



The **Research Shop**

CITY OF GUELPH OLDER ADULT COMMUNITY PROFILE

JANUARY 2015

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Citation: Anderson, M., Omar, F., Robson, J., & Harrison, B. *City of Guelph older adult community profile*. Guelph, ON: Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship. <https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/8902>



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OLDER ADULT COMMUNITY PROFILE

The authors would like to acknowledge Jennifer Smith and Wendy Kornelsen for their support throughout all phases of the research presented in the report. Our deep appreciation also extends to the Seniors Service Network who graciously shared their time with us. Lastly, we would like to thank the community organizations, agencies and individuals who participated in informational interviews and/or completed the reports consolidated in this project.



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SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report is a consolidated profile of the older adult (55+) community in Guelph. This community profile synthesizes local research and other sources of data on the Guelph older adult community (e.g., Statistics Canada) to support the City of Guelph in a variety of activities related to priority setting, performance measurement, and planning of public amenities, services, programs and activities for older adults. This profile is organized based on the eight World Health Organization (WHO) Age-Friendly City Dimensions: 1) outdoor spaces and public buildings; 2) transportation; 3) housing; 4) social participation; 5) respect and social inclusion; 6) civic participation and employment; 7) communication and information; and 8) community support and health services.



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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFC – Age-Friendly Communities

CCAC – Community Care Access Centre

CLGW – Community Living Guelph-Wellington

CMHA – Canadian Mental Health Association

CMHC – Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation

FAIR – Fee Assistance in Recreation Program

GWSA – Guelph Wellington Seniors Association

IAH – Investment in Affordable Housing

MOHLTC – Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

NOS – National Occupancy Standard

PSW – Personal Support Worker

PTF – Poverty Task Force

RRAP – Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program

WSSN – Wellington Senior Services Network

UWGWD – United Way of Guelph Wellington Dufferin

VON – Victorian Order of Nurses

WDG – Wellington Dufferin Guelph

WHLHIN – Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network

WHO – World Health Organization

This community profile consolidates existing local reports, documents, or policies and a list of local services that promote the quality of life of older adults (Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, 2013). Over the past year, City of Guelph staff and interns at the University of Guelph's Research Shop have worked in conjunction with various community-based



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organizations and groups to compile what is already known about older adults living in Guelph. This community profile will provide the City of Guelph and other organizations with a snapshot of the city's current age-friendly environment. After outlining the context, this report examines each of the World Health Organization's (WHO) age-friendly city dimensions and the associated Guelph documents or sources of data. This report uses several key terms, which are defined below:

Definition of Key Terms:

The following terms outlined in the *Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph* (The Osborne Group, 2012) has been used in this community profile:

- **Older Adult:** The term older adult refers to anyone who is 55 years old or more.
- **Age-Friendly:** An age-friendly community is a community that supports older adults to live in security, maintain their health and actively participate in society. An age-friendly city adapts its organizational structure and services to be accessible and inclusive of older adults with varying needs and capacities.

It is important to note that "older adults" is a term or category that spans a number of years and the experiences and lifestyle of a person in the earlier years of the category could potentially be very different from those of people who are thirty or more years older. The term represents people on a broad spectrum of health, lifestyle, and activity levels.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

In this section, we provide an overview of provincial and municipal demographics of older adults, conceptualizations of older adults and guidelines for establishing an age-friendly community, the WHO framework for age-friendly communities, and the methodology and limitations to this report.

WHY OLDER ADULTS? POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS AT THE NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL, AND MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Provincial and National Trends

The following are highlights of the projected population trends affecting the older adult population in Canada, and more specifically Ontario:

- At the national level, "the number of older adults aged 65 years and older is expected to double over the next two decades" (Sinha, 2011)", while the number



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of older adults aged 85 years and older is expected to quadruple (Statistics Canada, 2010).

- Across Canada, “the number of seniors aged 65 and over increased 14.1% between 2006 and 2011 to nearly 5 million. This rate of growth was higher than that of children aged 14 and under (0.5%) and people aged 15 to 64 (5.7%)” (Statistics Canada, 2011a).
- At the provincial level, the fastest growing group of older adults in Ontario are the oldest; those aged 85-89 years and 90 years and older (Government of Ontario, 2011).
- In Ontario, women substantially outnumber men in each of the five-year age groups over 65. There are 80 men for every 100 women aged 65 and older, and only 39 men for every 100 women aged 90 and older (Government of Ontario, 2011).

Municipal Trends

The population of the City of Guelph is projected to be 169,000 by 2031. Adults aged 55 years and older will comprise 34% of all Guelph residents (The Osborne Group, 2012). Within the City of Guelph, there are several wards that have distinctly older populations (Figure 1) and, more specifically, the distributions of older adults in these wards are evident in Figure 2.

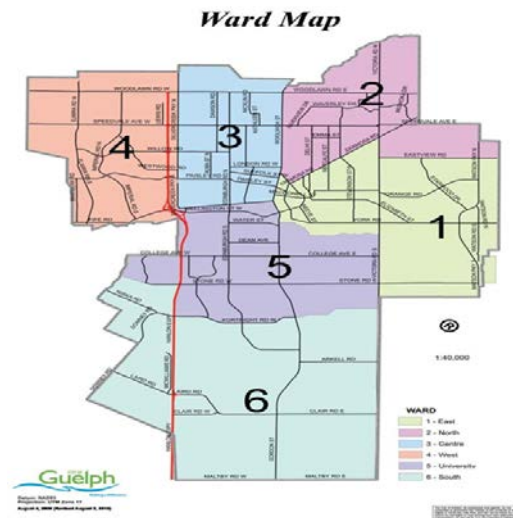


Figure 1. City of Guelph’s ward boundaries. From “Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph,” The Osborne Group, 2012, p.15.



