EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investing in community: age-friendly approaches to creating a vibrant Summerland

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1. What Does Age-Friendly Mean?

An age-friendly community is not just 'elderly-friendly', but is one that ensures equity, accessibility and inclusion for the benefit of everyone. This age-friendly assessment and planning project (phase 1) has helped to identify many age-friendly features that are already in place in Summerland. However, the findings also identify a number of opportunities where an age-friendly approach could strengthen aspects of the community for all ages, including in the areas of housing, transportation, healthy built environments, sustainable environmental and economic development, and social inclusion.

The eight key features of an age-friendly community include:
1. **Outdoor spaces and public buildings** are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.
2. Public **transportation** is accessible and affordable.
3. **Housing** is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed/accessible and secure.
4. Opportunities exist for **social participation** in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.
5. Older people are treated with respect and are **included in civic life**.
6. Opportunities for **employment and volunteerism** cater to older persons' interests and abilities.
7. Age-friendly **communication and information** is available.
8. Community **support and health services** are tailored to older persons' needs.

Adapted from: *Becoming an Age-friendly Community: Local Government Guide*, BC Ministry of Health, updated 2014.

The District of Summerland is committed to supporting the development of a vibrant and inclusive community. Accessing funds from the Age-Friendly Community Grant program of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) has allowed Summerland to do the work of developing an assessment and action plan as the first phase of becoming an 'designated' age-friendly community in BC. This is the first step to being eligible to apply for additional resources to support ongoing community development work.

2. Project Scope and Activities

The project was guided by a *Community Advisory Committee* made up of 8 community members. The committee met six times, between June and December 2019 to provide input into the design of activities, make recommendations on implementation, share key community resources, assist with interpreting findings, and identity gaps and opportunities.

Several data collection tools were used to undertake the community assessment:
a) *Environmental Scan* - was undertaken to find and review age-friendly assessments and plans from across Canada, with attention to communities of a similar size and context to Summerland. Findings showed those communities that involved intersectoral leadership (e.g. local service organizations, not-for-profits, businesses and local government staff) were more likely to create a sustainable plan based on partnership and multiple funding sources. A key drawback, however, is that most of the plans lacked clear evaluation measures.

b) *Review of Summerland Planning Documents* - key supports for healthy aging and age-friendly communities are touched on in the plans guiding municipal activities in Summerland. Areas of strength included a focus on regional growth and sustainable economic diversification, affordable housing, and attention to accessibility in parks and recreation planning. Areas of weakness were related to gaps in regional planning around the need for an inter-regional approach to accessible transportation, and the need for coordinated social health action. Opportunities to strengthen planning in Summerland include the development of a new Transportation Master Plan, and linking age-friendly principles to the six current strategic priorities for Council.

c) *Review of Services and Resources* – was undertaken with a focus on older adults. Several accessibility issues were identified:
   - The ever-changing nature of services available, which would benefit from a coordinated and centrally accessed information hub
   - The challenge of internet access and technical literacy, which would benefit from having support and training specifically for older adults
   - It is also recommended that the inventory of services and resources include all available health and social supports and not be limited by age.

d) *Focus Groups* - were held with four priority stakeholder groups to obtain input about key questions to include in the assessment survey: formal care providers; not-for-profit organizations; businesses and arts organizations; older adults living independently.

e) *Age-Friendly Survey* - was administered using electronic and paper data collection tools (October 1-15, 2019). The survey was open to all community members, but an extra effort was made to recruit older adults in order to ensure feedback was collected from as many Summerland residents age 55 and older as possible. The survey received a total of 224 completed responses, of which 190 responses were from those age 55 and older. The response rate for those age 65 and older was 3.8% of the Summerland population.

3. Survey Results

The majority of survey respondents **of all ages** agree or strongly agree that Summerland is an age-friendly community (~60%), but the number of 'neutral' and 'disagree' responses suggest that there is room for improvement (~40%).

