

Age-Friendly Woolwich



An Age-Friendly Community Plan (For Older Adults & Seniors)

Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee
Spring 2017

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the commitment and contributions of a number of people involved in the **Age-Friendly Woolwich** planning process.

Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council

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Age-Friendly Woolwich Steering Committee

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- Cathy Harrington (Community Care Concepts)
- Lynda Kohler and Joy Finney (Woolwich Community Health Centre)
 - Karole McDonnell (Woolwich Seniors Association)
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Woolwich Township Council Representatives

Mayor Sandy Shantz and Councillor Murray Martin

The Residents of Woolwich Township who provided invaluable input through the Elmira Kiwanis Club, dining groups, focus groups, faith group forums, and the Woolwich Seniors Information and Active Living Fair.

Thank you to all of you for your time, your insights and your love of Woolwich that was conveyed in so many ways.

Facilitators of the Planning Process:

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I Executive Summary

Municipalities, in concert with individuals and community groups, are working together to create communities that meet the needs of older adults and seniors. Known as *Age-Friendly Communities* (AFC), these are places that:

“Encourage active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.”¹

The World Health Organization has identified eight physical and social dimensions that support people’s desire to age in place:

1. Outdoor spaces and public buildings are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.
2. Public transportation is accessible and affordable.
3. Housing is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure.
4. There are opportunities for seniors to participate in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.
5. Older people are treated with respect and are included in civic life.
6. There are opportunities for employment and volunteerism that cater to older persons’ interests and abilities.
7. Age-friendly communication and information is available.
8. Community support and health is tailored to older persons’ needs.

In keeping with this movement, a mix of residents and organizations in Woolwich Township participated in creating an **Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan**. Guided by a Steering Committee and an Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee, the planning process entailed research and public engagement to identify local planning priorities for older adults and senior residents. Approximately 350 residents were involved through dining groups, focus groups, the Advisory committee, faith group forums, and the Woolwich Seniors Information and Active Living Fair. The top two priorities that emerged are **housing options** and **rural transportation solutions**.

Other priorities include:

- Social participation and inclusion
- Communication
- Access to amenities
- Outdoor spaces and public buildings
- Community supports and health services

At the heart of these priorities is a deep love for Woolwich and a strong sense of belonging and connection. This is reflected in the Vision developed by the Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee.

We are leading the lives we choose as we age in the community we love.

Woolwich: everyone feels they belong.

¹ WHO. (2007). Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide. Geneva: World Health Organization.

II Recommendations

1. Acceptance of the Plan and Implementation

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 1.1 The Township of Woolwich Council (in concert with the Boards of Directors of the Steering Committee members) receive this *Age Friendly Woolwich Plan* as a Living Document to guide future planning, decision making, and “*made in Woolwich*” solutions for the priorities identified by older adults living in Woolwich Township.
- 1.2 The Township of Woolwich Council (in concert with the Boards of Directors of the Steering Committee members) endorse the following initial action steps for implementation of the plan:
 - Adopt the World Health Organization principles for an age friendly community and the Vision for an *Age Friendly Woolwich* as expressed in the Plan.
 - Strike an **Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council** to guide the implementation and monitoring of the **Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan** and the accompanying Action Plan. This Advisory Council will ensure older adults have the opportunity to participate in the development of Woolwich Township policies, programs and services that affect them. (Appendix A has a proposed structure).
 - Develop an **Age-Friendly Decision Making Lens** to be integrated with the Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles to support planning decisions that contribute to a vibrant, inclusive and equitable community.
 - Integrate **Age-Friendly Woolwich** (where appropriate) with broader regional initiatives such as Wellbeing Waterloo Region.
 - Consider applying to the World Health Organization for designation as a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities/Communities.

2. Housing Options

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 2.1 The new **Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council** create a Housing Working Group (consisting of local housing champions, faith group representatives, developers, and interested citizens) that will work with Township of Woolwich and Region of Waterloo staff to design a plan for a full range of senior’s housing (including social housing) in Woolwich Township in keeping with the “**Complete Community**” approach. Their mandate would include such things as:
 - Developing a full inventory of existing housing for older adults that is readily available to the public.

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- Exploring a range of potential housing models, options and best practices for older adults and assessing the feasibility of co-housing or shared housing, creating secondary units (“granny flats” that may require changes to bylaws), integrating support services and age friendly design.
- Hosting Housing Forums in different locations throughout Woolwich (with key partners such as Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation and the Region of Waterloo) to generate participation and ideas for local solutions. (A “*Housing Roadshow*”)
- Considering the re-purposing of existing assets, including available land sites and buildings such as the former Riverside school in Elmira and the former Freibergers grocery store (which could become a grocery store on the lower level with rental units above it like *Home Hardware* in St. Jacobs).
- Exploring innovative financing models such as that anticipated by the KWCF (Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation) in its new Impact Investing program for capital projects.
- Providing input in 2019 when the Township is set to review its land development charges and considering development incentives for senior’s housing projects.

In Addition:

- 2.2 Discussions are held with the Region of Waterloo to ensure a rural strategy and age friendly lens is applied to incentive programs and other strategies available for affordable housing. Further, that the Region of Waterloo’s Housing Department ensure adequate resources are designated for affordable housing options within the rural townships and there is a commitment to increase affordable units for older adults in Woolwich Township.

3. Transportation/ Public Transit/Active Transportation

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 3.1 The new ***Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council*** create a Transportation Working Group (consisting of local transportation champions and interested citizens) that will work with Township of Woolwich and Region of Waterloo staff to design a plan for a full range of transportation options that is integrated with the plan for senior’s housing (including social housing) and the location of key amenities in Woolwich Township in keeping with the “***Complete Community***” approach. Their mandate would include such things as:
- Convene a Rural Transportation Forum to share needs, knowledge and solutions with Wellesley, Wilmott and North Dumfries (and potentially Wellington and other surrounding rural areas). ²

² Resources and Ideas: Rural Ontario Institute and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (2014). *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions*. See: <http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/rural-transportation>

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- Create a “*made in Woolwich*” Transportation Strategy (including active transportation) to address the Township’s unique transportation opportunities and challenges by building on and leveraging existing assets across the Township. These existing assets include:
 - Kiwanis Transit
 - Community Care Concepts *Assisted Transportation* program
 - Woolwich Community Services *Care-Ring* program
 - Grand River Transit Route 21
- Consider an integrated approach to the Transportation Strategy that could include such things as:
 - Building on the success of Kiwanis Transit by utilizing smaller vans to convey seniors to stores, businesses and other parts of the township. (For example, a Kiwanis Transit loop around Elmira might be possible once every hour.)
 - Adding GRT Route 21 links to subdivisions in Elmira and St. Jacobs so more than the main street is serviced.
 - Improving connections and access for seniors to GRT Route 21 by adding extended loops to seniors’ residences once or twice a week.
 - Adding bus shelters close to amenities to ensure the safety of the older adult.
- Review and implement active transportation recommendations from local documents (as is feasible) which support active seniors and those using mobility devices. These documents include: the Township of Woolwich’s Official Plan³, the 2014 study entitled *Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community*,⁴ the Regional Transportation Master Plan, *Moving Forward 2031*,⁵ and the Ontario Community Transportation Network study of Rural Transportation Solutions⁶.
- Explore the feasibility of bus service in Breslau so residents can connect into the GRT and LRT systems in Kitchener and be able to transfer to shops, grocery stores and medical appointments.
- Create the ability for public transit to move across the Township and to cross over the border lines into the adjacent cities and Townships and also future connections with the LRT.