DISTRIBUTION OF GUELPH ADULTS AGE 55+ BY WARD

WARD	# AGE 55+ IN WARD	TOTAL WARD POP'N	% AGE 55+
1	4,410	22,975	19.2%
2	5,110	15,814	32.3%
3	5,864	19,944	29.4%
4	4,021	20,069	20.0%
5	4,835	16,161	29.9%
6	5,364	26,699	20.1%
TOTAL	29,604	121,622	24.3%

Source: 2011 census

Figure 2. Distribution of Guelph adults age 55+ by ward. From “Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph,” The Osborne Group, 2012, p.16.

Older adults are the fastest growing population group in the City of Guelph. As the number of older adults continues to increase, this presents challenges for effectively providing services such as housing, transportation, recreation, urban planning, social services, and other public sector services (The Osborne Group, 2012).

CONCEPTUALIZING OLDER ADULTS

The Determinants of Active Aging

The WHO (2002) developed a framework outlining the determinants of active aging that surround individuals, families, and nations. These determinants include financial wellbeing as well as social factors that affect individual behaviour and emotional wellbeing. According to the WHO (2007), these determinants should be understood from a life-course perspective that recognizes that individual diversity increases with age.



Figure 3. WHO Framework: The determinants of active ageing from “Active ageing: A policy framework,” World Health Organization, 2002, p.19.



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ESTABLISHING AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

Older adults are important contributors to their communities. Older adults can be “volunteers, mentors, leaders, caregivers, and skilled workers who offer an abundance of experience to their families, workplaces, and communities. As such, the resilience and sustainability of our society will also depend on their continued contributions” (Sinha, 2011, p. 1). Age-friendly communities (AFCs) are “supportive physical and social environments that enable older people to live active, safe, and meaningful lives by continuing to contribute to all areas of community life” (Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat, 2013, p. 6).

The promotion of AFCs has implications for the general population in that they are not just elderly-friendly, but they also have positive benefits for the broader community and its members (WHO, 2007). Accessible public spaces and buildings enhance the mobility and independence of people of all ages. Moreover, the wellbeing of families of older adults improves when they are supported by their communities and have access to the services they require (WHO, 2007).

Developing an Older Adult Community Profile

A number of municipalities across Ontario have developed age-friendly community profiles to establish a snapshot of their community’s age-friendly status and to develop priorities within the community. Please see Appendix 1, which illustrates several municipalities that have developed age-friendly community profiles and implemented strategies to make their communities age-friendly.

THE WHO FRAMEWORK FOR AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The City of Guelph used the WHO’s (2007) age-friendly framework to develop its *Older Adult Strategy* (The Osborne Group, 2012). The WHO framework (Figure 4) focuses on 8 dimensions that relate to a city’s age-friendliness: 1) outdoor spaces and buildings; 2) transportation; 3) housing; 4) social participation; 5) respect and social inclusion; 6) civic participation and employment; 7) communication and information; and 8) community support and health services. These dimensions are further defined in the results section of this community profile, starting on page 10.



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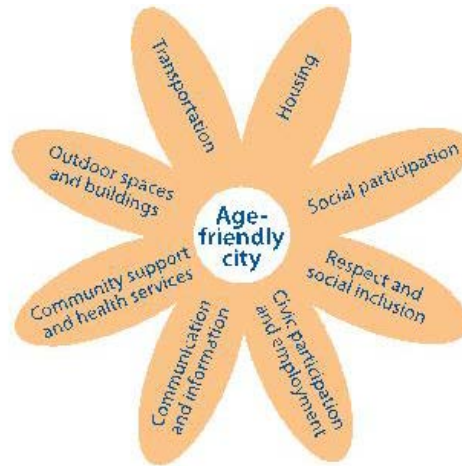


Figure 4. WHO Age-friendly city topic areas from “Global age-friendly Cities: A Guide,” World Health Organization, 2007, p. 9.

METHODOLOGY FOR COMPILING THIS COMMUNITY PROFILE REPORT

The process of gathering information for this community profile report involved three phases. The first phase was background research, which included reviewing policy documents, community reports, academic literature, and statistics relevant to older adults living in the City of Guelph. These documents were consolidated based on the WHO dimensions.

The second phase involved accessing relevant data to older adults in the City of Guelph through the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Data Consortium. This data was reviewed and included in this report.

