



Age Friendly Lethbridge A Community Profile

January 21, 2020





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Rob Miyashiro
Chair, Age Friendly Lethbridge



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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Age-friendly Designation

The World Health Organization (WHO) age-friendly designation recognizes age-friendly cities and communities that promote healthy and active aging. People in age-friendly communities are supported in maintaining their independence and have access to the community supports and services they need.

The Government of Alberta age-friendly designation is awarded to municipalities who have completed an age-friendly community profile, have developed an age-friendly action plan, and have secured a council resolution to actively support, promote and work towards being age-friendly. The community profile and action plan are based on the eight age-friendly domains: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services.

1.2. Age Friendly Lethbridge

Age Friendly Lethbridge is a collaboration of community stakeholders working together to provide input into and shape an age-friendly community. In order to develop the community profile and action plan. The committee commissioned a review of demographic information, documents, strategies and action plans, a telephone survey with a random sample of 500 Lethbridge residents who were aged 45 or older, four focus groups and four interviews with 19 unique individuals.

1.3. Community Profile

1.3.1. Demographic Information

Lethbridge has an aging population, with 16.4% of all residents being 65 years or older. Seniors make up a higher percentage of the population in Lethbridge compared to Alberta overall (13.9%) and to comparable cities, such as Red Deer (12.8%). Age groups with the highest growth in Lethbridge are children under 15 and seniors aged 65 to 80.

1.3.2. Strategic Documents and Age-Friendly Initiatives

The City of Lethbridge Strategic Plan demonstrates a strong commitment towards meeting the age-friendly principles. The community vision states that, *"We will continue to work together to ensure that Lethbridge demonstrates active leadership in environmental stewardship and innovation and is recognized as being a safe, healthy, vibrant, prosperous, economically viable place where all people can fully participate in community*

life". Of the five strategic goals, three of them specifically contribute to making our community age-friendly: people places for all, compassionate communities, and livable communities.

Other City of Lethbridge plans and strategies, such as the Community Wellbeing Needs Assessment and associated Community Wellbeing & Safety Strategy, the Capital Improvement Program Plan, the Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Strategy, the Lethbridge Transit Master Plan, the Mobility Accessibility Plan, the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy, and the CMARD Building Bridges Community Action Plan, all included public consultations, and are designed to improve safety, accessibility and inclusiveness for all, including seniors.

Lethbridge has a number of agencies, programs and services contributing to making our community age-friendly, such as, housing options, Seniors' Centres, accessible public transit, Meals on Wheels, abuse responses, service referral and volunteer hubs, FCSS-funded preventative programs, and peer and caregiver support groups.

1.3.3. Survey, Focus Groups and Interview Findings

The HarGroup 2018 telephone survey respondents agreed that Lethbridge is perceived as a great place for seniors. The highest priority areas in need of improvement, according to respondents, were housing, community support and health services, basic needs and transportation.

The 2019 focus groups and interviews confirmed the telephone survey findings. All agreed that Lethbridge is a great place to retire because of its size, the climate, and the availability of services and support for seniors. They identified issues of concern:

- Snow removal on sideways, bus stops and intersections.
- Concerns about the personal safety of seniors, especially in downtown Lethbridge.
- Seniors who use public busses and/or Access A Ride are pleased with the transportation options and the friendliness and helpfulness of drivers, but stated that scheduling appointments with AAR, especially during peak hours is difficult.
- While appreciating the wide range and availability of senior housing options, they would like to see newer affordable housing opportunities, and more spaces within the City limits (as opposed to the South region served by Alberta Health Services) for seniors requiring high levels of care.
- While Lethbridge offers various opportunities for social participation for those who are able to afford them and are willing to participate, a large number of seniors experience loneliness. They acknowledged that more information is needed on how age-friendly Lethbridge is for Indigenous seniors, recent immigrant seniors, and seniors who identify as LGBTQ2S+.
- Seniors and their caregivers lack information and understanding about available services and supports. Often, seniors don't know what they are eligible for, and how to apply, and processes are cumbersome. They greatly appreciate the social workers and other employees who provide systems navigators at the seniors' centers and in senior residences and indicated that more of them were needed.

1.4. Action Plan

Age Friendly Lethbridge reviewed the findings and jointly developed an action plan with 18 actions.

- Develop a volunteer snow removal program.
- Document barriers faced by seniors, identify burning issues, and collectively address or share the issues with relevant City Departments.
- Advocate for improved usability of Access a Ride busses and public transit.
- Advocate for senior housing.
- Share information about housing options and subsidies.
- Gather additional information on social inclusion of some senior groups, such as Indigenous seniors, recent immigrant seniors, and seniors who identify as LGBTQ2S+.
- Document existing initiatives and pilot new initiatives to address seniors' loneliness & isolation issues.
- Partner with Lethbridge Diversity and Inclusion Alliance.
- Host a yearly Age-Friendly Forum.
- Develop an information collecting and sharing strategy specific to services for seniors.
- Share consistent and accurate messages about Age Friendly Lethbridge and its member agencies across Lethbridge agencies.
- Provide input to City of Lethbridge strategies from an age-friendly lens.
- Increase availability of systems navigation for seniors.
- Increase caregiver support options.
- Review and update Age Friendly Lethbridge Committee Terms of Reference.
- Create outcome measurement plans for each initiative, based on desired outputs and outcomes.
- Pass a Council resolution to formalize Lethbridge's commitment to be an age-friendly community.
- Apply for the Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition, the first step towards the Public Health Agency of Canada and World Health Organization age-friendly designation.

2. Methodology

The community profile was developed based on a review of available documentation, including the 2018 survey of Lethbridge seniors (HarGroup Management Consultants, 2018), focus groups and in-depth interview findings. The research committee who oversaw the public survey in 2018 provided guidance in the development of the survey methodology and of focus group guidelines and interview questions.

2.1. Document Review

The City of Lethbridge adopted an overarching Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy (CWSS) in 2019, with the goal of coordinating and integrating multiple initiatives, programs and funding portfolios relating to community safety and social wellbeing into one strategy, ensuring that they are aligned to ensure collective impact (Community Social Development, 2019). Many of the Lethbridge initiatives and strategies contribute towards making the city more age-friendly.

The community profile is based on a review of documents, strategies and action plans available from the City of Lethbridge website, and other websites, including the 2018 survey of Lethbridge seniors (HarGroup Management Consultants, 2018). Reviewed documents were used to gather background information, and to determine the extent to which the City of Lethbridge strategies include provisions to accommodate distinct needs.

Results of the 2018 survey are an integral part of this report. For each domain of inquiry, we highlighted the responses to the general survey questions and the perceived priority areas of improvement, with areas perceived as needing “a lot of improvement” listed first.

The HarGroup report excluded “non-response (don’t know, unsure and no response)” in their percentage calculation. In many cases, a high percentage of persons surveyed chose not to answer the questions. It is possible that respondents skipped questions because of a lack of awareness and knowledge, or because they did not yet have the opportunity or the need to think about the questions raised.

In order to reflect the high number of respondents who did not respond to questions regarding perceived areas of improvement, we have included “non-response” as a response option. As a result, the percentages shown in this report are slightly different than the ones in the HarGroup report. However, the priority areas remain largely the same.

2.2. Focus Groups and Interviews

The research committee initially suggested seven focus groups with the following participants: members of senior centres, residents of apartment buildings operated by Lethbridge Housing Authority, residents of seniors’ residences, seniors who are new to Canada, seniors who are Indigenous, seniors representing the LGBTQ2S++ community, and caregivers of seniors. The Age Friendly Committee Chair had the responsibility to arrange for each of the groups. Due to challenges in arranging for the focus groups, the consultant met with only four groups.



Each group met for approximately 90 minutes. After being offered refreshments, the consultant explained the purpose of the group and discussed the consent form. Each group participants signed a consent form and received a printed copy of the 2018 Age Friendly Lethbridge public survey. The consent form and interview questions are included in the Appendices.

The first group was composed of five professionals, all members of Age Friendly Lethbridge Committee, and representing agencies serving seniors in Lethbridge. The second group was comprised of four seniors living in one of the lodges. One of them had a self-contained unit with a kitchen facility, the others took their meals at the lodge. All of them were members of one of the two Lethbridge senior's centres. One of them was in a wheelchair. The third group represented caregivers. Of the three persons in attendance, two of them were seniors themselves and members of one of the two Lethbridge seniors' centres. Two of the respondents cared for their senior parents at home, and one cared for a spouse in a long-term care facility. The seven participants of the fourth group all lived in an apartment building operated by Lethbridge Housing Authority. All of them had accessed services through one of the seniors' centres.

In addition, the consultant interviewed four professionals: Erin Vogt, the Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization (LSCO) Support Service Coordinator; David Ng, Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre Executive Director; Lorri Penner, Nord-Bridge Geriatric Social Worker/Member Support Coordinator; and Dr. Jennifer Mather, University of Lethbridge Faculty Member, Psychology Department.

Information regarding the specific needs and challenges of Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+ and new immigrant & refugee seniors found in the appendices was retrieved from recent Government of Canada publications (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018)

2.3. Document Outline

The community profile provides demographic information. Subsequent sections are organized around the eight domains of assessment. Each section includes a domain description, as outlined by WHO (World Health Organization, 2007) a summary of the features and elements found in the Alberta Age-Friendly Checklist (Alberta Health, 2012), a review of what Lethbridge is already doing and planning to do to support an age-friendly community, public survey and focus group findings. The analysis includes the identification of gaps in knowledge, age-friendly criteria not yet addressed with current initiatives and potential actions to be included in the action plan, and a list of Age-Friendly Lethbridge actions specific to the domain. Details about each action, with background information, responsibility, timeline, resources required, outputs, outcomes and indicators are found in the Action Plan section.

Age-friendly communities promote healthy and active aging. People in age-friendly communities are supported in maintaining their independence and have access to the community supports and services they need.

2.4.A Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

In 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Global Age-Friendly Cities Project (World Health Organization, 2019). Cities from around the world identified eight key domains of community life in which communities can become more age-friendly. WHO developed a checklist of features to consider under each of these domains (World Health Organization, 2007)

Age-Friendly Domains:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

In 2007, the Government of Canada endorsed the project (Government of Canada, 2016) and The Public Health Agency of Canada developed the Pan-Canadian Age-Friendly Communities Milestones. These milestones describe the steps to follow to successfully apply the model in Canada. They are:

- Establish an advisory committee that includes the active engagement of older adults
- Secure a local municipal council resolution to actively support, promote and work towards becoming age-friendly
- Establish a robust and concrete plan of action that responds to the needs identified by older adults in the community
- Demonstrate commitment to action by publicly posting the action plan
- Commit to measuring activities, reviewing action plan outcomes and reporting on them publicly

The Alberta Government (Government of Alberta, 2019) developed its Aging Population Policy Framework in 2010 (Government of Alberta, 2010). Facilitating age-friendly communities is one of the key directions in the framework. The guide for local action (Alberta Health, 2012) identifies four steps to create an age-friendly community:



1. Establish a committee that provides structure and leadership
2. Work with the local government to pass a resolution that formalizes the community's commitment to the process
3. Conduct an age-friendly assessment of the community
4. Create an action plan

Alberta Health adapted the WHO Age-Friendly Checklist around major aspects of community life for Alberta communities in 2012 (Alberta Health, 2012). In order for Alberta communities to be recognized as Age-Friendly communities (Government of Alberta, 2019), they have to create an age-friendly initiative, and complete an application package that includes the following: terms of reference of the advisory committee, a council resolution supporting the initiative, a needs assessment that includes a community profile, and a robust and concrete approved plan of action. Currently, only seven Alberta communities have obtained the designation, including Strathcona County, City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, City of Calgary, Villages of Glenwood, Hill Spring and Cardston County (Alberta Seniors and Housing , 2020)

Age-friendly initiatives need to be sustained in order to be successful. A recent article (Russel, Skinner, & Fowler, 2019) suggests several challenges to sustain an age-friendly initiative: overdependence on a small group of volunteers, insufficient professional capacity, the lack of on-going funding to sustain the age-friendly initiatives beyond the community needs assessment and plan, and goals that beyond the capacity of the age-friendly committees. The document identifies several strategies of success: (1) having a community champion who shoulders the workload; (2) partnership and collaboration between municipalities, public and not-for profit service delivery organizations, businesses and other stakeholders; and (3) long-term and embedded age-friendly capacity within local government.