³ Township of Woolwich Official Plan 2012. <http://www.woolwich.ca/en/doing-business/Official-Plan.aspx>

⁴ Woolwich Healthy Communities Partnership Steering Committee and Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership released *Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community* January 2014. <http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/LocalFoodAccessActiveTransportation.pdf>

⁵ Region of Waterloo (2011). *Moving Forward 2031*

http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regionalGovernment/resources/RTMP_FINAL_REPORT_PDF.pdf

⁶ Ontario Community Transportation Network. *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions: Ten Community Case Studies from Ontario* <http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/file.aspx?id=c3296740-5db4-436e-a56a-07e5e0cddf16>

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In addition:

- 3.2 The Township of Woolwich continue to work collaboratively with the Region of Waterloo to provide Woolwich representation when planning for future transportation needs (such as the 2018 Regional Transportation Master Plan).

4. Social Participation/ Respect and Social Inclusion

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends:

- 4.1 Building on the existing sense of belonging among Woolwich older adults and seniors by:
- Increasing interaction through community gardens, informal places to meet such as coffee/tea shops and sidewalk cafes, and organized programs or interest groups.
 - Generating more activities and opportunities to socialize across all age groups, interests, geographies and abilities.
 - Tapping into the knowledge, expertise and skills of older adults by encouraging entrepreneurial ventures that support the needs of older adults.
 - Ensuring there is a range of meaningful participation opportunities (including employment, volunteer and mentoring) that use the gifts and talents of older adults in service to others, or the community at large, and fosters the next generation of volunteers.
 - Increasing connections between seniors and youth. (This could be linked to students' Community Service Hours.)
 - Understanding how transportation, walkability or public transit options are integral to a person's ability to access programs and stay socially connected.

5. Communication

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that the Township of Woolwich and other community agencies work to:

- 5.1 Communicate all the existing programs, services and activities currently available to older adults and seniors in Woolwich Township.
- 5.2 Coordinate existing communications plans that focus on digital and non-digital strategies. For example:
- Develop a Facebook page for older adults to share information and ideas (and make training available so they know how to use it).
 - Continue to provide information through a variety of non-digital methods such as: community dining events, Community Information Centre, the *Breslau eBlast*, the *Woolwich Observer*, the *Leisure Guide*, the Woolwich Community Health Centre's newsletter, personal phone calls, mail outs, flyers available in local stores, and special delivery of bulletins through *Meals on Wheels*. (Community Care Concepts)

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- 5.3 Connect users to programs such as the library to increase the digital literacy of seniors who want to improve their skills.
- 5.4 Promote seniors' recreational and leisure programs that are subsidized.

6. Access to Amenities, Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends:

- 6.1 A new vision for grocery stores that is focused on walkable access or store to home delivery. This could entail such things as:
 - A pop-up storefront operation, in a walkable location, sponsored by one of the big box stores.
 - A mobile grocery store similar to the bookmobile that comes on a regular schedule and offers both a library and groceries (*Books & Basics*) or similar to *Fresh Express* which serves an area from Listowel to Wingham.⁷
 - A "Hop on/Hop off" service provided by Kiwanis Transit.
 - A re-opening of the former Freiburger's grocery store in Elmira with a grocery store on the main level and housing above.
 - Working with volunteers from faith or service groups to assist in bringing groceries to people and people to groceries.
- 6.2 Better access to trails and safer bike paths
 - Trails and parks could be more accessible to everyone, not just runners, cyclists or athletes.
 - More benches are needed along trails.
- 6.3 Age friendly streets and walkable communities
 - Streets need to be walkable for strollers, wheel chairs & mobility devices (walkers, scooters etc.).
 - Regularly placed benches on the main street and some primary side streets would provide a break for those who want to walk but are not strong on their feet for greater lengths of time.
 - A walkable community needs bright streetlights, bus stops with seating, and more accessible restaurants.
- 6.4 Accessible buildings and parks
 - Accessible washrooms in all public buildings and parks should have higher toilets installed, wide doors and rails (and more washrooms are needed in parks).
 - Work with businesses and the BIA to support adoption of AODA planning standards (that require accessible or universal design features) by using incentives such as consumer reports or ratings. (For example: A group of volunteers could do an audit

⁷ <http://www.freshxpress.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Fresh-Xpress-Winter-Schedule-2017.pdf>

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every year and create an annual report card that goes to the Township of Woolwich with a decal or logo for the compliant businesses.)

- 6.5 Access to Local food
 - More focus on promoting and buying local foods

7. Community Supports and Health

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 7.1 Older adults are supported to age in place in their community by having access to personal care, health services, mental health services, nutritious meals and food related support, community dining, homemaking services, exercise programs, home maintenance and adaptation, yard work services, transportation services, day programs, hospice and end of life support and caregiver support.
- 7.2 Services for older adults are integrated and coordinated between providers and within existing service delivery models.
- 7.3 An intentional strategy is developed to increase the number of “soft services” by using more faith groups and other volunteers to assist with informal home visits, mental health activities, and dining programs. This leverages and builds upon Woolwich’s culture of helping one another and provides continuing volunteer opportunities for seniors who are able to support other seniors.
- 7.4 Community health care services are enhanced by:
 - Providing residential and more community hospice and palliative care.
 - Increasing local access to primary health care including hamlets and villages.
 - Increasing access to respite services through a variety of options.
 - Offering programs that support practical skills and activities for well adult health.
 - Improving the availability of medical labs in Woolwich.
 - Increasing the use of OTN (Ontario Telehealth Network) for specialist appointments.
 - Improving access to community health services providing Chronic Disease Prevention and Management (CDPM) for conditions such as diabetes, respiratory ailments, and mental health needs.

III Background

Age Friendly Communities

The baby boomer generation is turning 65 and older, resulting in a massive demographic shift in cities, towns and rural communities. The 2016 census shows that 17% of Canadians are now 65 or older. It is predicted that by the year 2036 the province's older population will have more than doubled to 4.1 million.⁸ As Ontarians live longer, healthier lives, they want to continue to be active, engaged and contributing members of their communities. In recognition of this active approach to aging, municipalities, in concert with residents and community groups, are working together to create Age Friendly Communities (AFC). The World Health Organization has identified eight AFC physical and social dimensions:

1. Outdoor spaces and public buildings are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible
2. Public transportation is accessible and affordable
3. Housing is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure
4. There are opportunities for seniors to participate in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures
5. Older people are treated with respect and are included in civic life
6. There are opportunities for employment and volunteerism that cater to older persons' interests and abilities
7. Age-friendly communication and information is available
8. Community support and health is tailored to older persons' needs



Woolwich Township

Woolwich Township is also experiencing population growth, especially in the 65-69 year old age group. The 2011 demographics show that the 65 and older population grew from 14% of the population in 2001 to 15.1% in 2011. This compares with a provincial rate of 14%. Furthermore, Region of Waterloo population projections predict that **by 2031 the 55+ population will represent 31.3%** of the population in Waterloo Region and much of this growth will happen in the Townships.

"Canada's rural population is aging at a much faster rate than those in the urban centres."
(Michael Haan, University of Western Ontario; Record: February 9, 2017)

The 2016 census data show that the **population of Woolwich Township grew by 8% from 2011 to 2016**, which was the highest growth rate in Waterloo Region.

