

City of Richmond

Age-Friendly Hamilton Neighbourhood Group Final Report

Community Social Development





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INTRODUCTION

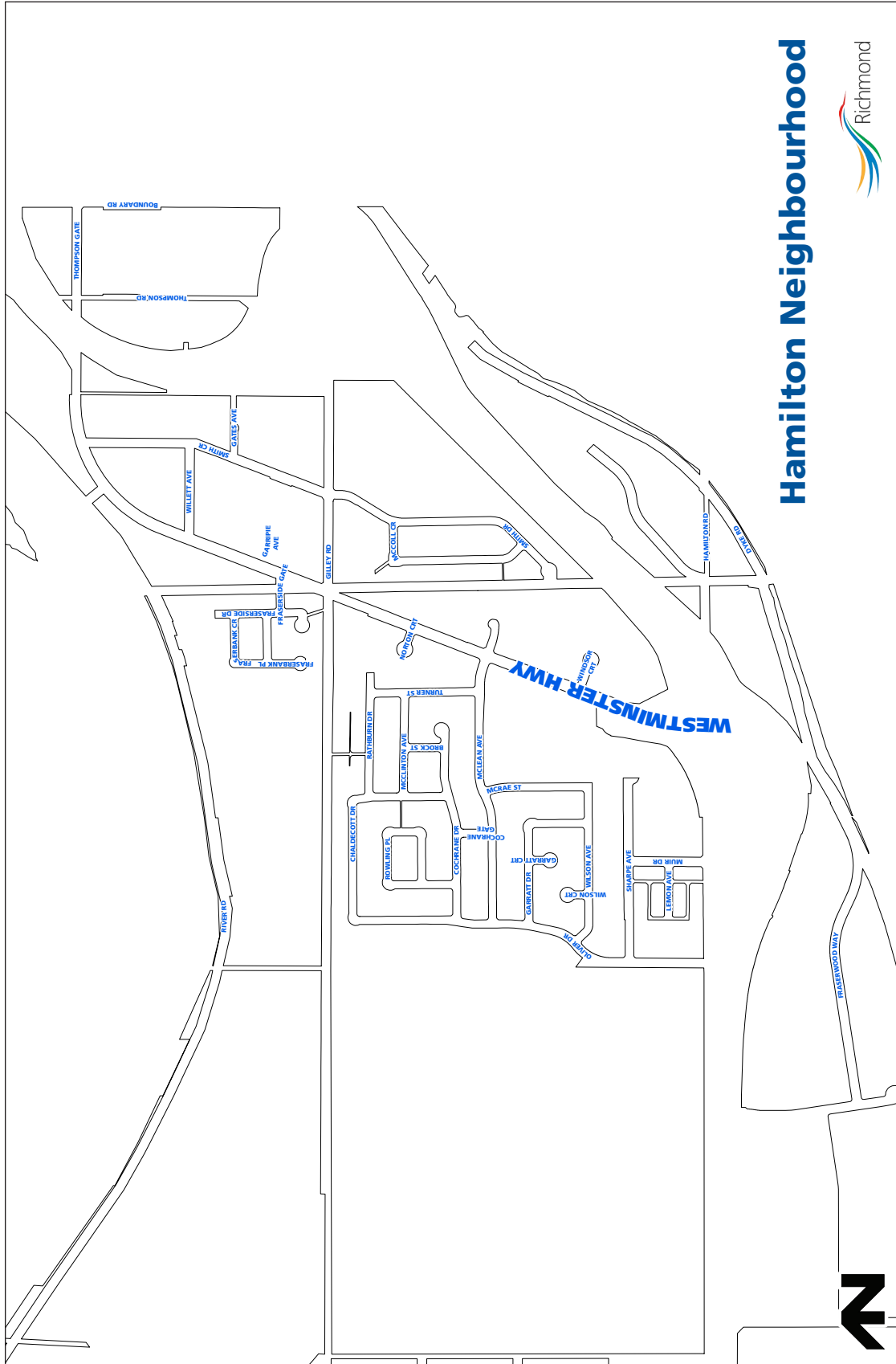
The City of Richmond is committed to prioritizing age-friendly initiatives, as outlined in the City of Richmond Seniors Strategy (2022–2032). The vision for this collaborative strategy is “that seniors living in Richmond are safe, respected, healthy and engaged in their communities.” It identifies five strategic directions to clarify areas of focus and includes actions that build on previous and ongoing work to achieve the desired outcomes.

