



NEW WESTMINSTER



# New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy

April 2017



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## Executive Summary

The City of New Westminster (City) and the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) collaborated on the *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy*. This seven-month collaboration was part of a broader experiential SCARP Planning Studio intended for Masters students to work on applied projects.

The purpose of this strategy is twofold. First, the City is seeking to proactively address present and future needs associated with an aging population. Between 2016 and 2041, people 50+ will increase by 80% and people 65+ will increase by 127% in New Westminster. By comparison, the population-as-a-whole will increase by 40%. Second, the City lacks an overall vision in support of an age-friendly community. The City and senior-serving organizations have undertaken numerous age-friendly initiatives which can act as a solid foundation for the strategy; however, there is no overall guiding framework and plan to ensure that interventions are deliberate, coordinated and purposeful. This strategy provides that direction. By doing so, it contributes to a welcoming, inclusive and accessible community; one in which seniors can continue to lead fulfilling, involved and meaningful lives.

The strategy is based on extensive research and consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders. A variety of methods were used to understand the lived experiences of seniors, including opportunities and challenges related to addressing age-related issues. This included key informant interviews,



an open house and surveys. Senior staff within City Departments were also consulted to add a municipal perspective and to build ownership and commitment related to strategy implementation.

The strategy refers to the World Health Organization's (WHO) internationally recognized report, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)* as a baseline reference on age-friendly planning and thinking. For this strategy, the WHO's eight conceptual categories were adapted and consolidated into four. This categorization, which is used to organize the actions, provides a more accurate representation and understanding of the aging experience for seniors in New Westminster.

The strategy and the actions contained within it are weighted towards those that are implementable by the City. This is purposeful, as the strategy is intended for the City and its Departments. It will also ensure that the City can gain traction with regard to its implementation. For some actions, the

City will use its influence and work with the senior levels of government on their implementation. These actions primarily relate to housing, home support and respite services, which are essential to enabling seniors to live in the community, and residential care options, when independent living is no longer possible.

Given the tight timeline associated with the SCARP Planning Studio, it was not possible to prioritize the actions or assign specific responsibilities or timelines. As a key step towards strategy implementation, it is proposed that an Age-Friendly Inter-Departmental Working Group be established. This body would be responsible for creating a five-year action plan based on the identified actions. To facilitate continuity, it is also proposed that senior staff who informed the strategy be involved in its implementation. This approach would facilitate inter-Departmental and inter-jurisdictional collaboration, which is essential to realizing an age-friendly community.





## 1.0 Introduction

One of the most significant challenges facing municipalities is planning for an aging population.

The *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy* is a proactive endeavor to ensure that individuals, communities, organizations and governments have the ability to address the challenges associated with an aging population. It is an issue that involves all aspects of life, ranging from accessible transportation systems, adaptable housing, responsive business practices and supportive community networks. This holistic nature also connects New Westminster to a larger dialogue about aging and age-friendliness at the provincial, national and international levels. The City recognizes the need to start planning and acting now in order to be prepared for a vastly different city in 2041; one in which over two-fifths of the population will be 50+ and over one-quarter of the population will be 65+.

Within New Westminster, there are already a number of initiatives that support age-friendliness. What is missing is an overall vision and framework to ensure that interventions are deliberate, coordinated and purposeful. This strategy builds on the strong foundation in place and acts as a catalyst and guide for future actions. The development of the strategy was supported



and facilitated by a core City team, including the Chief Administrative Officer, senior staff in the Development Services, Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments, and the City's Seniors Advisory Committee, which advises Council on issues related to an aging population.

In September 2016, the City collaborated with the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) to develop the strategy. This collaboration provided an added perspective and facilitated opportunities for mutual learning and leadership. It also instilled an inter-generational component to the development process, as aging impacts the entire community and not just older adults and seniors.

## 2.0 Background

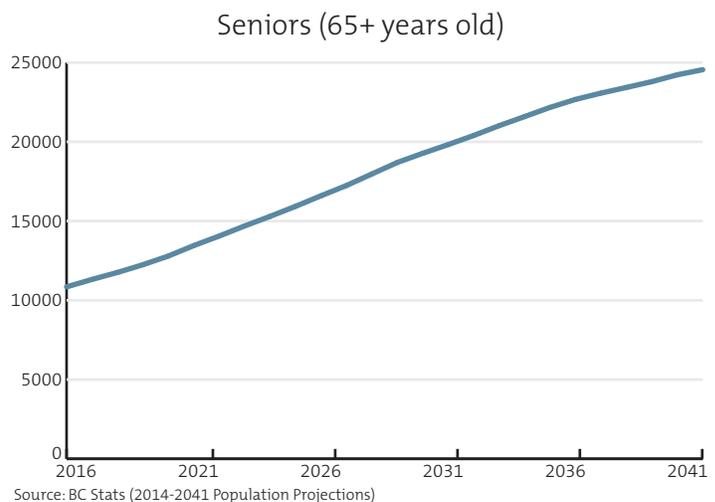
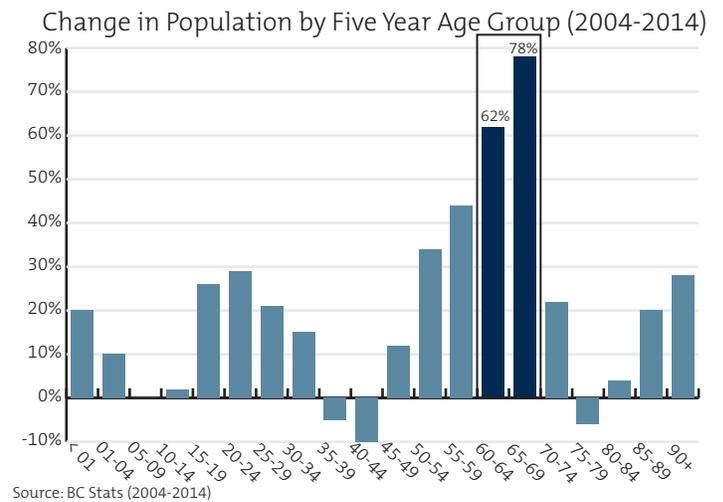
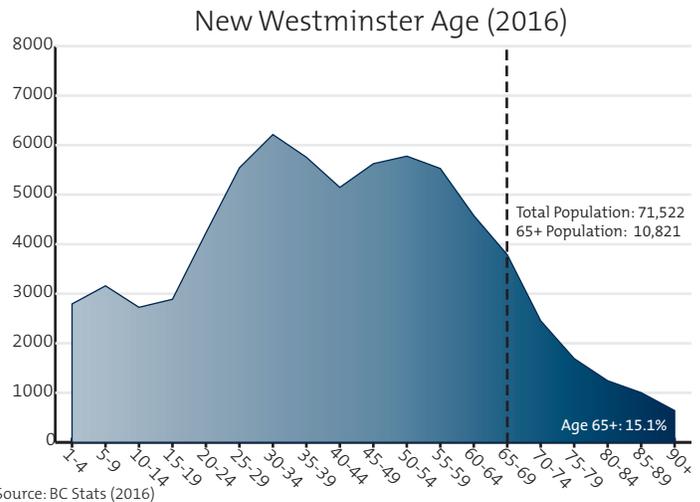


### 2.1 Current and Future Seniors in New Westminister

#### Who are New Westminister's Seniors?

New Westminister, similar to other municipalities, is experiencing an aging population and seniors will play a far more influential role in its future. Over the next 25 years, the number of seniors is expected to increase from about 11,000 to 25,000, a rise from about 15% to 25% of the population. Civic facilities, infrastructure, programs and services that cater to seniors will face increasing demands and pressures as a result of this growth.

