

ElderNET Calgary Strategic Planning Community Conversation VENU 1008 March 30, 2011

Summary Document Successful Aging & Transformational Possibilities

The Objectives for the Day:

To discuss and capture community insights on the following:

- What are the possibilities for further supporting successful aging and improving the quality of for older Calgarians?
- How can we as a community build more coordinated and collaborative action in support of successful aging for older Calgarians?

What does 'Successful aging for older Calgarians' mean to you?

(the number in brackets represents the # of times the response appeared)

- Independence, aging in place, being valued, sense of belonging, living interdependently, support for people living alone, contributing to overall well being to Calgary. (7)
- Integration vs. silos (whole communities). (6)
- Respecting the diversity of seniors, take advantage of experience/years/wisdom. (3)
- Better quality living, appropriate living facilities (affordable housing options), inclusive programs (recreation) and activities. (2)
- Affordable learning opportunities.
- Affordable housing options with services acknowledged with fair wages/salaries/benefits. (2)
- Involvement in planning for accommodations for all, better planning/research to assist seniors, part of decision making. (4)
- Engagement with life, mind & spirit development.
- Better public transportation. (3)
- More walk able communities. (3)
- Having a support network.
- Spokesperson, seniors' voice (2), mentor to help with legal processes.
- Social networks/connections/inclusion. (3)
- Lots of facilities for life-long learning. (2)
- Good health care system that targets seniors' costs, basic health necessities of life are easily available-should not take a lot of effort/process, no long wait times, availability of cognitive health. (3)
- Better financial support for seniors regarding housing, transportation, medical care...Adequate income to do what you want /need to do... Accessing & connecting with services/funding. (5)
- Adopt a family.
- Larger lobby groups can create change – small community groups don't have the same power, use of social media to get the word out.
- If long-term care is needed, it is of the highest quality care with social programming and active participation.

Burning Questions!!!

- What's going to help with our kids? How to support children when I need help?
- What is going to be done for affordable housing, not just living in rooms?
- What does immigrant engagement look like?
- Financial security!!! How do we manage inflation? How to manage many living just below the poverty line?
- How do we maximize choices, realistic choices?
- How to ensure we are 'inclusive' for all ages of older adults, the young old with the older old along with all citizens?
- We have to figure out housing and community supports as integrated into all seniors' services/choices. Fundamental to all!
- Where and how is the younger generation part of this discussion?
- Immigrant seniors not well represented today, why?
- High incomes and pensions for MLA's, not equitable.
- How can we guarantee that we are reaching the poorest of the poor, the most needy?
- How does the senior group just above the LICO line get supported?
- What about the seniors who choose to be alone at home? How are they supported?
- Why is health not a part of this?

What possibilities for supporting successful aging for Calgarians have the power to transform our city? Which ones most inspire you?

- Media and social networking/being visual. Get new picture out there, new demographic to include sandwich generation.
- Good open communications for family.
- People looking out for others, clusters not hallways.
- What's out there for funding access?
- Breaking down language barriers.
- Community associations need to start shifting how they operate.
- Having politician's part of local discussions.
- Look at existing organizational structures.
- Qualitative part of life is permanent.
- Moving from policy and planning to aspects of daily living.
- Build on community assets – libraries, schools.
- Use technology more for better ways to network, collaborate, educate.
- Boomers are in a position of power to respond & make changes for them. They are also still working using skills longer to find solutions.
- We need a plan for action. Who will lead it?
- Share specific outcomes. Social and medical approaches are very different. Recognize the differences and establish a plan to move forward.
- Proactive response rather than reactive.
- Work with what is already working well, and tweak what needs improvement.
- More collaborative funding models.
- Politically active seniors group (advocacy) on what's needed by seniors. A seniors' advisory board that reports to city council.
- Housing needs assessment.
- Comprehensive transportation with planning for age friendly city.