⁸ The Ontario Seniors' Secretariat (OSS), the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO), the University of Waterloo and McMaster University. **Finding the Right Fit: Age Friendly Community Planning.**
http://www.seniors.gov.on.ca/en/resources/AFCP_Eng.pdf

IV Planning Process

Woolwich has a long history of community engagement and connectedness. Solutions to issues are often driven by the leadership of local community members. In keeping with this tradition of collaborative planning, five community partners came together to form a Steering Committee and launch a Woolwich Township **Age-Friendly Community Planning** process. The partners included:

- The Township of Woolwich
- Community Care Concepts
- Woolwich Community Health Centre
- Woolwich Seniors Association
- Woolwich Community Services

Our Planning Process for Age Friendly Woolwich

Design Phase

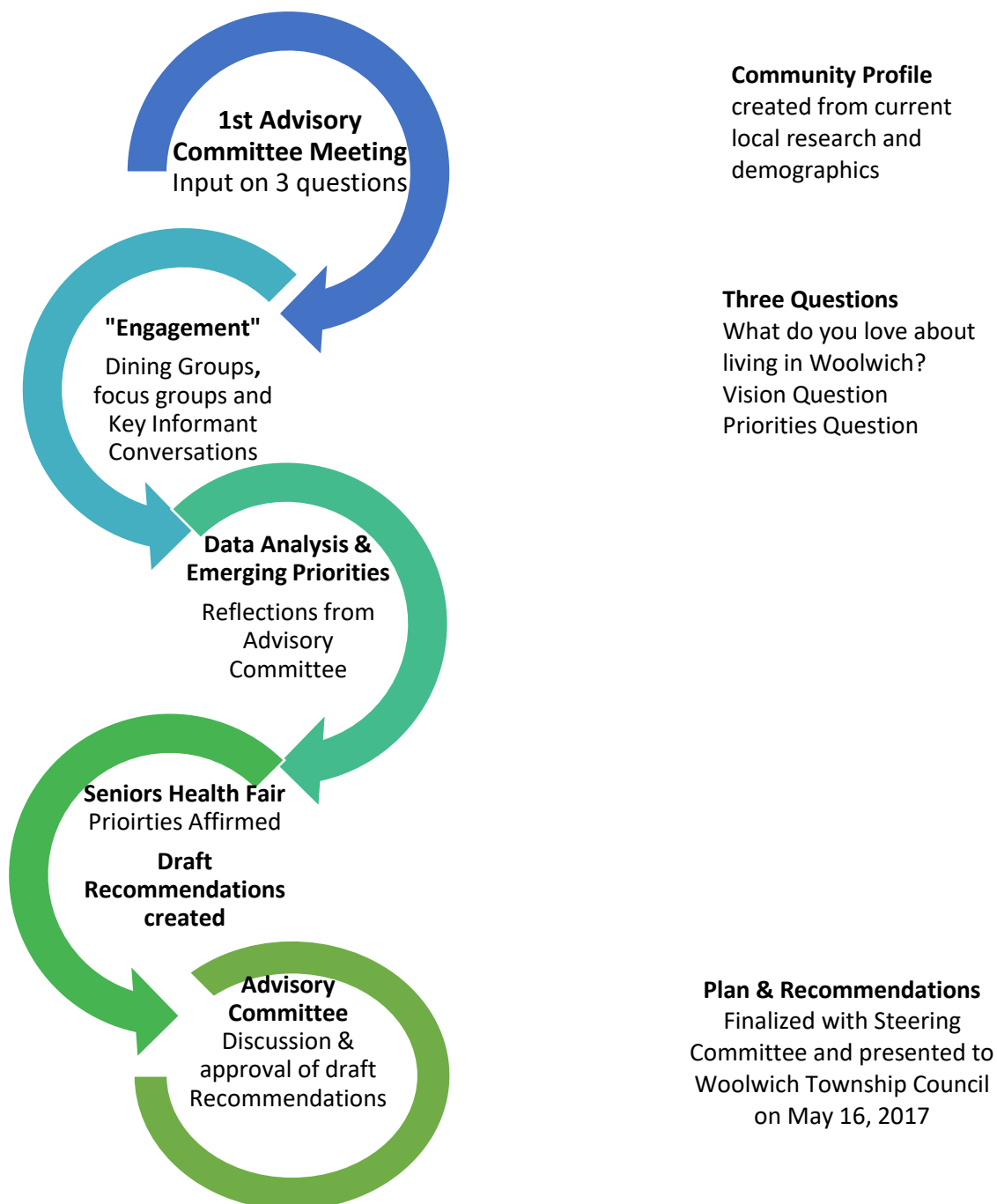
- The Steering Committee hired and met with two facilitators to design the process and identify members for an Advisory Committee of residents who would represent the Township in terms of geography, leadership and backgrounds.
- The Woolwich Community Profile was developed from Township of Woolwich data, local research studies, and Statistics Canada data.
- **Discovery & Engagement Phase** (Each step of the process informed the next step)
- Four Advisory Committee Meetings guided the process, provided input, created the Vision for an Age-Friendly Woolwich and developed the Recommendations for implementation.
- The broader community was engaged through a series of focus groups and facilitated conversations. Approximately **190 residents** responded to these three questions:
 - *What do you love about living in Woolwich Township?*
 - **Vision** - *If you woke up tomorrow and a miracle had happened in the middle of the night and Woolwich was renowned for being the most outstanding Age Friendly Community in the province, how would you know this?*
 - **Priorities** - *What are your 3 or 4 key priorities for this AFC Plan?*
- Additional information was gathered from: Key Informant conversations (with Region of Waterloo Staff for example); the Age Friendly Plans of other local communities; and Waterloo Region's Senior's Strategy.
- The unique priorities for the community were affirmed at the Seniors Information and Active Living Fair (approximately **160 participants**).

Analysis and Recommendations Phase

- All of the collected information was analyzed to create the draft recommendations for the Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan with the Advisory Committee. The plan and recommendations were finalized with the Steering Committee.

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Engagement Process



Implementation Phase

- The next phase will entail implementing and monitoring the plan for Age-Friendly Woolwich with the support and advice of the **Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council**

V Vision For An Age-Friendly Woolwich

The vision for an Age-Friendly Woolwich grew out of the simple question: *What do you love about living in Woolwich Township?*

Our Vision

We are leading the lives we choose as we age in the community we love.
Woolwich: everyone feels they belong.