The third phase of this project involved conducting semi-structured informational interviews with individuals who are members of the Wellington Seniors Services Network (WSSN). This network functions to bring service providers, helping professionals and others involved in older adult care together to provide leadership and advocacy for the improvement of community support and health and long term care services for older adults in Wellington County. Each member of the WSSN was contacted via email to request an informational interview. There were a total of 10 informational interviews conducted in which WSSN members provided suggestions regarding resources and reports for the community profile. The following organizations were interviewed and/or provided resources: Community Living, Community Mental





Health Association Waterloo Wellington Dufferin: Seniors At Risk, County of Wellington, Guelph General Hospital, Guelph Independent Living, Guelph Wellington Seniors Association, Hamilton Health Services, Hospice Wellington, Immigrant Services of Guelph-Wellington, and Victorian Order of Nurses. This information was compiled with the resources that had been gathered and was analyzed to determine prevalent themes or priority areas in this literature. The data were organized based on the WHO (2007) dimensions, and the prevalent themes from each dimension were presented to the WSSN. The WSSN provided feedback and direction regarding these themes that were used to enhance the organization of the final report.

LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

The report focuses on publicly accessible information, such as online information and community reports, and therefore our resources are not exhaustive. Further, the primary focus of this report is on the City of Guelph, and consequently certain resources that reported collective information on Guelph as part of other geographic areas such as the County of Wellington were excluded to a large extent. Lastly, for the purpose of this report, older adults and the clients of participating organizations were not interviewed. In the future, it may be beneficial to interview older adults in order to obtain their opinion or suggestions regarding resources in our community.

THE WHO DIMENSIONS

The WHO (2007) dimensions have been used to organize and consolidate the available literature on older adults in the City of Guelph. Evident in each dimension are themes that were developed based on the prevalence of available information, with the availability of data affecting the depth and range of information that could be provided. This section of the report provides a brief overview of each of the dimensions followed by information gathered from informational interviews and available reports. This information can be used to start a dialogue regarding priority areas and future planning for older adults in our community.

DIMENSION ONE: TRANSPORTATION

The WHO (2007) suggests that accessibility, affordability, and availability of transportation services are key factors to building an age-friendly city. These factors help to ensure that older adults are able to engage in civic, social, community, and health services. The WHO's (2007) *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* identified the following areas as important to age-friendly urban transportation:





- Public transportation is affordable to all older adults, and transportation rates charged are consistent and well displayed.
- Public transportation is accessible, reliable, and frequent (including services at night and on weekends).
- Public transportation is available to older adults to access hospitals, health centres, social events, public parks, shopping centres, banks and seniors' centres.
- Transport routes are well connected between the various transport options within the city, and between neighbouring cities (including the outer areas), and all areas are well serviced.
- Public vehicles are accessible, with lower floors, low steps, and wide and high seats. Vehicles are well maintained and clean, and have clear signage indicating vehicle number and destination.
- Sufficient specialized transport services are available for people with disabilities, and priority seating is available to older adults, and is respected by other passengers.
- Public transport is comfortable, not overcrowded, and safe from crime.
- Courteous drivers, who obey traffic rules, stop at designated transport stops and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off, as well as park alongside the curb so that it is easier for older adults to get off the vehicle.
- Designated transport stops and stations are located in close proximity to where older adults live, are clean, safe, and are provided with seating and shelter from the weather.
- Stations are accessible, with ramps, escalators, elevators, appropriate platforms, public toilets, and legible and well-placed signage.
- Accessible, affordable and priority parking available to older adults, subsidized and accessible community transport and taxis available to older adults to specific events and places.

Information gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with WSSN in Guelph-Wellington County

The following discussion provides an overview of information relevant to transportation services for older adults in the City of Guelph, informed by the age-friendly factors outlined in the WHO's transportation dimension and gathered from reports and informational interviews with the WSSN. The key themes evident in this dimension are public transportation services and challenges.



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I. Public Transportation Services

In order for older adults to access resources in their community and maintain independence, cities need to have public transportation systems that are subsidized, accessible, frequent, and reliable (WHO, 2007). Volunteer drivers continue to play an integral role for seniors living in Guelph. During the first four months of 2008, Wellington Transportation Services provided 5,136 rides for older adults and other clients (UWGWD Social Planning Council, 2008c).

The City of Guelph sold 2,710 senior monthly bus passes between July 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014; resulting in 141,523 total trips made by older adults 65 years and older on an average of 52 trips per pass sold (City of Guelph, 2014e). Out of the total bus passes sold, 1,639 were regular senior monthly passes and the rest were affordable senior monthly passes (City of Guelph, 2014e).

Affordable Bus Pass

In 2013, Guelph Transit implemented the affordable bus pass program in order to provide public transportation for adults, youth, and older adults living in low-income households (City of Guelph, 2014a). A total of 1,071 affordable bus passes were sold to older adults 65 years and older living in low income between July 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014. This resulted in 52,630 trips taken by older adults on an average of 49 trips per pass (City of Guelph, 2014e). The affordable bus pass program has been successful in decreasing costs and increasing accessibility for older adults using public transit (Taylor Newberry Consulting, 2013).

Mobility and community bus services, Guelph Transit

Guelph Transit provides both conventional and mobility services to the community through a fleet of 73 low floor conventional buses and 10 mobility vans (City of Guelph 2014a). Mobility services including community bus services for older adults. According to the City of Guelph transit website,

Mobility Service is a specialized shared-ride transit service that provides transportation from accessible-door-to-accessible-door within the city limits of Guelph. Service is provided on wheelchair accessible buses and, when needed, contracted taxi services...The community bus is a fully accessible mobility van that can seat several passengers using mobility devices as well as those without (City of Guelph, 2014c).