Seniors represent the fastest growing age groups within New Westminister. In particular, there has been an increased growth in the percentage of people aged 60 to 70 years, while the percentage of children and adults between 35 and 45 years have remained constant, or have even decreased.



## 2.2 Senior Community Profiles

New Westminster's aging population will have profound impacts on the community, including facilities, infrastructure, programs and services, and the City will need to adapt now in order to facilitate opportunities for active and healthy aging.

The challenges and needs of seniors within each neighbourhood will be different due to a variety of factors. The existing size of the aging population, neighbourhood amenities and topography are a few examples of influential factors.

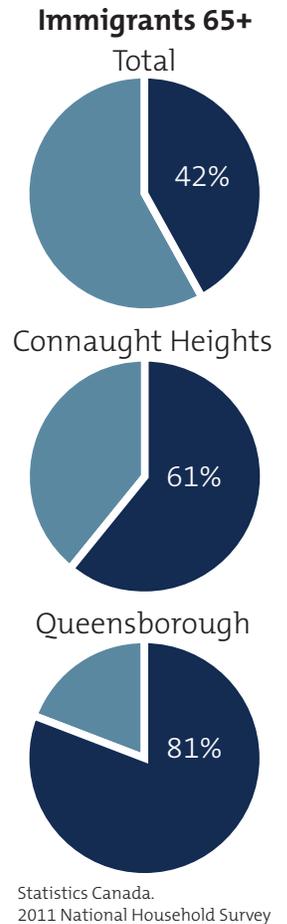
Currently, there are large concentrations of seniors within the Uptown (23%) and Glenbrooke South (23%) neighbourhoods.

### Diversity

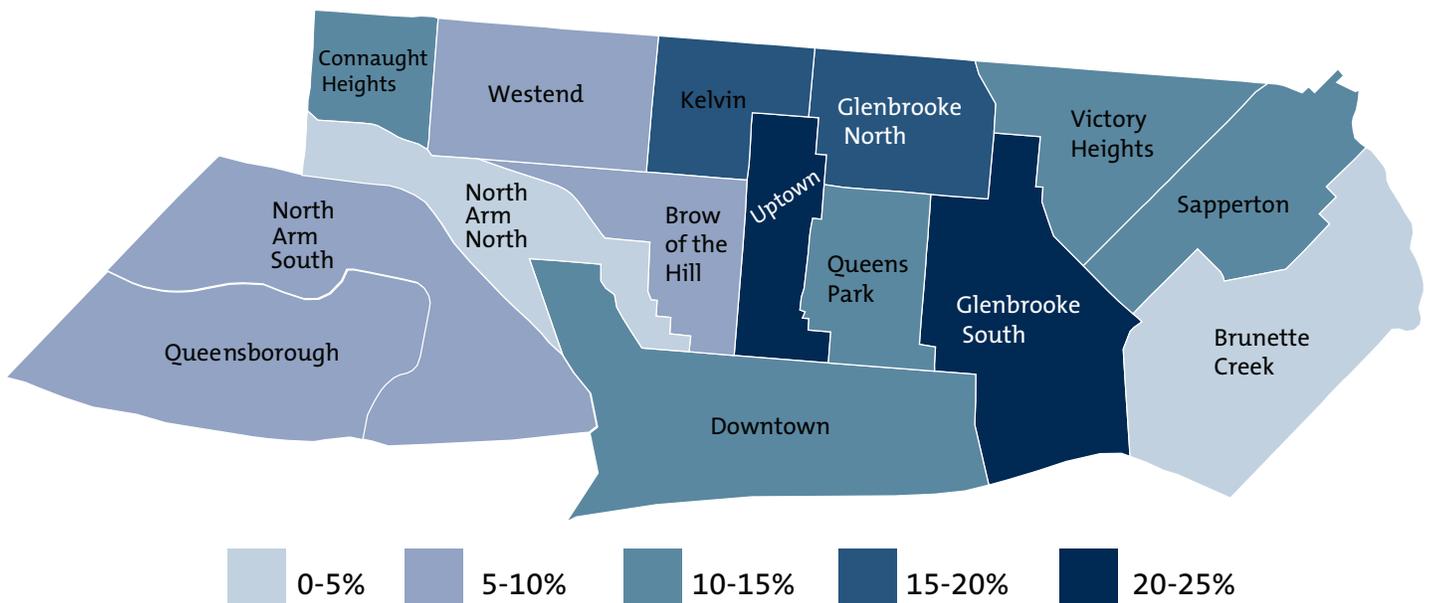
Similar to other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, immigrants comprise a large portion of New

Westminster's population. Currently, 42% of New Westminster seniors are immigrants. While 65% of seniors list English as their mother tongue, there are other prominent languages in the city including Chinese, Punjabi and Tagalog.

Although not quantified, there is a growing LGBTQ/2SA community within New Westminster with needs that may differ from other senior sub-groups; resources and services should be reflective and inclusive of this community.

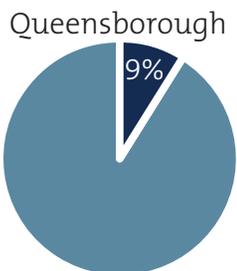
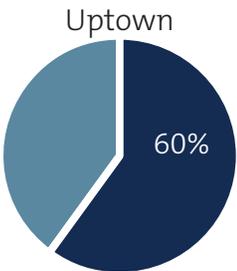
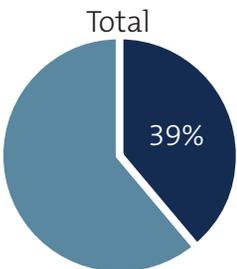


Seniors Percentage by Neighbourhood

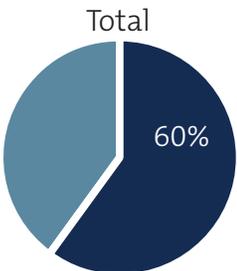


Statistics Canada. 2011 Census.

## Living Alone 65+



## Living Alone 85+



Statistics Canada. 2011 Census.