What We Love About Living in Woolwich Township

We love:

- Our welcoming, friendly, inclusive community with its commitment to community and service
 - If there are needs, the community responds and people work well together;
 - There's a depth of trust and volunteerism, caring for others, and connections to neighbors and friends
- Our strong sense of belonging and connection where everyone knows each other
 - *"People embraced me when I was new."*
 - The values of the people and the community
 - Peace and quiet and good neighbors
 - Friendliness. *"It's ok to shovel horse buns."*
 - The people – everyone brings new ideas and a willingness to be involved
 - Giving, loving attitudes
 - *Small enough that we know each other*
 - Continuity. Opportunity to grow old in this township
 - Lifelong friendships (harder to move elsewhere when you are older). Neighbors who care about you
- Our families, friends, neighbours and faith communities
 - It's about friendliness and support and if you need help, you will get it
 - Conservative culture. This church. Friendly and welcomed. Cared for if needed
 - Several churches of all faiths available
- The diversity of rural and urban living with active small towns and vigorous/prosperous farms;
 - Proximity to large urban centres
 - The Township is part of Region of Waterloo with its focus on *bikeable* and *walkable* communities
 - Availability of fresh produce and food
 - Choices – we can shop in Elmira or Waterloo
 - Diversity - people and jobs

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- Our Mennonite neighbors and culture that's unique to this area
 - We know people from all stages of life, history and heritage;
 - Our history, schools and eateries; our covered bridge
- Our walkable communities
 - In Elmira you are able to walk anywhere in 15 minutes such as the library or your dentist, to the arena, schools, don't have to drive everywhere. Most things are here. No need to shop elsewhere. Walkable stores
 - Walk/trails are nearby and safe
 - Good location (St. Jacobs) – can walk to the village, lots available, Tim's
- The open spaces and environment
 - Love the feeling of country!
 - We have bigger properties yet still have a central location;
 - Listening to the horses and that “fresh farm air”
 - Trails, rivers, access to outdoors
 - Trees! Parks for grand kids
 - Rural setting community spirit
 - Spaciousness and a sense of belonging
 - Quiet and darkness – night skies
- Our caring community
 - Our Services – There's a lack of bureaucracy from service providers. They bend over backwards to find a way to help people with their specific needs
 - Woolwich Community Health Centre
 - Kiwanis Transit
 - Community Care Concepts – Transportation and Frozen entrees
 - CCAC
 - GRT Bus route 21
- Our size – not too large and growing slowly
 - Scale of the community – more accessible
 - Of a size – sensitive to everything happening across the community
- The Amenities
 - *Geezers can play hockey at the arena in St. Jacobs*
 - Breslau – access to exercise classes (and also in Elmira and WCHC)
 - Proximity to family, good supports, and amenities such as our doctor, arena, schools and facilities;
 - Shopping!
 - Local theatres and events, great schools, local culture
 - Wonderful WMC with membership
 - Access to local produce, family owned/operated businesses and community gardens

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- It's a great place to raise your children
 - The school system and children and families are all around us and our back yard is like the local kids park; there are community influences that protect our kids
 - Enjoy the kids playing. *Don't want to be in an old folks place.*
- Feeling safe here
 - There's a comfort in knowing people.
 - Safe in Elmira.
 - Safe! On our streets
 - *There's little violence and I'm never uncomfortable". "People talk even if they do not know each other."*
- Accessible
 - *If not, then a business will accommodate you if you identify your needs*

Its home!

We have lived in Elmira for 40 years, raising our children and being involved in the church and community. We are in the process of thinking of downsizing in the next couple of years. There is nowhere in Elmira we would consider moving to. We would like to move into a nice, roomy 2 or 3 bedroom apartment with indoor parking. Close to the uptown shopping would also be a plus....I love Elmira and hate the idea of leaving but will probably have to do so. (Participant email)



VI Building On Our Strengths

During the Engagement and Discovery process, we heard repeatedly that residents want to stay in Woolwich Township as they age. They value their sense of belonging and want to continue to access all of the things they love – the country, trails, services, friendship, community connections and amenities - that contribute to the richness of life. As a result, the vision for an Age-Friendly Woolwich plan is built around the primary desire to age well at home and in the communities where residents live.

This finding was in keeping with the **Community Well-being Assessment** (Woolwich Community Health Centre, 2014). In their research they found that:

- Respondents reported an average of 19 neighbours they could ask for a favour. Across Waterloo Region the average number was 4 neighbours. This helps to explain the powerful sense of belonging that was mentioned by so many people in the focus groups and in the *Community Well-being Assessment*. **This level of belonging and support has proven to be a powerful protective factor for people as they age.**

We also heard about some important **gaps or areas that need strengthening** in Woolwich related to the World Health Organization's 8 Domains for an age friendly community. Based on the research and focus group data, the most important priority for an Age-Friendly Woolwich Township is to create housing options – a full array of choices to suit many different needs and lifestyles. Furthermore, it's not just about housing; residents want to see a planned approach that connects seniors housing to community amenities, such as grocery stores, trails and public transit. People want to live in a walkable community. Figure 1 depicts the weighting and inter - relationships of the various aspects of an **Age Friendly Woolwich**.



Figure 1

Participants also discussed the importance of developing an **Age Friendly Lens** for planning decisions. This lens could be integrated with the Woolwich Healthy Communities Lens which has inclusiveness as an integral component.

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1 Acceptance of the Plan and Implementation

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 - Strike an ***Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council*** to guide the implementation and monitoring of the ***Age Friendly Woolwich Plan*** and the accompanying Action Plan. This Advisory Council will ensure older adults have the opportunity to participate in the development of Township policies, programs and services that affect them. (Appendix A has a proposed structure).
 - Develop an ***Age-Friendly Decision Making Lens*** to be integrated with the Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles to support planning decisions that contribute to a vibrant, inclusive and equitable community.
 - Integrate ***Age-Friendly Woolwich*** (where appropriate) with broader regional initiatives such as Wellbeing Waterloo Region.
 - Consider applying to the World Health Organization for designation as a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities/Communities.

2 Housing

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

What We Know

There are some good examples of locally created housing options across the Township

- For example: The Meadows, Valley View Manor, Spruce Lawn Apartments for Seniors and St. James Manor
- Breslau Mennonite Church and Trinity United Church (Elmira) are exploring Senior’s housing

The affordable housing options for seniors in Woolwich Township are limited

- There are 145 Community Housing units in Woolwich; 104 of these are designated for seniors (Jeffrey Schumacher, Supervisor, Housing Supply Initiatives)
- One affordable rental housing option in Elmira (Waterloo Regional Housing on Wyatt Street) offers 36 subsidized units and has a waiting list. People tend not to put their

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names on the waiting list because the list is so lengthy. Unfortunately, this means there is inaccurate evidence of the real need.

- Menno Homes is a new development in Elmira at the corner of Church St. and Memorial Ave. This will be an affordable **25 unit** rental apartment building (14 units are subsidized by the Region) with an elevator and one, two, or three bedroom units. Tenants will be a mix of seniors, singles, and small families.
- Spruce Lawn Apartments for Seniors in St. Jacobs is considering building another 30 units

Region of Waterloo has an *Affordable Housing Strategy* (2014 – 2019)

- *“The proposed new goal of the Affordable Housing Strategy 2014-2019 is to address the housing needs of 700 low to moderate income households through the creation of 350 new affordable housing units and the preservation and retention of 350 existing affordable homes. The need for affordable housing for the lowest income households and supportive housing will remain key priorities of the new proposed new AHS.”* (Region of Waterloo Affordable Housing Strategy 2014-2019)
- The Region of Waterloo also provides housing support through their Ontario Renovates program: *Helping seniors and persons with disabilities to remain in their homes and neighbourhoods with supports and financial assistance for repair/ accessibility modifications, helps them to maintain a higher quality of life... (and has helped) prevent people from entering the long term care system prematurely.*

What We Learned in the Engagement Process

- Woolwich needs a full array of housing options including everything from upscale condos to supportive, affordable/income geared rentals.
- Adequate supports are essential - transit connections, easy access to amenities like grocery stores, and options for various levels of care and services go hand in hand with housing considerations.
- Housing options need to be integrated within the community rather than on the outskirts. People want a walkable lifestyle as they age so they can stay active and connected.
- Residents are open to exploring innovative solutions such as intergenerational or congregate living.
- There is a great deal of interest in repurposing existing buildings for seniors housing such as the former Riverside School in Elmira.
- There are some local best practices in Woolwich Township that provide a good foundation for future development.
- There are also best practices emerging from other communities nearby such as the conversion of the former Imperial Hotel in New Hamburg.⁹

“Seniors housing shouldn’t be isolated on the outskirts but be right in the heart of the community.”

