

New Denver's Age-friendly Assessment

Final Report

**Prepared for the Council of the Village of New Denver
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Executive Summary

New Denver's Age-friendly Assessment took place in the fall of 2009. It focused on eight key age-friendly community features that have been identified in global and national studies as important for active aging.

The assessment process comprised two public meetings and a survey. Twenty people attended the first meeting and eleven came to the second. Thirty four surveys out of three hundred were returned, resulting in a response rate of 11%.

According to residents, New Denver's top five age-friendly assets are:

1. Friendly, helpful and inclusive community
2. Walkable (level), compact community – easy to get around
3. Medical services - hospital, doctors, and health centre
4. Centralized business core
5. Volunteer opportunities and recognition

They also identified the following top five age-friendly needs:

1. Transportation services to medical services and other communities, including handyDART services
2. Wheelchair accessibility to businesses
3. Home care services – including Meals on Wheels
4. Assisted living housing
5. Sidewalks and roads maintenance – snow, ice and vegetation

At the last public meeting, residents identified the following priorities for Council's consideration:

1. Transportation services to medical services and other communities, including handyDART services
2. Wheelchair accessibility to businesses
3. Home care services – including Meals on Wheels
4. Assisted living housing
5. Clear sidewalk across the bridge in winter/public washroom in commercial core

The assessment also reviewed New Denver's Official Community Plan (OCP) for age-friendly policies and reflections of aging and disability trends.

The review found that, with nearly one in three residents over 65 years, more focus should be given to: 1) the need for public transportation, especially to medical appointments; 2) the need for housing alternatives and home services; 3) the need for regularly maintained sidewalks so that falls are prevented; and 4) the need to provide support for those seniors who want to continue to live in their homes and who are impacted by the reduction in government homecare care services.

Specific recommendations are made, including:

- a review of the OCP to include aging and disability/accessibility needs;
- the establishment of an Advisory Committee to review transportation needs and options as the first step in addressing residents' priorities;
- the establishment of a Seniors' Advisory Committee to advise Council on seniors' issues, particularly during the OCP review process;
- a long term accessibility plan for New Denver which would include including sidewalks, trails, buildings, and services;
- a joint effort with other agencies to address the need for additional home support and meal services;
- a review of New Denver's land use and housing policies to ensure they support and encourage a variety of assisted housing options needed to address the growing demand for assisted housing;
- a review of the Village's sidewalk and road maintenance practices in light of the needs of seniors and the disabled, along with a sidewalk audit with seniors and the disabled; and
- the establishment of a Community Foundation which could help with the funding towards the five priority needs- which in turn would contribute to the active aging of seniors and to the overall benefit of the community.

An Implementation Guide for Council concludes this Assessment report.

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Section One: Introduction

Our aging world

Our world is getting older. Already, the age group 80 years and over is one of the world's fastest growing demographic groups. And with baby boomers set to become seniors starting in 2011, there will be enormous impacts on demographics, healthcare, transportation, housing and services. Appendix A contains more details of our aging world.

What does this aging trend mean for local governments and the services they provide? What happens to a community when the majority of its residents are over 65? 80? What are the new needs and priorities?

According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), "An aging population will change the pattern of housing needs and preferences, alter the nature of the demand for services, change transportation requirements, accentuate the need for making communities more responsive to people with disabilities and challenge existing neighbourhood design and community planning practices."¹

Age-friendly guides to help cities and smaller communities

In response to the global forecasts that more than 1 billion people will be over 60 years of age by 2025² and recognizing the subsequent impact on health services, the World Health Organization began a Global Age-friendly Cities project. Based on interviews with seniors, caregivers and community leaders in 33 cities in 22 countries, the project looked at what supported the healthy aging of seniors in cities and subsequently identified eight key features of an age-friendly city.

Complementing the work of WHO's Age-friendly Cities project, Canada's Age-friendly Initiative focused on smaller, rural and remote communities. The Initiative, supported by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for seniors, involved ten communities with populations from 600 - 5,000, including Lumby and Alert Bay in BC.

Many physical, social and health barriers to active aging were found in these smaller and remote communities. The eight key features for age-friendliness identified in the Global Cities Project were adapted to the findings of these Canadian communities. The resulting Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities Guide (2007) includes a checklist for communities to use in evaluating their level of age-friendliness.

What is an Age-friendly Community?

¹ CMHC, Impacts of the Aging of the Canadian Population on Housing and Communities, Research Highlight Paper, February, 2008.

² Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

An Age-friendly community is “a community where policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment support and enable older people to ‘age actively’ by:

- Recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older persons;
- Anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences;
- Respecting decisions and lifestyle choices;
- Protecting those who are most vulnerable; and
- Promoting inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life”.³

The eight key features of an age-friendly community are⁴:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings that are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible (*Outdoor Spaces and Buildings*);
2. Public transportation that is accessible and affordable (*Transportation*);
3. Housing that is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure (*Housing*);
4. Community support and health services tailored to older persons’ needs (*Community Support and Health Services*);
5. Older people are treated with respect and are included in community life (*Respect and Social Inclusion*);
6. Opportunities for social participation in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures (*Social Participation and Recreation*);
7. Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities are available that cater to older persons’ interests and abilities (*Civic Employment and Employment Opportunities*);
8. Age-friendly communication and information is available (*Communication and Information*).

More details on each of these features can be found in the Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities guide checklist in Appendix B.

A community that works for seniors is a community for all ages. Many age-friendly aspects also benefit the rest of a community: eg) wider sidewalks provide better wheelchair accessibility to businesses, and sidewalk clearing and road maintenance help parents with strollers and kids on bicycles.