3. Age Friendly Lethbridge Community Profile

3.1. Age Friendly Lethbridge

The City of Lethbridge adopted an overarching Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy (CWSS) in 2019, with the goal of coordinating and integrating multiple initiatives, programs and funding portfolios relating to community safety and social wellbeing into one strategy, ensuring that they are aligned to ensure collective impact (Community Social Development, 2019).

Age Friendly Lethbridge is a collaboration of community stakeholders working together to provide input into and shape an age-friendly community. It provides a process for stakeholders to come together to create a preferred future for older adult population within the community of Lethbridge. The committee has been in existence since 2003, first as the Senior Community Forum, now as Age Friendly Lethbridge. The committee's terms of reference are included in the appendices. Age Friendly Lethbridge is one of the committees contributing to the Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy.



One of the goals of the committee (Age Friendly Lethbridge , 2016) is to conduct research towards meeting the requirements for the WHO Age-Friendly Cities designation. A research committee consisting of members of the committee and academics with interest and expertise in aging was created to oversee the research.

As a first step, the City of Lethbridge contracted HarGroup Management Consultants to conduct a survey to examine issues affecting Lethbridge seniors and identify priority needs and issues, from the perspective of seniors (HarGroup Management Consultants, 2018). The telephone survey took place in June 2018 and included 500 Lethbridge residents, ages 45 or older. Three key findings emerged:

1. Lethbridge is perceived as a great place for seniors
2. Highest priority areas for need of improvement were housing, community support & health services, and transportation
3. Affordability of services is a concern

The top three priorities for improvement identified by respondents were housing (69% of all respondents), community support and health services (59%), and transportation (48%).

As a follow-up to the survey, Age Friendly Lethbridge engaged Wirzba Consulting to prepare a community profile, collect more in-depth information through a series of focus groups with key stakeholders, and facilitate the development of an action plan with concrete recommendations.

3.1.1. Action Items

The following three actions will strengthen Lethbridge’s commitment towards implementation of the Age Friendly Lethbridge action plan.

- Review and update Age Friendly Lethbridge Terms of Reference.
- Create outcome measurement plans for each initiative, based on desired outputs and outcomes.
- Pass a resolution to formalize Lethbridge’s commitment to be an age-friendly community.
- Achieve the Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition, the first step towards the Public Health Agency of Canada and World Health Organization age-friendly designations.

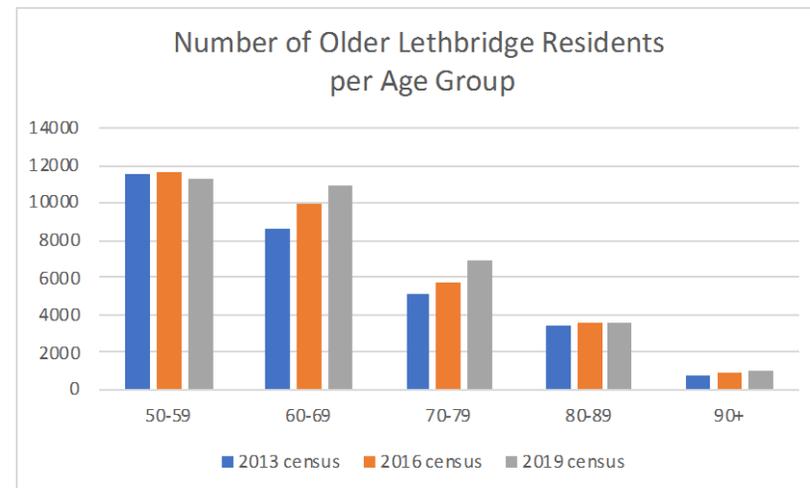
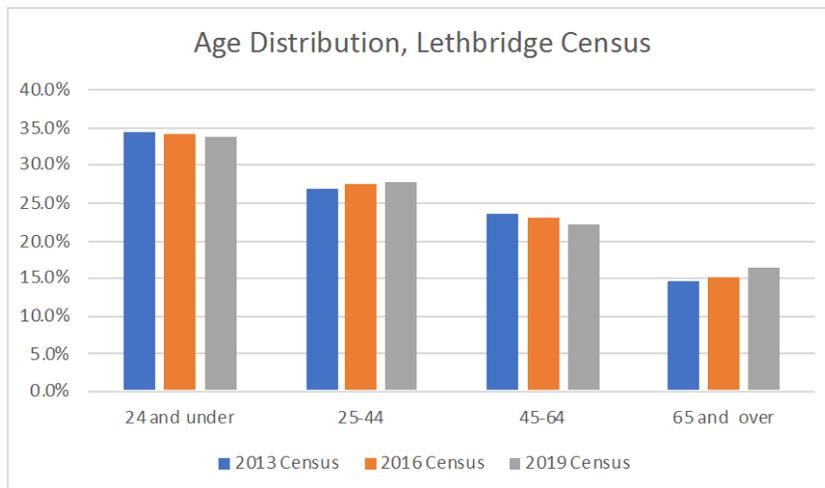
3.2. Demographic Information

Lethbridge has seen a steady growth in population of about 1.7% annually and had a population of 101,482 according to 2019 census results (City of Lethbridge, 2019). The average age increased from 38.1 in 2017 and 2018 to 38.4 in 2019.

According to the 2019 census, 16,598 Lethbridge residents were 65 years old or older. They represented 16.4% of all residents. In comparison, Red Deer had only 12.8% of seniors in 2019 (The City of Red Deer, 2019) and Grande Prairie had only 7.1% seniors in 2016 (SHS Consulting , 2019).

Between 2010 and 2019, the growth rate of seniors in Lethbridge was 39%, while the growth rate of the population as a whole was only 17% (City of Lethbridge, 2010) (City of Lethbridge, 2019). A comparison of the age distribution of residents per age group based on the 2013, 2016 and 2019 census results (City of Lethbridge, 2013) (City of Lethbridge, 2016), reveals that the percentage of residents 65 years old or older is increasing over time, from 14.7% in 2013 to 16.4% in 2019.

Based on the 2016 Census, Statistics Canada reports that the Lethbridge average age of the population was 39.5, nearly 2 years higher than the Alberta provincial average of 37.2 years old



In 2015, 14% of Lethbridge households were low income, compared to 10.9% in Alberta (Community Social Development , 2019). 2015 data suggests that Lethbridge had higher low-income rates across all age groups, compared to Alberta as a whole and to comparable municipalities (Grande-Prairie and Red Deer). Persons living in one-parent families had a rate of low income of 24.5% and those identifying as Indigenous a rate of low income at 26.9%. Lethbridge had a higher portion of government transfers (10.4%) compare to Alberta as a whole (6.7%).



Almost one quarter (23.7%) of households had a person reporting a disability. The most frequently reported disabilities were emotional, psychological and mental health conditions (10.4%), physical disabilities (10.0%), learning disabilities (6.6%), and vision impairment (6.3%) (Community Social Development, 2019).

The main challenges identified by Lethbridge citizens who responded to a public questionnaire during the recent Community Wellbeing Assessment (Community Social Development, 2019) were crime, violence, safety, substance use & addictions, and mental health. This is evidenced by, for example, there were 33,643 calls to Lethbridge Police Service in 2017, compared to 30,799 in 2016. Lethbridge has seen an increase in the number of fentanyl-related overdoses between 2016 and 2019, but the fentanyl-related death rates have decreased in the same period. Lethbridge has seen a spike in domestic violence (close to 1,700 reported case in 2017), three times higher than the Alberta average of 636 cases reported for 100,000 individuals in 2015.

Respondents identified the following key populations requiring particular attention as we look to achieve community wellbeing: Indigenous people, children and youth, seniors and newcomers. (Community Social Development, 2019).

3.3. Lethbridge as an Age-Friendly Community

3.3.1. A Municipal Commitment

The City of Lethbridge Council Strategic Plan's (City of Lethbridge, 2017) demonstrates a strong commitment to meet the age-friendly principles. For example, the community vision states that, "We will continue to work together to ensure that Lethbridge demonstrates active leadership in environmental stewardship and innovation and is recognized as being a safe, healthy, vibrant, prosperous, economic viable place where all people can fully participate in community life". Of the five strategic goals, three of them directly contribute to make the City age-friendly: people places for all, compassionate community, and liveable communities.

3.3.2. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The great majority of the 2018 survey respondents as well as the focus group participants perceived Lethbridge as a great community for seniors. The 2018 survey gathered the perspective of seniors (aged 65+) and mid-aged adults (aged 45 to 64). Overall, respondents were positive about living in Lethbridge.

The majority of respondents strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (48%) that Lethbridge was a great community for seniors to live.

A smaller percentage of respondents strongly agreed (35%) or agreed (46%) that Lethbridge was a safe place for seniors to live.

3.3.3. Focus Groups and Interview Results

Focus group participants and interviewees all agreed that Lethbridge was age-friendly, identifying several contributing factors:

“The size of the city is just about right.” Lethbridge is a relatively small community, with steady but small growth. It still has a small-town feeling, and there is quick access to where you need to go. It is a beautiful place, with many sunny days.

“Seniors choose Lethbridge because of the availability of senior housing at the time they wished to move, and at a financial rate that they can afford.” Lethbridge offers a range of housing options for seniors, including affordable housing.

“Lethbridge has a lot of resources for seniors.” Lethbridge has two vibrant seniors’ centres, offering numerous programs, services, and volunteer opportunities. There is a public transit system as well as transportation options geared to seniors. The city offers a range of community supports and services for seniors.

3.4. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

3.4.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: The external environment has a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives beyond the comfort of their homes. A clean city with well-maintained recreational areas, ample rest areas, well-developed and safe pedestrian and building infrastructure, and a secure environment provides an ideal living environment for seniors to age-in-place.

Areas of Assessment:

- Accessible, well-maintained, well-lit and cleared of snow and ice sidewalks, pathways and trails, parking lots, streets and rain shelters.
- Accessible public restrooms and rest areas located at convenient locations with proper signage.
- Safety and security, including programs and policies to support community safety and crime prevention.
- Accessible public buildings and businesses with ramps, non-slip flooring, doors that are easy to open, accessible washrooms, and parking.
- Accessible amenities, such as services that are in close proximity to where people live and that can be easily accessed.

3.4.2. Current Initiatives

The **Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy** (DCSS) (City of Lethbridge, 2019) is a city-led strategy developed in collaboration with other stakeholders, including the Heart of Our City Committee, Downtown Lethbridge Business Revitalization Zone, the Chamber of Commerce, Lethbridge Police Service (LPS), and the Canadian Mental Health Association. The plan was developed to address the real and/or perceived notion that downtown



Lethbridge is dirty and feels unsafe. The strategy includes a number of actions that will increase the safety and security of all citizens through enforcement, security, outreach, cleaning, promotion, education, and environmental improvements.

The 2018-2027 **Lethbridge Capital Improvement Program** (City of Lethbridge, 2019) includes several initiatives that will improve outdoor spaces and buildings. Planned transportation projects will include intersection improvement, bikeways/pathways/sidewalk maintenance and rehabilitation, accessibility improvement, and community lighting rehabilitation.

In response to the recent drug crisis and the surge in overdoses, Alberta Health funded a supervised consumption site (SCS) in downtown Lethbridge in February 2018. This resulted in increased citizens' concerns about discarded needles, crime, safety and anti-social behavior. As a response, the City engaged in a community consultation with citizens and service providers which informed the development and adoption of a **Community Led Drug Strategy** in March 2019 (Parson, 2019). The document includes goals, potential obstacles, strategies and an action plan. Safety of persons with addictions and of the community is embedded in all aspects of the strategy.

3.4.3. 2018 Survey Results

The survey did not include any general question asking the extent to which Lethbridge had age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings. Instead, respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which improvement was needed in each of the areas of assessment.