- Mayor operates all day in wheelchair (wheelchair access in the city). Having a barrier free city.
- Lowering the 10-year residency requirements for federal benefits can improve situation for immigrant seniors.
- Access to recreational opportunities/facilities – affordable, accessible throughout lifespan. Not just a personal responsibility.
- Growing awareness & popularity of complementary medicine, nutrition – preventative medicine – invests proactively.
- ESL classes for seniors in seniors’ centres would have an increased social benefit as well as the language development.
- Growing older population can change attitudes about aging – change our youth – oriented culture, value aging, respect for past history.
- City departments getting actively involved in planning for an ‘age friendly city’. What does ‘age friendly’ mean to the City?
- Integration of services/organizations as a collective impact can be quite powerful to help advocate for the aging population needs.
- Use the expertise of volunteers to help guide the vision.
- Finding a pilot/prototype to try the ideas of an ‘age friendly city’. More social enterprises will help build on supporting successful aging and sustainable funding.
- Both governments work with agencies to support aging in place.
- Creating a village. Use the wisdom of seniors to build a village. Council of Elders.
- Build upon intergenerational understanding.
- Build upon the knowledge level for community stakeholders on seniors.
- Putting ElderNET ideas into action – Umbrella organization to support communities.
- Technology tools to keep information current & accessible. Technology tools to establish a one stop shop for information access. Share/network services & catalog of accredited senior services today. Avoid duplication.
- Health & social & human services coordinating together to support aging in place.
- Cross collaboration with City on how to support an age friendly City.
- Seniors have one voice together.
- Legislation for caregiver support.
- City of Calgary could lead the coordination of all not-for-profits and seniors organizations. One stop shop for seniors. Agencies being cohesive and not competitive. Avoid duplication.
- Better understanding of differences between senior issues in different parts of the city.
- Access to information is critical. Could use the network, “Third Age Commons”.
- Need on entity to coordinate all services.
- Build ‘age in place over the age continuum community’.
- Leadership group – City/Funders & other stakeholders could lead “aging plan”.
- Design Calgary to be a walk able city.
- Getting businesses to come to the table for support.
- Locate all seniors’ facilities near transit and community amenities.
- Health promotion.
- Land use changes.
- Bus angels.
- CSRS home share program.
- Funders need to rally around the City objective to become age friendly by 2020.
- Renew “Block Watch” using new technology.

- Encourage community associations to re-focus on the changing demographics in their communities. Example – Alliance for Active Aging.
- Neighbourhoods are walk able in all seasons.
- Community centres need to be more supportive of seniors and seniors’ activities.
- Elect politicians who have & will support senior issues.
- Create a seniors’ political party.
- Adopt a senior program all year round.
- Politicians to stop talking and take action steps.
- Create a plan – who does that?
- Social/Medical model for successful aging. Recognize the differences in approaches.
- Advocate to policy makers.

Top Inspiring Ideas about the possibilities supporting successful aging to transform our City

- Politicians need to be at the table. A City Council seniors’ champion. A council that will hear the voice of seniors, seniors’ advisory board.
- Coordinating all media.
- Coalition of group leads. The way of the circle. Everyone equal. Alignment to work together.
- Changing our mindsets about aging and aging successfully.
- Better use technology to support the philosophy of successful aging.
- Grassroots community response/engaging community more & using seniors to respond to seniors in community.
- Incentives for organizations to collaborate more – increasing use of technology, education awareness, funding, urgency for efficiency & effectiveness. Maintain simplicity.
- Advocate to policy makers on multiple seniors needs.
- A city that incorporates aging in the design and planning of communities.
- Integration of services/organizations can be quite powerful and help to advocate for a collective impact.
- Encore careers – looking at your volunteers differently than in the past. Use their expertise to guide vision.
- Finding a pilot community to try the ideas of an age friendly city.
- Putting ElderNET ideas into action – Umbrella organization to support communities. One overall umbrella group to lead seniors’ work in Calgary – Coordination function.
- Technology use to keep information current & accessible, one stop shop for information access, social media.
- Cross collaboration within City to work toward age friendly 2020 goal.
- Comprehensive plan for infrastructure & resources for seniors. Create a plan.
- Businesses coming to the table to support age friendly city directions.
- It takes a village to support/engage seniors. Increase opportunities/events for engagement/interaction to build the dynamics of a village community. Example, Strong communities project, building strong neighbourhoods (Martindale, Bowness), use technology to promote “meet your neighbour days”.
- Assist community associations address the needs and wants of the changing demographic in their neighbourhood.
- Better planning and use of research.
- Better transportation and walk able communities.

- Encourage shared networks.
- Open the \$book regarding services so we know what we're working with

What key things need to change to support successful aging for older Calgarians?