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To continuously improve services to customers, Guelph transit monitors the level of customer satisfaction. In 2013, the customer service scorecard reported that, “100% of conventional buses are accessible, 68% of bus stops are accessible, 90% of Guelph population is within 400 meters of a bus stop or shelter” (City of Guelph 2014a).

Transportation Support Services

The Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) provides practical transportation support to older adults in Guelph and Wellington County to attend medical appointments and for travel to other places not easily accessible by bus. The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association also provides transportation to the Evergreen Seniors Community Centre and other locations throughout the City to isolated older adults attending the GWSA outreach program (GWSA, 2014).

In Guelph, 95% of older adults travel by car, either as driver or passenger, 2% use public transit, 1% walk, 1% bike, and 1% travel by some other means (Transportation Tomorrow, 2011).

“These services are particularly essential to older adults with multiple health conditions, multiple impairments, and to those who are social isolated” (VON representative, informational interview, May 2014).

The Wellington Senior Services Network (WSSN) was consulted regarding transportation and many of the members indicated that they often rely on VON to provide transportation and support services to older adults, especially to those with special needs and developmental disabilities.

II. Public Transportation Challenges

According to the United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin (UWGWD)’s *Age-Friendly Communities* report, older adults in Guelph expressed concern regarding public transportation and limited services provided to older adults. Older adults suggested that public transportation should make transit accessible for residents with disabilities and mobility devices by having floors that lower, low steps, and wide and high seats; creating parking spots for people with health problems who do not have disability stickers; and locating bus stops closer to where older adults live (UWGWD, 2009).



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Related to mobility and transportation issues, “not all seniors have a Personal Support Worker (PSW) to assist with hospital appointments and other social events, and this limits their ability to engage in day programs and activities” (Hospice Wellington representative, informational interview, May 2014).

Further, older adults living with low incomes suggested that transportation is a common concern that they encountered in their daily life (Schumann & Robson, 2012). Service providers working with older adults said older adults experience a loss of independence and have to rely on public transportation that is unable to meet demands. Older adults living in low-income described an inability to pay for public transportation due to financial limitations (Schumann & Robson, 2012).

DIMENSION TWO: HOUSING

According to the WHO’s (2007) *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*, “housing is essential to safety and well-being...there is a link between appropriate housing and access to community and social services in influencing the independence and quality of life of older people” (p. 30). The WHO identified several factors as essential to creating housing and support that enables older adults to age comfortably and safely:

- **Affordability and Ageing in Place:** Affordable housing and essential services are available to all older adults. Housing is located in close proximity to services and facilities.
- **Housing Design:** Housing is well structured and made of appropriate materials: to meet environmental conditions (appropriate cooling and heating); to have sufficient space to enable older adults move around freely; and is adapted for older adults with even spaces, wide enough passages for wheelchair accessibility, and accessible bathrooms, toilets and kitchens.
- **Housing Modifications:** Housing is modified and is affordable for older adults as needed, and there is a good understanding of how housing can be modified to meet the needs of older people.
- **Maintenance:** Maintenance services are affordable for older adults, public housing, rented accommodation and common areas are well maintained.
- **Community Integration:** Housing design facilitates continued integration of older adults into the community in which they live.
- **Housing Options:** A range of age-friendly, accessible and affordable housing options is available to older adults, and older adults are well informed of available housing options.



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- **Living Environment:** Housing is not overcrowded and older adults are safe and comfortable in their housing environment. Housing is not located in areas prone to natural disasters and financial support is provided for housing security measures.

Information Gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following discussion provides an overview of information relevant to housing of older adults in the City of Guelph informed by the age-friendly housing factors outlined by the WHO (2007). The key themes evident in this dimension are housing systems and housing affordability/accessibility for older adults.

I. Housing Systems

In reviewing local literature, numerous reports addressed a variety of housing options for older adults in Guelph, such as social and supportive housing, transitional housing, private rental accommodations, domiciliary hostels, and home care and long-term care facilities. The importance of considering various types of housing and accommodations for older adults with complex needs or development disabilities was also evident in this literature.

The County of Wellington (2014) recently developed the report, *A Place to Call Home: A 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph Wellington*, that outlined the following actions and examples of successful age-friendly housing models in place in the community (Table 1).

Table 1
Housing and Homeless Plan Actions and Examples of Successful Models of Guelph Wellington Age-Friendly Housing

Actions	Examples
<p>Establish a formal working relationship with the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (WWLHIN) to support the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care’s (MOHLTC) “Home First” philosophy that would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting community agencies to increase the supply of outreach and housing support services provided to individuals with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County’s partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (CMHA) and Traverse Independence to deliver support services at Fergusson Place • County’s funding agreements with Retirement Homes under the Domiciliary Hostel Program





Actions	Examples
<p>complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the supply of supportive housing units in Guelph Wellington Hospital discharge planning and community care offered through the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted Living for At Risk Elderly, Guelph Independent Living
<p>Establish a Housing First Network composed of multi-disciplinary staff providing housing outreach and support services in a variety of settings, in order to improve service coordination and information sharing</p>	<p>Model upon Seniors Services Network and Hoarding Network</p>
<p>Encourage the development of Secondary Suites; allowing client groups such as low-income seniors or adults with a disability to live independently in their community, close to family and friends</p>	<p>In the City of Guelph, 209 accessory apartment units were created in 2012 – above the City’s affordable housing target of 90 units</p>
<p>Promote financial programs from other levels of government that can help homeowners improve the safety and accessibility of their homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) former Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Ontario Renovates Program Ontario’s Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit

Note: Adapted from County of Wellington, 2014, p. 15.