## Living Alone

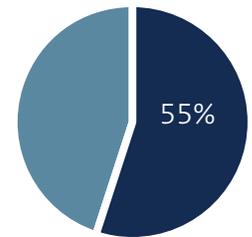
Social isolation is a major concern for seniors since it can be caused and reinforced by living alone. In the city, 39% of seniors live alone, with higher concentrations in the Uptown neighbourhood (60%). At the same time, areas that may lack specific resources and services, like Queensborough, have a small portion of seniors living alone (9%).

The number of seniors living alone also increases by age. In New Westminister, 60% of people over 85 years live alone.

## Disability

Seniors are more likely than other groups to have an identified disability. Over half of seniors (55%) identify as having a disability. As well, over half of seniors use the emergency room on an annual basis, with a quarter being hospitalized. As the senior population continues to grow, the stresses on these resources and services will continue to rise.

## With Disability 65+



Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey

## Housing Type 65+



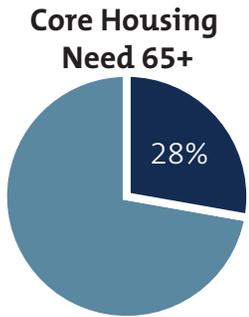
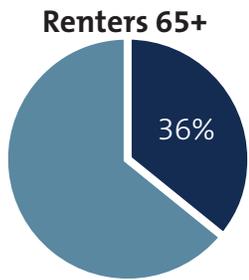
## Housing

Housing, and a place to call home, remains a key concern for all people. For seniors in New Westminister, over two-thirds live in apartments, ranging from three-storey walk-ups to high rises.

Seniors experience specific housing concerns. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 21% of households in New Westminister

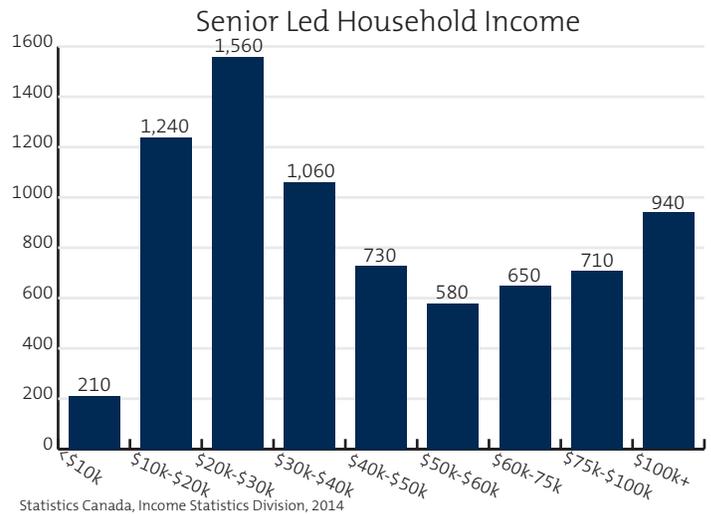
### Neighbourhood Profile:

Queensborough is a unique neighbourhood in New Westminister as it lies across the Fraser River, and is only accessible by bridge. Proportionally, Queensborough has the highest percentage of immigrant seniors in New Westminister (82%). The majority of immigrants are long-time members of the neighborhood, as under 7% have immigrated recently.



Statistics Canada. 2011 Census

are in core housing need. For households led by seniors, the percentage rises to 28%. Remaining in a suitable home becomes increasingly difficult for seniors as factors like affordability, maintenance and personal needs change through age. In New Westminster, the Uptown neighbourhood, which is also home to a large percentage of the city's seniors, has the highest core housing need for senior-led households (40%).



The demographic composition of New Westminster is rapidly shifting. As the aging population continues to grow, so does the diversity within it. The City must ensure there is infrastructure and networks to support the present and future seniors. By proactively addressing these needs, New Westminster will position itself to become an age-friendly community.

**Low Income Seniors:**  
 Total: 11%  
 Couple: 7%  
 Single: 17%

**Income**

Many seniors live on fixed and lower incomes which can limit access to appropriate housing, adequate nutrition, required health services and social connectedness. This is particularly true for single, female led households. As such, there is a need for civic programs and services to take these financial limitations into consideration in order to reduce barriers to access and usage.

## 3.0 What is Age-Friendly Planning?



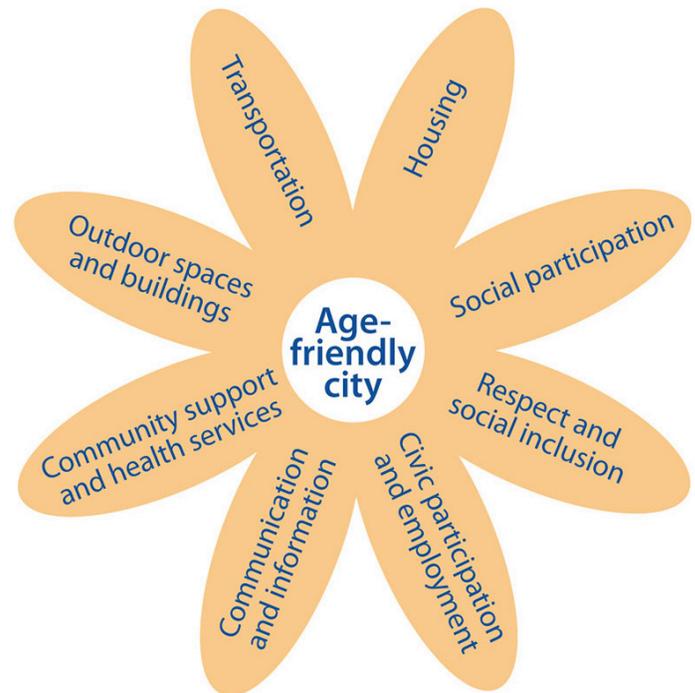
### 3.1 Who is a Senior?

Many terms are used to recognize individuals who are part of an aging population, including “older adult,” “elder” and “senior.” The definitions generally introduce a specific age at which point an individual enters a different and later life phase. For the purposes of this strategy, the term “senior” will refer to individuals aged 65 years and over; however, this term goes beyond an age number, recognizing that the gradual nature of aging is different for everyone. Younger individuals who experience dementia, health challenges and other limiting risk factors may also seek the same level of care and services as seniors. Furthermore, while some adults identify with the term “senior,” others do not. In this respect, the aim is to create an age-friendly environment where people of all ages and walks of life are provided access, opportunity and support.

A community that supports seniors is a community that supports everyone.

### 3.2 Age-Friendly Cities and the World Health Organization

In 2008, the World Health Organization (WHO) created an international collaboration and recognized framework on age-friendliness called *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)*. Within Canada, Halifax (Nova Scotia), Portage la Prairie (Manitoba), and Saanich (British Columbia) were selected as participants. The WHO report took a global



snapshot of aging populations, promoting a vision of active and inclusive aging filtered into eight categories (see above). Since then, communities interested in creating age-friendly policies have predominantly followed the WHO framework. The *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy's* framework was adapted to reflect the context, ambitions and community vision of the city while using the WHO's eight categories as a guide and standard reference.