⁹. “The Imperial” with 12 rental suites for seniors who are downsizing. <http://www.imperialnewhamburg.com/>

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Local Best Practices

A small working group identified the key enablers for local solutions to housing:

- Champions in the local community identify the need and opportunistically or through happenstance find a particular property or parcel of land.
- A successful financial model is developed. Funds need to be available - either CMHC (funneled through the Region of Waterloo and/or directly), or the church, or private funds from residents, or a financial institution
- Success is driven by dedicated volunteers with time, energy and connections that are in it for the long term.
- Potential residents step up and engage in planning.
- A loose network of relationships is created among community leaders, people with a need, builder/developer community and agency leaders.
- Successful projects think ahead to possible expansion or new projects.

According to the focus group data, senior's rental housing works best when:

- Accessibility is given top priority. For example: a washer and dryer in every unit and halls, doorways and elevators that are wheelchair or walker accessible;
- Safety is ensured;
- Affordability is a key consideration and there are a variety of unit options;
- The setting encourages fellowship between residents with spaces for cooperative meals, volunteer organized activities, and inter-dependence (support and help between neighbours); *"It's not a housing community it's a caring community!"*
- Supports through community service agencies are made available to residents, as required, to assist them to live independently for as long as they are able to do so;
- There are opportunities to be engaged in the community and the building is accessible/walkable to downtown and all the amenities (2 blocks);
- Residents have a say in how things are run through committees and/or a board;
- Each unit owner had the opportunity to design their own unit (no two the same); and
- If the approach is intentional or cooperative housing then the structure of the community is determined by the owners and enshrined in the by-laws and constitution. This provides a good foundation for participation, ownership and corporate decision making that is self-managed.

Recommendations

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 2.1 The new **Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council** create a Housing Working Group (consisting of local housing champions, church representatives, developers, and interested citizens) that will work with Township of Woolwich and Region of Waterloo to design a plan for a full range of senior's housing (including social housing) in Woolwich Township in keeping with the "**Complete Community**" approach. Their mandate would include such things as:

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- Developing a full inventory of existing housing for older adults that is readily available to the public.
- Exploring a range of potential housing models, options and best practices for older adults and assessing the feasibility of co-housing or shared housing, creating secondary units (“granny flats” that may require changes to bylaws), integrating support services and age friendly design.
- Hosting Housing Forums in different locations throughout Woolwich (with key partners such as Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation and the Region of Waterloo) to generate participation and ideas for local solutions. (A “*Housing Roadshow*”)
- Considering the re-purposing of existing assets, including available land sites and buildings such as the former Riverside school in Elmira and the former Freibergers grocery store (which could become a grocery store on the lower level with rental units above it like *Home Hardware* in St. Jacobs).
- Exploring innovative financing models such as that anticipated by the KWCF (Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation) in its new Impact Investing program for capital projects.
- Providing input in 2019 when the Township is set to review its land development charges and considering development incentives for senior’s housing projects.

In Addition:

- 2.2 Discussions are held with the Region of Waterloo to ensure a rural strategy and age friendly lens is applied to incentive programs and other strategies available for affordable housing. Further, that the Region of Waterloo’s Housing Department ensure adequate resources are designated for affordable housing options within the rural townships and there is a commitment to increase affordable units for older adults in Woolwich Township.

3 Transportation/Public Transit/Active Transportation

Public transportation is accessible and affordable

What We Know

Sustainable transportation is the key to the future.

- The Regional Transportation Master Plan, *Moving Forward 2031*, was released in January 2011. The authors clearly state that further expansion of roads for cars is not sustainable and future planning needs to incorporate more active transportation and public transit.¹⁰
- Woolwich Township’s Official Plan includes a commitment to trails:

¹⁰ http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regionalGovernment/resources/RTMP_FINAL_REPORT_PDF.pdf

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- *We value (a) being able to walk or cycle to many of our daily destinations; and (b) streets, parks, trails and neighbourhoods that are safe, healthy and attractive “people places”;*
- *We value an appropriate transportation system meeting the needs of cyclists, buggies, pedestrians and motor vehicles.*
- Woolwich Township’s Strategic Plan also embeds a commitment to trails:
 - *Continue with trails development as part of the local community planning process and involve community organizations in focus group sessions to ensure that sustainable community development and environmental stewardship remain priorities.*
- In January 2017, Woolwich Healthy Communities Steering Committee and Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership released *Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community*.¹¹
 - One key objective was to encourage walking and cycling as active modes of transportation. Recommendations include policies focusing on; cycling safety, walkability of new housing developments, signage and maintenance for trails as well as linkages between trails and roads.

Public transit impacts the viability of a rural community in multiple ways.

- Woolwich Township public transit options exist but need to be strengthened.
 - According to the Woolwich Community Health Centre’s *Community Wellbeing Assessment*,¹² 69% of respondents support rural bus service (GRT Route 21), as well as the services offered by *Kiwanis Transit, Community Care Concepts* and *Care- Ring*.
 - Grand River Transit is working to meet the needs of seniors with accessible and inclusive buses, however accessibility is also dependent upon other factors such as the routes, the timing and easy to access bus stops.

- A recent study examining solutions to rural transit¹³ states,

Given the aging demographic found in rural places, the assumption that social, economic and health needs can be met solely by private cars and volunteer programs is increasingly untenable... Public transit systems support the local economy by helping people get to work and to stores to shop... Social and health benefits are also created as people are able to access needed services, attend recreation and leisure activities, and maintain connections with family and friends.

¹¹ Woolwich Healthy Communities Partnership Steering Committee and Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership released *Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community*; January 2017.

¹² Woolwich Community Health Centre. *Community Wellbeing Assessment: Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich Townships*; November 2014,

¹³ Rural Ontario Institute and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (2014). *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions*. See: <http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/rural-transportation>

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This study profiled 35 unique transportation solutions from across rural Ontario that appeared to be successful and viable. Many of these are geared to special populations and include both public and private solutions. Woolwich's own "Elmira Kiwanis" is included. Ten detailed case studies are provided as examples that range from new public bus routes linking neighboring communities, volunteer driver programs, public bus routes along major highway corridors, specialized mobility transit, *dial a bus* routes, to door to door transit options. (Please refer to the study for details of the 10 profiled services.)

What We Learned in the Engagement Process

Public transit is integral to seniors aging in their homes and their community

- Focus group participants indicated that the need for public transit is imperative and is linked to housing options and access to amenities.
- Residents will use public transit if it is accessible in practical ways related to the route, hours of service, safe bus stops, and linkages to other forms of transit (e.g. a Breslau bus linking to Kitchener buses or the LRT)
- GRT Route 21 in Woolwich Township has had mixed reviews in the community for a number of reasons. People are happy to have public transit. However, a senior resident living in St. Jacobs without a car could take Route 21 to Conestoga Mall but would still have to walk a distance to buy groceries. Residents living in the suburbs in Elmira do not have easy access to the route.
- Residents appreciate Kiwanis Transit and the transportation choices offered by Community Care Concepts.
- There is strong support for local transportation solutions that are unique to Woolwich.