Strategic Direction 1, “Age-friendly neighbourhoods that support seniors to age in place,” recognizes the important role that age-friendly neighbourhoods play in building community, keeping people healthy, well-connected and able to participate in their neighbourhoods throughout their aging journey. The Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Group project is designed to achieve this by engaging seniors in planning at the neighbourhood level and applying the World Health Organization’s eight domains of

an Age-Friendly City¹ to identify areas of strength and areas for potential improvement. In addition, participants learn about existing programs and services available to support and connect seniors socially with other seniors in their community. The City’s aim is to facilitate a Neighbourhood Group in each neighbourhood in Richmond.

In 2024, the City received a federal New Horizons for Seniors Program grant to facilitate two Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Groups, one of which was initiated in fall 2024 in the Hamilton neighbourhood. The intent of this report is to share highlights of the Age-Friendly Hamilton Neighbourhood Group project, its implementation process and suggested next steps.

¹ [Age-friendly domains](#) include outdoor spaces and public buildings; transportation, including traffic safety; social well-being and participation; respect, social inclusion and cultural safety; community engagement and employment; communications and information; community support, and health and wellness services.



Hamilton Neighbourhood





NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP PROCESS

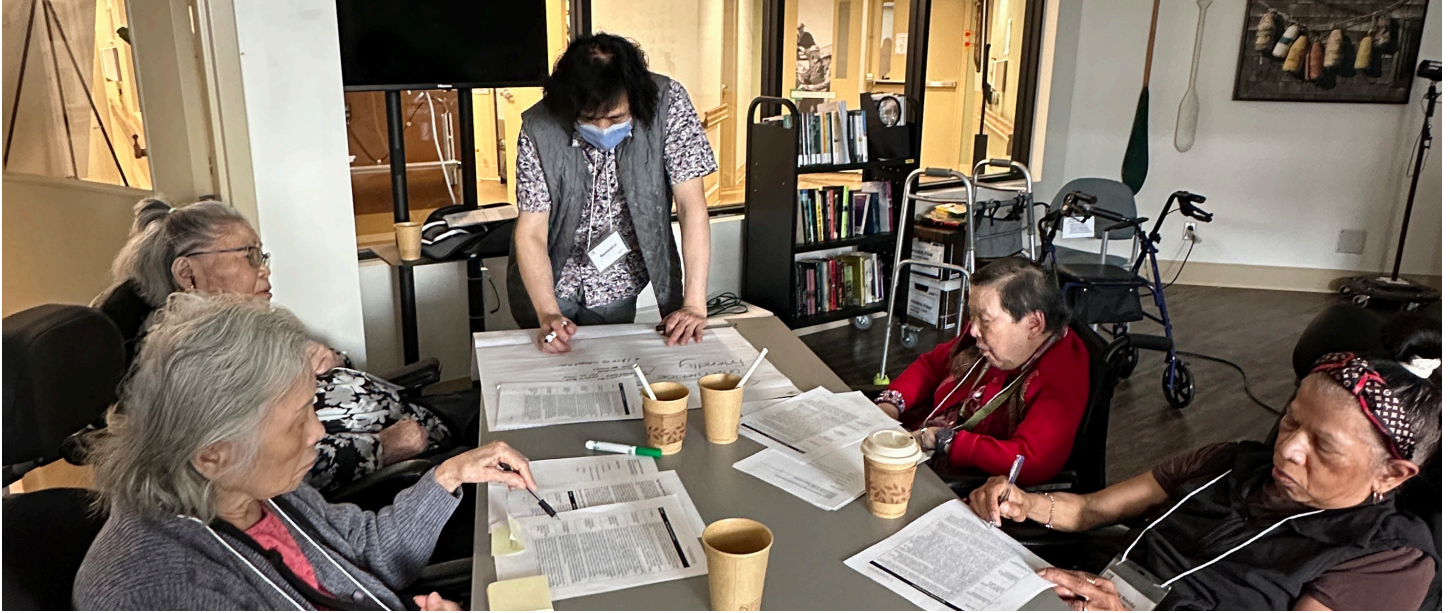
The Age-Friendly Hamilton Neighbourhood Group was comprised of 10 seniors aged 55+ living in the Hamilton neighbourhood. Where possible, efforts were made to ensure there was diversity in age, gender, culture, socio-economic status and ability. The majority (80 per cent) of participants identified as female and the remainder identified as male. The age of participants ranged from 65 to 84 years. To enhance accessibility, interpretation services were provided for three participants who spoke Cantonese or Mandarin, and printed materials were translated into both Simplified and Traditional Chinese.