Twenty five percent or more of all respondents responded that timely snow removal (45%) and availability of public washrooms (25%) were in need of a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	A lot	Moderate	No Response
Timely snow removal on sidewalks and pathways.	45%	24%	6%
Available public washrooms in parks, pathways, and publicly accessible buildings.	25%	29%	14%
Smooth sidewalks and pathway surfaces for walking, use of wheelchairs, scooters and walkers.	20%	32%	5%
Sufficient outdoor lighting for seniors to feel comfortable going out at night.	20%	25%	11%
Safe pedestrian crosswalks at intersections and on roads.	16%	30%	4%
Available rest areas or seating in public places.	15%	27%	7%
Publicly accessible buildings, so that seniors can get into, around, and where they want to go when walking or using wheelchairs, scooters or walkers.	11%	28%	11%
Publicly accessible parks and outdoor spaces, so that seniors can get into, around, and where they want to go when walking or using wheelchairs, scooters or walkers.	10%	27%	9%

Four to 14% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to the need for improvement of outdoor spaces and buildings.

3.4.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

Focus group participants and interviewees identified three main challenges related to outdoor spaces and buildings.

All stated that snow removal could be improved. Seniors find it very unsafe to use sidewalks and bus stops when it snows. They noted that many of the non-priority snow routes in residential areas never get plowed. For those without snow removal services, they cannot even leave their home after a snowstorm because of the snow and ice between their door and the sidewalks. One respondent added that some homecare service providers don't do home visits when the sidewalks or access to senior homes are icy, indicating that there are unexpected consequences to a lack of snow removal

All focus group participants discussed general safety issues in Lethbridge. "It is not safe to go out at night, and sometimes even in daytime." Several of them stopped going to the downtown public library because of safety issues, panhandling, needle debris and car theft. Some of them linked the issues with the opioid crisis. They all were aware of the "people with the red vests", the Lethbridge Police Watch Program volunteers, and believed that safety had improved since the program was introduced.

Respondents also commented on the sidewalks. “I was in a wheelchair for a while and I found it very difficult to use the sidewalks.” The old sidewalks are worn out, and access from the street is sometimes difficult. Crossing roads is also difficult because of the cracks and bumps on the roads. “If I don’t walk looking down, I would probably fall more often than I do.” Many seniors use the city sidewalks but don’t go to parks because of the holes in the grass. Many businesses have handicap parking spots in front of their offices or stores, but sometimes, there is no access from the handicap parking to the sidewalk for persons with wheelchairs.

3.4.5. Action Item

- Develop a volunteer snow removal program.
- Document barriers faced by seniors, identify burning issues, and collectively address or share the issues with relevant City Departments.

3.5. Transportation

3.5.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: Accessible and affordable public transport is key to ensuring a city’s senior population is able to age actively and remain engaged with their community, with access to health and social facilities. Driving conditions and parking facilities in a city should also keep older drivers in mind.

Areas of Assessment:

- Roads that are well-maintained, well-lit, supported by clearly visible signage and pedestrian crossing controls that allow adequate time for people with limited mobility to cross.
- Parking lots and street parking located close to amenities, a sufficient number of parking spots for persons with disabilities, and safe drop-off areas.
- Prompt snow removal of public sidewalks, roads and parking areas.
- Accessible, affordable and convenient public transportation options that are reliable and frequent; affordable and accessible community transportation services to take citizens to local and out-of-town appointments; accessible transportation for persons with a range of disabilities.
- Information about the range of transportation services available to seniors and persons with disabilities.

3.5.2. Current Initiatives

The City of Lethbridge commissioned a **Lethbridge Transit Master Plan** (Stantec, 2017) that was released in 2017. The plan was developed based on a comprehensive engagement process that included surveys, online conversations, sounding boards, message boards, discussions, open houses, and interactive workshops. Several issues related to the transit system were highlighted:

- Long trips: current route structures make long trip times
- Transfer and transit inefficiencies: in order to allow for timed transfers at key points, there are times when buses wait for buses from other routes to make it to the key points, creating efficiency losses
- Expansion opportunities are limited because of the routes and timed transfers
- Public transit is not attractive because trip frequency is low, and routes are long

Since then, Lethbridge has changed some of the routes, updated their website (<https://www.lethbridge.ca/living-here/getting-around/Transit/Pages/default.aspx>), introduced the online myRIDE Trip Planner that allows citizens to plan their bus routes, mobile data terminals for real-time scheduling, and created a Bus Travel Training program. Seniors, ages 65+ pay the same cash fare as adults, but reduced rates are offered for rides offered in packages of 10 and monthly passes.

All buses have bike racks so that cyclists can enjoy the convenience of biking and busing on all Lethbridge Transit routes. Busses are equipped with low floor buses and a ramp to aid with boarding.

Access A Ride (AAR) is a service offered by the City of Lethbridge for people who are unable to use the regular transit system. It is a shared ride public transportation service that operates within the city limits. In order to register and be eligible, permanent residents of Lethbridge need to have a physical, sensory or cognitive disability, be assessed by a health professional, register and complete an application. The program has over 1,400 registered active clients at any given time and provides approximately 700 trips each day. The City operates 21 AAR buses. Bookings can be made online, 7 days in advance.

The **Fiscal and Operational Performance Review** (KPMG, 2019) released in November 2019 included a review of Lethbridge Transit. The report states the number of AAR rides per capita in Lethbridge is much higher than in comparable municipalities, because of the City of Lethbridge broad and loosely-enforced eligibility criteria. It also points out that the conventional transit fleet has been made highly accessible, and that many of the current ARR users could use regular busses instead. The authors recommend revising the eligibility criteria, standards and procedures. City Council approved the recommendations during their November 25, 2019 Council meeting. The findings and the recommendations will affect future services offered through Access a Ride.

The City of Lethbridge is in the process of developing a **Mobility Accessibility Plan** (City of Lethbridge , 2019) that will guide the optimization of physical infrastructure and will allow all people to have access to programs and services, including those with physical, sensory and cognitive disability. The City owns more than 270 buildings, manages 129 parks, 29 school grounds, 150 km of paved pathways and 50 km of natural pathways, 111 playgrounds and 1,800 furniture amenities (benches, picnic tables and garbage cans). The mobility/accessibility working group represents multiple City of Lethbridge departments, and is responsible to identify mobility and accessibility concerns and address them as budget and time permits. The City website indicates that the working group has been instrumental in many initiatives, such as identifying “missing links” in pathways and sidewalks, revisions to standards for pathways and benches, including barrier-free components in new parks, adding ramps, changes in pedestrian push buttons and lighting for pedestrian crossing, increasing the number of accessible bus stops, making buses more accessible, and including mobility as a consideration for all City capital grants.

The **Cycling Master Plan** (Stantec Consulting Ltd. & Alta Planning + Design, 2017) was created to “facilitate an increase in cycling through safe, well-designed, and well-located cycling infrastructure”, with the goal of making Lethbridge friendlier for those walking or biking. The goal of the plan is “to make cycling a realistic transportation option for all ages and abilities, contributing to our sustainable future”.

The **Lethbridge River Valley Parks Master Plan** (O2 Planning + Design Inc., 2017) provides direction and vision for the development and use of the Oldman River Valley. The plan was launched in 2014 and included an extensive community consultation, using sounding boards, open houses, surveys and online mapping tools. Input from stakeholders identified five themes: a need to improve connectivity and pathways, a desire to protect the natural environment and focus on sustainability; a need to improve accessibility to amenities, facilities and to celebrate the Indigenous cultural heritage; the improvement of accessibility and safety; and ongoing stewardship. The plan was designed to “create a balance between preservation and recreation that will increase safe access and connectivity to Lethbridge River Valley amenities, while preserving the ecological, cultural and historical integrity of the landscape to continue providing diverse opportunities for nature-based recreation in the future.”

Since 2008, the **Go Friendly Shuttle Service** is a door-to-door transportation service between member homes and Nord-Bridge Senior Citizens Association (Nord-Bridge) or Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization (LSCO). The service started as a pilot project of the City of Lethbridge, Lethbridge Transit and Nord-Bridge. Nord-Bridge and LSCO each fundraised to purchase two shuttles. Both vehicles are leased to the City Transit. Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) subsidizes the actual cost to run the program. Nord-Bridge and LSCO members can book their transportation with the Go Friendly Shuttle, and pay a flat fee, which is equivalent to a regular transit fare. They can use their LA Breeze card or Monthly LA Transit Breeze card to pay for the shuttle. In 2017, Go Friendly offered 5,731 rides to Nord-Bridge members (15 to 38 rides/day). LSCO has had 31 unique Go Friendly passengers in 2017, 18 regular and 13 occasional users. Together they used the shuttle 1,511 days, for a total of 2,899 rides.

The **Red Arrow** (<https://www.redarrow.ca/>) currently offers two bus trips a day between Lethbridge and Calgary and has accessibility services. **J&L Shuttle Services** (<https://www.jandlshuttle.com/>) offers two trips a day between Lethbridge and Calgary, with pick-up at the door and drop off at several Calgary hospitals. **Shuttle on the Go** (<https://shuttleonthego.ca/>) is a private shuttle company offering daily door-to-door services between Lethbridge and Calgary.

3.5.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The majority of survey respondents strongly agreed (30%) or agreed (53%) that Lethbridge has suitable options available for seniors to get around the city, such as use of personal vehicle, public transportation, walking or using wheelchairs, scooters or walkers.

Twenty five percent or more of all respondents responded that convenient parking spots (28%) were in need of a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #2: Transportation	A lot	Moderate	No response
Convenient parking spots.	28%	24%	6%
Affordability of transit, accessible transportation and taxis.	23%	26%	23%
Accessible transportation methods for seniors with mobility or cognitive challenges.	21%	29%	18%
Availability of public transportation.	19%	29%	14%
Delivery options from local stores, restaurants and other services.	10%	24%	15%
Road signs easy to see and read.	15%	20%	7%
Sufficient lighting on roads.	13%	21%	10%

Six to 23% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to the need for improvement of transportation. The question about affordability had the highest percentage of non-response (23%), possibly reflecting the fact that respondents did not have a need to use public transportation and/or were not aware of costs involved.

3.5.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

All focus group participants and interviewees agreed that Lethbridge citizens rely on driving their own vehicles. Many seniors feared having their drivers' licenses removed. As a result, the public transportation system is not as developed as it is in other communities. However, seniors who

used the bus were pleased with the service and stated that bus drivers went beyond their duty to accommodate seniors with wheelchairs and walkers, taking the time to help them get settled in their seats.

All seniors appreciated the Access a Ride service. “Access a Ride in Lethbridge is better than in other cities.” They agreed that the service allowed seniors to get to their appointments on time, that the dispatchers and bus drivers were friendly and helpful, and that the service was affordable. Some seniors had used Access a Ride to go to concerts and to church, and appreciated the availability. Some had concerns about having to book appointments 7-10 days in advance, long waits for pick-ups after appointments, and the fact that it was hard getting appointments early in the morning and in the afternoon, when school starts or finishes. They believed that children and students needing Access a Ride had priorities over seniors.

Some seniors had used taxi services, and although they thought it was expensive, they appreciated the friendliness of taxi drivers. Others expressed their appreciation for the Go Friendly Shuttles.

Respondents said that most grocery stores were located at the outskirts of town, not within walking distance of residential areas and seniors residences. Several of them had their groceries delivered, but they resented the cost. “Can you believe it? Safe on Food charges \$7.95 and London Road Market \$10.49 for grocery delivery!” They felt that the cost affected their ability to buy additional food.

3.5.5. Action Item

- Advocate for improved usability of Access a Ride busses and public transit.

3.6. Housing

3.6.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: The housing conditions of older people are often linked to their quality of life and whether they are able to age independently and actively in their community. Appropriate housing design and its proximity to community and social services allow older residents to live comfortably and safely, while housing affordability gives them peace of mind.

Areas of Assessment:

- Availability of a range of appropriate and affordable housing options, located in close proximity to public, commercial and religious services, and that are responsive to local needs.
- Availability of services that support aging in the place, including home supports, assistance to citizens who live alone, housing modification services, new housing that considers principles of universal design, and access to information on financial assistance programs.

3.6.2. Current Initiatives

The recent **Lethbridge Community Wellbeing Needs Assessment Report** (Community Social Development , 2019) reports that rental vacancy rates have remained above 3% since 2017, but that rental costs were high with 21% of renters paying more than half of their income in shelter costs.