The survey results are reported for respondents age 55 and older for each of the six sections of the survey:
- Housing
- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Community supports and health services
- Communication and information
- Social participation, inclusion and respect

The older adults who responded to the survey (age 55 and older) told us that Summerland is generally age-friendly, that they feel like they belong, and that Summerland is a great place to live. At the same time, respondents identified areas where Summerland could improve as a community to become even more accessible and inclusive of all community members, from the youngest to the oldest.
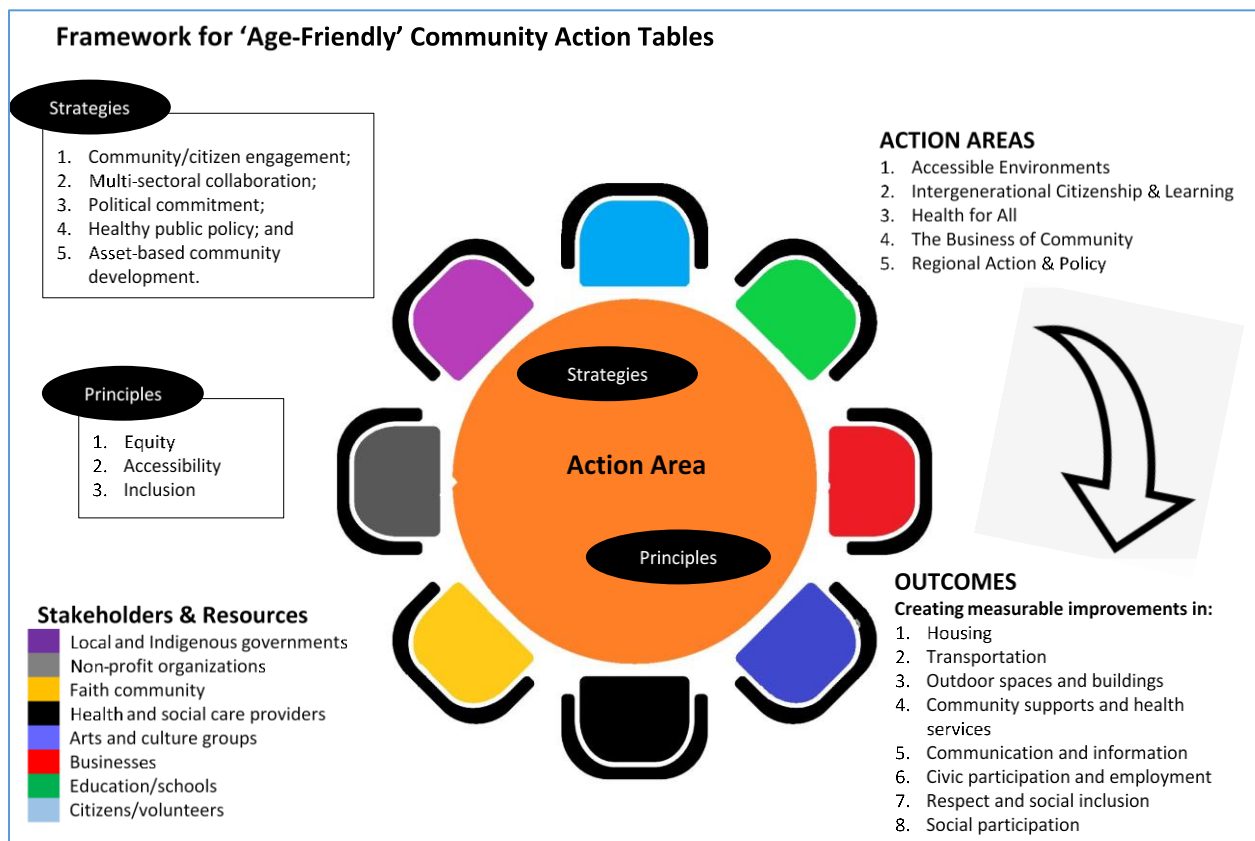
4. Action Planning Framework

Stakeholder collaboration is essential for achieving the objective of becoming a vibrant and age-friendly community. It means working in partnership to ensure an empowered public and transformative change; local government cannot do it alone.