The mandate of the Neighbourhood Group was to engage in collaborative dialogue to explore and identify age-friendly elements (or potential areas for age-friendly improvements) in the Hamilton neighbourhood, raise awareness of available age-friendly resources and services in the area and foster connections among seniors.

The Neighbourhood Group met four times at Hamilton Community Centre from November to December 2024 and meetings were two and a half hours in length. The format for each meeting was organized around a social activity/icebreaker, educational opportunity, discussion period and an opportunity for informal conversation over refreshments.

A facilitated bus tour of the Hamilton neighbourhood provided an opportunity to further explore and discuss age-friendly elements in the neighbourhood. Guest speakers were invited to present on age-friendly topics related to the group's interests and included representatives from Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives (RCRG) and the City of Richmond Housing Office. Participants also received a tour of the Seniors Centre at Minoru Centre for Active Living.

In addition to the Neighbourhood Group meetings, a two-hour session was held with residents of the Hamilton Village Care Centre and Hamilton High Street Residence to ensure the voices of residents who may face barriers to community participation were included. Recognizing that some residents might not easily access or engage in social activities outside their living facilities, this session provided an opportunity for seniors to share their perspectives on age-friendly community planning in Hamilton. A total of 24 residents participated, including 20 women and four men. Of this group, nine participants used a mobility device (wheelchair or walker) and one participant was experiencing sight loss. Verbal interpretation in Cantonese was provided for two residents.



WHAT WE HEARD

Participants discussed the eight domains of an Age-Friendly City in relation to identified features and services available in the Hamilton neighbourhood. This included outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social well-being and participation, respect and social inclusion, community engagement and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services.

While all eight domains of an Age-Friendly City were discussed, the depth of conversation varied based on participants' interests and lived experiences in the Hamilton neighbourhood. The group engaged most extensively with topics related to outdoor spaces and public buildings as well as housing.

An overview of each domain of Age-Friendly Cities and participant feedback in relation to their experiences in the Hamilton neighbourhood is summarized below. The domains are presented in an order that reflects the depth of discussion during the Neighbourhood Group sessions.

Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

Age-friendly outdoor spaces and public buildings refers to spaces that are safe, accessible and positively impact seniors' mobility, independence, quality of life and ability to age in place. Examples include design and maintenance of sidewalks and curbs, street intersections and crosswalks, green spaces, street lighting, regulation of traffic flow, accessibility and safety of buildings, pedestrian walkways and sidewalks.

Neighbourhood Group participants identified several strengths related to outdoor spaces and public buildings in the Hamilton neighbourhood, expressing overall satisfaction with their accessibility and usability. Hamilton Community Centre was noted as a facility that provides access to programs and services that are appreciated by seniors in the community.