The City of Lethbridge commissioned a **Housing Needs Assessment** (SHS Consulting, 2019) that led to the development of a new **Housing Strategy** (SHS Consulting , 2019) in 2019. The needs assessment included a review of available data and a series of consultation activities through meetings, an online survey, key informant interviews, engagement sessions and workshops. In 2016, there were 37,575 households in Lethbridge. Households led by seniors (aged 65 or over) and by older adults (ages 45 to 64) made up 23.7% and 34.3% of all households. Almost 69% of all Lethbridge households owned their homes, less than the 72% of all households in the Province of Alberta.

Eight organizations provide supportive living specifically for seniors. In 2016, Lethbridge had 1,610 beds/units for seniors who maintain an active lifestyle but need some support to maintain their independence. There is a waitlist for senior supportive housing, but there are also vacancies in some of the older and smaller units. There are two long-term care providers in Lethbridge, with 204 licensed beds. Depending on the time of the year, there are between 20 and 40 individuals waiting for one of these beds.

In 2016, Lethbridge had 89 individuals and families currently homeless or at risk of homelessness, indicating a gap in availability of supportive housing. Lethbridge had a higher percentage of households with a person with a disability than the Province of Alberta. In 2017, Lethbridge had a 4.9% vacancy rate for rental apartments in the primary market (purpose-built rental property) and a vacancy rate of 5.7% in older rental apartments.

The Housing Needs Assessment identified the following priorities: more subsidized rental housing options; more housing units which are program specific and meet the need for support services and accessibility; ensuring that existing rental housing stock is in good condition; and diversifying the housing supply in order to meet the demands of smaller households, households with a physical disability, and the aging population.

SHS estimates that between 2019 and 2025, Lethbridge will need 3,900 additional housing units for low income households, of which 390 should be supportive housing units and 100 units for households with moderate incomes. The authors recommend that 15% of all new housing units built in Lethbridge each year should be affordable to households with low incomes, and that 30% of these should be supportive housing, most of which should be barrier-free.

3.6.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The majority of survey respondents strongly agreed (31%) or agreed (54%) that programs and services are available to Lethbridge seniors to help them live independently as they age.

Twenty five percent or more of all respondents indicated that availability of affordable housing (41%), a range of housing options (36%), affordable services for caregiving in seniors’ homes (28%), affordable home-assisted devices or modification (27%), affordability of services and supports for house maintenance (26%), and availability of emergency housing (26%) were in need of a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #3: housing	A lot	Moderate	No response
Availability of affordable housing.	41%	29%	14%
Availability of housing options from independent living to nursing homes when seniors need them.	36%	30%	13%
Affordable services that provide caregiving to help seniors remain in their own homes.	28%	24%	29%
Affordable services and supports that help seniors with house maintenance for both inside and outside the home.	27%	27%	30%
Affordable home assisted devices or home modification that enable ease of movement and safety in homes of seniors.	27%	24%	30%
Availability of emergency housing.	26%	20%	42%
Suitable proximity of senior options to community and health services and other publicly accessible services.	22%	33%	14%

Thirteen to 42% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to the need for improvement of housing. Four questions had very high percentages of non-response: emergency housing (42%), services and supports with housing maintenance (30%), home assistive devices or home modification (30%) and affordability of services for caregiving in their own homes (29%). This may reflect a lack of awareness or need to inquire about such services.

3.6.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

All focus group respondents and interviewees agreed that Lethbridge has a wide range of housing options for seniors, but that seniors may not be knowledgeable about the range of housing options. Some respondents suggested that there is a need for more housing options for seniors with limited mobility, or for long-term care beds.

Others commented that most affordable independent living housing options and some of the lodges were built 40 to 50 years ago and may not currently be very appealing. Some of the available rooms in senior lodges are very small.

Service providers believed that younger seniors have different expectations in terms of food options, space and services than seniors in their 80s and 90s. “Expectations for food and activities are far different for seniors who are 65 to 75 years old than for older seniors.”

Affordability was a common theme. “Some seniors have limited choice because of affordability.” Seniors who live in their own home, and pay only city taxes and utilities, may find the rental costs very high. Some, but not all of the senior residences have rental subsidies available, based on seniors’ annual income. Several respondents were resentful of the fact that some senior residences operated as private businesses. One noted that when a spouse passes away, it takes several months until the surviving spouse has access to the documents stating their current income and the level of subsidies they are eligible for.

If seniors stay in their own homes instead of moving to a residential facility because of affordability or choice, they may not get the services and support they need. “People who stay in place may be at risk for isolation and health concerns.” “My parents are still at home, and it’s a huge challenge for them. I (caregiver) believe that they are living in a home that does not accommodate their needs.”

Caregivers and service providers suggested that while aging in place may be a very good option, “in some cases, seniors stay at home too long, and when they have to move, they may no longer be able to physically or mentally deal with the move. “

Several seniors and caregivers stated that access to financial help to support aging in place is based on income levels, and that those who are just under assistance thresholds struggle to pay for help with cleaning, snow removal... “If you are a homeowner with a fixed income that is over the threshold of poverty, but under the threshold of living a quality life, you have to make choices on which food or medication you buy, or whether to repair your leaking roof.”

When seniors are no longer deemed fit to stay in their current residence, they will be assessed by Alberta Health Services (AHS) Continuing Care Access Centre in Lethbridge and placed on a waitlist, dependant on available beds in the region. A request for a particular facility or circumstance will affect the length of time they wait. “It has been very difficult for a lot of seniors, when they are uprooted from their communities and told that they will be placed in another community.” “When you need the next level of care, you have to take whatever is open at that time. And sometimes it means that you will not even stay in Lethbridge, or that spouses cannot stay together anymore. “

3.6.5. Action Item

- Advocacy for senior housing.
- Document and share information regarding housing options and subsidies.

3.7. Social Participation

3.7.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community fosters seniors' continued integration with society and helps them stay engaged and informed. Seniors' participation in such activities, is affected by access to transport and facilities, their awareness of such activities and affordability.

Areas of assessment:

- Availability of a range of events and activities for people of all ages that are accessible, include outdoor and indoor activities and intergenerational events; that include enrichment and learning opportunities; and that are well-advertised for all, including persons with disabilities.
- Ongoing outreach efforts to include people who are isolated or at risk of social isolation, including neighborhood programs.

3.7.2. Current Initiatives

Several of the community projects included in the **Lethbridge Capital Improvement Plan** (City of Lethbridge, 2019) will contribute to increasing social participation: completion of the West Side ATB Leisure complex, Legacy Park and Yates Centre, maintaining the parks and pathway systems, maintaining and upgrading the Galt Museum parking lot, the Spitz Stadium grand stand, Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden, Libraries, and Galt Gardens.

LSCO **Meals on Wheels** is a charitable organization providing home delivery of hot, nutritious meals. In 2017, LSCO delivered 13,500 meals, feeding 55 to 70 people every day. In addition to nutrition, the program offers ongoing opportunities for health and safety assessments, through the initial intake process and regular meal delivery to the client's home. Volunteers use a communication binder to alert the program coordinator about meaningful information. The program also contributes to a reduction in social isolation, through regular home visits.

Both **LSCO and Nord-Bridge** provide a range of events and activities for seniors, including arts & craft, education, writing, exercise and fitness, games, a library, gaming, social events, music, and day trips. Both have a restaurant that offers daily breakfast and lunch, special meals and catering. Both make home visits to senior members who are isolated or sick.

Lethbridge does not have an Indigenous senior centre, but the **Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Centre** and **Opokaa'sin Early Intervention Society** both offer intergenerational programming and volunteer opportunities. Seniors are reportedly well integrated in both organizations.

The Lethbridge **Southern Alberta Ethnic Association** (<https://saea.ca/>) has been in existence for approximately 40 years. Its objectives are to promote understanding and celebrate cultural diversity, to promote awareness of different cultural practices, and to act as a multicultural hub for all Canadians, immigrants and refugees. Its current benefit to Lethbridge seniors is unknown.

Many Lethbridge event organizers offer senior rates or discounted tickets to concerts and events, and faith communities offer a number of fellowship and volunteer opportunities for seniors.

3.7.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The majority of survey respondents strongly agreed (32%) or agreed (54%) that opportunities are available for seniors to be connected and involved with other residents living in Lethbridge.

Survey respondents did not see a high need for improvement regarding social participation. None of the areas of inquiries was perceived by 25% or more of the respondents as needing a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #4: Social Participation	A lot	Moderate	No response
Availability of services so that seniors who have challenges with mobility or leaving their homes can be active.	24%	30%	23%
Venues and facilities in convenient locations where seniors can be active.	18%	32%	12%
Affordable community programs, social events, recreation activities, and attractions for seniors.	18%	29%	16%
Available opportunities for seniors to interact with residents of all ages.	16%	28%	15%
Availability of information about how seniors can be active.	13%	26%	20%
Availability of opportunities for seniors to be active.	11%	37%	13%

Twelve to 22% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to the need for improvement of social participation. The questions with the highest percentages of non-response were about availability of services for seniors with mobility challenges to be active (23%) and information about how seniors can be active (20%). This may reflect a lack of awareness and knowledge, or the fact that respondents have not yet had the need to inquire about such services.

3.7.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

Focus group respondents and interviewees agreed that seniors in Lethbridge had access to a wide range of activities. “If you have a desire to go, I don’t think there are too many insurmountable obstacles. But some seniors just don’t want to go anywhere.” “At the seniors centre, I can see people who are in wheelchairs, who have multiple disabilities, things against them, and losses. But they are showing up to do things for their community, and I love that. “

Some suggested that entertainment in Lethbridge was expensive, and that senior rates were not available everywhere. Some wished there would be more entertainment, catering to the needs of seniors. We don’t get a lot of really classic stuff. “There is a lot of entertainment at the Enmax, but you have to like that stuff.”

Most seniors stated that public locations, such as the Galt Museum, and the Enmax Centre, had good access, and that they were able to use public transportation, especially “Access A Ride” to go to events, even in the evenings and on weekends.

3.7.5. Action Item

- Gather additional information on social inclusion of some senior groups, such as Indigenous seniors, recent immigrant seniors, and seniors who identify as LGBTQ2S+.
- Document existing initiatives and pilot new initiatives to address seniors’ loneliness & isolation issues.

3.8. Respect and Social Inclusion

3.8.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: An inclusive society encourages older people to participate more in their city’s social, civic and economic life. This, in turn, promotes active ageing.

Areas of assessment:

- All citizens are treated respectfully.
- Programs on how to treat others with respect and empathy are offered to children and youth.
- Citizens of all ages and ability are encouraged to participate in community dialogues and conversations.
- Those providing services to the public are courteous, helpful and attuned to the needs of all citizens.
- Community events are accessible to all.

3.8.2. Current Initiatives

Lethbridge is home to a large number of cultural groups. In 2016 there were 5,285 Indigenous people living in Lethbridge, representing 6% of the population. This is an increase of 40% since 2011 (Community Social Development , 2019). The Indigenous population is younger than the non-Indigenous population. Lethbridge has also seen an increase in diversity, as more refugees began immigrating to Lethbridge. 12.6% of Lethbridge residents identify as members of a visible minority.

Lethbridge has been a member of the **Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD)** since 2007 (Iyilade JR, 2019). CMARD brings together municipalities that want to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance. CMARD member municipalities promote social inclusion, establish policies to eradicate all forms of racism and discrimination, and foster human rights and diversity. The **Lethbridge Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities committee** was established in 2007, and its work supported by an Inclusion Consultant. The Diversity and Inclusion Specialist (formally Diversity Consultant) supports the work of the committee, as well as the City of Lethbridge Human Resources department. In 2018, the CMARD committee started a process to develop a new strategic and action plan with the goal of reimagining, refreshing and remolding the CMARD model (CMARD, 2019). Two community consultations took place in April 2019. The 40 participants affirmed the work of the committee, and guided the development of a new model, a community-based network with representatives from community and public sector organizations, individuals representing the diversity within the community, and those who are passionate about creating a welcoming and inclusive community. New terms of reference, and a new coalition, at arm's length from the City. were developed and adopted in 2019. The **Lethbridge Diversity and Inclusion Alliance** has a broad membership that represents cultural groups and associations, faith groups, gender and sexually diversity communities, Indigenous groups, persons with health, wellness & disability challenges, new Canadians, seniors, visible minorities, youth, women, businesses, and Funders. It reports to City Council.