BC’s Age-friendly programs

To encourage BC communities to start addressing the needs of their growing seniors’ population, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) created a Seniors’ Housing and Support Initiative and in 2008, made Age-friendly community

³ World Health Organization, Global Age-Friendly Cities Project, and included in the Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide, p.5

⁴ Adapted from Age-friendly British Columbia Newsletter, Vol.1, No.1, December 2009

planning grants available to local governments. Funding was and is based on four priorities⁵:

- community consultations and learning
- review and revision of existing planning documents
- creation of new age-friendly plans and policies
- development of support tools and resources

New Denver's Context

New Denver is a small and beautiful village on the shore of Slocan Lake in the West Kootenays. Its stunning location, surrounded by mountains and provincial parks, and a 30 km long pristine lake, its moderate climate, and friendly small community with level walking terrain and a local health centre make it an attractive place to live for its current 512 residents.

Facts⁶:

- New Denver's median age is 53 years; BC's is 40.8 years
- Almost one in three or 150 of New Denver's 512 residents is over 65 years (29.9%); BC = 14.5%
- One in ten (10.8%) is over 80 years of age; BC = 4.1%
- One in five (20.5%) is in the 55-64 age range; BC = 12.2%
- New Denver's overall population declined by 4.8% between 2001 and 2006 while the proportion of seniors over 65 years increased by 30%
- New Denver ranked 9th out of 157 BC municipalities in its proportion of seniors⁷.
- The Arrow Lakes Local Health Area⁸, which includes New Denver, projects that between 2010 and 2025:
 - the 75-79 age cohort will increase by 123.8%
 - the 80-84 age group will increase by 93.9%
 - the 85+ age group will increase by 75.7%

New Denver Age-friendly Assessment Project

In the summer of 2009, the Village of New Denver applied for and received funding from UBCM's Seniors' Housing and Support Initiative to undertake an Age-friendly assessment. The objective was to assess how New Denver measured up against the eight defined features of an age-friendly community as identified in the Age-friendly Global Cities and Rural and Remote Communities guides.

In late September 2009, Brenda Dahlie was contracted to undertake the assessment and to submit the draft final report to Council by December 4, 2009. A

⁵ Source: Seniors' Housing and Support Initiative Application Guide, Union of BC Municipalities, p.2

⁶ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Profile – Summary Version, August, 2009

⁷ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Prepared by BC Stats in "2006 Census Fast Facts: Ageing of the BC Population"

⁸ Arrow Lakes Local Health Area (LHA): P.E.O.P.L.E.34 Population Projections. Table 3-A

work plan was developed and approved for the ten week period. Appendix C contains the Terms of Reference for the Project.

New Denver's Age-friendly Assessment Process

Public Meeting – October 15, 2009

- Attended by twenty residents
- Introduction of the Age-friendly assessment project to the residents of New Denver.
- Presentation by Faye White from the Age-Friendly Provincial Implementation Team on “Implementing Age-Friendly Communities in BC”
- Exercise to identify New Denver's top three age-friendly assets and needs. Summary of comments can be found in Appendix D.

Age-friendly Survey – November 9- 16, 2009

- Review of various age-friendly reports and surveys including Creston, Revelstoke, Parksville, Bowen Island, Strathcona, AB, and Cartwright, Manitoba.
- Information on, and links to, surveys was provided by Elaine Gallagher, head of the Provincial Implementation team.
- Draft survey was created and adapted from Cartwright, Manitoba's survey report which in turn was created by the Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba. Permission to adapt was received from the Centre.
- Draft survey was approved by the Village's Chief Administrator
- Copy of the final survey with all responses can be found in Appendix E.
- On November 9th, the Survey was distributed through New Denver's Canada Post. However, many residents had “No Flyer” arrangements with Canada Post, and hence, an unknown number of residents with mailboxes did not receive the Survey.
- To alert residents of this oversight, copies of the Survey were placed at Ann's Natural Food, Eldorado Bigway Market, and Mountainberry Foods, and posters were put in prominent locations.
- 175 surveys were given to Canada Post for distribution. 75 surveys were placed in the three stores (25 each), and 50 were available at the Village office.
- Residents were asked to return their completed Surveys to the Village Office by the end of Monday, November 16, 2009.

Survey Results

- 34 out of the 300 surveys were returned; an 11% response rate overall.
- Out of the 34 respondents, 14 (or 41.2%) were from those over 65 years; 13 (or 38.2%) were from those between 55 and 64; and 7 (or 20.6%) were from 32 to 54 years.
- Reasons for the low response rate could be: not everyone received a survey in their mail box; survey overwhelm (Healthy Housing survey the week before); survey fatigue; absence; or lack of interest.
- Compiled survey responses are contained in Appendix E.

Public Meeting – November 26, 2009

- Eleven people attended the meeting, including two Councillors.
- Discussion of survey results and identification of priorities for Council's consideration.
- Appendix D contains a summary of comments.

Communication

- Posters for the two public meetings and notification for mailbox holders about the Survey were placed in prominent locations in the business core
- Articles and an ad were also published in the Valley Voice notifying residents about the age-friendly process, the public meetings, and the survey.
- Ad in 358 Exchange announcing the November 26 public meeting
- Article in Valley Voice summarizing survey results and draft recommendations for Council

Implementation/Advisory Committee

- An invitation to participate on the Implementation Committee for the Age-friendly assessment project was extended at the first public meeting and also through a Valley Voice newspaper article. One resident offered. Due to the small response, it was decided to establish an Advisory Committee to assist with the implementation of recommendations in the New Year.

Meetings with Agencies

- Meetings were held between the Contractor and representatives of the Arrow and Slokan Lakes Community Services, the Healthy Housing Society, and the Columbia Basin Trust. Feedback from a representative of the Economic Development Commission was obtained via email.

Section Two: New Denver Seniors' Thoughts and Priorities

Appendix E contains a full summary of survey responses, the full list of age-friendly assets and needs identified by residents in the survey, and input from the two public meetings. In spite of the low response rate, the 34 completed surveys plus the input from the two meetings provide much food for thought.