Participants valued the availability of parks and recreational spaces in the neighbourhood, particularly Hamilton Community Park, which serves as an important gathering place for residents of all ages. The presence of washrooms in parks was noted as a positive feature that enhances usability. While the park is well-used and appreciated, participants mentioned

that additional lighting, more seating options and enhanced bylaw enforcement related to dog waste in the park would improve its accessibility and usability.

While public spaces throughout the Hamilton neighbourhood were positively regarded and well-used, several areas for minor improvements were identified. Overgrown trees in some areas were noted as reducing visibility for pedestrians, making the Hamilton Community Park perceived as less secure. Participants highlighted an appreciation for greenery and recreation spaces and would welcome any opportunities to further enhance the neighbourhood's environment with these spaces.

Some accessibility barriers were mentioned as a concern, particularly for those requiring mobility assistance. Uneven sidewalks and pathways were highlighted as a challenge, with construction activity noted as a contributing factor, causing damage to specific sidewalks. The absence of wheelchair ramps at some private shops and facilities makes travel difficult for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, some crosswalks in the neighbourhood were described as too long, making it difficult for those using mobility aids to cross safely, particularly when the pedestrian crossing lights change quickly.

Following the Neighbourhood Group meetings, participant feedback was shared with the relevant City departments to help address immediate concerns where possible and to inform future planning and improvements. As a result, the City's Parks Department is planning to assess Hamilton Community Park for visibility improvements, lighting and seating, and the Community Bylaws Department is reviewing options such as signage and education/enforcement measures to address concerns related to dog waste in the park. Feedback about the absence of wheelchair ramps and insufficient pedestrian crossing time at certain locations was noted by the Transportation Department for further assessment. Reports of specific locations with uneven sidewalks and walkways were forwarded to the City's Public Works Service Centre and have since been addressed.

Housing

Age-friendly housing is safe, well-designed and in proximity to support services and social connections. It includes access to a range of options that accommodate changing needs over time by offering different levels of support, from independent living to assisted living and long-term care, allowing seniors to transition as their mobility, health or care needs evolve. Other key factors include accessibility and affordability of housing and the proximity to services to ensure seniors can maintain their independence and quality of life.

Most of the Neighbourhood Group participants indicated that they have lived in the Hamilton neighbourhood for many years, while others had recently moved to the neighbourhood. Overall, participants were satisfied and secure with their current housing situations. The Neighbourhood Group participants all live in single-family dwellings and the participants from the engagement session at the Hamilton Village Care Centre reside in seniors-oriented independent living or long-term care settings. Those living in single-family dwellings noted that, while they value remaining in their homes, maintenance can become increasingly difficult due to mobility limitations, the demands of household tasks and the financial burden associated with upkeep.

Some participants expressed a desire to downsize but reported that smaller units were either difficult to find or too costly. A lack of suitable, affordable options along the housing continuum makes it difficult for seniors to transition into housing that better supports their changing needs while remaining in their community. In addition, the group noted limited awareness of the availability of long-term care services in the neighbourhood and how to access them. Some participants shared that long waitlists and high costs associated with assisted living further limited their options, particularly for those requiring additional care.

Housing-related feedback from the Hamilton Neighbourhood Group was shared with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH); Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives (RCRG) and the City's Housing Office. The feedback related to long-term care and assisted living was noted by VCH for consideration in ongoing service planning. VCH provided information and resources on accessing long-term care and assisted living options that were subsequently shared with the Neighbourhood Group participants.

RCRG offers a variety of services through the Better at Home program to support aging in place, including light housekeeping, grocery shopping and delivery, and friendly visiting. RCRG also provides assistance with finding and accessing housing supports and resources, completing housing forms and applications, and understanding topics such as tenancy rights and the continuum of housing options in Richmond through the Seniors Housing Information and Navigation Ease (SHINE) program. These services were highlighted during a presentation to the Neighbourhood Group, and related information was shared with participants.