Recommendations

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 3.1 The new **Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council** create a Transportation Working Group (consisting of local transportation (including public transit and active transportation) champions and interested citizens) that will work with Township of Woolwich and Region of Waterloo staff to design a plan for a full range of transportation options that is integrated with the plan for senior's housing (including social housing) and the location of key amenities in Woolwich Township in keeping with the "**Complete Community**" approach. Their mandate would include such things as:
 - Convene a Rural Transportation Forum to share needs, knowledge and solutions with Wellesley, Wilmott and North Dumfries (and potentially Wellington and other surrounding rural areas).¹⁴

¹⁴ Resources and Ideas: Rural Ontario Institute and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (2014). *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions*. See: <http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/rural-transportation>

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- Ensure that a “*made in Woolwich*” Transportation Strategy (including active transportation¹⁵) is created to address the Township’s unique transportation opportunities and challenges by building on and leveraging existing assets across the Township. These existing assets include:
 - Kiwanis Transit
 - Community Care Concepts *Assisted Transportation* program
 - Woolwich Community Services *Care-Ring* program
 - Grand River Transit Route 21
- Consider an integrated approach to the Transportation Strategy that could include such things as:
 - Building on the success of Kiwanis Transit by utilizing smaller vans to convey seniors to stores, businesses and other parts of the township. (For example, a Kiwanis Transit loop around Elmira might be possible once every hour.)
 - Adding GRT Route 21 links to subdivisions in Elmira and St. Jacobs so more than the main street is serviced;
 - Improving connections and access for seniors to GRT Route 21 by adding extended loops to seniors’ residences once or twice a week.
 - Adding bus shelters close to amenities to ensure the safety of the older adult.
- Review and implement active transportation recommendations from local documents (as is feasible) which support active seniors and those using mobility devices. These documents include: the Township of Woolwich’s Official Plan¹⁵, the 2014 study entitled *Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community*,¹⁶ the Regional Transportation Master Plan, *Moving Forward 2031*,¹⁷ and the Ontario Community Transportation Network study of Rural Transportation Solutions¹⁸.
- Explore the feasibility of bus service in Breslau so residents can connect into the GRT and LRT systems in Kitchener and be able to transfer to shops, grocery stores and medical appointments.
- Create the ability for public transit to move across the Township and to cross over the border lines into the adjacent cities and Townships and also future connections with the LRT.

¹⁵Township of Woolwich Official Plan 2012. <http://www.woolwich.ca/en/doing-business/Official-Plan.aspx>

¹⁶ *Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community* January 2014. <http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/LocalFoodAccessActiveTransportation.pdf>

¹⁷ Region of Waterloo (2011). *Moving Forward 2031*

http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regionalGovernment/resources/RTMP_FINAL_REPORT_PDF.pdf

¹⁸ Ontario Community Transportation Network. *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions: Ten Community Case Studies from Ontario* <http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/file.aspx?id=c3296740-5db4-436e-a56a-07e5e0cddf16>

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In addition:

- 3.2 The Township of Woolwich continue to work collaboratively with the Region of Waterloo to provide Woolwich representation when planning for future transportation needs (such as the 2018 Regional Transportation Master Plan).

4 Social Participation/ Respect and Social Inclusion

Older people are treated with respect and are included in civic life with opportunities to participate in leisure, social, cultural, employment, civic, and spiritual activities.

What We Know

As we age, connecting to the various activities and community events that sustain and enrich a life is an important part of staying active and engaged. However, it's not just about connecting; it is also about belonging. As mentioned earlier in this report, a strong sense of belonging is widespread among the residents of Woolwich Township. The *Community Well-being Assessment* found that:

- Seniors who were independent in the past and those who were lifelong residents stated that they are well connected and participate actively within their community
- Survey respondents reported an average of 33 years lived in the community. (Those 60 to 79 reported 40 years)
- Survey respondents rate the community as a good place to grow old with an average rating of 4 out of 5
- 74% of respondents in the rural Townships rated their sense of belonging to their local community as strong
- Community residents enjoy many community programs such as drop-in programs, exercise classes and senior congregate dining

However, the *Community Well-Being Assessment* also found that:

- Rural villages are challenged with integrating newcomers into the community (especially if they don't have connections into local faith groups etc.)
- High projected population growth rates indicate there is a need to support and maintain connectedness
- Seniors who are frail and those who have moved to this community later in life (perhaps to be closer to their children) were thought to be more lonely and isolated and indicated that it was difficult to make connections
- Loneliness and isolation is predominately an issue among older widowed women, older LGSMM (Lower German Speaking Mexican Mennonite) women whose children have left home or are childless, and some newcomers to the community

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What We Learned in the Engagement Process

- Focus group participants repeatedly stressed the importance of connection to friends, neighbours, community and church life.
- People appreciated the dining opportunities and fellowship organized by Community Care Concepts.
- Newer residents spoke highly of the newcomers program offered by the Woolwich Community health Centre. (*Practical Skills to Live Well as We Age*)
- Participants spoke highly of programs at the Woolwich Memorial Complex, the Breslau Community Centre, walking groups and other leisure activities
- Participants mentioned the importance of respect in all interactions – for example service providers need to speak directly to seniors not their family or care givers.

(It's) very good for single seniors to make a meal together and have fellowship.

"Ask me what I'm thinking! We want to be heard!"



Recommendations

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends:

- 4.1 Building on the existing sense of belonging among Woolwich older adults and seniors by:
 - Increasing interaction through community gardens, informal places to meet such as coffee/tea shops and sidewalk cafes, and organized programs or interest groups.
 - Generating more activities and opportunities to socialize across all age groups, interests, geographies and abilities.
 - Tapping into the knowledge, expertise and skills of older adults by encouraging entrepreneurial ventures that support the needs of older adults.
 - Ensuring there is a range of meaningful participation opportunities (including employment, volunteer and mentoring) that use the gifts and talents of older adults in service to others, or the community at large, and fosters the next generation of volunteers.
 - Increasing connections between seniors and youth. (This could be linked to students' Community Service Hours.)

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- Understanding how transportation, walkability or public transit options are integral to a person's ability to access programs and stay socially connected.

5 Communication

Age-friendly communication and information is available

What We Know

Communication in the Township happens through a number of services:

- The Township of Woolwich website undergoes an accessibility check each month. IT Services staff reviews the accessibility check and makes necessary adjustments to address any items which are found to be non-compliant.
- Woolwich Community Services connects people with the programs and services that suit individual needs. Serving Woolwich Township and the northern part of Wellesley Township, they are the place to go for information, support or assistance. The Woolwich Community Services Information Centre had an all-time high of 5,265 inquiries in 2013; 64% of inquiries were walk-in while the remainder were by phone.
- The Woolwich Community Health Centre is another source of communication for residents through its website, programs and mailings.
- The Leisure Guide and Woolwich Observer are additional sources of information.

The Township of Woolwich has a focus on communication in the Strategic Plan 2020

- *Communicate with residents about local programs and related service delivery expectations.*
- *Develop methods to communicate with the public concerning the growing disparity between service level expectations and actual resources.*
- *Communicate with residents about issues that directly impact their quality of life (e.g. ATVs, dirt bike noise, airport noise).*
- *Manage the expectations of residents, living in a community of communities, on the importance of needs based service and program delivery.*
- *Increasingly use social media to communicate news and events, as well as provide customer service support.*

What We Learned in the Engagement Process

- Access to information and communications varied considerably depending upon people's comfort with technology.
 - There are those who get all their information from google, local websites and email. However, others told us that they rely upon regular mail, the "Breslau eBlast", the Woolwich Observer, the Leisure Guide
 - Word of mouth or personal calls are still preferred forms of communication for a number of people.
- LARGE print is important to remember when creating documents.

