



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: Monday, June 15, 2020

SUBJECT: City of Markham Older Adult Strategy Update
PREPARED BY: Jason Tsien, Community Recreation Manager, Recreation Services

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled “City of Markham Older Adult Strategy (OAS) Update” be received; and,
- 2) That staff report annually on the status of the OAS actions; and further,
- 3) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report is to update Council on the progress of Markham’s Older Adult Strategy (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND:

Approved by Council in the Fall of 2017, the OAS provides a roadmap on how the City of Markham will respond to a growing older adult population over the next 10 years. Since the OAS was approved, there has been ongoing work to address its recommendations. Outcomes and status of work will be discussed in this report.

The OAS focuses exclusively on the programs and services that the City of Markham is responsible for delivering to local residents.

As result of collaboration between the City and York Region there are considerable common linkages between the OAS and the York Region Seniors Strategy. Communication **challenges** and **barriers to participation in programs and services** are themes that are important elements of both the OAS and the York Region Seniors Strategy.

Demographic modelling identified that the Older Adult population within Markham is expected to grow by 123% over the next ten years. Older adults are the fastest growing segment of Markham’s population. This trend will continue over the next decade, as population growth amongst older adults continues to outpace that of youths and adults.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

The Older Adult Strategy serves as a roadmap with respect to municipal policies, service delivery, design standards and community partnerships, in order to improve age-friendliness for all Markham residents. The OAS is intended to ensure that programs and services delivered by the City are appropriately aligned with the dynamic needs of older adults in Markham. The OAS also intends to promote accessibility and equity for older adults in order to encourage Markham residents to remain physically and mentally active, healthy and engaged in their community.

The Markham Older Adult Strategy represents a proactive policy response to better manage the growing proportion of older adults in Markham. The OAS has been undertaken to help ensure that the City is prepared to address prevailing trends and future challenges related to this aging population segment in Markham.

OAS – VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

The vision statement reflects the **desired outcome of the OAS**. The vision statement presented below reflects **where Markham aspires to be in 5 – 10 years**, with respect to the delivery of programs and services for older adults.

VISION

Markham – a leading Age-Friendly Community in Canada – is responsive to older adult citizens and promotes independence, respect, innovation, diversity and community engagement.

The mission statement indicates the role that will be performed by the City. The mission reflects **how the City of Markham will work towards achieving the OAS vision**.

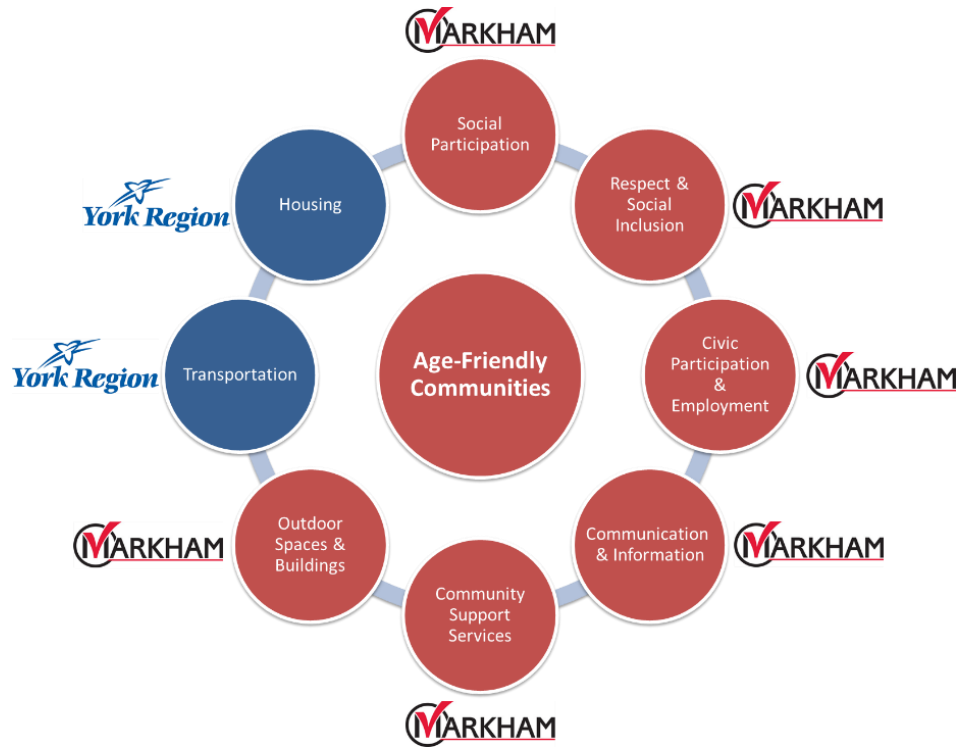
MISSION

The City of Markham will ensure that spaces, programs and services are inclusive, flexible and accessible for older adult citizens of all backgrounds and abilities.