Broader concerns related to the affordability and availability of housing options that support aging in place have been documented by the City's Housing Office and will be considered as part of ongoing development and refinement of new and existing policies. Representatives from the Housing Office also presented to the Neighbourhood Group about the City's housing policy and planning initiatives, how to access housing supports provided by BC Housing and other service providers, and to provide copies of the City's Affordable Housing Guide to participants.

Social Well-being and Participation

Age-friendly social well-being and participation opportunities are affordable and accessible to allow seniors to avoid isolation, connect to their community, and enjoy good health and longevity. Examples include inclusive programs and services, affordability of services, convenience of location and times of programs and services, and a variety of programs and services offered.

Neighbourhood Group participants highlighted several strengths in the Hamilton neighbourhood, including the accessibility and variety of programs offered at Hamilton Community Centre and local churches. Overall, the convenient location of Hamilton Community Centre was viewed as an advantage for seniors living in the neighbourhood as they can access programs and services and feel welcome at the community centre. However, those living in the long-term care facilities mentioned limited mobility and lack of awareness about available programs at the community centre as barriers to participation in community activities and feeling connected to neighbours.

While the City's program registration system works well for many, a few participants noted that seniors find the evening timing and online system navigation difficult without in-person assistance. While telephone support is available, those needing in-person support may have to wait until customer service is available the next morning, by which time some popular programs may already be full or have waitlists.

Feedback about the barriers to online program registration was shared with relevant City departments, who were aware of these concerns and already implementing various pilot solutions. This includes enhancing Call Centre support during registration periods and providing technology education and support specific to program registration to enhance seniors' comfort with using their technology and the online registration system. In addition, feedback about the desire for more information to be distributed to long-term care home residents was shared with staff at Hamilton Community Centre, who will follow up with these facilities directly.



Transportation

Age-friendly transportation planning aims to create inclusive, safe, well-designed transportation networks in proximity to support services and social connections. Examples include visibility of street signs and numbers, lighting at intersections, accessibility and availability of parking, safety and frequency of public transportation, accessible parking spots and permits, and drop-off and pick-up areas.

Many of the participants travel within and outside their neighbourhood by private transportation. Public transit offered by TransLink, while valued, was noted as challenging to navigate. Participants shared that some bus routes become overcrowded, especially during peak hours in the early morning, creating an uncomfortable environment for seniors that may not be able to access a seat.

Those who require mobility aids noted that there are limited public transportation options, such as HandyDART or smaller buses for organized group trips that support travel within and outside their neighbourhood. Participants expressed interest in more outtrips to destinations outside the Hamilton neighbourhood, particularly for recreational and social opportunities. Residents living in care facilities also noted that transit routes they previously relied on had been reduced in recent years, limiting their ability to travel for medical appointments or social activities.

Feedback was shared with the relevant departments in the City. Participants' interest in more outtrips to destinations outside the Hamilton neighbourhood was noted by staff. Broader transportation feedback, including requests to improve TransLink bus frequency, explore local shuttle options for those who need mobility assistance, and enhance public transportation access by TransLink for seniors living in care facilities was documented to help inform ongoing discussions with TransLink.

Respect, Social Inclusion and Cultural Safety

Age-friendly communities promote respect, social inclusion and cultural safety of seniors, which positively impacts their overall well-being. This helps reduce ageism and stereotypes, fosters positive attitudes towards the aging population and encourages respectful social connections between all ages in the community. Examples include consulting seniors about their needs and interests, recognizing past and present contributions of seniors, integration of seniors with diverse backgrounds, and inclusion of seniors in community events and intergenerational activities.

Neighbourhood Group participants generally felt safe, respected and socially connected within the Hamilton neighbourhood. However, some participants expressed a desire for ongoing engagement with residents about their needs and interests. The participants that were relatively new to the neighbourhood shared that

they did not yet feel socially connected, as they were adapting to their surroundings, and noted interest in opportunities to further connect with neighbours.