- Education and information needs to be enhanced. Expand intergenerational programs. Council and City liaison investments.
- Housing needs assessment.
- Political will to fund programs – funding matches needs (programs, transport, income).
- City and all levels of government need to be more involved.
- Community organizations need to work together on a common agenda.
- Involvement of major public players needs to increase; i.e., health region, corporate sector.
- The timeline in Calgary is very interesting. We are one of the youngest cities. Can we look at timeline in Victoria. What have they tried, abandoned, and what was successful?
- Plan -> Action -> Who is the lead?
- Incentives to work together.
- Incorporate neighbourhood/community responses.
- Include seniors in the planning process.

Doubts or Reservations

- Barrier of protecting ones own turf.
- Information systems too bureaucratic, too layered.
- Recognition of differences that exist in a social planning model compared to a medical model, business/economic model, political model.
- Who will advocate so that voices are not fragmented?
- The quantity of resources needed, are they manageable?
- Educating stakeholders about the change factors needed to be out of the box.
- How to break down the silos? i.e. 8 organizations for disabled to find employment...how to establish one umbrella? Kerby Centre vs Golden Age...

Summary Document Assets & Challenges

To discuss and capture community insights on the following:

- Most important current assets (e.g., strengths, opportunities, initiatives, organizations, etc.) to build on?
- Most important challenges?

Most Important Assets

- Seniors' organizations/providers are well equipped with resources
- Creative Aging Group
- Third Age Commons

- Conversation teas and cafes at public libraries, library programs
- Calgary Retired Teachers Association; social opportunities, wellness presentations, informational conferences.
- Brenda Strafford Program for Excellence in Gerontology; program geared towards educating health care providers, agencies on caring for this population.
- Seniors' games
- Learn from the past
- Inclusive events advertised in "swerve", "fast forward"
- 24 hour seniors' call line at the Calgary Distress Centre
- AMA older drivers refresher courses
- Senior Connect Program
- Meals on Wheels
- Opportunity for ethnic foods through immigrant services
- City wide seniors' outreach workers working well
- Family and friend support is a huge asset
- Many agency programs are valuable resource to seniors
- Adopt a student program
- Social Network like "ElderNET" and their workshops
- Still a "Volunteer" environment
- Seniors voice is getting stronger and more cohesive
- Senior serving agencies are working toward collaboration
- Economically prosperous city and forward thinking when it comes to seniors
- City people who are willing to advocate for seniors
- Home Care programs
- Alexandra Centre Activities
- Programs that support home renovations for accessibility
- Access to information: 311, 211, social services, Inform Alberta
- There is a sense of care about the aging population and a willingness to work to try to improve upon the issues that are challenging.
- Existing senior centres
- Lots of current seniors groups
- Gathering places for seniors
- Tea and Conversation Program at Confederation Park Seniors
- Seniors have social resources that are targeted to them, such as food programs, pension, health coverage
- Access Calgary, handibus
- Subsidized transit pass
- CFS, Get Up and Go Program
- CSRS, Escorted Transportation Program
- Private ambulance/shuttle: Medishuttle
- Driving Miss Daisy, granddaughter.ca, A Friend at Hand
- Support for Grassroots initiatives
- Volunteer Opportunities and Options
- Gov't programs: OAS, CPP, GIS, AB seniors benefit, blue cross
- Learning options through U of C, BVC, MRU, Calgary Foundation
- Matinee performances at CPO and Theatre Calgary
- Intergenerational programs: Linkages
- CSRS Homeshare program

- YMCA: Health & Wellness programs
- Life-Long Learning: Free tuition at U of C
- Public recreation facilities
- The urban Aboriginal Community is growing and creating supports involving elders. Excellent multi-generational initiatives. First nations culture is an asset to Calgary.
- Community Centres: AAA in NW Calgary provides courses, speakers, fitness and hobbies.
- Expansion of current housing through Beaverdam Memory Care Lodge, Shawnessy Enhanced Lodge, Willow Park on the Bow: offering 1 & 2 bedroom suites with meal options.
- Growing awareness about the aging population
- ElderNET: service coordination, policy advocacy, intersectoral involvement, re-defining mindsets with respect to issues/problems and solutions
- Seniors are a political voice – there is power in their message
- Mayor Nenshi, new energy: focus on opportunity for everyone, livable city, welcomes input, age friendly city direction
- City Links programs and services
- Provincial Population Aging Framework
- Food and More Coalition: A sustainable supply of low cost nutritional food program to start September 2011

Most Important Challenges

Systems

- Rigid policy approaches that do not have ability to consider creative/alternative solutions.
- Be more proactive and preventative.