New Denver's top five age-friendly assets and needs

One section of the Survey asked respondents to identify what they thought were New Denver's top five age-friendly assets and needs. Based on frequency of response, the following summarizes the top five age-friendly assets and needs:

New Denver's top five age-friendly assets	New Denver's top five age-friendly needs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friendly, helpful and inclusive community 2. Walkable (level), compact community – easy to get around 3. Medical services - hospital, doctors, and health centre 4. Centralized business core 5. Volunteer opportunities and recognition 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transportation services to medical services and other communities, including handyDART services 2. Wheelchair accessibility to businesses 3. Home care services – including Meals on Wheels 4. Assisted living housing 5. Sidewalks and roads maintenance: snow, ice and vegetation

This list correlates with the input received at the October 15 public meeting with one exception: at the public meeting, there were more comments about the prevalence of social activities than there were about volunteer opportunities. The need for cell phone coverage was also raised in the survey responses as well as the October 15th meeting.

Survey Results – key findings

The following provides a summary of those Survey responses with the highest levels of agreement or disagreement based on the highest levels of importance. It should be noted that while many respondents checked "Important" in their responses, they also added "Don't know". This could indicate that they don't use that particular service but know it is important to others, or they don't know about that service but think it is important. A future version of the Survey should include a "Don't Know" option to determine the level of awareness about a topic.

In terms of age-friendly assets, these results tell us **the level of agreement** that the statement is true and also how important the topic in that statement is to respondents.

Key survey findings – Age-friendly assets

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Timely snow and ice clearing of roads and sidewalks
Yes – 21 No - 11 Important – 31 Not Important – 0

Community Support and Health Services

- Long-term care available
Yes – 25 No –5 Important –31 Not important - 0

Respect and Social Inclusion

- Seniors generally treated with respect.
Yes -29 No – 3 Important - 29 Not Important - 0
- Seniors volunteer contributions recognized and appreciated
Yes – 27 No –5 Important -28 Not Important - 2

Social Participation and Recreation

- Local parks or walking trails accessible to seniors.
Yes – 24 No – 8 Important - 27 Not Important - 2
- Community and school activities include seniors
Yes -17 No – 9 Important- 24 Not Important – 2

Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

- Choice of volunteer opportunities for seniors
Yes -24 No –7 Important -28 Not Important - 2
- Seniors well represented on council, boards and committees
Yes – 18 No – 11 Important- 23 Not Important – 4

Communication and Information

- Information about community events, services and programs readily available to seniors
Yes -22 No – 8 Important -26 Not Important - 1

In terms of age-friendly needs, these results tell us the **level of disagreement** with the statement and how important the topic in that statement is to respondents.

Key survey findings – Age-friendly needs

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Most or all building entrances in New Denver are readily accessible to seniors (eg, have wheelchair ramps, automatic doors, stairs with railings)
No – 31 Yes –1 Important – 29 Not Important –2
- Public and accessible washrooms are available in New Denver and in convenient locations.
No - 30 Yes –3 Important –27 Not Important –1

Transportation

- Public transportation (not provided by family or friends) to health care services that are not provided in New Denver is sufficient
No –28 Yes – 0 Important –31 Not important - 1
- The public transportation (not provided by family or friends) to and from medical appointments is sufficient in New Denver.
No – 31 Yes – 0 Important – 30 Not important – 2
- The transportation that is available for individuals with disabilities (eg, handyDART) is sufficient in New Denver.
No –27 Yes – 1 Important – 30 Not important - 1
- The public transportation (not provided by friends or family) to shopping, events etc is sufficient in New Denver.
No –31 Yes – 2 Important – 28 Not important – 4

Housing

- There is a variety of housing for seniors (independent living, assisted living, subsidized) in New Denver.
No –26 Yes – 5 Important –31 Not important - 1
- Housing for seniors is affordable in New Denver.
No –18 Yes – 11 Important –31 Not important - 1
- There is enough subsidized housing for low-income seniors in New Denver.
No –27 Yes – 2 Important –30 Not important – 3
- The waiting times to get into senior housing, such as assisted living, are reasonable in New Denver.
No –19 Yes – 3 Important –27 Not important - 1

Community Support and Health Services

- The home care services for seniors in New Denver are sufficient.
No –23 Yes – 5 Important –30 Not important - 1
- Access to health care services that are not provided in New Denver is generally convenient (eg, services not too far away, appointment times are convenient).
No –24 Yes – 6 Important – 29 Not important – 1
- Services that help seniors around the home (eg, snow removal, lawn care, garbage brought to the street) are available in New Denver.
No –17 Yes – 11 Important –29 Not important – 2

In addition to the responses above, responses to several survey questions were divided, in some cases almost evenly. Such opposing opinions should be taken as indicators of either emerging issues, such as road safety, or the need for more investigation and communication.

Key Survey findings – Divided Opinion

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- The road signs in New Denver are adapted to needs of older drivers (eg, large signs)
Yes –15 No – 15 Important – 25 Not Important – 4

Transportation

- The public transportation (not provided by family or friends), including handyDART that is available in my community is affordable for seniors.
No – 14 Yes – 11 Important – 23 Not important – 1

Community Support and Health Services

- The health care services that are provided in New Denver meet the needs of seniors (eg, hospitals, physicians)
Yes –16 No –14 Important –30 Not important - 0

Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

- Community consultations in New Denver specifically include seniors
No – 16 Yes - 12 Important -25 Not Important -3

Communication and Information

- There is enough assistance available in New Denver for completing official forms (eg, income tax, etc).
Yes -14 No – 13 Important – 29 Not Important - 0

New Denver's age-friendliness in terms of eight key features

The following Table summarizes how New Denver ranks in terms of the eight key features of an age-friendly community. It indicates that New Denver's 'age-friendly' assets are mainly in the '**social**' sphere whereas the most important age-friendly needs or priorities for New Denver are in the '**physical**' sphere: transportation, housing, community services (such as home care) and outdoor spaces and buildings (such as wheel chair accessibility).