AGE FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES:

The preparation of the Markham OAS directly supports both, the World Health Organization ('WHO') Age Friendly Cities and Communities initiative, and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat ('OSS') Age Friendly Communities initiative, which were established to guide communities in taking steps to become more age-friendly.

Friendly Community ('AFC') framework (World Health Organization, 2007). As illustrated in Figure 1-3, these dimensions are generally related to the programs and services delivered by local (i.e. City of Markham) or regional (i.e. York Region) government partners. Housing and Transportation services in Markham are administered by York Region, therefore, the OAS is principally concerned with the remaining six age-friendly community dimensions.

Figure 1-1: Eight Dimension of Age-Friendly Communities

MARKHAM'S OLDER ADULT STRATEGY – FOCUS AREAS

The following six focus areas form the basis for the overall OAS, they represent **priorities** identified by older adults in Markham during the development of the plan and align to the Age Friendly Communities dimensions. The six focus areas for the OAS are:

1. Community Support Services
2. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
3. Social Participation
4. Respect & Social Inclusion
5. Social & Civic Participation
6. Communications & Information



Status Update of the Older Adult Strategy

The following is a summary of the work that has been completed and the ongoing projects that support the recommendations of the approved 10 year Older Adult plan.

Focus Area 1 : – Community Support Services

GOAL: *The City of Markham will work collaboratively with local agencies, community organizations, private businesses, citizens and other community partners to ensure that a broad range of community support services are available across Markham.*

There are 3 outcomes and 8 actions in this area. Key highlights :

1.1 Ensuring a coordinated delivery model to improve the clarity of roles of community support services resulting in increased access for older adults in Markham

Actions completed – Databases compiled of senior services and seniors groups which is used to connect local senior groups with local and provincial grant opportunities and used as solicit feedback through surveys.

1.2. Ensuring that community support services for older adults in Markham are easy to identify

Delayed due to COVID-19 - Consolidate and Identify City of Markham program and services and Regional services into new dedicated older adult website that will be launched Fall 2020. Information is consolidated ready for posting on the website.

1.3. Improving the affordability of community support services available for older adults in Markham

Actions completed and ongoing - The Celebrate Markham Seniors Club funding stream provides \$40,000 annually to local agencies and senior clubs to support programming and services to older adults in the community.

Focus Area 2 – Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

GOAL: *The City for Markham will ensure that there is equitable access to City roads, trails, pathways, parks and facilities for older adult residents through the implementation of sustainable community planning and infrastructure management.*

There are 3 outcomes with 14 actions in this area. Key highlights:

2.1 Improving the quality of coverage of seating notes throughout the City

Actions completed - full inventory of benches and seating nodes in Markham parks.

Ongoing - There are a total of 2,139 benches of which 85% have been upgraded. Conversion continues as benches through lifecycle program

Completed - New City bench standard with back rest (19" high) and arm rest in the middle to meet age friendly guidelines.

Ongoing - Improvements to park areas for shade and seating are being undertaken through lifecycle replacements , park renaissance program and through new park design. Examples of completed work:

- Installation of new shaded structure along with additional seating nodes at Armadale C.C New Cornell Community Park & Box Grove Community Park designed with seating nodes with shade.
- Tree canopies planted in 8 parks, along playgrounds and trails to provide shade relief for users. Another 8 parks will receive additional tree canopies in 2020.

2.3 **Align with Age Friendly practices to effectively manage facilities and infrastructure in Markham for all residents**

Actions Completed – Spaces for Older Adults with facilities: Opened Aaniin Community Centre with amenities catered to older adults in the community. All community centres provide spaces for older adult programs, clubs and drop in programs.

Actions ongoing – When undertaking facility retrofits projects (the projects will exceed AODA compliance standards. Projects Completed: New Milliken Mills Universal Change Rooms, Aaniin C.C., Morgan Pool are fully accessible.

