



Building an Age Friendly Community

A community discussion

4/15/2015

Engaging members of the community in an open forum to discuss the current state and future vision of Vegreville as an age friendly community.

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Outline and Agenda

The Town of Vegreville adopted a new Strategic Plan on October 27, 2014.

http://www.vegreville.com/uploads/Vegreville_Strategic_Plan_2014-2017_Oct_27_14.pdf

One of the key objectives included in this plan for Town Council is to;

- “Assess municipal and community infrastructure, services, and facilities to support aging in community/aging in place”

To gain a greater understanding of the need, the scope of the objective was expanded to include the broader community. Building Age-Friendly Communities “A Guide for Local Action” resource developed by the Alberta Government was utilized to create the context for the community discussion.

A focus group, facilitated by the Director of Community Services, was held on April 15, 2015 including 25 community members and 6 town staff. Participation included members from various local agencies, service clubs, and health organizations as well as community members at large.

Building an Age-Friendly Community

April 14, 2015 10 am – 12 pm

Agenda

- 10:00 am – 10:15 am – Welcome
- 10:15 am – 10:20 am – Introductions
- 10:20 am – 11:00 am – Context & discussion
- 11:00 am – 11:40 am – Small group work
- 11:40 am – 11:55 am – Report back
- 11:55 am – 12:00 pm – Closing comments/Next steps



“Design for the young you exclude the old. Design for the old you include everyone.”

~Bernard Isaacs, Founding Director Birmingham Centre for Applied Gerontology~

What is Age-Friendly?

The World Health Organization describes “age-friendly” as communities in which older adults are able to flourish. Age-friendly communities have policies, services and structures related to the natural, human built and social environments that enable older people to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society. In short, age-friendly communities are communities where citizens of all ages can thrive.

There are some basics that every age-friendly community should have;

- Affordable & accessible housing
- Access to services and opportunities to engage with others

...however there is no single model that defines an age-friendly community.

Overarching Focus for this discussion

- How can we be a more age-friendly community?
- What are gaps in availability, accessibility & awareness of services/supports; specifically for older adults/persons with disabilities?
- What is needed to help citizens remain in community & age actively?

Group Discussion

In what ways is Vegreville age-friendly?

- ✓ Curb cuts/ Para ramps on most corners of sidewalks
- ✓ Meals on Wheels
- ✓ Walking groups
- ✓ Assisted living
- ✓ Designated times at pool/bowling/library
- ✓ Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity (VALID)
- ✓ Travel clinics
- ✓ Transportation coupons
- ✓ WJS Employabilities Program
- ✓ Paved Trails
- ✓ Vegreville Transportation Services Society (VTSS) Handivan
- ✓ Homecare
- ✓ Specialist Clinics at hospital
- ✓ Playgrounds sports org.
- ✓ Sunshine Club/Intergenerational activities
- ✓ Primary Care Network (PCN) geriatric specialists
- ✓ Doctors

8 Age-Friendly Domains

1. Outdoor spaces & buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social participation
5. Respect & inclusion
6. Civic participation & employment opportunities
7. Communication & information
8. Community support & health services

Small Group Work Format

As a group read the statements related to the domains and based on your experiences answer either yes or no to each general statement. Discuss the responses with the group and provide feedback.

Next read group discussion question

- Share ideas on ways to improve/achieve success
- Try to be specific in your ideas/suggestions
- Provide as many examples that you can think of

The following are the scribe notes from the six participant groups that each discussed one of the 8 domains.

Domain #1 - Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- ✚ *There are sidewalks linking residences and essential services in most or all areas of my community*
 - Sidewalks in most but not all – this has improved in the last couple of years.
 - Access to playground/fields...stumble over roots etc. to get to soccer fields/egg park
 - Access to playground at Egg Park
- ✚ *Sidewalks in most or all areas of my community are well-maintained and accessible to everybody (e.g. curb ramp or sloped area, good lighting)*
 - NO
 - Cleaning not good especially in winter.
 - Town properties not cleaned well
 - Ramping not in existing older sections
 - Lightning also a problem – terrible.
 - Only patching areas rather than replacing whole sections of sidewalks/curbs
 - Sidewalks are too narrow
- ✚ *Snow clearing is done in a timely manner so walking and driving are safe*
 - Takes too long to clear
 - School zones/ main street takes too long
 - Needs totally different planning/priorities
- ✚ *Crosswalks are accessible to everybody, including individuals with visual or mobility impairments e.g. crosswalk has audio signal, crossing control provides adequate time for persons with limited mobility to cross the street)*
 - Need to paint the crosswalks better especially the ones on Main Street.
 - Need more enforcement for failure to stop
 - No flashing lights
 - New Highway Registries location – parking/crossing etc is a concern
- ✚ *There are enough public washrooms in key areas of my community (e.g. business and recreation areas)*
 - Not enough public washrooms – non-existent at parks and certainly not accessible