Eight Key Features of an Age-friendly community	New Denver's Age-friendly Assets	New Denver's Age-friendly Needs
1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	√ ? **	X X ? * *
2. Transportation		X X X X ? *
3. Housing		X X X X *
4. Community Support & Health Services	√ ? *	X X X ? *
5. Respect & Social Inclusion	√ √ *	
6. Social Participation & Recreation	√	
7. Civic Involvement & Employment Opportunities	√ ? *	?
8. Communication & Information	√ ?	?

√ = Most agreement X = most disagreement ? = divided opinion * - top five

Priorities for Council's consideration

At the November 26th public meeting, attendees were provided with a summary of the survey results and were then asked to identify the priorities for Council's consideration. In their opinion, four of the top five needs list reflected their priorities. These are:

1. Transportation services to medical services and other communities, including handyDART services
2. Wheelchair accessibility to businesses
3. Home care services – including Meals on Wheels
4. Assisted living housing

It was agreed that the fifth need – “Sidewalks and roads maintenance – snow, ice and vegetation” was important but that the specific priority was the need for a clear sidewalk across the bridge in winter. There was also considerable discussion and agreement over a centrally located public washroom as an additional priority.

With this addition and modification, the priority list for Council’s consideration is:

1. Transportation services to medical services and other communities, including handyDART services
2. Wheelchair accessibility to businesses
3. Home care services – including Meals on Wheels
4. Assisted living housing
5. Clear sidewalk across the bridge in winter/public washroom in commercial core

Section Three: Discussion and Potential Actions

1.0 Outdoor spaces and Buildings

Needs identified by residents

- Sidewalks and roads maintenance – free of snow, ice and vegetation.
- Wheelchair accessibility to businesses
- Public washrooms that are also accessible in commercial core

Suggestions from residents

Sidewalks

- “Keep sidewalks on 6th and 7th avenue ploughed or shovelled during the winter months”
- “Some sidewalks impassable due to tree branches, shrubs etc on walkway. Could be on a scheduled program for clearing etc.”

Wheelchair accessibility

- “Need ramps and/or milder slopes down to beaches, for example, currently inaccessible to disabled.”

Discussion

The ability to walk safely in a community and attend to daily activities is a basic age-friendly need. Most seniors, if not all, have a fear of falling while walking and so need well maintained roads and sidewalks. Not only is the ability to walk an asset for good health, it also enhances social participation and community involvement.

Sidewalk and road maintenance were commented on both positively and negatively. For some, snow and ice removal is timely; for others, not so. Several comments suggested annual clearing of branches and bushes which are blocking sight of pedestrians and people in wheelchairs. And while New Denver does not have continuous sidewalks, several comments mentioned the need for a sidewalk or path from the orchard to “Main Street”.

New Denver has a policy of maintaining sidewalks in the commercial core area. However several respondents pointed to the need for sidewalks to access the commercial core safely.

Accessibility –Almost all respondents refuted the statement that most or all building entrances in New Denver are readily accessible to seniors. Many added comments that reflected their concern that New Denver buildings were not reflecting current accessibility legislation. Under the BC Building Code, all new buildings must be accessible to all members of the public. Older buildings are exempt from being accessible unless undergoing renovation.

Access to public and commercial buildings in New Denver is varied. Some such as Kootenay Savings, Canada Post, the school and the Slocan Community Health Centre are fully accessible. Others such as Knox Hall, the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches have ramps but not automated doors. Some commercial businesses such as Home Hardware, Nuru, Apple Tree, Panini, and Eldorado Food Market are located in older buildings and do not have front door accessibility. Currently, people in wheelchairs either need to wait for assistance to enter or enter through the rear of the building.

An additional requirement for increased accessibility would be wider sidewalks. According to Mayor Wright, while there is adequate road space to widen sidewalks, the cost to do so is approximately \$25K per block.

A public washroom in the commercial core was identified as a need by several residents. Currently New Denver's public washrooms are located in Centennial Park and in the Museum during summer hours. A more centrally located public washroom is important for seniors and others who walk to the commercial core. There is a risk of seniors staying home and becoming isolated if they don't drive and don't have the use of a public washroom while out. Currently, businesses provide washrooms; however, use of these is restricted to business operating hours. It also places a greater burden on the owner for maintaining a properly working septic system.

Other –there is divided opinion about the question "road signs in New Denver are adapted to needs of older drivers (eg, large signs)". Several comments were made about replacing the yield signs with stop signs as some older drivers are driving right through the yields.

Potential actions⁹

Sidewalks

- Undertake a sidewalk inspection assessment with seniors and disabled people
- Review sidewalk and road maintenance practices, and with regard to the bridge on the highway, work with Highways to ensure clear sidewalks in winter
- Paint curbs a brighter colour for better visibility
- Create a volunteer pool to shovel seniors' sidewalks as needed in winter

Roads

- Undertake a review New Denver's roads, signage, traffic controls from the needs of seniors who have slower reflexes, and lowered hearing and visual capacities.

Accessibility

- Encourage 'no-step' entrances to commercial buildings

⁹ Suggestions adapted from Creston and Bowen Island's Age-friendly reports and the District of Saanich Global Age-Friendly Cities Project report.

- Undertake an accessibility audit with seniors and the disabled to identify key areas of concern
- Communicate current accessibility requirements to residents through articles in the Valley Voice.

Public Washroom in Commercial Core area

- Offer incentives for developers to include public washrooms in their development plans.
- Identify potential locations for a centrally located public washroom

2.0 Transportation

Needs identified by residents:

- Transportation to medical appointments in Castlegar, Trail, Nelson, Vernon and Kelowna
- Transportation, including handyDART services between New Denver and other communities for shopping, events
- Local transportation within New Denver

Suggestions from respondents

- "Seniors usually have varying levels of ability and access to mobility and will willingly share this information. A good question might be to find out if this is so."
- "There could be a local system for helping seniors get around – something organized with volunteer drivers."
- "Inter-village transit or group rides to include Silverton"
- "Use school busses outside of peak hour needs"
- "More busses to Vernon and Revelstoke for seniors and connections"

Discussion

Almost all input for this assessment was unanimous in the need and importance for more public transportation. In New Denver, many residents depend on friends or family for transportation, if they no longer drive. However, for those who don't have family or are reluctant to ask neighbours or friends for rides, there is a risk of missing medical appointment, no longer participating in community events, or pursuing personal interests.