The **CMARD Building Bridges Community Action Plan** for 2019-2022 (CMARD Committee, 2019), now working under the name of the Lethbridge Diversity and Inclusion Alliance, includes a number of actions that will foster awareness, build participation, partnership and commitment, and to create a safe community. For example, the Bonvenon initiative will work with downtown businesses and organizations to create a culture of diversity and inclusion by providing training and recognition to participating businesses. A public education campaign will inform citizens about racism and discrimination, human rights, equitable policies and practices, and research-based best practices for inclusion. Monthly coalition meetings and lunch & learn sessions will provide opportunities for community members to come together and discuss issues related to inclusion, diversity and equity in a safe space. CMARD will promote diversity and inclusion-related events, create a database of local experts, facilitators, speakers and trainers with expertise in inclusion, diversity and equality, and support organizations offering Indigenous awareness and cultural competency training. They will support youth organizations, develop a recognition program for schools and students, organizes two Welcoming



and Inclusive Community Conferences in 2020 and 2022, and develop a response model to document and respond to incidents of racism and discrimination.

The **Lethbridge Elder Abuse Response Network (LEARN)** is a collaboration of human services organizations that responds to and provides education, awareness and advocacy for those at risk of or already experiencing abuse, and to the community at large. The network consists of a full-time Case Manager, a part time Coordinator, a Steering Committee made up of representatives from Alberta Health Services, Lethbridge Police Service, Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization, and the City of Lethbridge, as well as representatives from 29 human support service agencies. The LEARN Case Manager is responsible for responding to complaints or concerns of elder abuse, making contact with suspected victims, arranging a home or office visit, assessing risk and making a safety plan, assisting in determining needs and setting goals, providing emotional support, consulting with other professionals and referring to organizations and support, and following up with clients to ensure continued safety and connection to community. Case Management services are provided free of charge within the City of Lethbridge and County of Lethbridge.

The **Hoarding Outreach Management & Education (HOME) Committee** is a partnership between The City of Lethbridge, Alberta Health Services, Volunteer Lethbridge, the Seniors Centres, the Office of the Public Guardian/Trustee, Lethbridge Housing Authority, and others (Lethbridge Housing Authority, 2019). It provides consultation, education and intervention. Through their work, individuals who live with hoarding disorders have opportunities to become less isolated, to develop or restore social connections and to access the support systems they need.

3.8.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

Almost all respondents strongly agreed (72%) or agreed (20%) that they would like to continue to live in Lethbridge as I grow older.

The majority of respondents strongly agreed (42%) or agreed (36%) that they have friends and family available when I need help as they grow older.

Survey respondents saw a moderate need for improvement regarding respect and social inclusion. “Issues affecting seniors being considered by residents of all ages” was perceived as needing the most improvement with 25% seeing a need for a lot of improvement in that area.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #5: respect and social inclusion	A lot	Moderate	No Response
Issues that affect seniors being considered by residents of all ages.	25%	34%	12%
Seniors being valued by residents of all ages.	21%	36%	9%
Seniors from different backgrounds being accepted by residents of all ages.	20%	36%	10%
Seniors are being treated respectfully by residents of all ages.	15%	33%	8%
Service providers, retail clerks, and public transportation drivers being respectful to seniors.	7%	23%	23%

Eight to 23% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to the need for improvement of respect and social inclusion. This may reflect a lack of awareness or need to think about it.

3.8.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

All the seniors interviewed identified as Caucasian of European origin. They all agreed that those living in senior residential facilities and members of the two senior centres were almost all Caucasian. They did not know much about Indigenous seniors, or new immigrant seniors.

Most seniors agreed that overall Lethbridge seniors were respected and included. However, they knew about seniors who were isolated, or who experienced discrimination. “Seniors are sometimes seen as an inconvenience. People say that they don’t drive well, or that they are too slow in the grocery store, that type of thing. Some believe it is acceptable to devalue old people.” “ I think Lethbridge is getting better at social inclusion over time, but we are not there yet.”

3.8.5. Action Item

- Partner with Lethbridge Diversity and Inclusion Alliance (LDIA).

3.9. Civic Participation and Employment

3.9.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: Older people are an asset to the community, and they continue contributing to their communities after retirement. An age-friendly community provides opportunities for older people to do so, be it through voluntary or paid employment, and keeps them engaged in the political process.

Areas of assessment:

- Civic participation: citizens of varying ages, abilities and backgrounds are represented on councils, boards and committees; there are volunteer options for seniors and persons with disabilities; volunteer options allow for intergenerational interactions.
- Employment policies encourage diversity in age, ability, skills and experience and offer flexible work and employee development opportunities.
- Transportation is available and accessible to older adults who wish to volunteer or remain employed and workplaces are willing and able to adapt worksites to meet the needs of older adults and those with disabilities.

3.9.2. Current Initiatives

Lethbridge has a diversified economy and a relatively low rate of employment at 4.8 percent. The public sector accounts for 9 of the top 10 major employers, including health care, education and government services (Community Social Development , 2019).

In its **2019-2022 Business Plan** (Economic Development Lethbridge, 2019), Economic Development Lethbridge commits to align with City Council’s strategic plan and to develop and maintain “suitable economic, social, cultural, learning, environmental and political environments in which balanced growth may be realized, increasing the prosperity of the community.” The 25-member Economic Development Lethbridge Board includes members of the Indigenous, the multicultural and the senior communities.

The 2018-2027 **Lethbridge Capital Improvement Program Plan** (City of Lethbridge, 2019) is based on a number of evaluation criteria. Six of the 10 criteria used to evaluate community projects contribute to making Lethbridge age-friendly: community support, well-designed city, community vibrancy, social impact, health and safety improvement and environmental impact.

3.9.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The survey did not include any general questions asking the extent to which Lethbridge promoted civic participation and employment for seniors. Instead, respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which improvement was needed in each of the areas of assessment.

Survey respondents saw a moderate need for improvement regarding civic participation and employment. No area of inquiry was perceived by 25% or more of the respondents as needing a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #6: civic participation	A lot	Moderate	No response
Available opportunities for seniors to be employed in the workforce.	20%	28%	25%
Flexible workplaces to accommodate seniors as employees.	20%	23%	31%
Available opportunities for seniors to participate and engage in civic and government-related issues.	11%	22%	21%
Available opportunities for seniors to volunteer in the community.	6%	18%	10%

Ten to 31% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to the need for improvement of civic participation and employment.

3.9.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

All respondents knew that both seniors’ centres offer peer support and volunteer opportunities.

Many seniors were volunteering. One was involved with several committees and boards; one taught sewing to persons with disabilities; one took other seniors shopping. “It is easy to find volunteer opportunities at the senior centres, or through Volunteer Lethbridge. It is too bad that if you volunteer, you are asked over and over because they know you.” “People have great respect for us when we volunteer.”

Some continued in paid employment long after their official retirement. “I was a doorman at Wal-Mart for five years. I quit when I was 85. It was fantastic. It got me mixing with people instead of just sitting in my house. It was not difficult to get the job.”

3.9.5. Action Item

- Host a yearly Age-Friendly Lethbridge Forum

3.10. Communication and Information

3.10.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing, especially with the trend of information overload in urbanized cities. Technology can be employed to spread information quickly, but can

also play a role in social exclusion. Cities must provide access to information to seniors in an accessible format, and bear in mind the wide range of needs and resources older people have.

Areas of assessment:

- Widespread communication about events and programs, including to citizens who may be socially isolated.
- Communication is accessible to all (such as printed in large letters, available in alternate format); literacy programs are available, telephone services provide an option to speak with a real person, and access to computers and the internet is available at a local centre such as a public library).

3.10.2. Current Initiatives

The City of Lethbridge recently introduced the **Lethbridge 311 online and telephone portal** (<https://311.lethbridge.ca/en-US/>) where residents can get information and submit service requests in one, easy-to-access location.

Community Links (www.communitylinks.ca) is the information and referral source of community, health, social and government services and programs in southern Alberta. Community LINKS provides: a one stop resource to connect people to services and programs, an accredited Information and Referral Specialist, a website designed to give the most up-to-date information about services in the region, a monthly events calendar and a Lethbridge Housing Registry. A printed "Getting Connected Guide" helping individuals in need of support and information that is published several times per year and is available electronically through the Community LINKS Service Directory. Community Links is a member of Age Friendly Lethbridge. The booth at the downtown Lethbridge Library has existed since 2016, but relatively few seniors report stopping to ask for information.

The monthly **LSCO Times Publication** and the **Nord-Bridge newsletter** are widely available in the community and offer information about events and programs in the community.

Both LSCO and Nord-Bridge seniors' centres have social workers funded through FCSS Lethbridge, responsible to provide **information, navigation support**, and short-term case management to seniors asking for help with access to services and support.

3.10.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The majority of respondents agreed (45%) or strongly agreed (21%) that they considered themselves informed about how to access programs and services that are available to seniors in Lethbridge.

Survey respondents saw a moderate need for improvement regarding communication and information. No area of inquiry was perceived by 25% or more of the respondents as needing a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #7: communication and information	A lot	Moderate	No response
Available information to help seniors with health care needs.	23%	15%	15%
Available information to help seniors report concerns about facilities, programs and services.	20%	24%	28%
Available information about senior’s facilities, programs, and services.	16%	29%	14%
Available translation or interpreter services to help seniors whose first language is not English use community facilities, programs and service.	15%	16%	54%
Publicly accessible computers and Internet access for seniors.	15%	27%	27%
Information about programs and services located in places where seniors go to or gather.	11%	22%	28%

Fourteen to 54% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to communication and information. In particular, 54% did not answer the question related to translation and interpretation, 28% did not answer the question regarding facilities, programs and services, and 28% did not answer the question regarding location of information.

3.10.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

Service providers agreed that Age Friendly Lethbridge provided a valuable service in the community. The committee provides a venue for sharing information and resources, and for working on issues together. “Some things, we need to do as a community rather than just an agency.” A recent example is how several people got together to research how to best help seniors who can’t identify a next of kin. However, respondents believed that more sectors should be represented. “We need more people in health care and people with lived experience.” Some would like the committee to be more than a networking group, to have a stronger voice, and to take on some projects.

Focus group participants and interviewees agreed that seniors have insufficient knowledge about available services and supports. “There are many people who are not getting the support they need because they are isolated or because they don’t know about what is available.” “I don’t know how many times somebody ends up at Nord-bridge and comments that they didn’t even know that Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre existed or did not know that they could get help here.” “You know, I lived (in this residence) for almost three years before I knew we had a community service worker.”

One person felt that professionals could be intimidating. “The doctor tells me I have to go to Calgary, then they tell me to sign papers. They tell me these things in Greek and Latin and I don’t understand. You have to put a lot of faith in them!”

Several respondents believed that certain seniors may be too proud to ask for help. “In Southern Alberta you do your own, you don’t ask for help. And if something happens, you suck it up.” Seniors have a great sense of pride, and they are going to try to handle things themselves. We don’t talk to people about our problems.”

Most seniors who participated in the focus groups were knowledgeable about the professional and peer navigation services offered at both seniors centres, and in their residences. “I get information from other residents. If they don’t know, they will help me find the information. The manager and the assistant manager at the Lodge also help us. “If I can’t figure it out by myself, I go to a counselor/our community service worker.” At the Lodge, we have a nurse who comes in the building. She is in charge of homecare. And she goes out of her way to do little things for us. “ Some seniors had looked for information in the yellow pages, searched websites, or had called 311. “I have used 311. I was looking for information on Henderson Pool. They put me through to the manager of the swimming pools, and they provided the information I needed after a few days.”

Many seniors would like to see more avenues for seniors to access information and help. Interestingly, only one senior knew that Community Links was a source of information and support. Most of them did not know about Community Links, and those who had seen the booth at the Library avoided going there. “I assumed that it was for those with ‘mental health issues’. When I asked them what they did, they just mentioned mental health.” (It is possible that the mention of mental health referred to the fact that Community Link is a program of Canadian Mental Health Association.)

Seniors spoke about how difficult it was for them to use automated phone systems. They find it difficult to understand the menus and voice-activated commands, and the long wait-time on the phone is difficult to handle. “In the old days you could speak to somebody on the phone! When you listen to the music and hear “We appreciate your call. Please stay on the line” ten times, you hang up. We need human contact.” “I would find it very beneficial if there was one phone number to call to receive service, instead of being tossed from one person to the next.” “If you have a complaint to make, you should be able to talk to the person you want, not where they refer you to.”