Participants highlighted that, while Hamilton Community Centre offers a variety of programs, language barriers prevent some seniors from fully participating. Mandarin and Cantonese are commonly spoken in the neighbourhood, which can pose challenges for seniors who do not speak these languages in trying to form connection with neighbours. At the same time, seniors who do speak Mandarin or Cantonese shared that they often face difficulties due to the limited availability of programs and information in their preferred language. Participants emphasized the need for more multilingual programming and communication, particularly in Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi and English to reflect the linguistic diversity of the community. Additionally, there was interest in beginner-level English classes tailored to seniors, as some participants found existing options too advanced or fast-paced. Participants also expressed a desire for more intergenerational and intercultural activities, as well as workshops focused on fall prevention.

While many cultural activities and events take place throughout Richmond and in Hamilton each year, the feedback from participants reinforces the value of continuing to support these types of inclusive activities. Feedback regarding culturally inclusive programming, intergenerational activities, opportunities for physical and social engagement, beginner-level English classes for seniors and interest in fall prevention workshops was shared with relevant City departments and partner organizations to inform future program planning.

Community Engagement and Employment

Age-friendly community engagement and employment allows seniors to maintain social connections, develop new skills and contribute to their communities in a meaningful way. This positively impacts their health and reduces age-related stigma, which in turn leads to seniors that are respected and engaged in their communities. Examples include opportunities to volunteer in the community, participate in local government meetings, find paid work suited to their skills and access clear information about available opportunities.

Participants recognized that there are various volunteer opportunities available for seniors in the Hamilton neighbourhood. However, some seniors expressed challenges in accessing these opportunities due to language barriers and a lack of awareness about relevant programs. In addition, some participants expressed a desire for more employment options for seniors who wish to remain active in the workforce, as well as volunteer roles that better align with their skills and interests.

Feedback regarding barriers to volunteering, such as language challenges and limited awareness of available opportunities, as well as the desire for more employment options and skill-aligned volunteer roles, was shared with and noted by relevant City departments and partner organizations, including RCRG, for future planning.

Communication and Information

Age-friendly communication and information about programs and services is accessible and easy to understand by all seniors with varying needs and abilities, allowing them to stay informed and actively engaged. This includes using clear and varied communication methods, ensuring information is presented in readable formats, improving access to technology and digital literacy support, and providing a centralized system for accessing information.

In the Hamilton neighbourhood, information about programs and services is shared through multiple communication channels. This includes online content available on the City's website, as well as outreach by the Recreation Leader at the Hamilton Community Centre, who regularly informs residents visiting the centre about upcoming activities and events. Hamilton Community Centre also provides a wide range of printed materials onsite to promote and raise awareness of programs and services for seniors, including the seasonally produced 55+ Program Guide, along with brochures, posters, pamphlets, and flyers.

Participants noted a strong preference for paper-based communication, as many seniors find online resources less accessible. There was an emphasis on the need for frequent distribution of flyers and mail-based communication to ensure that information reaches all residents. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of translating materials into a variety of languages such as Chinese and Punjabi and of ensuring communications are available for a variety of accessibility needs (e.g. for those with sight loss).

Feedback regarding communication and information sharing was shared with relevant City departments and partner organizations. While the City's website includes an embedded translation feature, some materials require translation beyond what is currently provided. Feedback about the importance of accessible communications that accommodate a range of needs as well as seniors' preference for printed materials and frequent distribution of flyers and mail-

based communication was acknowledged, alongside the City's ongoing efforts to balance these with sustainability objectives. The City is actively working to enhance accessibility features through the various communication channels.

Community Support and Health and Wellness Services

Age-friendly community support and health and wellness services are accessible and available in a range of options for those with varying health conditions. This allows seniors the opportunity to remain in their communities and maintain their health and independence. Examples include a range of health services such as home care, nutrition advice, physical activity programs and the availability of adult day programs and residential facilities for people who are no longer able to live at home.