Housing

- Subsidized housing needs.
- Universal design needs.
- Maintenance and alternations that allow senior to age in place.
- Learn more about housing options from municipal, level, federal level, agency offerings level.

Transportation

- Access to transportation and scheduling needs to be revisited
- Access Calgary
- We need intra-community buses to get around communities to create a community friendly transportation option
- What happens when current senior drivers can no longer drive to access seniors centres?
- Making communities walk able, inclusive, aging in place.
- Transportation options lacking.
- Urban sprawl leads to low walkability.

Differing Needs of Senior Cohorts

- Programs with policies that do not reflect realities.
- Age differences between 60's, 70's, 80's & 90+

- Leaving “current” behind in favour of “new” ones.
- Gov’t levels not responding quick enough to seniors’ needs
- Dealing with Elder abuse: teenagers’ aggression, family changes, and generational challenges.

Service Challenges

- Lack of accessible grocery stores.
- Communities should build around commerce and housing. Don’t segregate people by income, ability, age, etc.
- Lack of job search support for seniors.
- Balance manpower <-> Need for service.
- More interaction between service providers in a structured manner.
- Cap on programs, accessibility to programs.
- Need program navigators to support program awareness for seniors.
- Community literacy around program availability.
- Accessing hard to reach older adults that could greatly benefit from program offerings.

Financial Challenges

- Coordinate all not-for-profits to avoid duplication of efforts & focus on specific issues.
- Qualifying seniors for assistance to include income and assets.
- Setting priorities when there are so many components to seniors’ issues.
- Federal and Provincial benefits for immigrant seniors.
- Rising property values, taxes, utility rates.
- Seniors on fixed incomes. Limitations of OAS and CPP.
- Retirement planning.

Advocacy Challenges

- Not enough system solutions.
- Policy makers need to listen.
- Leadership, political <-> individual.

Access to information

- Distribution of information needs to improve.
- Access to available services and programs.
- Lack of coordination. Lack of strategic collaborative plan amongst agencies.
- More collaboration between agencies. Similar to electronic health records – not having to repeat information at each agency.
- Overall coordination of services – One stop shop.
- Empowerment of seniors to optimize the use of resources

Health Care

- Supports re: addictions, mental health as population ages.
- Personal responsibility for health; fitness, nutrition over the pill solution.
- Overall health care costs.
- Level of care in supported living facilities not satisfactory.
- Shortage of health care providers caring for older adults.
- Long term facilities – better access to programming and social connections within.

Volunteers

- Getting volunteers.
- Engaging seniors in work and volunteer opportunities.
- How to tap into the wisdom, experience and knowledge of seniors?

Stereotypes

- Lack of opportunities to learn about immigrant cultures.
- Not enough integration with immigrants.
- Lack of role models for people aging successfully.
- Challenge for community based organizations to let go of individual agendas/goals to serve a broader, integrated approach. Taking a systems view of seniors' issues so that we go beyond treating the symptoms & begin to shift our attention/resources to root causes & broader outcomes.
- Social agency not working for seniors.

Isolation

- Support for caregivers.
- Language.
- Intergenerational connections for future endeavours.
- Inclusion of diversity.
- Social supports being provided in care facilities are limited.
- Transportation access contributes to.

Funding

- How to fund services on a go forward basis?
- Debt – Personal and Government – Realities to consider.
- Programs not resourced adequately. Run out of money quickly.
- Agency staff that serve seniors (and people with disabilities) are underpaid, which results in difficulty retaining regular staff.
- How to set funding priorities?

Summary Document

Major Themes from Community Responses

Please note: Themes are not in priority ordinal sequence.

1. Successfully accessing information and services whether through traditional communication methods and/or new technologies.
2. Age Friendly City by 2020.
3. Establish a pilot community that is representative of “Aging in Place”.
4. Incorporate aging solutions to issues in planning & designing communities.
5. Coordination of Service Providers.
6. Role of families in the context of caregivers, generational differences and the support characteristics that are needed.
7. Role of Community Associations.
8. Role of Government – Municipal, Provincial, Federal
9. Creating a social movement about Calgary being the age friendliest community in the...
10. Better Transportation alternatives and promoting walk able communities.
11. Advocacy to decision/policy makers.
12. Volunteerism at the different aging cohorts.
13. Eldership.
14. Assessment of Housing Needs.
15. Seniors supporting seniors: politically active seniors groups.