Seniors also complained about the increase in computer-based services, including the public transit schedules, the “Access A Ride” bookings, and home delivery for groceries. Not all seniors have access to the technology or fully understand it. One service provider shared that some of the seniors asking for help are illiterate. They may have coped with illiteracy for their whole life but going through the paperwork during retirement is really hard for them. For example, in order to access Alberta Seniors’ Benefits, you have to complete an application form.

3.10.5. Action Item

- Develop an information strategy specific to services for seniors.
- Share consistent and accurate messages about Age Friendly Lethbridge and its member agencies across Lethbridge agencies.
- Provide input to City of Lethbridge strategies from an age-friendly lens.

3.11. Community Support and Health Services

3.11.1. Description and Areas of Assessment

Domain Description: Accessible and affordable community and health services are crucial in keeping seniors healthy, independent and active. This involves an appropriate supply of aged care services conveniently located close to where older people live, with trained health and social workers to provide these services.

Areas of assessment:

- An adequate range of affordable and accessible home health and support services available including meal options, delivery services or escorted shopping services.
- Facilities such as health, social services, and housing options are conveniently located and accessible.
- Citizens, including caregivers, are well informed about services they are eligible for.

3.11.2. Current Initiatives

Lethbridge participates in the **Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)** program of the Government of Alberta which provides funding on an 80%/20% cost-shared basis with municipalities and towns (Schissel, 2012). The program funds community-driven, preventative social initiatives that enhance the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. FCSS invests in prevention, early intervention and community development, and increases the quality of life for Lethbridge citizens, including youth, families and seniors. In 2019, FCSS provides funding for 14 different programs, including the two seniors' centres.

The Lethbridge **Community Wellbeing Safety Strategy Project recognized** four strategic priorities: (1) systems planning & integration, (2) safe and resilient communities, (3) basis needs, and (4) social inclusion (Community Social Development, 2019). Addressing the four priorities will contribute to ensuring that community supports are available and coordinated, that individuals and communities are safe and thrive, that basis needs are adequate and accessible, and that citizens are engaged in community and have a sense of belonging.

Alberta Health Services South Zone is responsible for coordinating **Home Care services** in Lethbridge and area. They provide support for people with medical needs, including daily living activities to support aging in home. Services include nursing, personal care, respite, palliative care, wound care, self-managed care and living options assessments. Services are provided by contracted non-profit agencies.

The geriatric social worker at Nord-Bridge Seniors' Centre facilitates the **COMPASS for Caregivers** support group three times a year for a fee. COMPASS for Caregivers is a supportive 9-module workshop facilitated by someone who understands how difficult caregiving can be. COMPASS encourages caregivers to care for themselves, teaches about self-care, and provides navigation information and strategies. The group meets two hours a week for eight weeks, takes a break for six weeks, then meets for a final session. She also facilitates a **Grief Recovery** eight-week program. There are costs to both programs, \$150 for COMPASS for Caregivers and \$20 for the Grief Recovery program.

Several organizations offer **peer- or caregiver-support** to individuals who provide unpaid support, care and assistance to seniors and individuals with long-term illnesses or disabilities.

3.11.3. 2018 Senior Survey Results

The majority of respondents strongly agreed (34%) or agreed (52%) that Lethbridge has the facilities, programs and services needed to support healthy lifestyles among seniors.

Two thirds of all respondents strongly agreed (20%) or agreed (48%) that Lethbridge is an affordable place for seniors.

Two thirds of all respondents strongly agreed (29%) or agreed (39%) that they are comfortable that they will have sufficient funds to pay for their daily living as they grow older.

Just over half of all respondents strongly agreed (33%) or agreed (21%) that in the past 12 months, they have been involved in accessing senior programs and services in Lethbridge, either for themselves or on behalf of a senior.

Twenty five percent or more of all respondents indicated that affordability of dental care (48%), and affordability of other health services (36%) were in need of a lot of improvement.

Percentage of all respondents who saw a need for a lot or moderate improvement in domain #8: Community Supports and Health Services	A lot	Moderate	No response
Affordability of dental care for seniors	48%	20%	19%
Affordability of other health services such as physical, vision, and hearing for seniors.	36%	30%	13%
Availability of family or general practitioner doctors for seniors to access.	24%	31%	10%
Availability of respite services for unpaid caregivers who take care of seniors.	23%	20%	42%
Services and counselling are available to help seniors with filling out or completing forms, paperwork, taxes, etc.	19%	23%	30%
Availability of home health, personal care and support services for seniors to access.	19%	23%	18%
Availability of programs and services that inform or assist seniors about maintaining their health.	15%	28%	17%

Ten to 42% of all respondents did not answer the questions related to community support and health services. In particular, 42% did not answer the question related to respite services, and 30% did not answer the question related to services to help seniors with filling out or completing paperwork.

3.11.4. Focus Group and Interview Findings

Respondents were all aware that the Government of Alberta provides premium free Alberta Blue Cross Coverage for health services not covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan for all senior Albertans, that dental and optical coverage is available for allowable procedures to low-income seniors based on established program thresholds, and that seniors have to cover a portion of the costs of medication and of some procedures.

All seniors agreed that finding a family doctor in Lethbridge was not an issue in 2019, but that it was more difficult several years ago. Some specialized services are only available in Calgary. They lamented that some services were not covered by Alberta Health care. “Massage is what keeps me walking. I go to Lethbridge College for massages, because you don’t get reimbursed for that. At the College, it is \$30.00 an hour, and that’s probably the cheapest you get.”

Seniors complained that only eligible dental procedures were covered. You have limited choices on how you can spend the funds allocated for dental work. “You get a new denture every five years. But if you want that specialized dental implant, it’s not paid for.” One professional believes

that “many seniors have bad teeth, because preventative services were not offered when they were children, youth and adults to the same extent as now”, and that dental coverage should be extended to more seniors.

Almost all respondents experienced difficulty in understanding and applying for additional benefits offered through Alberta Seniors Benefits and Service Canada. The social workers and other professionals responsible for systems navigation in seniors centres and seniors residences provide a valuable service in helping seniors understand what they are eligible for, which can result in accessing additional benefits. “The biggest hurdle that people face is how long it takes to process applications, getting the information together, getting the right paperwork. Some people don’t have birth certificates, for example.” Having to pay upfront for eligible expenses is an additional challenge. “In addition to giving them the information, we can also encourage them to join a seniors centre. And pull them out of social isolation.”

Many discussed the unique challenges of caregivers. “Caregivers are often part of the sandwich generation. They work full-time, have children on their own, and care for their parents as well. Other caregivers are seniors themselves. And they get burned out, because they don’t have the resources or access to respite to take care of themselves.”

Caregivers need more access to information on services available for themselves and the persons they care for. They complained about the struggles in getting respite care. “When you have respite, there is no consistency in who provides the respite. It could be a different person every respite shift.” Caregivers often feel uncomfortable with that and eventually give up. If caregivers don’t get adequate help, their own health tends to decline. Caregivers who had taken the COMPASS course found it very useful and would recommend it to others.

Additional services, such as housecleaning or snow removal are available at a reduced cost for eligible seniors with lower income, though they may still experience a waitlist. Unfortunately, those who are not eligible often feel they don’t have enough resources to pay for the services at a market rate.

Some seniors are financially just “getting by”. “No one should have to trade off enough good food for health-related support, or be worried every day that some chance disruption will fracture a tenuous financial balance.” These seniors need knowledge and better informed support.

There are seniors who fall through the cracks. One service provider shared the following story. “I worked with a lady who is 66 years old, has been in Canada for nine years, and does not speak English. She has been sleeping on the floor, because she cannot afford a bed. She has been working in a kitchen as a dishwasher, was fired because of depression, and so has no money at all. Her CPP is \$51 per month, and that’s it. She has been in Canada for less than 10 years, so does not qualify for OAS yet.”

3.11.5. Action Item

- Increase availability of systems navigation for seniors.
- Increase caregiver support options.

4. Age Friendly Lethbridge Action Plan

4.1. Domain # 1: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Age-Friendly Domain: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings					
<p>Domain Description: The external environment has a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives. A clean city with well-maintained recreational areas, ample rest areas, well-developed and safe pedestrian and building infrastructure, and a secure environment provides an ideal environment for seniors to age-in-place.</p> <p>Related strategies: Lethbridge Capital Improvement Plan; Lethbridge Mobility Accessibility Plan</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
1. Develop a volunteer snow removal program	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge is proposing a partnership with Volunteer Lethbridge, where Snow Angel volunteers would assist with snow removal on sidewalks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidelines around the program: for example, volunteers may only clear a pathway between the door and the sidewalk, as opposed to clean the whole driveway. Investigate greater involvement by City of Lethbridge staff. Draft eligibility criteria for the program for free snow removal from City Sidewalks (see City of Toronto application form). Develop orientation, training resources (safety, confidentiality...) and screening protocol for Snow Angel volunteers. Seniors who need help with their snow would contact either one of the Senior Centres or Volunteer Lethbridge who would then arrange for Volunteer Lethbridge to assign a screened volunteer. 	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge</p> <p>Senior-serving agencies</p> <p>Volunteer Lethbridge</p> <p>City of Lethbridge Communications</p>	<p>October 2020;</p> <p>Snow months of every year</p>	<p>Volunteer Lethbridge: \$25,000 contract</p> <p>Communications: \$0</p>	<p>Outcome: Reduced barriers for seniors</p> <p>Indicators: Number of Snow Angel volunteers and seniors accessing the service.</p>

Age-Friendly Domain: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Domain Description: The external environment has a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives. A clean city with well-maintained recreational areas, ample rest areas, well-developed and safe pedestrian and building infrastructure, and a secure environment provides an ideal environment for seniors to age-in-place.

Related strategies: Lethbridge Capital Improvement Plan; Lethbridge Mobility Accessibility Plan

Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
	The City of Lethbridge Communication Department also has a mandate to inform all residents about the importance of snow removal, and best practices for homeowners, etc.				
2. Document barriers faced by seniors, identify burning issues, and collectively address or share the issues with relevant City Departments.	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge is the collective voice of senior-serving agencies. They are in an ideal position to identify, document and address issues faced by seniors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a standing agenda to Age Friendly Lethbridge meetings to document and discuss issues. • Formalize a process to collect information and communicate issues to relevant City Departments, City Council or Community Social Development at least on an annual basis. • Insert a regular column in LSCO and NB newsletters about age-friendly barriers and solutions. 	Age Friendly Lethbridge	Immediately and ongoing	\$0.00	<p>Outcome: Increased knowledge and awareness about age-friendly barriers in Lethbridge.</p> <p>Indicator: Number and types of issues documented; number of communications with City of Lethbridge and with public; number and efficacy of solutions created.</p>

4.2.Domain# 2: Transportation

Age-Friendly Domain: Transportation					
<p>Domain Description: Accessible and affordable public transport is key to ensuring a city’s senior population is able to age actively and remain engaged with their community, with access to health and social facilities. Driving conditions and parking facilities in a city should also keep older drivers in mind.</p> <p>Related strategy: Lethbridge Transit Master Plan; Mobility Accessibility Plan</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
3. Advocate for improved usability of Access a Ride busses and public transit.	<p>The Access A Ride bus program is a valuable and well-used service in our community. Seniors are concerned about the scarcity of same day and morning/afternoon peak hour booking availability, long-wait times for return trips, and the online-booking mechanism.</p> <p>City of Lethbridge commissioned a municipal fiscal and operational performance review in 2019. The report includes a number of recommendations regarding Lethbridge Transit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the implementation of the Lethbridge Transit and Access A Ride changes . Advocate for seniors as required. 	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge</p> <p>Lethbridge Transit</p> <p>City Council and Administration</p>	2020	<p>Analysis: None</p> <p>Potential massaging of service: unknown</p>	<p>Outcome: Accessible public transportation</p> <p>Indicators: Number of rides; satisfaction with the service.</p>