### 3.3 Age-Friendly Best Practices and Research

The strategy and actions were informed by best practices from other age-friendly jurisdictions, as well as the most recent research available. These best practices provided insight into successful

examples of policy and actions that the strategy could use to best address the needs of New Westminster. Age-friendly plans from Canada (e.g., Calgary, Hamilton and Toronto) and abroad (e.g., Australia, Ireland and Portland) were examined. Age-friendly policies, aging-in-place initiatives, and healthy and active communities were also researched. Overall, the process was mindful of the fact that a senior's experience is varied across many overlapping topics and felt through a variety of physical and socio-economic scales.

There is a wide variety of experiences and needs within the senior population. Recent research

provides confirmation that “seniors” form a wide categorical group, and that the experience of the same issue or place will vary from one person to the next.

Aging is not just an individual responsibility, but also a community one. Contrary to a common misconception that aging-related challenges should be addressed on a personal scale, communities have a vital role to play in aging. Ensuring the availability of appropriate services, community amenities, or opportunities for social interaction are examples of such components.



## 4.0 Developing the Strategy



### 4.1 Previous Work in New Westminster

New Westminster benefits from a strong foundation based on previous and ongoing initiatives related to age-friendliness. The active input of the Seniors Advisory Committee, which advises Council on an aging population, also provides a senior's lens to City work. The strategy builds on this foundation and legacy and develops a unifying vision and framework to ensure that future interventions are deliberate, coordinated and purposeful.

To date, the City has undertaken the following age-friendly initiatives:

- In My Back Yard (IMBY) Resource Directory and Fairs (2008)
- Wheelability Assessment Project (2009)
- *Adaptable Housing Policy and Bylaw* (2011)
- *Seniors Engagement Toolkit* (2011)
- Century House Inclusion Enhancement Project (2013)
- *Age-Friendly Business Initiative* (2014)
- *Master Transportation Plan* (2014)
- *Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan* (2016)
- Official Community Plan Update (2017)
- Annual Seniors Festival

These initiatives address themes related to age-friendliness such as accessibility, adaptability, involvement and social connectedness. It is important that this strategy continues to build on these initiatives.

### 4.2 Strategy and Community Engagement Methodology

The development of the *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy* was conducted within a condensed timeframe based on the City's partnership with the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) Masters Studio Project. The strategy development fit well within the City's long-term commitment to work towards becoming an age-friendly community, while providing an



overall vision and framework to guide this work in the future. Moving forward, there will be more opportunities for specificity and refinement through subsequent initiatives leading from this document. The strategy is an important, but by no means concluding, component of the City's overall age-friendly work.

The strategy development process was broken down into three phases over a seven-month period:

### **Phase 1: Research and Data Consolidation September – December 2016**

A review of previous initiatives, plans and strategies related to age-friendliness, including the *WHO's Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)*, was conducted. The findings formed the foundation and their reference points were used to create a unified strategy. Background data on New Westminster and best practice research on age-friendliness were gathered to ensure the strategy was grounded in relevant and current information.

Efforts were made to ensure that the strategy aligns with related age-friendly standards from both the City and the senior levels of government. For example, New Westminster's *Master Transportation Plan (2014)*, the new *Official Community Plan*, as well as provincial reports like *Becoming an Age-Friendly Community: Local Government Guide (2014)*, prepared by the BC Ministry of Health, were referred to for consistency.

### **Phase 2: Core Community Engagement November 2016 – February 2017**

Meaningful community engagement captured the lived experiences of seniors and identified

opportunities and challenges related to aging in New Westminster. This engagement generated ideas in support of an age-friendly community and informed a plan to transform the emerging vision into a reality. Engagement with over 200 seniors and relevant stakeholders took the form of an open house, online and paper surveys, and small group discussions with related committee and senior serving organizations. This was complemented with key informant interviews and insights from City staff, senior service providers and senior advocates.

Overall, the strategy was informed by:

- Seniors Advisory Committee;
- Multiculturalism Advisory Committee;
- Welcoming and Inclusive New West (WINS) Local Immigration Partnership Council;
- Peer Counselling Program at Century House;
- Queen's Park Healthcare Foundation;
- Senior City Managers and Staff;
- Senior Service Providers; and
- Seniors.

For more information about the engagement strategy and feedback, please refer to the *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Engagement Summary Report (2017)*.

### **Phase 3: Strategy Creation and Refinement February – March 2017**

Feedback and consolidation from the previous phases lead to the development of the draft strategy and actions. Refinements to the draft were made after receiving feedback from the City's Seniors Advisory Committee and Senior Social Planner. All actions considered the level of municipal feasibility in order to help ensure implementation.

*The actions as contained in this strategy have no attached timeframe and only limited reference to primary responsibility, as this will be a next step in the work.*

### **4.3 The Role of the City of New Westminster**

The City has a key role to play as it informs the built environment and is responsible for civic facilities and infrastructure such as sidewalks and signage. It also offers a range of programs and services including fire, library, police and recreation. On a daily basis, this is the level of government that most impacts the lives of seniors.

The City can also influence senior government policy, programs and services related to housing, home support, respite and residential care. This can be done through its membership in the Lower Mainland Local Government Association and the

Union of BC Municipalities. It can also collaborate or partner on specific initiatives such as the *New Westminster Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan (2016)*.

In this context, the City plays a dual role:

1. To develop an overall vision and framework and implement actions related to age-friendliness at the municipal level.
2. To advocate to the senior levels of government for funding and resources to support strategy implementation and to address larger systemic issues.

The focus of this strategy is to outline age-friendly actions that the municipality can deliver. The City will continue to champion the needs of seniors and advocate for actions that fall outside of its jurisdiction.





## 5.0 Vision and Principles

### 5.1 Vision

New Westminster is a welcoming, inclusive, accessible and age-friendly city, where seniors have an opportunity to contribute and lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.

#### Snapshots in 2021: Four Stories about the Future

##### Snapshot 2021: Rashida

Rashida is a senior who recently immigrated to New Westminster. Although she does not speak English, she was given a newcomers' guide in her language to learn about the resources and services available to her. She also refers to the bulletin board found at her local place of worship for updates on senior events and programs. Rashida was paired up with an established senior through a newcomer buddy program so she is not alone when trying out new activities or visiting unfamiliar places. Overall, starting a new life in New Westminster was a challenge but the transition was made easier through the City and community supports available.

##### Snapshot 2021: Bianca

Bianca is a senior living in an adaptable housing unit in the Brow-of-the-Hill neighbourhood. She is within a 10 minute walk to all her essential health services, stores, and the

seniors centre. The sidewalks are well maintained and she feels safe crossing the street. After she stopped driving, she initially felt constrained and physically isolated. However, she attended a transit orientation session to learn more about using public transportation. Bianca feels as though she has recovered her independence and frequently travels to different neighbourhoods within New Westminster and across Metro Vancouver.

