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need more community engagement in events and planning. Have job postings accessible (multiple formats, different languages).
COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors Directory available for services in Tiny, Midland and Penetanguishene. Legion is a good resource for information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadband barriers. Need for greater awareness of services, “I would not know who to call”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to provide information in multiple formats, hard copy, online, brail, multiple languages. More collaboration for information sharing. More promotion of 211. Use buses for communication and promotion of events, services. Have one central number for information. Enhance access to technology, internet.
COMMUNITY & HEALTH SUPPORTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to doctor and specialists (i.e., physiotherapist, optician) is a challenge. No central area for services. Loss of high school. Increase in people experiencing mental health and addiction challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite centre to improve access to services. Options for delivery of amenities (i.e., groceries, pharmacy). Need access to low-income dental care. Need more in-home care. Greater awareness of health services in Penetanguishene and also surrounding area. Improve access to support services. Ensure range of services for people with different needs/abilities. Need for health ‘connector’.
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of activities for all age groups. “Lots of activities here” (museum, curling club, arena, theatre, church). Museum has a lot of activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of multi-use facility. No outdoor rinks. No fitness facility or pool. No seniors centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-use facility (fitness room, art space, community rooms, coffee shop, arena, walking trail). More diversity in programing. More seniors programing in evenings (i.e., skating). Free programing for low-income seniors. Programs for Indigenous Peoples. More activities for youth/teens.