Public transportation, including handyDART service is operated from the Arrow and Slocan Lakes Community Services on behalf of BC Transit. The bus to Nelson and Nakusp is wheelchair accessible and there is no separate handyDART bus. If required, passengers can be picked up at their home.

While there is public transportation to Nakusp and Nelson twice a week, many comments pointed to the need for more frequency during the day and for bus service in the evenings and weekends. Several people mentioned the need for bus service to Slocan to connect with the Nelson-Slocan bus that runs Monday to Saturday.

Currently, transportation to medical appointments is ad-hoc. There is public transportation to Nelson, Castlegar and Trail. However, using public transportation to Trail requires two transfers and usually an overnight stay due to bus schedules.

In Nakusp, the Minto bus at the Arrow Lakes Hospital goes to Vernon and Kelowna every Wednesday and is available to New Denver residents if there is space. The cost is \$15 return to Vernon and \$20 to Kelowna from Nakusp. This service, however, is not well advertised in New Denver.

Ideas from other communities

- *Transportation to medical appointments in Castlegar, Trail, Nelson, Vernon and Kelowna*
 - West Kootenay Volunteer Driver Program operated by Castlegar and District Community Services Society . Provides daytime Monday – Friday service to those who can't access public or private transportation to attend medical appointments or visit to care centres.
- *Transportation between New Denver and other communities for shopping, events*
 - ELDERGO! – a seniors/elders transportation pilot project servicing Pemberton, Mount Currie, Birken, Divine, and D'Arcy. Free service running on Wednesdays. Door to door service.
 - A subsidized "on demand" taxi/transit service available for anyone without a driver's license in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- *handyDART services*
 - Alert Bay's wheelchair life van was purchased by a community group along with support from the Legion, Credit Union and BC's 'Measuring Up' program.
- *Local transportation within New Denver and perhaps to and from Silverton*
 - "Car stops", a community project on Pender Island. "Car-stops" are pull-outs with signs, similar to bus stops and strategically located at 16 points around the Island to facilitate safe stopping for drivers willing to share rides. If the pilot program is successful there may be need for up to 20 additional locations. Permanent "Car stop " signs include a legal disclaimer and an explanation that travellers are free to choose their ride and that conversely drivers can give lifts to whomever they please, even if this person is not first in the line up. The stops are situated in safe areas where vehicles can pull off the road. (source: www.islandsolutions.co.uk)
 - Nakusp taxi service which will eventually be accessible for wheelchairs

Potential actions

- Address the possibility of having the Minto bus in Nakusp used for weekly trips from New Denver and Nakusp to Castlegar and Trail for medical appointments.
- Advertise the Minto bus option for appointments in Vernon and Kelowna.
- Encourage the development of a volunteer drivers program for medical appointments, shopping, and community events
- Work with neighbouring local governments, Interior Health and BC Transit on increasing the frequency and service of public transportation and Handy Dart, including bus service to Slocan.
- Explore opportunity to use school busses in non-peak hours with the School Board
- Research co-op taxi models

3.0 **Assisted housing**

Needs identified by residents

- A variety of housing for seniors
- Assisted living housing
- Affordable housing
- Enough subsidized housing for low-income seniors

Discussion

Assisted housing in New Denver is one of the top five needs identified by residents. Not only do residents think there isn't enough variety of housing for seniors, they also point to long waiting times to get into the seniors' housing that does exist. They also believe that there is not enough subsidized housing for low-income seniors.

Most seniors in New Denver live in their own homes. And almost half of those over 65 live alone¹⁰. This reflects the current trend of seniors wanting to 'age in place' with familiar surroundings. As well, an increasing number of seniors live alone in BC and in Canada.

The challenges for seniors to 'age in place' are that their homes are also aging. Houses will need to be updated particularly with safety measures. It is estimated that falls in the home account for 80% of hospitalizations of seniors¹¹. Home repair, maintenance and support services will be increasingly required. Repairs and maintenance are also costly, especially for low income seniors. Currently, there are two programs to assist low income homeowners with repairing and upgrading their homes so that they can continue to live independently (the provincial RRAP –

¹⁰ Statistics Canada 2006 Census

¹¹ CMHC Impacts of the Aging of the Canadian Population on Housing and Communities, Research Highlight Paper, February, 2008.

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program and the federal HASI – Home Adaptations for Seniors’ Independence Program). Often seniors need support with completing the application for these programs and for following through the upgrades.

The BC Building Code now includes Adaptable Housing Standards which provide consistent standards in home modification to meet the changing needs of the occupants over time, including seniors. Appendix H provides an overview of this recent change to the Building Code.

According to New Denver’s OCP, “Council’s policy is to ensure that a single family residential land use remains the dominant form of land use in New Denver” (Policy 4.2.2.). With nearly one in three residents now over 65 and an increasingly older residential population, this policy may no longer serve the needs of New Denver residents who are looking for alternative forms of housing to their own single-family dwelling.

In New Denver, there is one BC Housing Subsidized housing complex (Brouse Lodge). It has 10 units, was built in the 1980s, and has a long waiting list. It cannot expand due to its septic system. A second BC Housing subsidized project is being planned for the property next to the Health Centre but has not yet been officially announced.

There are long waiting lists for many of the assisted housing complexes in the Province. The closest assisted housing to New Denver is in Nakusp (10 subsidized and 7 private units). The costs of new facilities plus the cost of upgrading aging facilities to meet the growing demand is placing more attention on providing support services to help keep seniors in their homes.

Potential actions

- Undertake a more detailed housing needs study of New Denver seniors as part of the upcoming OCP review.
- Review New Denver’s land use and housing policies to ensure they support and encourage a variety of assisted housing options needed to address the growing demand for assisted housing;
- Provide help to seniors with paperwork and process for home adaptations and upgrading to support their aging in place
- Encourage new housing and renovations to use the adaptable housing standards and universal design principles which support aging in place.