4.3. Domain# 3: Housing

Age-Friendly Domain: Housing					
<p>Domain Description: Housing conditions are often linked to the quality of life.. Appropriate housing design and its proximity to community and social services allow older residents to live comfortably and safely, while housing affordability provides peace of mind.</p> <p>Related strategies: Lethbridge Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy; Lethbridge Municipal Housing Strategy</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
<p>4. Advocate for senior housing options.</p> <p>Read and analyze the Municipal Housing Strategy. Respond accordingly.</p>	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge is in the position to advocate for housing options on behalf of seniors with all levels of government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and share stories about seniors who struggle with housing options • Respond to the Lethbridge Municipal Housing Strategy and monitor progress towards implementation of the Strategy. • Write letters on behalf of Age Friendly Lethbridge members regarding housing policies • Meet with all levels of government, regarding the need for senior housing 	Age Friendly Lethbridge and member agencies	Begin 2020 and on-going	None	<p>Outcome: A greater range of affordable and accessible housing options for Lethbridge seniors.</p> <p>Indicator: Housing success stories from Lethbridge seniors.</p> <p>Reduced number of seniors experiencing housing instability, inappropriate housing, or homelessness.</p>
5. Share information about housing options and subsidies.	Age Friendly Lethbridge member agencies will continue documenting (asset-mapping), updating and providing information to seniors and professionals regarding housing options and subsidies available to seniors to help them age in place.	Age Friendly Lethbridge Member Agencies	Beginning 2020 and on-going	None	

4.4. Domain # 4: Social Participation

Age-Friendly Domain: Social Participation					
<p>Domain Description: Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community fosters seniors’ continued integration with society and helps them stay engaged and informed. Seniors’ participation in such activities, however, is affected by access to transport and facilities, their awareness of such activities and their affordability.</p> <p>Related strategies: Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy Master Plan; CMARD Building Bridges Community Action Plan</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
6. Gather additional information on social inclusion of some senior groups, such as Indigenous seniors, recent immigrant seniors, and seniors who identify as LGBTQ2S+.	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge consulted with a number of seniors as part of telephone survey and community consultation. However, there is a need to learn more about social isolation of seniors in Lethbridge, risks and protective factors, and promising practices to support the wellbeing of several groups of seniors living in Lethbridge, including but not limited to the following: Indigenous seniors, recent immigrant seniors, and seniors who identify as LGBTQ2S+. The knowledge will be used to create strategies to better serve those seniors.</p> <p>A number of students are associated with Age Friendly Lethbridge and/or member agencies every year as practicum students or interns. Other students are doing applied studies through the University of Lethbridge under the guidance of Faculty members who sit on the Age Friendly Lethbridge research Committee.</p> <p>Age Friendly will develop a list of topics needing additional research and have them available for students looking for a research topic. Ideally, students would have an existing affiliation with the groups of seniors they plan to engage with.</p>	Age Friendly Lethbridge committee, Senior-serving agencies	September 2020 and on-going.	4 Focus Groups: \$600 (refreshments and facilitation).	<p>Outcome: Increased knowledge about seniors’ needs and best practices.</p> <p>Indicator: Completed student-led research projects.</p>

Age-Friendly Domain: Social Participation

Domain Description: Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community fosters seniors’ continued integration with society and helps them stay engaged and informed. Seniors’ participation in such activities, however, is affected by access to transport and facilities, their awareness of such activities and their affordability.

Related strategies: Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy Master Plan; CMARD Building Bridges Community Action Plan

Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
7. Document existing initiatives and pilot new initiatives to address seniors’ loneliness & isolation issues.	<p>Low income seniors, in particular, are experiencing great loneliness, particularly when mobility issues are involved.</p> <p>“Senior Center without Walls” – is an example of an initiative offering regular activities, opportunities for conversations with other older adults, and support groups all performed over the phone to create a sense of connectivity for those confined to their homes.</p> <p>Age Friendly Lethbridge will explore opportunities to expand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational programming, including programs between post-secondary students and seniors. • Matching seniors and post-secondary students in living situations, which addresses loneliness as well as financial stresses for both populations. • Continuing phone calls and visits from members of each seniors’ centre to homebound seniors. 	Age Friendly Lethbridge	<p>Some initiatives currently underway.</p> <p>An assessment in 2020.</p>	<p>Programming: .25 FTE – approximately \$25,000</p>	<p>Outcome: Increased knowledge about current initiatives. New initiatives piloted.</p> <p>Indicator: Completion of assessment.</p>

4.5. Domains # 5: Respect and Social Inclusion

Age-Friendly Domain: Respect and Social Inclusion					
<p>Domain Description: An inclusive society encourages older people to participate in their city’s social, civic and economic life. This, in turn, promotes active ageing.</p> <p>Related strategies: Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy Master Plan; CMARD Building Bridges Community Action Plan (now LDIA)</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
8. Partner with Lethbridge Diversity and Inclusion Alliance (LDIA)	<p>The mission of LDIA is: “shaping a welcoming, inclusive and safe Lethbridge for our diverse community through education, advocacy and collaboration to build strength to combat racism and discrimination.”</p> <p>LDIA has three areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster awareness • Build participation, partnerships and commitments • Create a safe community. <p>Members of the alliance include a number of agencies and groups, inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the community. Seniors and supporting agencies are among the proposed members.</p> <p>LDIA is in a position to strengthen and support Age Friendly Lethbridge initiatives. It will be important for both groups to share information and consider working together on some of their respective initiatives.</p>	Age Friendly Lethbridge LDIA	Immediately and on-going	None	<p>Outcome: Strengthened partnership to address racism and discrimination.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of joint projects and initiatives.</p>

4.6. Domain # 6: Civic Participation and Employment

Age-Friendly Domain: Civic Participation and Employment					
<p>Domain Description: Older people are an asset to the community, and they continue contributing to their communities after retirement. An age-friendly city and community provides ample opportunities for older people to do so, be it through voluntary or paid employment, and keeps them engaged in the political process.</p> <p>Related Strategy: Community Social Wellbeing Safety Strategy</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
9. Host a yearly Age-Friendly Forum	<p>In order to remain an age-friendly community, it is important for Age Friendly Lethbridge to engage with the community on a regular basis.</p> <p>A yearly forum will allow Age Friendly Lethbridge to engage with about current senior issues, to showcase Age Friendly Lethbridge, and to facilitate conversations with stakeholders.</p> <p>This would also be an opportunity for the City to showcase how municipal strategies contribute to Age Friendly Lethbridge, and to promote HelpSeeker and Lethbridge 311.</p>	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge</p> <p>Senior-serving agencies</p>	2020 and annually.	Forum: \$5000 annually	<p>Outcome: Age Friendly Lethbridge plan informed by community at large.</p> <p>Indicator: Number and diversity of participants in annual forum.</p>

4.7. Domain # 7: Communication and Information

Age-Friendly Domain: Communication and Information					
<p>Domain Description: Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing.. Technology can be utilized to spread information quickly, but also plays a role in social exclusion. Cities must provide access to information to seniors in an accessible format, and consider the wide range of needs and resources older people have.</p> <p>Related Initiative: Lethbridge 311, HelpSeeker</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
10. Develop an information strategy specific to services for seniors.	<p>Community Links, currently operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), coordinates information about community supports and services. The information is available in print, on-line, and through in-person contacts with social workers at the Community Links desk at the downtown Lethbridge Public Library. However, professionals, caregivers and seniors still find it difficult to find the right information when it is needed.</p> <p>In order to address the need for timely and accurate information regarding senior services, the strategy may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend improved signage at the downtown Lethbridge Public Library regarding the Community Links desk and its purpose and remove reference to Community Mental Health Association which may be misleading to customers). In order to improve the comfort level of customers with Community Links, consider having senior 	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge</p> <p>Senior serving-agencies</p> <p>Agency contracted to manage Community Links</p>	April 2020 and on-going.	\$2000 signage	<p>Outcome: Improved access to information for seniors and professionals working with seniors</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and types of resources developed/updated Increase in the number of seniors and professionals accessing the information and resources.

Age-Friendly Domain: Communication and Information

Domain Description: Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing.. Technology can be utilized to spread information quickly, but also plays a role in social exclusion. Cities must provide access to information to seniors in an accessible format, and consider the wide range of needs and resources older people have.

Related Initiative: Lethbridge 311, HelpSeeker

Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
	<p>volunteers at the Community Links desk, working side-by-side with the social workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data on Community Links outputs (users' demographic, types of information requested...) to inform the services provided. • Use existing technology (Community Links website and HelpSeeker App) to update and improve web-based versions of senior-specific resources and services. • Share program information via HelpSeeker. • Share information with professionals about where to get information about senior-specific resources and subsidies. • Collect and disseminate information for seniors about free or subsidized event tickets, training, volunteer and employment opportunities, etc. • In partnership with Community Links, explore adding location of toilets/bathrooms available to the public on HelpSeeker (see Bedminster Toilet Map: https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-11/bedminster-toilet-map.pdf) 				

Age-Friendly Domain: Communication and Information

Domain Description: Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing.. Technology can be utilized to spread information quickly, but also plays a role in social exclusion. Cities must provide access to information to seniors in an accessible format, and consider the wide range of needs and resources older people have.

Related Initiative: Lethbridge 311, HelpSeeker

Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
<p>11. Share consistent and accurate messages about Age Friendly Lethbridge and its member agencies across Lethbridge agencies.</p>	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge provides an opportunity for participating agencies to collaborate, cooperate, and partner towards integration between health, social services, housing and community services.</p> <p>While Lethbridge has printed information about services for seniors (such as the senior centres’ newsletters, or Lethbridge Herald health directory published in partnership with Alberta Health Services), there is currently no printed directory of services that are specific to seniors.</p> <p>AFL members will develop, share, and update detailed information about services and support with each other in an electronic format, so that messages and information are consistent across agencies, and can be printed off if needed.</p> <p>Add a page of resources in the Lethbridge Senior’s Safety Calendar.</p>	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge participating agencies</p>	<p>July 2020 and on-going.</p>	<p>Printing \$1500 annually</p>	<p>Output: Senior-specific card/brochure directory developed.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of cards/brochures printed and distributed.</p>

Age-Friendly Domain: Communication and Information

Domain Description: Staying connected with events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical information is a key part of active ageing.. Technology can be utilized to spread information quickly, but also plays a role in social exclusion. Cities must provide access to information to seniors in an accessible format, and consider the wide range of needs and resources older people have.

Related Initiative: Lethbridge 311, HelpSeeker

Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
12. Provide input in implementation of City of Lethbridge strategies from an age-friendly lens.	Age Friendly Lethbridge is the collective voice of senior-serving agencies. They are in an ideal position to provide input to developing strategies, and provide recommendations or feedback around the implementation of strategies, from an age-friendly lens.	Age Friendly Lethbridge	Immediately and on-going	None	Output: Number of strategies Age Friendly Lethbridge reviewed and provided feedback. Outcomes for seniors improve

4.8. Domain # 8: Community Support & Health Services

Age-Friendly Domain: Community Support & Health Services					
<p>Domain Description: Accessible and affordable community and health services are crucial in keeping seniors healthy, independent and active. This involves an appropriate supply of aged care services conveniently located close to where older people live, with trained health and social workers to provide these services.</p> <p>Related strategy: Lethbridge Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy</p>					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
13. Increase availability of systems navigation for seniors.	<p>The Age Friendly Lethbridge Community Plan highlights the importance of systems navigators to help seniors and caregivers learn about, as well as facilitate access to the supports and services available to them.</p> <p>Age Friendly Lethbridge will advocate for an increased number of systems navigators in Lethbridge, in particular for seniors needing services.</p> <p>Contribute where necessary to the enhancement of coordinated senior-serving systems.</p> <p>Monitor the work done in other jurisdictions, adopting best practices.</p>	Age Friendly Lethbridge & senior service providers	October 2020 and ongoing.	HR and program costs if new positions are created, currently unknown.	<p>Outcome: Improved access to senior services and supports.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of seniors and caregivers accessing navigation services.</p>
14. Increase caregiver support options.	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge sees a need to expand and strengthen caregiver support, with opportunities for peer and professional support, and closely linked with navigation services for caregivers.</p> <p>AFL will develop a localized reference guide to caregiver support.</p> <p>AFL will analyse service gaps, including respite services.</p>	<p>Senior serving agencies</p> <p>Community Social Development</p>	2021 and on-going.	HR and program costs if new positions are created.	<p>Outcome: Caregivers' improved wellbeing.</p> <p>Indicator: Increased number of caregivers accessing peer and professional support.</p>