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- Participants that are more tech savvy can see a future where communication may look very different - e.g. driverless cars, distance medical diagnosis etc.

Recommendations

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that the Township of Woolwich and other community agencies work to:

- 5.1 Communicate all the existing programs, services and activities currently available to older adults and seniors in Woolwich Township.
- 5.2 Coordinate existing communications plans that focus on digital and non-digital strategies.
 - Develop a Facebook page for older adults to share information and ideas (and make training available so they know how to use it).
 - Continue to provide information through a variety of non-digital methods such as: community dining events, Community Information Centre, the *Breslau eBlast*, the *Woolwich Observer*, the *Leisure Guide*, the Woolwich Community Health Centre's newsletter, personal phone calls, mail outs, flyers available in local stores, and special delivery of bulletins through *Meals on Wheels*. (Community Care Concepts)
- 5.3 Connect users to programs such as the library to increase the digital literacy of seniors who want to improve their skills.
- 5.4 Promote seniors' recreational and leisure programs that are subsidized.

6 Access to Amenities, Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

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

What We Know

Accessibility is a necessary component of today's built environments

- When people view a neighbourhood or community as safe and accessible it encourages outdoor activities and engagement with the community.
- Accessibility entails removing barriers that limit opportunities for people with disabilities (including older adults with age-related impairments) and ensures that older adults can participate in social activities and access important health and social services and businesses. (World Health Organization)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or AODA

- *The Act aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The AODA became law on June 13, 2005 and applies to all levels of government, non-profits, and private sector businesses in Ontario that have one or more employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, or contract).*

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The Township of Woolwich

- **Strategic Plan 2020 (Focus Area: Healthy Communities)**
 - *Consider municipal policies, services and programs that take into account the impact of an aging population.*
 - *Implement legislated requirements, with the goal of improving and expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities, and identify, remove and prevent barriers to their full participation in the life of the community.*
- **Township Policies**
 - The Township approved a policy in 2013 for adult residents entitled, “*Accessing the Recreation Experience*” aimed at improving accessibility.

The **Community Wellbeing Assessment** (WCHC, 2014) found that:

“The perceived access to recreational and cultural facilities was rated higher in all categories by respondents living in the 3 townships compared to Waterloo Region.”

In addition:

- Focus group participants indicated that structured recreational programs are not accessible to all participants.
- Road safety was an access issue for many of the key informants and focus group participants. This included concerns with congestion, speed of the traffic, increased traffic/ busy roads (e.g. St. Jacobs and Maryhill) and mixed use situations (i.e. bikes, walkers and buggies sharing the road with cars). Walking and cycling were identified as the least safe modes of transportation.

“When traffic is heavy it is difficult to cut into a roundabout. It’s difficult to get the horse going when you can see a break in the traffic.” (Old Order Focus Group)

What We Learned in the Engagement Process

Residents highlighted the need for walkable streets and amenities that were easy to access. The number one priority for many participants was a grocery store or some form of small shop that would serve local customers in places like Breslau and St. Jacobs. The loss of Freibergers in the downtown of Elmira was mentioned repeatedly as an example of poor planning for an age-friendly future. People also had suggestions for other aspects of accessibility.

Recommendations

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends:

- 6.1 A new vision for grocery stores that is focused on walkable access or home delivery. This could entail such things as:

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- A pop-up storefront operation, in a walkable location, sponsored by one of the big box stores.
- A mobile grocery store similar to the bookmobile that comes on a regular schedule and offers both a library and groceries (*Books & Basics*) or similar to *Fresh Express* serving an area from Listowel to Wingham.¹⁹
- A “Hop on/Hop off” service provided by Kiwanis Transit.
- A re-opening of Freibergers space in Elmira with a grocery store on the main level and housing above.
- Working with volunteers from faith or service groups to assist in bringing groceries to people and people to groceries. (This fits with a service ministry role.)

6.2 Better access to trails and safer bike paths

- Trails and parks could be more accessible to everyone, not just runners, cyclists and athletes.
- More benches are needed along trails.

6.3 Age friendly streets and walkable communities

- Streets need to be walkable for strollers, wheel chairs & mobility devices (walkers, scooters etc.).
- Regularly placed benches on the main street and some primary side streets would provide a break for those who want to walk but are not strong on their feet for greater lengths of time.
- A walkable community needs bright streetlights, bus stops with seating, and more accessible restaurants.

6.4 Accessible buildings and parks

- Accessible washrooms in all public buildings and parks should have higher toilets installed, wide doors and rails (and more washrooms are needed in parks).
- Work with businesses and the BIA to support adoption of AODA planning standards (that require accessible or universal design features) by using incentives such as consumer reports or ratings. (For example: A group of volunteers could do an audit every year and create an annual report card that goes to the Township of Woolwich with a decal or logo for the compliant businesses.)

6.5 Access to Local food

- More focus on promoting and buying local foods

7 Community Supports and Health

What We Know

¹⁹ <http://www.freshxpress.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Fresh-Xpress-Winter-Schedule-2017.pdf>

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Woolwich has excellent local health programs and community services such as the Woolwich Community Health Centre, Community Care Concepts, Woolwich Community Services, and the Woolwich Seniors Centre. The partnerships between these services are strong and a number of programs and services are very well integrated and connected.

The **Community Wellbeing Assessment** (WCHC, 2014)) found that:

- Among respondents who indicated that they use the health services, 75% rated the accessibility of dental services as very good or excellent, followed by 65% who rated access to their family doctor or nurse practitioner as very good or excellent. Rehab services closely followed with 58% and diagnostic services with 57% as having ratings for accessibility of very good or excellent.
- WCHC is viewed as very accessible due to their on-call system.
- The seniors groups valued the senior support services offered in the community such as Meals on Wheels and volunteer driving. Many commented on the value of the Seniors Support Workers who play a new role within the community. A number had either used the Senior Support Worker or knew someone who had used it and felt that this support was needed to help people through short-term times of need.
- Easy Coordinated Access and specialized geriatric services are working well.

However, the assessment also found that:

- Farm families reported the highest rate of having no extended health benefits - 89% do not have benefits. The next largest population group reporting no extended health benefits was the group representing individuals 65 years and older (72%),
- Seniors report that lab services are difficult to access especially if a senior needs regular blood work. They suggested having a mobile lab clinic.
- Access to OHIP-funded physiotherapy can be difficult since the only clinic is in Kitchener.
- It is less stressful for seniors to know that there's always someone that they can call when they have a medical issue.
- Dental care costs were also seen as a barrier for some.
- Accessing specialists can be challenging for seniors without transportation due to the multiple trips that need to be planned. There are sources of transportation but it takes some coordination to plan these trips. Problems do arise when a senior needs multiple trips per week to a regular appointment.
- Among respondents who indicated that they use health services, 27% rated the accessibility of addiction services as poor or fair, and 23% rated mental health and family violence prevention support accessibility as poor or fair.

