

REPORT

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

To: Mayor Jonathan Coté and Members of Council in Regular Date: January 16, 2017

From: Jackie Teed, Acting Director of Development Services File: 13.2630.08

Subject: New Westminster Age-Friendly City Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the most significant challenges facing municipalities is accommodating an aging population. Between 2011 and 2036, people 50+ will increase by 87.7% and people 65+ will increase by 130.0% in New Westminster. By comparison, the population as a whole will increase by 43.9%.

The City has undertaken a number of initiatives in support of an age-friendly community; however, it has no overall vision or strategy to deal with the significant aging of the population. In August 2016, the City was approached by the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) as to its interest in participating in a Studio Project. The City submitted several ideas; one of which was the development of an Age-Friendly City Strategy.

This idea was selected and City staff and three SCARP students are developing the strategy, which is based on extensive research and consultation. When completed in April 2017, the City will apply to be officially recognized as an Age-Friendly British Columbia community.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council about a unique partnership with the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning

(SCARP) in which City staff and three SCARP students are preparing an Age-Friendly City Strategy for New Westminster.

POLICY CONTEXT

Official Community Plan

The *Official Community Plan* (2011) includes the following policy and priorities:

Continue to support inter-dependent living for seniors and aging in place housing choices.

- *Encourage units for seniors that are adequately designed for special needs.*
- *Encourage the creation of a seniors housing policy that includes a variety of affordable units that are based on an aging in place concept.*
- *Encourage access for seniors to a variety of recreational and social programs.*

Envision 2032

The *Envision 2032 Sustainability Framework* (2013) includes the following descriptions of success:

- *There are opportunities for all residents, including children, youth and seniors, to be fully engaged in the community, to make a meaningful contribution, and to be recognized and valued for their contributions; and,*
- *The built and natural environments are accessible and barrier-free and housing is designed to be easily adaptable in accordance with needs and abilities, enabling residents to age in place.*

BACKGROUND

The City has undertaken a number of initiatives in support of age-friendly community; however, it has no overall vision or strategy to deal with the significant aging of the population. Such a vision or strategy is important to inform municipal decision-making, including with regard to strategic priorities and budgeting.

The University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) approached the City about its participation in a Studio Project whereby SCARP students would work on an applied project in order to gain practical experience. The City submitted several ideas for a potential Studio Project; one of which was the development

of an Age-Friendly City Strategy. SCARP reviewed the submissions and the proposed project was selected.

ANALYSIS

Aging of the Population

One of the most significant challenges facing municipalities is accommodating an aging population. Between 2011 and 2036, people 50+ will increase by 87.7% and people 65+ will increase by 130.0% in New Westminster. By comparison, the population as a whole will increase by 43.9%. In 2036, people 50+ will comprise 43.4% and people 65+ will comprise 21.4% of the population in New Westminster.

Impacts on Municipalities

According to the report *Impacts of the Aging of the Canadian Population on Housing and Communities* (2008), “An aging population will change the pattern of housing needs and preferences; alter the nature of the demand for services; change transportation requirements; accentuate the need for making communities more responsive to people with disabilities; and challenge existing neighbourhood design and community planning processes.”

Age-Friendly Cities

The World Health Organization (WHO) in its *Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide* (2007) describes 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.” In practical terms, an age-friendly community adapts its facilities, infrastructure, programs and services to be accessible to and inclusive of people with varying needs and capacities.

Need for a Strategy

The City has a strong foundation in place in which to develop an Age-Friendly City Strategy. Since 2008, the City has developed and implemented a number of age-friendly community initiatives. These initiatives include but are not limited to:

- *In My Back Yard (IMBY) Senior Resource Fairs and Directory* (2008/09)
- *Wheelability (Mobility) Assessment Project* (2010)
- *Adaptable Housing Policy and Bylaw* (2011)
- *Seniors Engagement Toolkit* (2011)
- *Century House Inclusion Enhancement Project* (2013)

- *Master Transportation Plan* (2014)
- *Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan* (2016)
- *Official Community Plan* (under development)

The *Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan* (2016) is the first such plan in British Columbia and Council became the first Dementia-Friendly City Council in Canada as a result of participating in Dementia-Friends training.

Despite the City being recognized as a municipal leader in the area of age- and ability-friendly communities, it has no overall vision or strategy to deal with the significant aging of the population. Such a vision or strategy is important to inform municipal decision-making, including with regard to strategic priorities and budgeting.

Strategy Development

The three SCARP students are working closely with senior staff in the Development Services, Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments. They are also taking the lead with regard to conducting case study research and key informant interviews in support of the strategy, as well as hosting a public presentation and open house at Century House on January 14, 2017. Additionally, they are implementing a hard copy and on-line survey. The Seniors Advisory Committee will be regularly engaged with regard to the development of the strategy and will also play a role in its implementation.

The research and consultation results will be used to inform the development of the strategy, which will include an action plan to address needs, barriers and gaps which may be inhibiting active, healthy and independent aging in New Westminster. It will also define an important role for the senior levels of government to play in addressing the identified needs, barriers and gaps.

DISCUSSION

Benefits

From a City perspective, the strategy will facilitate awareness among Council and staff of the possible impacts of an aging population and the need to be prepared. It will also contribute to inter-Department planning and coordination related to an aging population, while facilitating strategic partnerships with post-secondary institutions. Additionally, it will provide involvement opportunities, including related to implementation, for both the Access Ability and Seniors Advisory Committees.

From a SCARP perspective, the strategy will provide meaningful opportunities for leadership, contribution and research. City staff and students will collaborate on key aspects of the project, including projections, case study research, consultation and strategy development, as well as inform implementation and monitoring.

Age-Friendly Recognition

Upon completion of the Age-Friendly City Strategy, the City will apply to be officially recognized as an Age-Friendly British Columbia (AFBC) community. This recognition comes with an award and promotion under the AFBC section of the SeniorsBC.ca website. It also results in automatic eligibility to receive official Pan-Canadian AFC recognition and World Health Organization AFC recognition. With recognition, provincial funding is available to create a legacy project, or hold a celebration. Regarding the latter, this could coincide with National Seniors Day on October 1, 2017.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The three SCARP students are working with a senior staff team representing the Development Services, Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments. The strategy, when complete, is also intended to facilitate enhanced inter-Department planning and coordination related to an aging population.

OPTIONS

There are two options for Council's consideration:

1. That Council receive this report for information.
2. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends option #1.

Authors:

John Stark,
Acting Manager of Planning

Tristan Johnson,
Planning Analyst

Approved for Presentation to Council

Jackie Teed,
Acting Director of Development Services

Lisa Spitale,
Chief Administrative Officer