- ✚ *Most or all businesses and public buildings are easily accessible to everybody (e.g. they have wheelchair ramps, automatic doors)*
 - Not all are accessible – wildlife federation building
 - No businesses downtown have accessible doors except the banks
 - Arena/Aquatic Centre
- ✚ *Public facilities, including recreational facilities, transportation systems, parks, trails and other outdoor spaces are accessible.*
 - Public Facilities see above.
 - Asphalt trails great, could be continued throughout town especially in Pysanka Park

Group Discussion Questions

- ✓ When you leave your home to go places, what is that experience for you?
- ✓ How accessible do you find buildings and outdoor spaces to be? Think about parks, sidewalks, streets and stores.

Considering the questions above, can you think of outdoor spaces, buildings or public facilities that are not accessible or need to be improved? If yes, please identify the spaces and how they could be improved.

Lighting, sidewalks

- Para ramps – water/ice/snow etc. collects in the areas
- Drainage issues all over – esp. back alleys
- Sidewalks have shaved off the heaves but are treacherous because you cannot see the shaved areas and it ends up sloped.
- Limited to where they can go because of getting into various facilities.
- Wheelchair access transportation limited. Why can't we have a community bus like other communities do? *Further discussed Mundare's bus that the school owns – is insured under the town.*
- Long term car vans/buses – partnership with orgs.
- Town own vehicles – long term lease to facilities for community use.

Community Needs

- Strategic plan of upkeep & maintenance of streets/sidewalks
- Put in paper/publicise to let residents know which streets are slated for sidewalk curb replacement and when

Accessibility**Stores**

- Older stores esp. downtown have poor accessibility for anyone with mobility issues
- Steps into buildings
- General repair of entrances
- Big heavy doors
- Doctor's office
- Double entries

Parks

- Accessibility into playgrounds – cannot get in because no pavement into playgrounds
- No approaches into areas
- Tree roots
- Bridge across river at Pysanka Park
- Rotary Peace Park is not accessible nor are the washrooms
- Information booth washrooms not open year round

Domain #2 – Transportation**Group Discussion Questions**

- ✓ How would you describe the availability of transportation in our community?
- ✓ What have your experiences been like when you try to get around and from place to place?
- ✓ In what ways would you like to see improvements

Considering the questions above, can you identify a priority transportation issue our community can address to enhance or improve its age-friendliness?

 *The road signs in my community are easy to read and large enough for older drivers.*

- Yes they are good
- Emergency Services/RCMP/Hospital – is there enough directional signage in town? Good to check that these services can be found from all entries.

 *Roads are in good repair and are well-maintained*

- Icy in winter other than intersections
- Snow pushed onto wheelchair ramps

 *Roadways are clear of obstructions that block a drivers vision*

- Planters need to be moved back
- Hedges, trees are too close and obstruct view of crosswalks – (bylaw question?)
- 5 way stops confusing to drivers, traffic control issues, single lane, traffic circle?

- ✚ *Roads and parking areas are promptly cleared of snow and ice*
 - Snow pushed on to wheelchair ramps
 - Thank you for what you do! Public works accommodating.
- ✚ *Affordable and accessible transportation options are available for those who do not drive, to facilitate access to necessary services (food, medical care etc) and opportunities for well-being associated with recreation and social activities.*
 - Handivan
 - Coupons 10
 - Delivery – CO-OP/Value
 - Fundraising – chamber generate funds
 - Cooperative dispatching
 - Special Events – registered for transportation?
- ✚ *Public transportation is easy to navigate, with accessible routes and can accommodate people with hearing, visual or mobility impairments or strollers.*
 - Taxi’s – help with wheelchairs/walkers
 - Handicap parking – is there one on every corner/block
 - Parking limits
- ✚ *Persons with disabilities are able to access reliable and affordable transportation*
 - Driver Education – refresher courses for aging drivers
 - PCN still offering drive able?
 - Plan for future changes
 - Information about transportation services (public and private) is available.
 - More awareness for need
 - How to donate
 - Chamber/Rotary presentation



More discussion re: transportation services under
Community Support and Health Services