4.0 Community Support and Health Services

Needs identified by residents

- Home care services – including Meals on Wheels
- Home support services (eg, snow removal)
- Serious lack of adequate home support for disabled, including seniors

Discussion

Most of the comments were concerned with home care services and Meals on Wheels. New Denver used to have a Meals on Wheels program and Interior Health still advertises a Meals on Wheels program in New Denver on their website. However, it has been replaced by a Dinners at Home Program whereby a person places an order for frozen dinners (in allotments of 8) through the receptionist at the Health Centre and approximately 10 days later the dinners are sent from Penticton. This service is currently not advertised and knowledge of it is passed to seniors by home support workers. The cost is \$6.25 per meal and currently there are approximately 6 customers in New Denver.

With the reduction of home care services by Interior Health, many seniors are either going without or depending on friends and family or are paying privately for assistance with housekeeping, snow removal, meal preparation. While some receive financial support from the Department of Veterans' Affairs for these services, there are some seniors in New Denver who are unable to pay for these services, or who do not have family nearby to assist. There is a danger of these seniors 'falling through the cracks'.

In terms of home maintenance support, there are private businesses in New Denver which offer home maintenance services. However, the survey responses indicated either a lack of awareness of these businesses or a lack of free home maintenance services. Whether this is a communication or an affordability issue needs to be reviewed.

Ideas from other communities

- In Kawasaki Japan, a Seniors Co-op was formed to help seniors remain in their homes as long as possible. "It helps frail seniors get the help they need to stay independent and helps able seniors find work that pays, keeps them active and adds meaning to their lives. Member can both provide services and receive them". (See Appendix I)
- In Nakusp, home support is contracted out by the Interior Health Authority to the Arrow and Slokan Lakes Community Services. There is also a privately operated company called "Cordially Yours" offers home care and support.

Potential actions

- Review the need in New Denver for additional home support services and other seniors' services with Interior Health and the Arrow and Slokan Lakes Community Services
- Assess the community's need for a 'Meals on Wheels' type service
- Encourage home services businesses for providing housekeeping and maintenance services
- Investigate school community service credits for helping seniors
- Review the possibility of establishing a seniors' co-op that would provide home support and maintenance services as a start.

5.0 Respect and Social Inclusion

High on the list of comments both in the survey and at the first public meeting was feeling respected and feeling included in community events. New Denver is strong in this age-friendly feature.

6.0 Social Participation and Recreation

Needs identified by residents

- More structured social, recreational and learning events

Suggestions from respondents

- "Create opportunities for assistance, nutritional advice and interactions for elderly in their own home"
- "Community dinners (potluck) once a month"
- "Do a 'seniors' meals-out event regularly through a local restaurant (Valhalla Inn?) paid for by a seniors' fund or program if possible. Subsidized perhaps to lower the price so seniors can afford it? Oh to be able to afford pizza and wine!"

Discussion

While social participation has been identified an age-friendly asset in New Denver, some of the "no's" in the Survey responses indicate that there may be a need for structuring more regular monthly community dinners as well as a need for more regular school/senior activities. It could be that the 'shyer' or more isolated seniors could benefit from some sort of regular structured social activity. There is a volunteer "Friendly Visitor Program" in New Denver where volunteers visit shut-ins upon recommendation of the Community Care nurse.

Ideas from other communities

- Use unused schools for recreation, learning and cross-generational activities.

Potential actions

- Develop a seniors' skills inventory that could be accessed for potential classes, talks, and support

7.0 Civic Participation and Employment

Suggestions from respondents

- "Ideas from seniors would be helpful for consultations"

Discussion

There is a need to involve seniors in the planning activities that will affect them. A Seniors' Advisory Committee, Elder Councils or a Seniors' representative to Council are some ideas for ensuring that the needs of seniors are brought to the attention of Council.

The survey results indicated divided opinion as to whether community consultations in New Denver specifically include seniors. This indicates either a lack of awareness of the consultations or if those consultations include seniors. Since seniors tend to vote more than other age groups and as their numbers grow, the needs of seniors will increasingly be politically addressed as well.

Potential actions

- Create a Seniors' Advisory Committee to support Council in addressing the needs of seniors. One option to this might be to ensure that seniors' perspectives are included in the upcoming Official Community Plan update.
- Create a separate 'Volunteer' bulletin board for those seniors needing assistance or those wishing to volunteer.

8.0 Communication and Information

Needs identified by residents

- No Counselling advocacy services for seniors
- Info about community events might be in a place a senior does not have access to or that is unsuitable for motorized access.

Discussion

Many seniors mentioned that they get their information from either 'word of mouth' or from either the 358 Exchange or the Valley Voice and were satisfied with their sources of information.

There was divided opinion as to whether there is enough assistance available in New Denver for completing official forms (eg, income tax, etc). It would be useful to find out what is not working in this case.

Location of the current Bulletin Board was commented on by a few respondents.

From the mixed responses on the availability of Meals on Wheels in New Denver and on medical transportation options, there seems to be a lack of awareness of some services for seniors – eg) Dinners at Home program; the Minto Bus to Vernon and Kelowna. This is understandable given that there is no public advertising for

these programs. While the survey results indicated that having a central directory for seniors was not as important to respondents, there may be a need for a 'one-stop' information shop for seniors.

Potential Actions

- Create a current listing of seniors' services and support and place on the Village website and in tax notices.
- Encourage agencies to advertise their services for seniors.
- Increase the font size in correspondence from the Village of New Denver and other businesses for easier reading.
- Review the accessibility of the current location of Bulletin Board and determine with seniors whether there is a need for another location.

Section Four: How Age-friendly is New Denver's OCP?