Actions completed – Markham Development Services and York Region development services have aligned site plan reviews to consider Older Adult and senior requirements when approving plans.

Focus Area # 3 – Social Participation

GOAL: *The City of Markham will encourage social participation and community engagement by delivering programs and services that reflect the dynamic needs and expectations of older adult residents.*

There are 4 outcomes and 17 actions in this area: Key highlights:

3.1 **Delivering clear, concise communication about new social, leisure, education and recreation programs to a diverse audience**

Ongoing - Program information for older adults is now provided to residents in a consistent print and online format. Both formats look the same.

Completed - Worked with local senior clubs to establish program schedule format on the new dedicated older adult's website.

Delayed Due to COVID-19 - New dedicated website for older adults will provide a single window of information for changes in programming schedules

3.2 **Increasing the variety and flexibility of social, leisure, education and recreation programs.**

Completed and Ongoing - Coordination with 5 older adult clubs in the delivery of new recreational programs including cultural interest areas for older adults at City operated facilities during the daytime and evening. (IE: Angus Glen Older Adults Club – Filmmaking, MOTM – Chinese Calligraphy, etc.)

Completed - Installed signage for adult exercise equipment in local parks: Simonston Park, John Button Park, Monarch Park, Alma Walker Park, E.B.F. Robinson Park, Wismer Park, Featherstone Park, Highgate Par

Completed – Developed a new identification system for programs for Older Adult programs that indicates if the program is “Active” or “Passive” programming to help older adults of all physical and cognitive abilities to make

appropriate selections. Older Adult Clubs supported this initiative as well and are using the same identification system”. The wording is felt to be more inclusive and does not segregate programs based on age.

- **Ongoing** - Partnering with paramedical services of York Region to improve home checkout and outreach program to help seniors identify local programs.
- **Completed** - Shinrin Yoku signage program, where older adults can take self-guided forest therapy walks at Springdale Park, Rouge River C.C. & Park, Toogood Pond Park and Pomona Mills Park.

3.3 Improve the affordability of social, leisure, education and recreation programs

- **Completed** - Develop and implement city-wide seniors membership, that will allow access to multiple seniors clubs– will be fully implemented Fall 2020
- **Ongoing** – Report back to Council in Fall 2020 on a new Ability to Pay model in partnership with York Region.

Focus Area # 4 – Respect & Social Inclusion

GOAL: *The City of Markham will promote respect and social inclusion for older adult residents of by embracing diversity inclusivity and compassion, in order to create a more interconnected community.*

There are 4 outcomes and 7 actions within this area. Key highlights:

- 4.1 Providing more opportunities for older adults to provide public input**
Completed – Regular undertake feedback from older adults - established an ongoing process to seek feedback through surveys to local senior groups/clubs. A recent example is the parks renaissance survey to local senior groups about priorities for older adults for shade and seating areas.
- 4.2 Ensuring that older adults continued to be recognized for their contributions in the local community**
Ongoing - Annual Recognition Program : Seniors Hall of Fame Event undertaken to acknowledge the significant involvement and volunteer contributions to the City of Markham
- 4.4 Ensure that events hosted by the City are accessible and appealing to older adults in community**
Ongoing – Seniors Focused Events undertaken: Annual Canada Day Senior’s Luncheon, Seniors Chinese New Year, Armadale Senior’s Club Diwali, Seniors Art Show at Thornhill Seniors Club.
Completed - Implemented new events: 2019 Seniors Health Fair and 2018 Crafts Fair at Aaniin C.C.

Focus Area # 5 – Civic Participation & Employment

GOAL: *The City of Markham will demonstrate leadership with respect to employment and volunteerism by identifying opportunities for older adult residents to work/volunteer with the City and community partners to make a meaningful impact in the local community.*

There are 2 outcomes and 5 actions within this area. Key highlights:

5.1. Advocates to increase awareness of skills, knowledge and life experiences of older adults, so that older adults can make meaningful ongoing contributions to the local community

Completed - Development of a centralized location where volunteer agencies and service organizations can post volunteer opportunities for older adults in the local community- City of Markham's Volunteer portal - Better Impact Volunteering system.

Ongoing - Implementation of intergenerational programs and opportunities (IE: Aaniin C.C. partnership with Middlefield Seniors Club – senior volunteers in indoor playground program for preschoolers)

Completed - Volunteer opportunities for older adults have been added to the City's Volunteer System from local senior clubs who are adding current club volunteer opportunities.