Five 'action areas' are proposed as a starting point for **community conversations** in the next phase of the project:
1. Accessible Environments
2. Intergenerational Citizenship and Learning
3. Health for All
4. The Business of Community
5. Regional Action and Policy

The 'community action tables' provide the structure for a variety of inter-sectoral partners/stakeholders to come together and build on the work they may already be doing together. These action areas and community conversations are guided by **principles of equity, accessibility and inclusion**.

Framework for 'Age-Friendly' Community Action Tables

Strategies
1. Community/citizen engagement;
2. Multi-sectoral collaboration;
3. Political commitment;
4. Healthy public policy; and
5. Asset-based community development.

Principles
1. Equity
2. Accessibility
3. Inclusion

Stakeholders & Resources
- Local and Indigenous governments
- Non-profit organizations
- Faith community
- Health and social care providers
- Arts and culture groups
- Businesses
- Education/schools
- Citizens/volunteers

ACTION AREAS
1. Accessible Environments
2. Intergenerational Citizenship & Learning
3. Health for All
4. The Business of Community
5. Regional Action & Policy

OUTCOMES
Creating measurable improvements in:
1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Outdoor spaces and buildings
4. Community supports and health services
5. Communication and information
6. Civic participation and employment
7. Respect and social inclusion
8. Social participation

The establishment of *Age-Friendly Community Action Tables* needs to be based on a **community strategic plan** that describes the priorities and commitment of the range of stakeholders, including the District of Summerland. Based on this, the action tables will be able to lead community conversations, identify opportunities, and undertake projects to ensure Summerland is a 'community for all ages'.

5. Recommendations

The recommendation for the next phase (phase 2) of the project is to create an *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan* that supports existing plans and priorities by filling knowledge gaps and engaging both citizens and organizational stakeholders. Everyone has a role in setting priorities for an age-friendly strategic plan that is aligned with community values and principles. This will include bringing together stakeholders to:
- review proposed action areas for community action tables;
- identify priority projects for quick wins related to each action area; and
- select outcomes and indictors that will drive community collaboration.

The plan needs to avoid duplication and integrate age-friendly approaches into existing planning processes, while supporting leadership by both the District and stakeholder organizations. Shared ownership of the resulting plan is essential for effective implementation as local government cannot create an age-friendly community on its own.

Recommended actions for the development of an *Age-Friendly Community Action Plan* include:

#	Item	Timeline
Planning		
1-1	Map age-friendly outcomes, stakeholders and priority action areas against District plans and upcoming planning processes **to identify areas of overlap and explore opportunities** to integrate strategies and activities.	March
1-2	Establish an age-friendly stakeholder **working group** with representation across ages and sectors (e.g. nonprofit, health and social care, business, local government)	April - December
Community Engagement		
2-1	**Focus groups** – host 2-3 focus groups with older adult populations under-represented in the assessment survey	April
2-2	**Community Café** – host a full day event with citizens and representatives from stakeholder organizations to identify opportunities for partnership, set priorities, and identify potential leaders/champions for priority action areas.	May
Action Plan		
3-1	Develop a **community action plan** with priority action areas, intended outcomes, and leadership commitments from the District and stakeholder organizations.	June - September
3-2	Develop an **evaluation framework** based on intended outcomes with appropriate indicators and recommendations for developing a data collection strategy.	October
3-3	Host a **wrap-up event** to share the *Summerland Community Age-Friendly Action Plan*.	November

Implementation of these recommendations will lay the foundation for a sustainable approach to creating an age-friendly community that ensures Summerland is accessible and inclusive of all ages and abilities. By creating space for community conversation and intersectoral collaboration, the District will be able to leverage local resources and commitment for quick-wins, and focus District funding in the areas that can be most impactful.