A Review of New Denver's OCP

New Denver's Official Community Plan, adopted in 2007 contains several specific references to seniors:

Outdoors Spaces and Buildings

- Policy 10.2.3. Council's policy is to maintain sidewalks in critical areas such as downtown, near schools and near senior's facilities

Housing

- Objective 4.1.1. To retain the existing residential density and character, with some exceptions to allow housing types and densities that can accommodate a wide range of socioeconomic and age groups
- Policy 4.2.7. Council will actively encourage multi-family housing catering to seniors, low income residents and renters in areas where conflicts with other uses will be minimized.
- Policy 4.2.10. Council's policy is to encourage residential development designated for seniors to locate either in the commercial core area or adjacent to the Slocan Community Health Centre

Community Support and Health Services

- Policy 5.2.8. Council's policy is to actively encourage the development of and the preservation of health care establishments that can serve the increasing senior population as well as the general public.

Using the eight key areas as a checklist, New Denver's OCP's 'age-friendliness' is found mainly in its housing policies. There is recognition of the changing housing needs of seniors and Council's encouragement of housing that would meet those needs is contained in policy. However Council's Policy 4.2.2. "to ensure that a single family residential land use remains the dominant form of land use in New Denver" should be reviewed in light of the alternate housing needs of many of its seniors.

Sidewalk maintenance in critical areas is another 'age-friendly' policy in the OCP. There is, however, no objective or policy regarding public transportation, home services, public washrooms, and accessibility, all of which are key needs of seniors.

A review of New Denver's OCP will be undertaken in the spring of 2010. At that time, more detailed information about the needs of seniors in New Denver will be obtained. As well, the OCP review will provide an opportunity for seniors to forward their needs and perspectives to Council on key topics, either individually or through a to be established Seniors' Advisory Committee.

Comments:

An Official Community Plan provides a local government with an opportunity to plan for and accommodate the needs of its aging community.

The ability of seniors to actively age is mostly determined at the community level. The more a local government can proactively address their needs for housing, transportation and support services and programs, the more seniors are able to remain safely in their homes and contribute to the community. Given the demographic trends and forecasts, the Village of New Denver will face increasing pressure to address the housing, health services and transportation needs of its large seniors' population.

Alongside an aging population, local governments will also be increasingly faced with rising levels of disability. In 2006, approximately 30% of BC residents, ages 65-74, and approximately 50% of people over 75 years of age, report living with a disability. This is an increase of 20% from 2001-2006.¹²

Recognizing aging and disability in OCPs

1) Draft guidelines for developing Age-friendly and Disability –Friendly OCPs

As a follow up to the April 2009 conference on “Creating Universally Designed Healthy Sustainable Communities”, a working group made up of representatives from UBCM, 2010 Legacies Now Measuring Up program, Measuring up the North, SmartGrowth BC, and the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, developed a set of draft guidelines to encourage and support local governments to consider aging and disability issues, and to incorporate these into OCPs (see Appendix F).

For example, when updating or creating their OCP, a local government, could:

- Include a commitment to accessibility and inclusion in the overall vision or mission section of the OCP
- Include aging and accessibility goal statements in the OCP on key topics including public transportation, the built environment – using Universal Design principles, and housing
- Actively invite the participation of people with disabilities, older people and others in the development or revision of the OCP

The Measuring up the North project is an example of the emerging shift to including aging and disability issues in OCPs. Currently over 40 cities, towns, villages and districts in Northern BC are working to make their communities liveable age-friendly, disability-friendly, universally designed, inclusive for all citizens and visitors¹³.

¹² Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006. Contained in Introduction to “Developing Age-Friendly and Disability –Friendly Official Community Plans.

¹³ www.measuringupthenorth.com

2) The Accessibility Community Bylaws Guide was released by Social Planning and Research Council (SPARC)¹⁴ in September 2009 to assist communities in BC to enhance their accessibility.

A Provincial Advisory Committee made up of representatives from elected officials, municipal recreation staff, city engineers, and people with disabilities assisted with the development of ten 'model' bylaws and one hundred recommendations.

These bylaws provide local governments with tools to address the emerging needs of the growing number of disabled. Appendix G contains a summary sheet of the ten model bylaws.

¹⁴ www.sparc.bc.ca

Section Five: Summary and Recommendations

This assessment has provided an opportunity to look through the lens of seniors as to what is important, what is already in place, and what is needed. The assessment looked at New Denver's level of age-friendliness, using the checklist of eight key areas contained in two age-friendly guides.

The assessment found that New Denver is **most** age-friendly in terms of its 'social' areas: Respect and Social Inclusion, Social Participation and Recreation; Civic Involvement and Employment Opportunities, and Communication and Information. It is **somewhat** 'age-friendly' in terms of its Community Support and Health Services and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings. It is **least** 'age-friendly' in terms of (public) transportation, alternate housing such as assisted living, and accessibility.

New Denver has some basic assets which many communities do not have: level terrain which makes it easy for walking; a compact sized village with a centralized commercial core; and a local health centre. It has excellent drinking water, beautiful vistas, friendly, caring people and an active group of seniors. With all these, New Denver is further ahead in terms of age-friendly assets than many other places.

In considering the priority list below, it maybe comforting to know that almost every community in Canada is wrestling with the same or similar needs. Transportation, sidewalks, accessibility, and housing alternatives are priorities of most communities. By attending to these needs, New Denver can become **the** age-friendliest community in the Kootenays.

- Transportation services to medical services and other communities, including Handy Dart services
- Wheelchair accessibility to businesses
- Home care services – including Meals on Wheels
- Assisted living housing
- Clear sidewalk across the bridge in winter/public washroom in commercial core

Recognizing that New Denver is a very small community and that most of these priorities are 'big ticket' items, making them a reality will require a variety of approaches, including: joint partnerships, private/public initiatives, volunteer support, and having a proactive OCP that supports their implementation.

Currently there are two other initiatives underway in New Denver: the Healthy Housing's Economic Development initiative and the New Denver Sustainability Initiative. It would be advantageous for New Denver if the results of all three initiatives could be mutually focused to work on addressing the needs of transportation, assisted housing, homecare and accessibility as identified as priorities in this report.