Many of the Neighbourhood Group participants had a family doctor and a relationship with a local pharmacist. They highlighted relying on the local health centre to meet their primary health needs and appreciated the accessibility of nearby pharmacy services, including access to flu shots. However, for those whose first language was not English, language was seen as a barrier to communication with health professionals. Some participants shared that although doctors are available at the local health centre, they are not all accepting new patients, making it difficult for seniors without a regular physician to receive timely care. In addition, access to specialists was noted as a challenge, with many seniors sharing that they travel to Vancouver or Burnaby for specialist appointments, which can be inconvenient and difficult for those with limited mobility or transportation options. Those living in the long-term care facilities noted a desire for more frequent physician visits.

All health-related feedback was shared with VCH and Richmond Division of Family Practice, and will be addressed through ongoing service planning.



PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

To assess the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Group, pre- and post-program surveys were completed by all participants. These surveys provided insights directly from participants, enabling an evaluation of their expectations and experiences before and after the sessions. Participant feedback helps to inform the City's approach to facilitating future Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Groups in Richmond.

According to the surveys, the reasons for participating in the Neighbourhood Group (in order of frequency) were to contribute to positive changes in the neighbourhood, to learn more about programs and services available to support seniors in the Hamilton neighbourhood and to learn more about age-friendly planning.

Comparing responses between the pre- and post-program surveys highlighted the impact of the Age-Friendly Hamilton Neighbourhood Group on participants and showcased improvements in several areas. The most significant change was observed in participants' familiarity with the age-friendly concept and their awareness of and access to programs and services available for seniors in Richmond, which increased from 70 per cent before the program to

100 per cent afterward. This was followed by an improvement in participants' confidence in advocating for age-friendly changes in their neighbourhood (rising from 80 to 100 per cent) and an increase in feelings of belonging and safety within the community (both increasing from 90 to 100 per cent).

Additionally, 80 per cent of participants agreed that participation in the Neighbourhood Group provided them with an opportunity to learn more about available seniors programs and services in Richmond, learn more about their neighbourhood and engage in new experiences. Meanwhile, 60 per cent indicated that their participation contributed to positive change in their community and built connections with their neighbours.

Participants described their experience with the program as "eye-opening, excellent and resourceful." Many found it "well-organized, very good and variable." These results highlight the program's positive impact in enhancing awareness, confidence and community connections among seniors.

NEXT STEPS

While this report summarizes the Neighbourhood Group's feedback, detailed feedback has been shared with all relevant City departments and partner organizations to inform short- and longer-term planning, including updates to the City's Official Community Plan.

Additionally, these insights, alongside results from the pre- and post-program surveys, will help shape future age-friendly initiatives in Richmond, such as refining the Neighbourhood Group process by incorporating participant feedback related to Neighbourhood Group recruitment, session structure and ensuring each group is meaningful, inclusive and responsive to the needs of local seniors.

As the City continues to expand Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Groups across all neighbourhoods in Richmond, emerging trends will be monitored to support the broader implementation of Richmond's Council-adopted Seniors Strategy, particularly Strategic Direction 1, which focuses on creating age-friendly neighbourhoods that support aging in place. These efforts align with the Seniors Strategy's broader vision of ensuring that "all seniors living in Richmond are safe, respected, healthy, and engaged in their communities."

CONCLUSION

The City of Richmond recognizes the important role that age-friendly neighbourhoods play in building community and keeping people healthy, well-connected and able to participate in their neighbourhoods.

The Age-Friendly Hamilton Neighbourhood Group sessions offered valuable insights into the experiences of seniors living in the Hamilton neighbourhood. Participants highlighted key strengths, including availability of accessible community spaces, parks and recreational areas such as Hamilton Community Park and the variety of accessible programs and services provided at Hamilton Community Centre. They also acknowledged an overall sense of safety and feeling of social connection in the neighbourhood. Identified areas for improvement included specific segments of pedestrian infrastructure, availability of affordable and accessible housing options, additional volunteer opportunities, increased access to health care services and access to multilingual information and resources.



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