Social and supportive housing

The majority of social housing, transitional, and supportive housing units in Wellington County are located in the Guelph area. In 2008, Guelph Independent Living opened the first supportive housing units for older adults living in Guelph in 2008. This facility has 20 units and is funded by the Local Health Integration Network’s Aging at Home Strategy (UWGWD, 2009). Further, there are approximately 112 older adults supported in retirement residences in the Guelph area through subsidized rents (County of Wellington, 2014). In the community consultations that informed the *10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph Wellington*, participants emphasized the need for



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more affordable housing options, including transitional and supportive housing, social housing, and affordable private rental accommodations (County of Wellington, 2014).

In an informational interview that informed this report, a representative from Guelph Independent Living emphasized the importance of social and supportive housing, describing a lack of funding for these initiatives due to recent pushes for efficiency and older adults ageing at home (Guelph Independent Living representative, informational interview, May 2014)

Home care and long term care residences

Despite the number of retirement homes in Ontario to support older adults who need a more supportive care environment, not all older Ontarians can afford to live in these homes, and there may not be enough long-term care available for all. Some older adults therefore require or prefer supportive housing options that enable them to age at home and community (McDonald, 2011). Recently in Ontario, the government and its ministries have released a number of provincial programs that support aging at home and encourage older adults to obtain in-home support rather than moving into residential facilities (Sinha, 2012). In the *Guelph Community Wellbeing Initiative Engagement Findings* report (Guelph Wellbeing, 2013), participants reported that, on average, 11.8 hours a week were spent caring for an older or dependent family member. In Guelph, in-home support for older adults has been addressed in multiple ways, including:

- The WWLHIN (2010) has undertaken an Aging At Home initiative, in which the objectives were to provide seniors with supports to stay healthy at home, provide a comprehensive plan for an integrated continuum of care, and offer preventative supports to sustain health.
- There are various home care programs available, such as Community Support Service (Guelph Wellington Seniors Association, 2014), the Home Independence Program (Community Care Access Centre, 2013b), the Integrated Assisted Living Program (Community Care Access Centre, 2013a), the Seniors' Assisted Living Program and the Seniors' Supportive Living Programs (Guelph Independent Living, 2014).

However, there is limited public information available regarding these services and the older adults who are accessing these services.

There are numerous challenges for seniors attempting to access long-term care, such



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as limited space and long waitlists. “Wait times for basic long-term care beds in Waterloo Wellington range from 24 to 1730 days (Waterloo Wellington CCAC, 2014). Guelph currently has five long-term care homes and a total of 667 beds: Eden House, Lapointe-Fisher Nursing Home, The Elliott, Riverside Glen and St. Joseph’s Health Care Centre (City of Guelph, 2013a). “Between April 1, 2012 and September 13, 2012...125 residents of the City of Guelph were admitted to a long-term care home within the City’s boundaries, while 87 were admitted elsewhere” (City of Guelph, 2013a, p. 8). As part of the mandate to provide quality long-term care to residents, the City of Guelph recently released a report seeking approval to operate the Elliott Long-Term Care Residence as the approved municipal home in Guelph (City of Guelph, 2014b). For example, “the Elliott is a not-for-profit, registered charitable corporation that provides mature living arrangement with four levels of care: 78 independent life-lease suits, 134 assisted living retirement suits, 85 long-term care beds and 8 interim convalescence and respite care beds” (City of Guelph, 2014b, p. 3).

Residential support for older adults with developmental disabilities and complex needs

Older adults with developmental disabilities or complex needs may encounter additional challenges in accessing support and resources (Willis & Associates, 2006). *The Community Living Guelph Wellington Strategic Plan 2011-2013* described a need for partnerships with long-term care agencies, and access to support services provided by the Community Care Access Centre in order to meet the demand of residential support for older adults with development disabilities in the region (Community Living Guelph Wellington, 2011)

There are 773 people with developmental disabilities living in Guelph, and 155 (20%) are over the age of 50. Of the 155 older adults with developmental disabilities, 112 (72%) are receiving residential services and have diverse living arrangements (CLGW, 2010) (Figure 5).



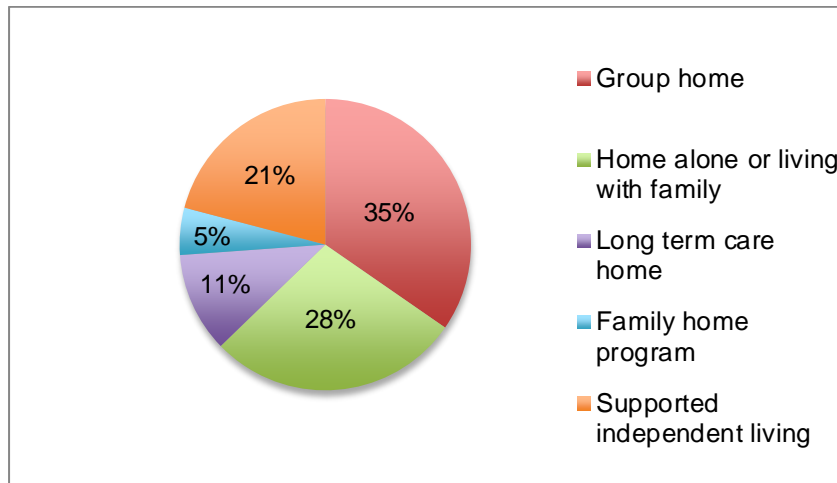


Figure 5. Living arrangements for older adults with developmental disabilities in Guelph. Adapted from Community Living Guelph Wellington, 2010, p. 5.