Completed - Developed a training program for volunteers in local senior clubs in the areas of for Emergency First Aid + AED.

5.2. Ensuring that there is adequate representation from older adults on boards and committees.

Ongoing - Process has commenced to ensure the recruitment of older adults is undertaken to ensure they are represented on City boards and committees.

Focus Area # 6 – Communication & Information

GOAL: *The City of Markham will deliver communication in multiple formats to ensure that all residents have unencumbered access to information about the programs and services available in the community.*

There are 4 outcomes and 15 actions for this area. Key highlights:

6.1 Coordinating a centralized, interactive database of programs and services from all community partners that deliver services to older adults

Delayed due to COVID-19 - New dedicated older adults website to be launched in Fall 2020 will include the following functions:

- ❖ Centralize municipal information resources
- ❖ Listing of local and regional community services
- ❖ A search feature that will allow older adults to find information easily
- ❖ Program schedule for City programs and the 5 older adult clubs

6.2. Connecting with local residents using communications that are clear and understandable for all audiences

Completed and Ongoing: Consultation and outreach to local senior groups and Seniors Advisory Committee on a regular basis to seek input on variety issues and opportunities.

Completed: All information and communications delivered by the City will meet AODA compliance standards.

6.3 Ensuring that communications and information distributed by the City are accessible

Delayed due to COVID-19 - Consistent communication available in print and electronic will be achieved when new dedicated older adult website is launched in Fall 2020.

Completed and Ongoing – Expansion of communications to seniors: Installed local community message boards in designated spaces in the following parks: : Aaniin C.C., Berzcy Park North, Cornell C.C., German Mills, Milliken Mills C.C., Ray Street Park and Victoria Square C.C

6.4. Ensuring customer service standards address older adult needs

Completed and Ongoing: Developed training module for City staff to enhance customer service to older adult residents

OLDER ADULT – AGE DEFINITION

Prior to the development of the Older Adult Program there was no consistency among City departments or programs concerning the age requirement for eligibility for subsidized programs and services for older adults.

In order to maintain consistency across all departments, Council approved a recommendation from staff to standardize the definition of older adults across all City departments to all residents who are **65 years of age or older**.

The benefits of standardizing the age definition of older adults across all departments at the City of Markham, at 65+ years of age, will help to minimize confusion and improve the clarity of communications for older adults. Furthermore, 65+ is consistent with the social policy framework defined in the York Region Seniors Strategy. Using a 65+ age definition for older adults would also be consistent with other nearby municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (e.g. Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Mississauga), which have recently undertaken strategic planning exercises related to older adults.

.Since the approval of the OAS, city staff have been working with presidents from the five City-partnered senior clubs (Thornhill Senior Club, Older Adult in Action, Angus Glen Older Adults Club, Milliken on the Move and Armadale Older Adults Club) to align the age definition of seniors in all Recreation programs to be 65+ years and older. Alignment will take place in 2021, when the current senior club agreement expires. The new standard of 65 years of age will be applied to the new senior club agreement.

CONCLUSIONS

All departments with a service delivery interaction with older adults have been engaged in the implementation of the OAS. Implementation of the 10 year strategy commenced in 2018 with good progress and review done on all of the actions areas. As noted above

many actions require ongoing engagement and there are also many changes already made that address how we deliver and what we deliver to our older adults. A key deliverable related to accessing information in a one-window format has been a key focus that is a partnership with York Region and community partners. Unfortunately, due to COVID19 there is a delay to the final stages of implementation of that key action - it will be undertaken in the fall of 2020 with the creation of an Older Adult website. Working corporately on the OAS will continue to occur and will result in advancement of the actions over the next few years. Staff will undertake an annual report on the results and status of the actions.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no direct financial impact with the approval of this Older Adult Strategy at this time. Pending approval of the Ability to Pay model, which will require additional work, a funding strategy may need to be developed. Staff will report back to Council on this in the future, prior to implementation.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The development of the Markham Older Adult Strategy is a recommendation from the Integrated Leisure Master Plan.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Operations, Environment Services, Library, Clerks, Corporate Communication, By-Law, Culture, Planning, Recreation, Fire, Sustainability and Asset Management.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Mary Creighton
Director, Recreation Services

Brenda Librecz
Commissioner, Community &
Fire Services

ATTACHMENTS: Older Adult Strategy