##### Snapshot 2021: Ben and Mary

Ben and Mary have lived in New Westminster for over four decades. Now that their children have moved away, they are looking to downsize from their single family home. Over the years, their neighbourhood has changed a lot but its character remains familiar, even with the integration of new housing types like laneway and row homes. They are very attached to their neighbourhood and want to remain



living close to their neighbours. The couple is hoping they can find a suitable home knowing that there are many at-grade housing types available to them.

### **Snapshot 2021: Chris and Rick**

Chris and Rick moved to New Westminster as it appeared to be a welcoming and inclusive community. Soon after moving to the city, they got involved in Century House, with Rick joining the Seniors Gay-Straight Alliance. Unfortunately, Chris suffered a massive stroke and had to be hospitalized for a significant period of time. Chris and Rick feared that they would have to hide the fact that they were a couple; however, they soon realized that the hospital had inclusion policies in place and staff were supportive and even encouraged them to display their affection for each other. This experience solidified their connection to the city and they informed their friends about its receptivity and sense of community.

## **5.2 Principles**

### **Accessible Community**

New Westminster is a city that recognizes the unique challenges faced by seniors and ensures that responses meet their varying abilities, capacities and needs.

### **Engaged Community**

New Westminster is a city that recognizes that age-friendliness is a result of “planning with and not for seniors.”

### **Inclusive Community**

New Westminster is a city that facilitates equal opportunities for all seniors to be active, healthy and independent. All residents should be treated fairly no matter their age, ability, ethnicity, faith, gender, marital status or sexual orientation.

### **Respectful Community**

New Westminster is a city that recognizes, respects and celebrates seniors as important community members. Seniors contribute in a variety of ways, especially through their caregiving, leadership, mentoring and volunteering.





# 6.0 Strategy Framework

## Safe and Secure Community

New Westminster is a city that ensures the safety and security of seniors in all aspects of life, including health, housing, service delivery and transportation.

The *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy* promotes an age-friendly culture by using a relatable and meaningful framework to showcase the lived experiences of seniors. The strategy simplifies the WHO framework to reflect the interconnected nature of an age-friendly community and calls for collaboration and a shared responsibility for action. The strategy groups actions into four categories:

- Self,
- Built Environment,

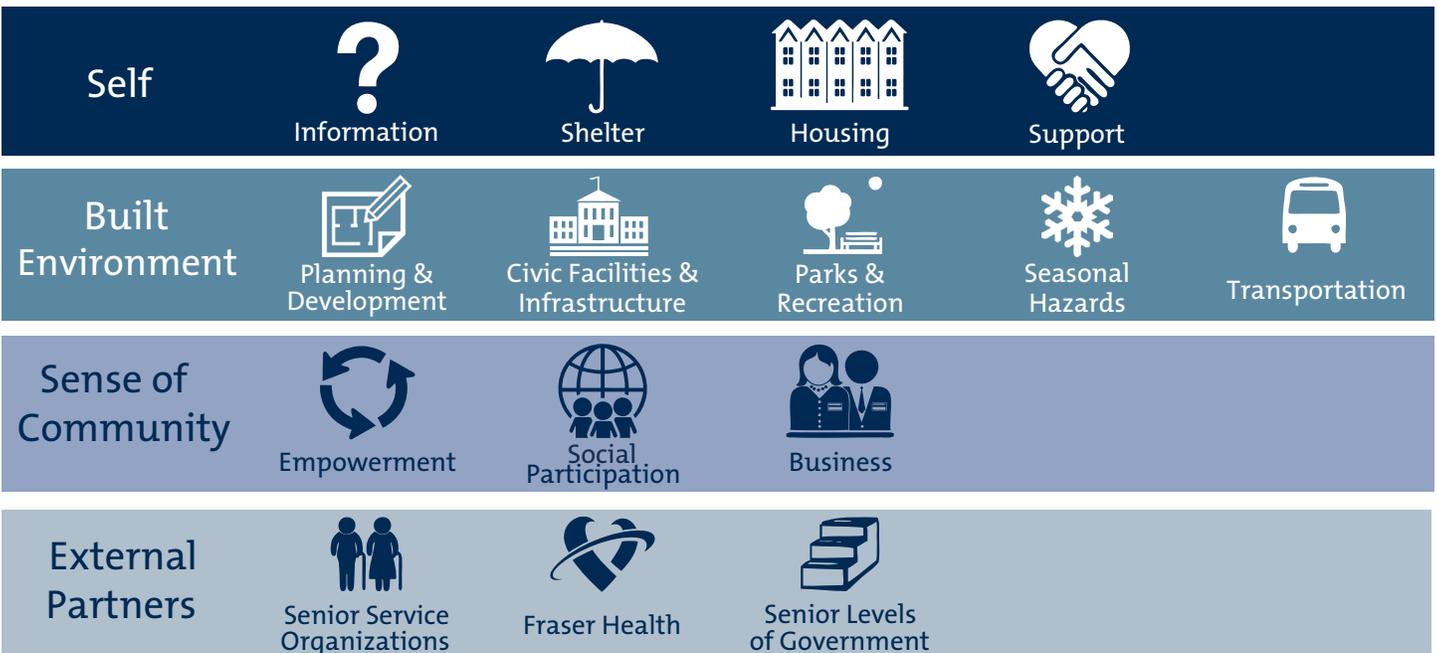
- Sense of Community, and
- External Partners.

## The Categories

**Self:** Ensuring that seniors are able to access needed resources, services, supports and suitable housing sits at the core of the strategy and is essential for independence and quality of life.

**Built Environment:** Addressing accessibility and mobility for seniors in all aspects of the built environment, including buildings, parks and transportation systems.

**Sense of Community:** Creating a welcoming, inclusive and respectful community where seniors feel a sense of belonging and can make a meaningful contribution.



**External Partners:** Partnering with senior serving organizations and influencing the senior levels of government to address issues of importance to seniors which are outside the City’s jurisdiction.

*The categories within the semicircle framework, Self, Built Environment and Sense of Community, illustrate a holistic and relational perspective of the aging experience. The fourth category, External Partners, outlines actions that require collaboration.*





## 7.0 Age-Friendly Community Proposed Actions

The following chapter outlines goals and actions relating to each category within the *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy*. Collectively, these actions promote the idea of a welcoming, inclusive, active and involved age-friendly community for everyone.

### 7.1 Self

In an age-friendly community, seniors have the ability to comfortably age-in-place (i.e., choose to remain in their homes or neighbourhoods), while having access to community information, services and supports. This strategy advocates for providing a variety of affordable and suitable housing options for seniors as they transition through different life changes. This will allow them to remain independent as possible and continue to access and receive the supports they need in the neighbourhoods they call home.