Domain # 3 - Housing

- ✚ *Appropriate and affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to community services and amenities which help people stay connected with the community*
 - Believe statement is true – however not enough
 - There is a demand for senior housing/low income housing
 - Have to relocate to other communities which increases separation from family
- ✚ *Affordable housing options are available for people with a wide range of economic circumstances*
 - Available? Specific criteria to access the housing
 - e.g. no laundry facilities in some
 - No transportation also causes issues

- ✚ *Appropriate and affordable home maintenance and support services are available*
 - FCSS snow removal program
 - Programs not aware of to access funding options
 - Housekeeping – FCSS help apply for funding
 - Gap on criteria for funding, income level thresholds etc.
- ✚ *Appropriate housing options are available that support*
 - Yes and no – waiting list?
 - 6 or 7 information
 - Smaller homes for 6-8 people popular in Edmonton
 - Determining the need
 - Determine the questions to gather the information desired – survey?
- ✚ *Information about how housing needs can change with age is available in the community?*
 - FCSS
 - AHS homecare

Group Discussion Questions

- ✓ Describe the housing you live in? Does your house meet your needs at this point of your life? Why or why not?
- ✓ How do you think your housing needs will change in the future?
- ✓ What kind of housing options exist in our community? Are there a variety of housing options available that will suit varying needs Housing options exist?

Considering the questions above, can you identify priority housing issues in our community?

Current

- Home without stairs, smaller home
- Meets needs currently until cannot manage outdoor work on my own
- There are some condo/townhouse options – they are costly
- Location to have easy access to services, shops etc
- Multiple suite properties – family all live together in same home
- “Generation” school program
- What interest is there in building suites for family members?
- Opportunity in smaller community if need is there to develop this

Future

- Downsizing
- Senior home with 2 bedrooms?
- Affordability, remove outdoor work
- Rent instead of own
- Long term plan for your housing future plans – timeline to set goals

Options Available

- Senior lodging – some have suites/options. Wait list? Finances? Priority?

Domain #4 - Social Participation

Domain # 5 – Respect and Inclusion

- + There are opportunities for people of all ages to be socially active in the community*
- + Older people and persons with disabilities are included in activities for all community members*
- + Older people and persons with disabilities are recognized in their community for their past and present contributions*
- + Schools provide opportunities to learn about aging and older people and involve older people in school activities*
- + There are opportunities to socialize and maintain good networks of friends, family and neighbours*

Group Discussion Questions

- ✓ Do you feel that our community is respectful of people with different backgrounds and needs?
- ✓ Do you think our community does enough to include people of different ages, backgrounds and circumstances? How could it be better?

Considering the questions above, can you identify ways to improve social participation, respect and inclusion in our community?

- A person that wants to participate can do so at Sunshine Club and elsewhere
- Get to people ahead of time? Reach out to retiring people.
- No organized consistent outreach – Welcome Wagon – Sunshine Club have committee to reach out
- There are difficulties for socially isolated people and transportation issues.

Domain # 6 -Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

- + There are opportunities for people of all ages to participate in suitable volunteer, civic and employment positions*
 - Volunteering vital in the community
 - We find our community is inclusive (Veg-min, volunteering)
 - Volunteering opportunities for people house bound
- + Appropriate training and guidance are provided to citizens to support a wide range of volunteer and employment opportunities*
 - Education and training for employers on guidelines and Gov. programs
- + The skills and attributes of older employees and persons with disabilities are well-promoted*
- + Citizens have options that allow them to remain in the workforce if they choose to continue working, including a range of flexible and appropriately paid options*

- ✚ *Local employers are aware of the potential contribution of mature workers and persons with disabilities and are aware of the benefits of attracting, retaining and developing these individuals*
- ✚ *Our community recognizes that healthy aging may involve working longer and a gradual transition from the workforce to retirement*
- ✚ *Decision-making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership for older people*

Group Discussion Questions

- ✓ Describe your experiences in community life, such as volunteering or engaging community organizations.
- ✓ Do you feel able to fully participate and access these?
- ✓ Do you think there are accessible employment opportunities for seniors and person with disabilities?

Considering the questions above, can you identify ways to improve civic participation and employment opportunities in our community?

- 98% of persons living with disabilities cannot drive
- Transportation major barrier to employment/social activities/community events
- Connection with the city would be good

Domain # 7 - Communication and Information

- ✚ Our community has basic, effective communication systems that reaches community residents of all ages
- ✚ Information is readily available on community events, activities and opportunities
- ✚ There is affordable and accessible public access to computers and the Internet
- ✚ People at risk of social isolation receive needed information

Group Discussion Questions

- ✓ Are you able to access information about what's happening in our community?
- ✓ Is information accessible, readable and understandable?
- ✓ How could government, businesses and organizations communicate better with you and other community residents?