The City of Guelph and Wellington County also have domiciliary hostels to assist and provide housing services to older adults that live in the community. Domiciliary hostels serve as “permanent housing for vulnerable adults with a wide range of special service needs, such as mental health issues, physical and developmental disabilities and frail elderly” (County of Wellington Social Services, 2008, p. 5). Based on the Wellington County’s website (2014) there appears to be four domiciliary hostels in Guelph: College Place Retirement Residence, Heritage House, Norfolk Manor Inc., and Stone Lodge Retirement Home.

II. Housing Affordability and Accessibility for Older Adults

As part of the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey (Hilbrecht, Smale, & Shifman, 2012), residents of Guelph were asked about the affordability of their place of residence. Older adults reported greater satisfaction with their overall wellbeing when they were able to afford their housing and when they believed their housing was adequate for their needs (Smale, 2012b).

The 2011 National Household Survey for Guelph census metropolitan area (this includes Guelph/Eramosa and some parts of Puslinch) calculated the shelter cost to income ratio for older adults 55 years and older. Shelter cost to income ratio refers to “the percentage of a household’s average total monthly income which is spent on shelter-related expenses” (Statistics Canada, 2011h). A total of 21,355 older adults responded to the survey.





Table 2

Shelter Cost in Relation to Income for Older Adults

Age	Number of older adults who spent less than 30% of total household income on shelter costs	Number of older adults who spent 30% to 100% of household income on shelter costs
55-59	4, 095	880
60-64	3, 565	815
65-69	2, 560	69
70-74	2, 010	650
75+	4, 155	1, 390

Schumann and Robson (2012) suggested that affordable and available housing is one of the main challenges for older adults living in low-income situations in Guelph. Living on a low-income is reported to be one of the root causes of homelessness and housing affordability. Similarly, one of the County of Wellington Social Services' (2014) goals in their homelessness plan is "to help low income households in Guelph Wellington close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses" (p. 11).

Social and supportive housing

In their report, County of Wellington Social Services (2014) emphasized how difficult it is for older adults to obtain social or supportive housing in Guelph. Participants suggested that the waiting lists are too long, the quantity or size of the units are typically below expectations, and units that are affordable are typically unavailable.

It was suggested that wait lists make it difficult to address the needs of older adults because waitlists for residential services can be so extensive that by the time the older adult obtains services their needs may have compounded (Community Living representative, informational interview, May 2014)

The UWGWD's (2009) *Age-friendly Communities* report also suggested that there are not enough accessible and affordable housing options in Guelph and Wellington County. Older adults who provided feedback for the report suggested that the majority of homes had a lot of stairs and small bathrooms that are not accessible and suggested policies needed to be developed to enhance the design of seniors and age-friendly





housing. In the 2011 National Household Survey, older adults in Guelph reported on the suitability of their owned or rented housing. According to Statistics Canada (2011i), “a household is deemed to be living in suitable accommodations if its dwelling has enough bedrooms”, as calculated using the National Occupancy Standard. Out of the 21,355 older adult respondents, 20,855 (97.7%) reported housing suitability and only 490 (2.3%) said their housing was not suitable. Seventy-nine percent (16,920) of the older adults live in their own private accommodation and 4,430 (20.7%) live in rented accommodation (Statistics Canada, 2011i).

DIMENSION THREE: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

The WHO (2007) suggests that participating in community leisure, social, cultural, and spiritual activities can help older adults exercise their competence, retain respect and esteem, and establish supportive relationships. According to the WHO, the biggest concerns related to the social participation of older adults are affordability and accessibility, especially for older adults with disabilities. The WHO (2007) report outlines the following factors as important considerations when assessing older adult’s social participation:

- Accessibility of information and awareness of events and activities;
- Affordability of events, activities, and local attractions;
- Range of events and activities that appeal to a diverse population of older adults and encourage the participation of people of different ages and cultural backgrounds;
- Accessibility of facilities and settings to enable participation by older adults with disabilities or those who require care;
- Organizations make efforts to engage older adults who are experiencing social isolation (Example: personal visits and phone calls); and
- Community integration: facilities promote shared and multi-purpose use by people of different ages and interests.

Information gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with the WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following discussion will provide an overview of information relevant to the social participation of older adults in the City of Guelph, informed by the age-friendly factors outlined by the WHO’s (2007) social participation dimension. The key themes evident in this dimension are opportunities for social participation, accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity of recreational and cultural activities.



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I. Opportunities for Social Participation in the City of Guelph

According to the WHO (2007), the existence of a variety of social opportunities that interest a broad range of older adults encourages community participation. This section will discuss the availability of a range of social opportunities for older adults and older adults perspectives on opportunities for social participation in Guelph.