*“Put the care back in health care.”*  
- *Open House Participant*

*“There is no point of having a lot of resources if people don’t know about them.”*  
- *Seniors Advisory Committee Member*

### Community Assets and Resources

- **Seniors Advisory Committee:** advises Council on issues related to seniors and aging
- **Century House:** a civic facility which provides educational, leisure and social activities to over 2,000 members 50+ in cooperation with the Century House Association
- **New West Hospice Society:** working towards the establishment of a compassionate community which supports people in end of life situations
- **Senior Peer Counselling Program at Century House:** provides one-on-one support to older adults dealing with issues such as grief, illness, loneliness and relocation
- **Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster Local Immigration Partnership Council:** multi-organizational collaborative working to create a welcoming, receptive and inclusive community



## Information

### Goal 1: The City will increase accessibility to and distribution of information.

1.1 That the City continue to host resource fairs for seniors to facilitate connections to the community and senior serving organizations and to inform healthy lifestyle choices.

1.2 That the City continue to update the resource listings related to senior serving organizations as part of its Community and Social Services Asset Map (2016) and that it facilitate access to the map by sharing the link and offering training for its usage.

1.3 That the City, as part of the *New Westminster Public Engagement Strategy (2016)*, create a listing of community and senior serving organizations, including cultural and faith, and that the listing be used to help inform and engage seniors.

1.4 That the City update the *Your New West Newcomers' Guide (2012)* and incorporate additional information for seniors and that it prepare a *Resident Guide to Municipal (2017) Services* and that it be available in the five most commonly spoken non-English languages.

1.5 That the City, through the Intelligent City Digital Literacy Working Group, address barriers to accessing digital and electronic information sources through enhanced access to computers, internet services and training.

### Goal 2: The City will provide information and education about safety and risk prevention for seniors.

2.1 That the City make available information related to fall prevention and safety in multiple languages and that it work with School District #40 to distribute the *Safety Superheroes (2012)* booklet, which teaches children about how to make their homes safer for their grandparents.

2.2 That the City, through New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services, continue to distribute the *Seniors: How can I be fire safe?* publication and that it partner with senior serving organizations to support fire safety programs and seminars.

## Shelter

### Goal 3: The City will decrease barriers to housing for homeless and vulnerable seniors.

3.1 That the City, BC Housing and Lookout Emergency Aid Society explore the establishment of an accessible Extreme Weather Response Program site for New Westminster. (Currently, the existing site, which is located at the Cliff Block, is not accessible and presents



challenges for homeless seniors with disabilities and mobility limitations.)

3.2 That the City and BC Housing explore the creation of designated shelter beds and purpose-built transitional and supportive housing units for at-risk and homeless seniors.

## Housing

### Goal 4: The City will facilitate and advocate for senior specific housing needs.

4.1 That the City and BC Housing collaborate on non-market, subsidized rental housing projects which address the needs of low-income seniors and persons with a disability. (Currently, there are 149 senior and 113 persons with a disability households on the BC Housing Waitlist for New Westminster.)

4.2 That the City continue to enforce its *Business Regulations and Licensing Bylaw, No. 6926 (2004)*, which prescribes standards of maintenance for residential properties and rental units. (Of particular concern to seniors and persons with a disability is the maintenance of elevators and other accessibility and safety features.)

4.3 That the City review its *Adaptable Housing Policy (2011)* in order to increase the percentage of adaptable units (Currently, 40% of all single-story, multi-family units are required to be adaptable).

4.4 That the City continue to implement its *Official Community Plan (2017)*, which is intended to increase housing choice by providing a diversity of housing forms,

including carriage and laneway homes, rowhouses, townhouses, duplexes and triplexes. (These forms of housing facilitate intergenerational living arrangements, while enabling seniors to downsize, realize the equity in their existing homes, and still have access to private outdoor spaces).



## Support

### Goal 5: The City will provide support for seniors facing health and lifestyle changes.

5.1 That the City continue to educate and train its staff about diversity and about inclusive and respectful customer service practices through participation in the Safe Harbour: Respect for All program (2014) and other similar initiatives.

5.2 That the City continue to support the Senior Peer Counselling Program at Century House, which is a free, one-on-one service offered by trained senior volunteers.

5.3 That the City, as an equal opportunity and progressive employer, demonstrate leadership in retaining and recruiting older workers by

accommodating their needs, offering flexible hours and providing responsive benefits.

5.4 That the City, through its development approvals process, ensure that residential care facilities are connected to and integrated into the community.

5.5 That the City continue to support the New West Hospice Society in its efforts to create a compassionate community and to develop a plan to assist and support residents and their family members in end of life situations.

## 7.2 Built Environment

An age-friendly community is defined by both built and social characteristics. The built aspects of an age-friendly city must meet the needs and preferences of all seniors. Buildings, parks and open spaces, and transportation systems must be accessible, comfortable and safe to build trust and confidence in the built environment. Removing barriers that prevent connections between “home” and the larger “community” will increase the mobility and independence of seniors, while promoting health and well-being.

*“Some seniors may need to experience what it is like to use public transit; not to be told about it.”*  
- Senior

### Community Assets and Resources

- Access Ability Advisory Committee: advises Council on issues related to accessibility and mobility, with particular emphasis on reducing barriers for persons with a disability

- Seniors Advisory Committee and Seniors’ Lens, with the latter being a set of questions which can be used by the committee to evaluate development applications and infrastructure works
- *Accessibility Policy (2017)* will ensure that the City provides public access to facilities, goods and services in a manner that is consistent with the BC Human Rights Code and other applicable legislation
- Downtown-Uptown Connector (DUC) Shuttle: complimentary transit service which connects Downtown and Uptown New Westminster
- *Master Transportation Plan (2014)*: provides long-term direction that will guide transportation policies, priorities and investments over the next 25 years
- Wheelability Assessment Project (2009): pilot project to improve mobility and enhance active transportation options for persons who are reliant on a mobility aid

## Planning and Development

**Goal 6: The City will incorporate a seniors perspective into planning and development processes and meaningfully involve seniors in such processes.**



6.1 That the City's Access Ability and Seniors Advisory Committees take a more active role in the review and evaluation of master planned communities, larger developments and major infrastructure works.

6.2 That the City, through Legislative Services, annually appoint a member of the Seniors Advisory Committee to sit on the New Westminster Design Panel.

6.3 That the Seniors Lens (2011), which was developed by the City's Seniors Advisory Committee, be distributed to planning and design staff and that it be augmented based on their usage of this evaluation tool.



*Westminster Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan (2016) and other senior-focused initiatives.*

**Goal 7: The City will continue to facilitate professional development and engagement opportunities in support of an age-friendly community.**

7.1 That the City encourage and facilitate participation by its planning and design staff in conferences and professional development opportunities related to age- and dementia-friendly communities, accessibility and adaptable design. (For example, consider participating in the annual conference of the Council of Senior Citizen Organizations.)

7.2 That the City update the *Seniors Engagement Toolkit (2011)* and that this document continue to be used for staff orientation and training purposes.

7.3 That the City, through its various Departments, continue to implement and update the *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy (2017)*, the *New*

**Civic Facilities and Infrastructure**

**Goal 8: The City will ensure that civic facilities meet the needs of all members of the community, including older adults and seniors.**

8.1 That the City, as part of its *Social Equity Policy (2017)*, identify and address barriers to access and usage of civic facilities, infrastructure and services which are specific to seniors and persons with a disability.