Considering the questions above, can you identify ways to improve communication and information sharing in our community?

- Reach out to seniors to teach how to use internet
- WIFI available in senior housing?
- Mobile persons to go into homes to teach internet
- Computer use at A.L.Horton
- Current calendar of events
- Municipal Scoop is widely read by some, get to senior's homes
- Where is the best gathering point??
- Sunshine Club for seniors, bulletin board
- Radio Station into Town 106.5FM
- Majority looking at newspaper

Domain #8 - Community Support and Health Services

+ *There is an adequate range of health and community support services offered for promoting, maintaining and restoring health.*

- Overall yes, but there is a gap and lack of support for information on natural options.

+ *Older adults are supported in staying physically active and safe*

- Swimming program
- Veg Min
- Need to call Alberta Health Services @ Health Unit
- Not enough bulletin boards in town
- Library board is limited
- Suggest free standing board (electronic?)



+ *Affordable services to help seniors and persons with disabilities, such as snow removal or lawn care are available in the community*

- Lack of communication on where to find services outside of what the Town provides. Ie: FCSS
- VALID services not widely known

+ *Local health care services meet the needs of older citizens, or transportation is available to bring them to services*

- Presents a concern
- \$225 cab fare to go to Edmonton
- \$87 University and Back
- Expand and bring in more transportation services/options for seniors

✚ *Community emergency planning takes into account the needs of older citizens and persons with disabilities*

- VERY IMPORTANT - Who has the information to add to the Town's plan? Vegreville Emergency Plans or Council?
- Emergency Services – Roster Available – who is available? Contact, keys, wheelchair access, water, food, blankets, candles etc
- Suggest communication for the non-profit – provide services for emergency services.

Group Discussion Questions

- ✓ Do you think services in the community meet the needs of citizens with varying needs?
- ✓ What kinds of community services would you like to have better access to?

Considering the question above, can you identify some community supports and health services that are needed in our community?

- Should be discussed in the senior residences/need to ask what makes a difference to them
- Contact Baydalla's Brothers – need information and see how feasible it is
- Need to buy a community bus, share costs on liability
- Consider more networking and communication between groups, just like today

Report Back – Highlights from small group work

One person from group to provide couple of highlights of your discussion – a few insights

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Crosswalks – lines by highway
- Public Washrooms
- Older buildings entrances are not accessible easily
- Parks – parking but can't easily get to playground/field
- Streetlights are dim
- Sidewalks hit & miss for maintenance
- Communicate where roadwork/cleaning happens
- Snow removal near schools and other public facilities

Transportation

- Activities register for transport
- Road signs good
- RCMP/Hospital signs at all entrances
- Snow pushed up at curbs
- Handicap/short limit parking on main street
- Visibility on corners...bylaw?
- 5 way stops monitor
- PCM "drivable"
- VTSS – availability/ fundraisingTaxis help

Housing

- Many options
- Waiting lists
- Long term planning to remove fear
- Privacy wanted
- Maintain independence
- Focus group – families not just senior
- Multi-family dwellings e.g. suites within homes.
- Awareness of support services – housekeeping etc.
- Local stats

Social Participation

- Easy to participate
- Wide variety activities
- Could improve communication of activities
- Posters/info to facilities

Respect and Social Inclusion

- Volunteering is vital
- Inclusive – Vegmin etc.
- Transportation is a barrier to social inclusion and employment
- Group events with travel included
- Educating employer re: value of the older worker or disabled

Communication/Information

- Website – keep current
 - Training? Public Access
 - WIFI in senior facilities
 - Mobile volunteers to train
 - What’s in it for them
 - School accessibility
 - Municipal Scoop – get printed and out to apartments/facilities
 - Bulletin Boards
 - Banks
 - Coffee Places
 - Radio Station (TBA)
 - Newspaper – community events page – keep current
 - Town entrance signs
- } Posters

Community Supports and Health Services

- Quite adequate
- Communication improved
- Transportation
- Networking groups like today
- Emergency services plans

Moving Forward/Next Steps

- ✓ How do we keep this initiative moving forward? How do you want to be involved?
 - Continue the conversation
 - Demonstrate/show concerns/solutions
 - Action plans – Who is responsible?
 - Prioritize
 - Keep it simple and do it well
 - Volunteers to help
 - Formalization of a committee to continue to consider next steps and provide recommendations to community on opportunities to improve

The Town of Vegreville has gathered names from interested individuals who attended this focus group session to come together to continue the discussion and bring forward recommendations to the Town and community.