Designed to start the process of addressing the priorities identified by residents for New Denver to be more age-friendly, it is recommended that:

- 1) Council receive this New Denver Age-Friendly Assessment final report;
- 2) Council append the Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities Guide checklist in its entirety to New Denver's Official Community Plan to serve as a guide for increasing New Denver's age-friendliness in the future;
- 3) Council be assisted in addressing the needs of seniors through the creation of a Seniors' Advisory Committee;
- 4) Council request that a review of the transportation, accessibility, assisted housing, home services and pedestrian needs of New Denver seniors as well as aging and disability trends and requirements be included in the upcoming review of the Official Community Plan;
- 5) Council review New Denver's land use and housing policies to ensure they support and encourage a variety of assisted housing options needed to address the growing demand for assisted housing;
- 6) Council establish an Advisory Committee to focus on one priority need at a time, starting with the transportation needs and options for New Denver residents. The Advisory Committee is to report back to Council with recommendations within three months;
- 7) Council work with the to be established Seniors Advisory Committee, Interior Health Authority and the Arrow and Slocan Lakes Community Services and other businesses to address the need in New Denver for additional home support and meal services;
- 8) Council create a long term accessibility plan for New Denver which would include including sidewalks, trails, buildings, and services;
- 9) Council review its sidewalk and road maintenance policies and practices in light of the needs of seniors and the disabled; and
- 10) Council establish a New Denver Community Foundation which, in turn, could help with the funding towards addressing the five priorities needs, contribute to the active aging of seniors and to the overall benefit of the community.

Section Six: Implementation Guide for Council

In Section Three, a number of potential actions were identified to help New Denver become a more age-friendly community. Many of these actions are included in the Guidelines below. These are intended to provide Council with a guide for addressing the age-friendly priorities as identified by New Denver's seniors:

1. Transportation from New Denver to medical appointments and to other communities

Immediate action (1-3 months):

- Council support the creation of an Advisory Committee to focus on the transportation and handyDART needs and options for New Denver seniors and to report back to Council with recommendations within 3 months. The review should include:
 - the possibility of having the Minto bus in Nakusp used for weekly trips from New Denver and Nakusp to Castlegar and Trail for medical appointments.
 - the Minto bus option for appointments in Vernon and Kelowna for New Denver residents
 - the development of a volunteer drivers program for medical appointments, shopping, and community events
 - increasing the frequency and service of public transportation and Handy Dart, including bus service to Slocan.
 - the use of school busses in non-peak hours with the School Board
 - the option of a co-op taxi model

Short term actions (3 -9 months):

- Based on the findings of the Advisory Committee above, investigate options for funding transportation options, including joint funding with surrounding communities such as Nakusp and Slocan, and with agencies such as BC Transit and the School District Board.
- Review option for a structured volunteer driver program (depending on above findings) supported by the Village

Medium term actions (9 months -2 years):

- Potential fundraising for a New Denver HandyVan

2. Wheelchair accessibility to businesses

Immediate action (1-3 months):

- Review SPARC's ten model accessibility bylaws

Short term actions (3 -9 months):

- Undertake an 'accessibility audit' with seniors and the disabled to identify key issues and needs;
- Undertake an inventory of all commercial, public and institutional buildings in terms of accessibility as part of the Official Community Plan review

- Encourage businesses to construct 'no-step' entrances to their buildings

Medium term actions (9 months – 2 years):

- Review requirements for, and costs associated with, widening sidewalks to better accommodate wheelchairs
- Create long term accessibility plan for New Denver

3. Home care services, including Meals on Wheels

Immediate action (1-3 months):

- Work with IHA to publicize available services
- Encourage the establishment of home care service businesses

Short term actions (3 -9 months):

- Work with Senior's OCP Advisory Committee (once established) to create inventory of home care services, including Meals on Wheels and current level of use and needs.
- Work with IHA and Arrow and Slocan Lakes Community Services to determine how to meet the gap in home care services

4. Assisted living housing

Immediate action (1-3 months):

- Confirm the new assisted housing project with BC Housing and create public awareness of its development

Short term actions (3 -9 months):

- Undertake a review of seniors' current and future housing and assisted policies and options and requirements in New Denver as part of Official Community Plan review
- Review options for seniors' housing within the Core area

Medium term actions (9 months – 2 years)/Ongoing

- Work with agencies and private developers to build a variety of assisted housing options for seniors Encourage new housing and renovations to use the adaptable housing standards and universal design principles which support aging in place.
- Provide support seniors with paperwork and process for home adaptations and upgrading to support their aging in place

5. Clear sidewalk across the bridge in winter

Immediate action (1-3 months):

- Review agreement with the Ministry of Highways to ensure prompt snow clearing of the bridge sidewalk;

Medium term actions (9 months – 2 years):

- Council re-examine the possibility of building a pedestrian bridge across Carpenter Creek in the near future to enhance pedestrian safety.
- Council review its sidewalk and road maintenance policies and practices in light of the needs of seniors and the disabled;
- A sidewalk clearing audit with seniors and the disabled be initiated by the Village to identify key issues

6. Public washroom in commercial core

Immediate action (1-3 months):

- Review option of opening Museum washroom year round.

Short-Medium term actions (3 -18 months):

- Identify potential locations for washroom
- Review funding options for a public washroom, including land, construction and signage

Other

Short term actions (3 -9 months):

Seniors' Advisory Committee

- Create a Seniors' Advisory Committee to support Council in addressing the needs of seniors.

Communication

- Create a current listing of seniors' services and support and place on the Village website and in tax notices.
- Encourage agencies to advertise their services for seniors.
- Increase the font size in correspondence from the Village of New Denver and other businesses for easier reading.

Medium term actions (9 months – 2 years):

Roads

Undertake a review New Denver's roads, signage, traffic controls from the needs of seniors who have slower reflexes, and lowered hearing and visual capacities.