8.2 That the City conduct a review and audit of civic facilities and infrastructure related to the significant aging of the population and that it use this audit to inform capital and operating budgets.

8.3 That the City, through its *Accessibility Policy (2017)*, provide access to facilities, infrastructure and services in a manner that is consistent with the *British Columbia*

*Human Rights Code* and with other applicable legislation related to accessibility standards, including the *British Columbia Building Code*.

## Parks and Recreation

**Goal 9: The City will work to increase the accessibility, inclusiveness and safety of public parks and open spaces.**

9.1 That the City, through the Parks and Recreation Department, address and incorporate actions related to an aging population as part of its new *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan*. (The existing plan, which was completed in 2008, includes very limited information about the aging of the population

and incorporates only one action related to seniors – i.e., “broaden services for seniors.”)

9.2 That the City explore adaptations to public parks and open spaces to enhance accessibility and increase usability by seniors and persons with a disability.

9.3 That the City explore the development of parklets, incorporating accessible seating and landscaping in high pedestrian traffic areas to provide places of refuge and relaxation.

9.4 That the City, through the Parks and Recreation Department, explore programming opportunities with residential care facilities, including outreach programming at these facilities.



## Seasonal Hazards

**Goal 10: The City will work to ensure that seasonal hazards are minimized.**

10.1 That the City recognize that snow and ice removal are critical to the independence and wellbeing of seniors and persons with a disability and that it vigorously enforce its *Street and Traffic Bylaw, No. 6027 (2015)*, which requires that snow and ice be removed from sidewalks abutting private property by no later than 10:00 a.m. of the day following a snowfall event.

10.2 That the City continue to distribute public information on snow and ice removal, including related to bylaw and enforcement measures; as well as the “Adopt a Sidewalk” initiative, whereby community members are

encouraged to clear the sidewalk for a senior or a person with a disability.

10.3 That the City, in conjunction with a senior serving organization, explore the establishment of a Snow Angel Program or similar initiative, in which volunteers are assigned by a coordinator to clear snow and ice from both the private walkway and public sidewalk of a senior or person with a disability, enabling them to access medical appointments and receive home support.

## Transportation

### **Goal 11: The City will continue to implement the *Master Transportation Plan (2014)*.**

11.1 That the City continue to implement its *Master Transportation Plan (2014)*, with particular reference to Policy C (Improve Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility) and Actions 1C.1 to 1C.15 and Policy 3F (Improve Safety and Accessibility of Transit) and Actions 3F.1 to 3F.4.

11.2 That the City provide a safe, convenient and accessible pedestrian system which offers a quality walking experience. (As part of the *Master Transportation Plan*, actions 1C.6 and 1C.14 state:

- “develop design standards that recognize the diverse needs of pedestrians, including a sidewalk clear zone width, benches, and enhanced pedestrian crossings such as reduced distance and modified pedestrian signal timing;”

- “continue to maintain and rehabilitate sidewalks and pathways so they are free of trip hazards, debris and clutter (e.g., sandwich boards), are comprised of smooth materials and are designed to be comfortable for users of strollers, wheelchairs and other mobility aids.”)

11.3 That the City, in conjunction with TransLink, install shelters at bus stops which link and serve senior serving organizations. (As part of the *Master Transportation Plan*, action 3E.1 states:

- “Compile and maintain a transit facility inventory and prioritize and install shelters, initially at bus stops on the existing Frequent Transit Network in the Downtown and at SkyTrain stations and at bus stops with higher passenger activity, with a target of having 90% of all stops provided with adequate weather protection and seating by 2020.”

### **Goal 12: The City will provide safe and accessible transit for all members of the community, including older adults and seniors.**

12.1 That the City, in conjunction with TransLink, ensure a universally accessible transit system to enable all users to access the entire transit network. (As part of the *Master Transportation Plan*, action 3F.1 states: “Retrofit all remaining inaccessible bus stops in the city, where feasible, to provide 100% accessible stops.”)

12.2 That the City encourage TransLink to offer transit orientation sessions for seniors, targeting those seniors who can no longer

drive or who have limited access to private transportation.

12.3 That the City encourage TransLink to provide information at transit stops in an accessible and age-friendly format.

12.4 That the City, through the Seniors Advisory Committee and senior serving organizations, promote, facilitate, and encourage seniors to wear reflective apparel in order to enhance their visibility and to reduce pedestrian-related fatalities and injuries.

### 7.3 Sense of Community

Taking steps to become an age-friendly community requires the involvement of all residents within the city. This strategy reinforces the point that aging is not just an individual experience but also a community and societal one. Equal attention needs to be given to facilitate an age-positive cultural shift alongside tangible improvements such as infrastructure or mobility upgrades. This means combating ageism, celebrating all ages and cultures, and supporting local initiatives that contribute to making seniors feel respected and valued as a members of society.

*“People talk down to me when they see me. [They] easily dismiss what I am saying or think I do not understand them.”*

*Open House Participant*

#### Community Assets and Resources

- Alzheimer Awareness Month: recognized and celebrated each January

- National Seniors Day: celebrated on October 1 of each year
- Seniors Festival: organized by the Seniors Advisory Committee to recognize and celebrate the considerable contributions of seniors in New Westminster

### Empowerment

**Goal 13: The City will continue to facilitate, recognize and celebrate the contributions of seniors.**

13.1 That the City, through the Seniors Advisory Committee, annually recognize and proclaim October 1st as National Seniors Day and January as Alzheimer Awareness Month.

13.2 That the City continue to support and fund the Seniors Festival, which recognizes the considerable contributions of seniors and celebrates their accomplishments.



13.3 That the City, through the Century House Association and the Parks and Recreation Department, continue to support the *Clarion* and that the City explore the inclusion of a dedicated page for seniors on the City's official website.

**Goal 14: The City will work with seniors to ensure they are included in planning and decision-making processes.**

14.1 That the City's Seniors Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the Century House Association, encourage seniors to join City committees, task forces and working groups to ensure that their voices are heard and reflected in decision-making.

14.2 That the City, through Legislative Services, work with the Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster Local Immigration Partnership Council and cultural and ethnic faith-based organizations, to encourage newcomer seniors

to apply for City committees, task forces and working groups.

14.3 That the City promote volunteer opportunities for seniors and that it make appropriate accommodations to facilitate their inclusion and participation.

**Social Participation**

**Goal 15: The City will explore ways to facilitate connections and a sense of belonging for seniors.**

15.1 That the City, through the Century House Association and the Parks and Recreation Department, continue to implement and update the *Century House Inclusion Enhancement Project (2014)*, which includes an action plan to diversify the membership and ensure that it is reflective of the overall seniors population.

15.2 That the City, in conjunction with Landlord BC, explore initiatives to facilitate social connections and support for seniors in purpose-built, market rental apartment buildings.

15.3 That the City, in conjunction with the Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster Local Immigration Partnership Council or other similar body, explore ways of reaching out to and involving newcomer seniors who are facing cultural, language and other barriers.