4.9. Overarching Actions

Overarching Actions					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
15. Review and update Age Friendly Lethbridge Terms of Reference.	<p>The purpose of Age Friendly Lethbridge is to support an age-friendly community. Age Friendly Lethbridge will provide a dynamic process for stakeholders to come together to create a preferred future for our older adult population within the community of Lethbridge.</p> <p>The Age Friendly Lethbridge Terms of Reference were last updated in January 2016. There is a need to review and update the terms of reference in light of the Age Friendly Action Plan.</p>	Age Friendly Lethbridge	March 2020 and on-going.	None	<p>Outcome: Age Friendly Lethbridge updated mandate.</p> <p>Indicator: Implementation of Age Friendly Lethbridge Action Plan.</p>
16. Create outcome measurement plans for each initiative, based on desired outputs.	Each initiative should consider specific outcome measurement plans in order to effectively evaluate.	Age Friendly Lethbridge	On-going	None	<p>Outcome: Outcome measurement plan developed and implemented.</p> <p>Indicator: Outcome measurement plan. Minutes reflect review of actions based on the plan.</p>
17. Pass a resolution to formalize	Passing a Council resolution to formalize Lethbridge's commitment to becoming an age-friendly community could have positive impacts	Age Friendly Lethbridge	February 2020	None	A City of Lethbridge commitment to be an

Overarching Actions					
Action	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Costs & Other Resources	Outputs, Outcomes & Indicators
Lethbridge's commitment to be an age-friendly community.	<p>on the implementation of the action plan, and will allow us to gain formal recognition from the Provincial and Federal Government, and the World Health Organization (WHO).</p> <p>The Alberta Government Age-Friendly website (Government of Alberta, 2019) provides a sample that could be used to draft a resolution for the City of Lethbridge.</p>	City Council			Age-Friendly Community.
18. Apply for the Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition.	<p>Alberta Seniors and Housing is managing the Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition Program. In order to apply for the Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition Award, Age Friendly Lethbridge needs to complete an application form available on the Alberta website, provide the required supporting materials: committee terms of reference, Council resolution, needs assessment, and action plans.</p>	<p>Age Friendly Lethbridge</p> <p>City Council</p>	April 2020	None	A City of Lethbridge commitment to be an Age-Friendly Community.

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6. Appendices

6.1. Age Friendly Lethbridge Terms of Reference

The Age Friendly Lethbridge terms of reference were last revised in January 2016.

Purpose:

The purpose of Age Friendly Lethbridge is to provide input into and shape an age-friendly community. Age Friendly Lethbridge will provide a dynamic process for stakeholders to come together to create a preferred future for our older adult population within the community of Lethbridge.

Goals:

1. To conduct research toward meeting the requirements for the WHO Age-Friendly Cities designation
2. To facilitate planning and development of evidence based initiatives which support a healthy and age friendly community
3. To provide a clearinghouse for information regarding older adults in our community
4. To share information and identify current issues impacting the delivery of services for seniors, their families and the stakeholders, service/care providers
5. To facilitate collaboration, cooperation and partnering opportunities towards effective integration and interface between health, social services, housing and community services
6. To support and provide awareness and education
7. To advocate for services to meet the needs of older adults

Membership:

The membership of Age Friendly Lethbridge shall be open to all stakeholders who represent the promotion of the health, social well-being and interests of the senior population. Members' predominant and intentional purpose is to support the building of an age-friendly community and provide care and/or service to seniors and their families. Guests may be invited from time to time to assist in achieving the goals of Age Friendly Lethbridge.

Meetings:

Age Friendly Lethbridge shall meet monthly, on the second Tuesday of each month. The membership shall host meetings. Meetings will be held at City Hall, unless otherwise announced. The City of Lethbridge shall be the secretariat. Agenda items are generated by the membership and submitted to the City of Lethbridge.

Chair:

The Chair of the Age Friendly Lethbridge shall be selected by the membership by December of each year.

6.2. Focus Group Questions

1. In 2018, 500 Lethbridge residents participated in a telephone survey. A number of them believed that Lethbridge was a good place for seniors. What do you think? Can you think of specific examples that make Lethbridge a great place to retire?
2. How would you describe the housing options for seniors living in Lethbridge? What works well and what are the housing challenges faced by seniors?
3. How easy is it for Lethbridge older adults and persons with disabilities to access the health services they need?
4. How easy is it to get help with other community services (such as: personal care, housekeeping, lawn care, snow removal, meals on wheels, delivery of groceries or medication)? What works well and what could we do better?
5. How would you describe the transportation options for seniors in Lethbridge? What is your experience in using the various options? What could Lethbridge do better in terms of transportation?
6. When you need to have information about a service from government, a business or an organization, where do you go to find the information? How difficult is it to get the right information? What would make it better?
7. How easy is it for you to use the Lethbridge sidewalks, to go the parks and outdoor spaces, or to access the offices, buildings, shopping centres you need to go to?
8. Do you participate in social activities (such as education, recreation, cultural and volunteer opportunities)? Are seniors welcome and encouraged to participate in community events and activities?
9. Lethbridge is becoming increasingly diverse. It includes indigenous people, immigrants from various countries, persons of various ages, persons with disabilities, persons from the LGBTQ2S++ community. Do you feel respected and included? How could Lethbridge become more inclusive?
10. How easy is it for seniors in Lethbridge to volunteer or to have a job? To what extent do organizations working with volunteers or employers accommodate for persons with disabilities?
11. If you could suggest one idea to make Lethbridge more age friendly, what would it be?

6.3. Focus Group Consent Form

Interview/Focus Group Consent Form

Title of the Project:

Age Friendly Lethbridge Needs Assessment

Name of Consultant:

Hélène Wirzba, Wirzba Consulting

Purpose:

An Age-Friendly Community is one where all individuals can be full and meaningful participants in their community.

The City of Lethbridge Age Friendly Committee is working at obtaining an Age-Friendly designation (by Alberta, Canada, and WHO), and creating a plan to make Lethbridge more age-friendly.

The Age Friendly Lethbridge Committee has contracted Hélène Wirzba to prepare a City of Lethbridge Age-Friendly community profile and needs assessment and to support the development of a Lethbridge Age Friendly action plan. The interview/focus group findings will be incorporated in the community profile /needs assessment.

Participant's Rights:

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be available only to the consultant. No one will be able to identify me when the findings are reported, and my name will not appear anywhere in the written report. I will not share other people's identities or responses from the interview/focus group with others to maintain the anonymity of the participants outside of the interview/focus group.

I also understand that I may skip any questions that I do not wish to answer.

I understand that the consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality.

I may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the interview/focus group without penalty.

I agree to have my verbal responses tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis with the understanding that my responses will not be linked to me personally in any way. After the transcription is completed, the tape recordings will be destroyed. I understand that upon completion, the report will be approved by the Committee and will be available on the City of Lethbridge website.



If I am uncomfortable with any part of this interview/focus group, I may contact Rob Miyashiro, Chair, Age Friendly Lethbridge at (403) 360 5000 or Amanda Jensen, City of Lethbridge at (403) 393 2240.

I understand that I am participating in this interview/focus group of my own free will.

Consent to participate:

I agree to participate in the Age Friendly Lethbridge Needs Assessment.

I understand my rights as a interviewee/focus group participant as outlined in the consent form.

I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary.

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

6.4. Social Isolation of Seniors

6.4.1. Social Isolation of Seniors

In 2017, the Government of Canada published a document on the social isolation of seniors produced by the Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for seniors to help organizations and individuals approach the social isolation of seniors (Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors , 2017).

Social isolation is a situation in where someone has infrequent and/or poor quality contacts with other people. Social isolation is often associated with health inequities and social disadvantage. Persons living in isolation don't fully participate in economic, social, political and cultural relationships. They may be vulnerable to negative health outcomes.

Factors that place seniors at risk of social isolation and loneliness include: living alone, being age 80 or older, having health issues, no children or no contact with family, no access to transportation, low income, changing family structures, being left behind when younger people migrate for work, location of residence, going through critical life transitions such as retirement, death of a spouse or losing one's driver's license, lacking awareness or access to services, and being a caregiver.

The authors add that consequences of social isolation include a greater chance of premature death, a reduced sense of well-being, depression, dementia, health and mental health issues, increased need for health and support services, reduced quality of life, and increased caregiver burden.

The report identifies the following protective factors against social isolation for all seniors:

- Being in good physical and mental health
- Having sufficient income and safe housing
- Feeling and being safe in neighbourhood
- Having good literacy and communication skills
- Having satisfying relationships
- Having a supportive network
- Feeling valued
- Being able to access local services offered by community organizations, government programs and services, and health agencies
- Feeling productive in society
- Having access to transportation
- Having higher education

The report suggests that community organizations, government and public institutions, researchers, seniors and businesses need to work together, combine ideas and resources to address social isolation.

6.4.2. Social Isolation – A Focus on Indigenous Seniors

In their supplement to the Social Isolation of Seniors toolkit with a focus on Indigenous seniors in Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018), Employment and Social Development Canada states that Indigenous seniors are considered at high risk of experiencing social isolation due to the recent history of oppression and racism against Indigenous communities, residential school trauma, and moving from a Reserve or Indigenous community to a city. This has resulted in trauma, marginalized language and culture, and poverty, and in turn affects their health and wellness. Indigenous seniors may have to leave their communities to gain access to health services and supports.

In addition to protective factors that are relevant to all seniors, the report identified the following additional protective factors for Indigenous seniors:

- Participating in ceremonies
- Having social support (individual, family and community) that provides practical help, positive interaction, emotional support, and friendship
- Belonging to a community that promotes respect for the Indigenous way of life and cultural values as social norms
- Belonging to a community that promotes respect for Indigenous seniors for their wisdom and knowledge
- Belonging to a community that appreciates Indigenous resilience and the diverse narratives of Indigenous experience
- Having access to social events that respect Elders and experiencing positive interactions that make them feel comfortable
- Having translators when needed
- Having social contact in the form of phone calls, visits, excursions and/or other interactions
- Having access to culturally sensitive health care services within the community

6.4.3. Social Isolation – A Focus on New Immigrants and Refugee Seniors

In their supplement to the Social Isolation of Seniors toolkit with a focus on new immigrants and refugee seniors in Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018), the authors outline the great diversity of new immigrants and refugees, in terms of country of origin and ethnicity, language, culture and spirituality. Each of them have a unique journey of migration, settlement and integration, influenced by many factors, including the pre-migration context, adjustment, adaptation and integration.

New immigrants and refugees are at risk for isolation for the same reasons as other seniors, but they are confronted with other risk factors, such as cultural differences, language struggles, being visible minorities, attachment to their culture/language of origin, insufficient awareness of the

culture and norms of the new country, the small sizes of communities of the same ethnicity, restricted access to religious and cultural activities, racism and discrimination, sponsorship relations, dysfunctional multigenerational families, shortage of settlement services, changes in income or socio-economic status and social standing or value.

The report suggests the following interventions to reduce social isolation for this sub-group of seniors:

- Multi-dimensional strategies addressing multiple risk factors
- Strategies specifically targeting new immigrants and refugee seniors
- Participatory approaches
- Group activities, as well as one-on-one initiatives
- Use of technology, i.e. training seniors to use computers, the internet and social media.

6.4.4. Social Isolation – A Focus on LGBTQ2S+ Seniors in Canada

In their supplement to the Social Isolation of Seniors toolkit with a focus on LGBTQ2S+ seniors in Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018), authors suggest that LGBTQ2S+ seniors experience social isolation along a continuum. They may be completely integrated and not isolated, may have become isolated over time, or may experience isolation because of an unexpected event.

Recognition of the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ2S+ individuals has improved considerably over the past decades, but the effects of past discrimination likely contribute to the small percentage of seniors who identify as LGBTQ2S+ individuals. They may also experience discrimination because of ageism, sexism, racism or their HIV/AIDS status. Another factor may be that they have a smaller social network with fewer children and supportive family members than other seniors.

Initiatives that are welcoming and inclusive encourage the social inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ seniors. For example:

- Communities can increase awareness and knowledge about the realities of LGBTQ2S+ seniors
- Senior organizations can offer spaces where LGBTQ2S+ seniors can come together in safe spaces, while at the same time accessing services available to all seniors
- LGBTQ2S+ organizations can promote intergenerational activities and offer safe spaces for seniors to meet on their own