Social and recreation activities for older adults

There are a number of programs and services in Guelph Wellington that provide social opportunities for older adults. The Evergreen Centre has 222 registered program opportunities for adults 55 years of age and older in the City of Guelph. These include arts and crafts programs, dance classes, and IT classes, among others. In 2013, these programs resulted in 20, 486 hours of participation among older adults. These programs support older adults in learning new skills, being active and socially engaged (City of Guelph, 2013b). The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association (GWSA) offers annual memberships and includes 30 activity groups, 60 registered programs, day trips, drop-in activities, access to volunteer work, opportunities to stay active and involved, and opportunities to advocate for seniors' issues, among others. The GWSA also offers a number of support services for older adults, including a 1/2 day social outreach program for those unable to socialize regularly, and a gentle exercise program called Feeling Better Move Well that is offered in home or in group settings (City of Guelph, 2014f).

The Evergreen Seniors Community Centre is also identified as a valuable source for recreational or cultural activities that are inclusive to older adults (UWGWD, 2009). The Centre is a recreation facility that serves as an important link to information about wider community events that older adults may wish to attend (City of Guelph, 2014d). While most of the programs facilitated by the Evergreen Seniors Community Centre are geared toward adults age 55 years and older, individuals of all ages are able to participate. This facility also acts as the home base for the GWSA.

Older adults' perspectives on social opportunities

Given the range of opportunities for participation outlined above, it is important to consider older adults' perceptions of social opportunities in Guelph. In the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey, participants were asked to respond to the statement "this city provides opportunities for me to do a lot of different things", with responses ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. The survey responses of older adults have been weighted to reflect the population of Guelph and are outlined in the report, *Selected Aspects of the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey* (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012). According to this report, on average, 39.3% *agree*, 25.7% *strongly*



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agree, and 11.9% *very strongly agree* that there are many social opportunities in the City of Guelph. On average, 6.3% *disagree*, 1.2% *strongly disagree*, and 0.5% *very strongly disagree* that Guelph provided opportunities for activity (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012)¹.

Moreover, having a range of opportunities for social participation can positively influence the overall wellbeing of older adults in the City of Guelph. According to the *Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey: Relationship of CIW Domain Indicators to the Overall Wellbeing of Residents of Guelph* report (Smale, 2012b), several factors related to recreation activities lead to a higher level of satisfaction with overall wellbeing, such as feeling recreation activities were easy to access from their home and if childcare was available at the recreation centre. A higher level of satisfaction with overall wellbeing was evident when there was an opportunity to participate in recreation and cultural activities that enabled older adults to:

- try new things,
- socialize with others,
- are enjoyable so they can connect with others,
- develop close relationships with others,
- help them relax and relieve stress,
- help them develop their emotional wellbeing,
- develop physical fitness and stay healthy,
- learn more about themselves, and
- learn more about other people (Smale, 2012b, p 10).

II. Accessibility of Recreation and Cultural Activities

According to the WHO (2007), older adults may be aware of events and activities that exist in their communities, but these activities are often inaccessible. The WHO highlights several factors that influence the accessibility of recreation and cultural activities, including personal safety, convenience of scheduling and location, accessible

¹ Data reported in the *Selected Aspects of the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey* (2012) from the Canadian Index of Wellbeing is weighted. Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey data was collected from 1,401 residents in Guelph and extrapolated to the population of Guelph.



physical space, and adequate facilities such as toilets and seating (WHO, 2007). The following section will discuss the accessibility of recreation and cultural activities in the City of Guelph, with regard to the convenience of activities and support for older adults accessing services.

Convenience of the locations and times of recreation and cultural activities in Guelph

The Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey asked participants to respond to the statement “recreation and cultural facilities are easy for me to get to from my home”, with responses ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. The *Selected Aspects of Wellbeing Among Older Adult Residents of Guelph* report suggests that, on average, 77.2% of older adults *agree, strongly agree, or very strongly agree* that recreational and cultural facilities are easy to get to from their homes, whereas 8.7% of older adults *disagree, strongly disagree, or very strongly disagree* that recreational and cultural facilities are easy to get to from their homes (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012).

Further, the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey asked participants to respond to the statement “Recreation programs are at convenient times”, with responses ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. The results suggest that, on average, 87.6% of older adults *agree, strongly agree, or very strongly agree* that recreation programs occurred at convenient times and only 9% *disagree, strongly disagree, or very strongly disagree*. Approximately 38% of older adults felt neutral about the timing of recreation programs in the City of Guelph (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012).

Support for older adults to access programs

The Handbook for Recreation and Sports Activity in Guelph produced by the Volunteer Centre Guelph Wellington (2013) provides a list of supports to help those with disabilities access program facilitated by the City of Guelph. While not exclusively for older adults, these services can assist older adults with disabilities to access greater opportunities for participation in City programs. These services include:

- **One2One program:** matches volunteers with children, youth and adults who require assistance to participate in City recreation programs and activities.
- **Leisure Access Card (LAC):** available to persons 18 years and older with a disability; entitles cardholder to pay reduced rate for many Community Services courses/programs.
- **Personal Assistant for Leisure Activities Card (PAL):** for persons with disabilities who require assistance to attend City of Guelph recreation programs;



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PAL card issued to person with the disability to allow accompaniment by a friend/relative/support worker at no additional cost.