15.4 That the City, through its Seniors Advisory Committee, develop and implement a public awareness campaign to address ageism and age- or disability-related stigmas, including



those related to cognitive challenges and dementia.

## Business

**Goal 16: The City will work with the private sector to raise awareness about and address senior-specific needs.**

16.1 That the City distribute the *Creating an Age-Friendly Business in BC (2011)* publication to local businesses and that it apply for grant funding to initiate a program whereby seniors would be trained to conduct age-friendly audits for interested businesses.

16.2 That the City, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, develop a business program to facilitate enhanced access by seniors to washrooms in emergent situations.

## 7.4 External Partners

While the City has an important role to play in the development of an age-friendly community, external partners, including the senior levels of government, also play an important role. With the emphasis on living as independently as possible in one's own home, adaptable and affordable housing, home support and respite services, and income assistance and rent supplements take on added importance. Additionally, when independent living is no longer possible, timely access to residential care is essential. Regarding these services and supports, they are outside the City's jurisdiction; however, the City can influence decisions related to their provision.

## Community Assets and Resources

- BC Housing: provides low-cost, subsidized and supportive housing and financial assistance, including the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program
- BC Non Profit Housing Association: provincial umbrella organization for the non-profit housing sector comprised of nearly 600 members
- Better at Home Program: managed by the United Way and operated locally by the Seniors Services Society, it is intended to facilitate seniors independence
- Fraser Health Authority: operates health facilities and provides a range of health related services, including day programs for older adults, geriatric psychiatry services and specialized seniors clinics
- Seniors Services Society: non-profit organization which provides local and provincial programs and services to vulnerable older adults and seniors
- TransLink: operates an Access Transit program to improve accessibility to and the experience of transit services for seniors and persons with a disability

## Senior Service Providers

**Goal 17: The City will assist senior serving organizations in their efforts to facilitate independence and improve quality of life.**

17.1 That the City prepare socio-demographic information and profiles related to seniors, including at-risk and vulnerable seniors; and that it share this information with senior serving organizations.

17.2 That the City annually prepare a listing of grant opportunities related to aging in place, accessibility and adaptable design; and that it distribute this information to senior serving organizations.

17.3 That the City assist senior serving organizations in applying for grants and capitalizing on sponsorship and other opportunities, including writing letters of support.

17.4 That the City continue to support and fund the Seniors Services Society and its various programs, including through a City Partnership Grant.

### Fraser Health Authority

**Goal 18: The City will explore opportunities to enhance health information and services for seniors.**

18.1 That the City and the Fraser Health Authority explore a Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the sharing of information which may be beneficial to the care, health, support and wellbeing of seniors and persons with a disability.

18.2 That the City and the Fraser Health Authority explore the establishment of a Hoarding Action Response Team similar to that established by the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. The evidence suggests that seniors are more prone to hoarding and more vulnerable to its impacts.

18.3 That the City and the Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice explore opportunities to improve access to family physicians and personal health and wellness information.

### Senior Levels of Government

**Goal 19: The City will advocate for enhanced senior government assistance, resources and supports to enable seniors to live independently in their homes.**

19.1 That the City advocate for enhanced provision of affordable home support and respite services to enable seniors to live independently in the community and to ensure that caregivers can continue in their role without compromising their health, income, safety, or wellbeing.

19.2 That the City advocate for increased and new funding to facilitate home adaptations, including for older purpose-built market rental apartments, to enable more seniors to age in place and in their neighbourhoods of choice.



## 8.0 Implementation and Monitoring



### 8.1 Implementation Strategy

After receiving Council’s endorsement in principle, the *New Westminster Age-Friendly Community Strategy* will go through an iterative and ongoing implementation process.

#### Applying for Official Recognition

In combination with other age-friendly initiatives, the City will use the strategy to seek formal recognition from the Province as an Age-Friendly British Columbia (AFBC) community.

By becoming a recognized AFBC community, the City will receive the following benefits:

- an AFBC recognition award;
- an ability to promote the community’s achievements in the AFBC section of the SeniorsBC.ca website and the SeniorsBC e-newsletter;
- automatic eligibility to receive official “Pan-Canadian AFC recognition,” endorsed by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization;
- a reward to assist the community to develop an age-friendly community legacy project or hold a celebration.

#### Establishing an Inter-Departmental Working Group

An Age-Friendly Inter-Departmental Working Group will be established in support of strategy

implementation. This working group will be comprised of senior management and staff who participated in strategy development representing the Development Services, Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments and the New Westminster Public Library. Staff will be recruited depending on the selected actions and their applicability to other City Departments. The working group will be responsible for preparing an annual action plan based on the five-year action plan and ensuring that the actions are captured in Departmental work programs and capital and operating budgets. The overall coordination will reside within the social planning function of the City. Initially, the working group will focus on actions that will build and facilitate inter-Departmental collaboration, which is a key premise of the strategy.

### **Involving the Senior Level of Government**

Support from the senior levels of government will be vital. Efforts will be made to involve the senior

levels of government, as they have a key role in planning for and responding to an aging population, particularly with regard to health services, home support and housing affordability. As such, the working group should seek representation from the Fraser Health Authority and, depending on the actions, involve provincial and federal bodies on an as-needed-basis. This support will greatly assist strategy implementation and outcomes for seniors.

## **8.2 Monitoring and Reporting**

The Age-Friendly Inter-Departmental Working Group will prepare an annual status report to City Council. This report will provide an update on progress in implementing the strategy. More specifically, it will identify the number of actions implemented in a given year and the status of action implementation – i.e., fully, partially or not at all. If partially or not at all, it will state the reason(s). Based on the report, the strategy could evolve to address new issues, establish new partnerships or respond to unforeseen circumstances.



## 9.0 Next Steps



The work towards an age-friendly community continues with other initiatives in New Westminster such as the celebration of National Seniors Day and the Seniors Festival. The *Official Community Plan (OCP)* will include a sub-section dedicated to seniors and encourage the application of an age-friendly perspective to other City projects. Adaptive learning will also be applied to continually represent and include the voices and needs of all seniors in New Westminster.





## Abbreviations

<b>AAAC</b>	Access and Ability Advisory Committee
<b>BCNPHA</b>	BC Non-Profit Housing Association
<b>CMHC</b>	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
<b>DUC</b>	Downtown-Uptown Connector Shuttle
<b>FHA</b>	Fraser Health Authority
<b>LGBTTO/2SA</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Queer/2 Spirited and Asexual
<b>LIPs</b>	Local Immigration Partnership Council
<b>MAC</b>	Multicultural Advisory Committee
<b>OCP</b>	Official Community Plan
<b>QPHF</b>	Queen's Park Healthcare Foundation
<b>SAC</b>	Seniors Advisory Committee
<b>SSS</b>	Seniors Service Society
<b>SCARP</b>	School of Community and Regional Planning
<b>UBC</b>	University of British Columbia
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WINS</b>	Welcoming and Inclusive New West