Focus group participants identified that transportation and cost are the greatest barriers in accessing health care services"

What We Learned in the Engagement Process

Community Health Services

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Participants reiterated many of the findings in the *Community Wellbeing Assessment* and expressed their desire to be rostered at the Woolwich Community Health Centre and to see expanded satellite clinics and services. Here are some of their comments/questions:

- WCHC in St Jacobs provides health care for many in the community. Are additional centres being considered for other villages besides St Jacobs?
- Medical labs in Elmira are refusing patients from other than their own doctors. Many rides into K-W could be avoided with local labs for bloodwork for all citizens
- Palliative Care services & Residential Hospice are needed (what is happening in Bloomingdale?)
- We are driving across town as some of the doctors and clinics have moved into the Ira Needles Medical centre
- There is no medical clinic in Breslau. Would a satellite clinic of the WCHC be considered?
- Doctor offices - need to have wheel chair accessibility and more doctors with appointment availability (*"Elmira doctors are aging and not willing to invest in a bigger accessible building to house more doctors"*)

Community Services

- As has been mentioned previously, residents repeatedly mentioned their appreciation for Kiwanis Transit, and the programs of Community Care Concepts and Woolwich Community Services.

Recommendations

The Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Committee recommends that:

- 7.1 Older adults are supported to age in place in their community by having access to personal care, health services, mental health services, nutritious meals and food related support, community dining, homemaking services, exercise programs, home maintenance and adaptation, yard work services, transportation services, day programs, hospice and end of life support and caregiver support.
- 7.2 Services for older adults are integrated and coordinated between providers and within existing service delivery models.
- 7.3 An intentional strategy is developed to increase the number of "soft services" by using more faith groups and other volunteers to assist with informal home visits, mental health activities, and dining programs. This leverages and builds upon Woolwich's culture of helping one another and provides continuing volunteer opportunities for seniors who are able to support other seniors.
- 7.4 Community health care services are enhanced by:
 - Providing residential and more community hospice and palliative care.
 - Increasing local access to primary health care including hamlets and villages.

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- Increasing access to respite services through a variety of options.
- Offering programs that support practical skills and activities for well adult health.
- Improving the availability of medical labs in Woolwich.
- Increasing the use of OTN (Ontario Telehealth Network) for specialist appointments.
- Improving access to community health services providing Chronic Disease Prevention and Management (CDPM) for conditions such as diabetes, respiratory ailments, and mental health needs.



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Sample Work Plan for Year One

Domain	Recommendations	First Steps/Who
Acceptance of the Plan and Implementation Township of Woolwich, Council Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council	1.1 The Township of Woolwich, Council and the Boards of Directors of the Steering Committee members, receive this Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan as a Living Document to guide future planning, decision making and implementation of the identified priorities for “made in Woolwich” solutions for older adults living in Woolwich Township. 1.3 An Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council be struck (consisting of local champions, stakeholders and Township of Woolwich politicians and staff) to guide the implementation and monitoring of the Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan and the accompanying Action Plan. This Advisory Council will ensure older adults have the opportunity to participate in the development of Township policies, programs and services that affect them. (Appendix A has a proposed structure). 1.4 An <i>Age Friendly Decision Making Lens</i> be integrated with the Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles to support planning decisions that contribute to a vibrant, inclusive and equitable community.	Township of Woolwich endorses and accepts the Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan Boards of Directors endorse and accept Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan The Steering Committee conducts the outreach to seek members to join the Advisory Council, facilitate its operation and serve as an ongoing resource to ensure continuity and succession of Council members. Steering Committee members will also ensure the provision of a secretariat/backbone function 1 or 2 members of the Advisory Council work with WHC to finalize the <i>Decision Making Lens</i>
Housing	2.1 The new Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council creates a Housing Working Group (consisting of local housing champions, faith representatives, developers, and interested citizens) that will work with Township of Woolwich and Regional staff to design a plan for a full range of senior’s housing (including social housing) in Woolwich Township in keeping with the “ Complete Community ” approach. (See full recommendation)	Housing Working Group is established and develops Terms of Reference Housing Group sets priorities and chooses actions for Year One
Transportation	3.1 The new Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council create a Transportation Working Group (consisting of local transportation (including public transit and active transportation) champions and interested citizens) that will work with Township of Woolwich and Region of Waterloo staff to design a plan for a full range of transportation options that is integrated with the plan for senior’s housing (including social housing) and the location of key amenities in Woolwich Township in keeping with the “ Complete Community ” approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a Rural Transportation Forum to share needs, knowledge and solutions with Wellesley, Wilmott and North Dumfries (and potentially Wellington and other surrounding rural areas). 	Transportation Working Group is established and develops Terms of Reference Organizes & hosts the Rural Transportation Forum
Social Participation, Access to Amenities Communication Community Supports & Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Recommendations to be undertaken in Year Two or as decided by the Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council 	

Appendix A

Appendix A: AGE-FRIENDLY WOOLWICH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Background

Municipalities, in concert with individuals and community groups, are working together to create communities that meet the needs of older adults and seniors, known as Age Friendly Communities. The World Health Organization has identified eight physical and social dimensions that support an age friendly community. In keeping with this movement, Woolwich Township has undergone a process of research and engagement to identify the age friendly planning priorities for its older adult and senior residents. The top two priorities that surfaced from this process are housing options and transportation. Other priorities surfaced in the areas of social participation and inclusion, communication, access to amenities, outdoor spaces and public buildings and Community Supports and Health Services.

A Plan was created with a series of recommendations for implementation. The first two recommendations requested that:

- The Township of Woolwich (in concert with the Boards of Directors of the Steering Committee members) receives this Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan as a Living Document to guide future planning, decision making and implementation of the identified priorities for older adults living in Woolwich Township.
- An ***Age-Friendly Woolwich Advisory Council*** be struck (consisting of local champions, stakeholders and Township of Woolwich politicians and staff) to guide the implementation and monitoring of the Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan. This Advisory Council will ensure that among others, older adults have the opportunity to participate in the development of Township policies, programs and services that affect them.

Age Friendly Community Vision

A vision grew out of the simple question: *What do you love about living in Woolwich Township?*

***“We are leading the lives we choose as we age in the community we love.
Woolwich: everyone feels they belong.”***

Advisory Council Purpose:

- To guide the further development and implementation of the Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan and the Recommendations;
- To ensure the voices and perspectives of older adults are included in relevant planning and decision making processes

Advisory Council Composition:

- Interested residents (5)
- Representatives from local agencies, volunteer/service groups, faith communities, Woolwich Healthy Communities
- Township of Woolwich staff (1)
- Council member (1).

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Other considerations include:

- A diversity of older adults and seniors should represent 50% of Council members
- The majority of members should not be paid employees
- Township geography should be evident

Advisory Council Responsibilities:

- In conjunction with Steering Committee members, develop an annual work plan (sample template attached), budget and schedule of meetings
- Ensure that Housing and Transportation Sub Committees (and others as needed) are established and are populated by members of the Age Friendly Advisory Council and community members with special expertise and experience in each area
- Serve as the link with the Ontario Seniors Secretariat and the provincial Age Friendly Communities community of practice - swebster@seniorshealthknowledgegenetwork.com

Staff Support Provided:

- The Steering Committee will conduct the outreach to seek members to join the Advisory Council, facilitate its operation and serve as an ongoing resource to ensure continuity and succession of Council members.
- Steering Committee members will also ensure the provision of a secretariat/backbone function and resources (including staffing and financial) to support communications and other needs.

Communication/ Liaison:

- Two way communication, on an as needed basis, between relevant Township staff, Steering Committee members and the Advisory Council will foster input and guidance in the implementation and monitoring of the Age-Friendly Woolwich Plan and Recommendations.
- The Advisory Council may also choose to provide comments or presentations directly to Council on issues related to the goals of Age-Friendly Woolwich.