III. Affordability of Activities for Older Adults

Social activities that are free or affordable help to facilitate the participation of older adults in their communities (WHO, 2007). The WHO (2007) highlights the cost of activities as a common barrier to older adults accessing opportunities for social participation. The following section points to information on the cost of recreation and cultural activities for older adults in the City of Guelph, and on financial assistance programs available to older adults with financial barriers in the City of Guelph.

Cost of recreation and cultural activities in the City of Guelph

Related to accessibility of recreation and cultural facilities in Guelph, the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey asked participants to respond to the statement “cost prevents participation”, with responses ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. According to the report, *Selected Aspects of Wellbeing Among Older Adult Residents of Guelph* (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012), on average, 58.1% of the older adults *disagree, strongly disagree, or very strongly disagree* that the cost of activities in the City of Guelph prevented their participation. In contrast, 12.2% of the older adults *agree, strongly agree, or very strongly agree* that the cost of activities prevented their participation.

According to the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination’s report (Schumann & Robson, 2012) on older adults living on low incomes, cost is a major barrier to the social participation of older adults. The older adults in this report suggested that they were unable to participate in programs due to the prices and that often this made them feel forgotten by the community.

Older adults who are immigrants do not always have the additional income required to participate in extracurricular activities (Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington representative, informational interview, May 2014).

Financial assistance for participation in recreation and cultural activities

According to the UWGWD’s (2009) *Age-friendly Communities* report, there is a need for services and activities that offer subsidized memberships and fee reductions.





In order to support the efforts of organizations to provide affordable recreation for all in the Wellington Dufferin Guelph (WDG) area, Guelph in Motion conducted surveys with seven service providers (from government, not-for-profit, and private organizations) from across WDG to establish a baseline of existing policies, procedures and programs in the WDG area. According to the *Affordable Access to Recreation: Policies, Procedures and Programs in Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph* report (Guelph in Motion, 2011), many programs support child and youth involvement in recreation, while fewer support older adults.

The City of Guelph also facilitates the Fee Assistance in Recreation Program (FAIR) for adults/seniors who live in Guelph and are unable to attend recreation programs due to financial constraints (Volunteer Centre Guelph Wellington, 2013). The program provides older adults with a discount that can be used for a combination of passes, punch passes and classes offered by the City of Guelph (Volunteer Centre Guelph Wellington, 2013).

IV. Inclusivity of Recreational and Cultural Activities

In the WHO (2007) report, it is suggested that concerted efforts to encourage and motivate older adults to participate in activities could be the difference between participation and isolation. Older adults may be reluctant to join associations and clubs because they do not know anyone, feel they have to associate with a particular political view, or the activities offered are not of personal interest (WHO, 2007). One of the challenges identified by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2013) is awareness, and ensuring that seniors are aware of programs and program locations in order for them to participate.

Older adults are more likely to participate in recreation and cultural activities in their community if they feel that these activities are welcoming and of interest to them (WHO, 2007). The Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey asked participants to respond to the statement “recreation and cultural facilities are welcoming”, with responses ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. According to the Canadian Wellbeing Index (2012), on average, 42.2% of older adults *agree, strongly agree, or very strongly agree* recreational and cultural facilities are welcoming, and approximately 53% were *neutral*. In contrast, approximately 4% of older adults *disagree, strongly disagree, or very strong disagree* that recreational and cultural facilities are welcoming to them.

DIMENSION FOUR: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The WHO suggests that “changing societal and behavioral norms, a growing lack of contact between generations, and a widespread ignorance about aging and older people” (WHO, 2007, p. 45) contributes to the feeling of social isolation among older





adults. Many of the older adults consulted for the WHO (2007) *Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* reported that they often felt respected, recognized, and included, however they experienced a “lack of consideration in the community, in services and in the family” (WHO, 2007, p. 45). The WHO (2007) identified the following areas as relevant for creating an inclusive age-friendly community:

- **Respectful and inclusive services:** Older adults are consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on ways to serve them better. Service staff is trained to meet the needs of older people with services and products adapted to their needs and preferences.
- **Public images of ageing:** The media include older people in public imagery, depicting them positively and without stereotypes.
- **Public education:** Primary and secondary students are educated about ageing and older adults. Older people are actively and regularly involved in local school activities with children and teachers. Older adults are given the opportunity to share their knowledge, history, and expertise with other generations.
- **Community and economic inclusion:** Older adults are included as full partners in community decision-making affecting them as well as being recognized by the community for their past and present contributions. Economically disadvantaged older adults enjoy access to public, voluntary and private services and events.
- **Intergenerational and family interactions:** Community-wide settings, activities and events attract people of all ages by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences. Older people are specifically included in community activities for families. Communities regularly organize activities that bring generations together for mutual enjoyment and enrichment.

Information gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following discussion will provide an overview of information relevant to the social respect and inclusion of older adults in the City of Guelph, informed by the age-friendly factors outlined by the WHO (2007). The key themes identified in this dimension are a sense of belonging to local community and rights, equity, and inclusion for older adults.

I. Sense of Belonging to Local Community

The WHO (2007) suggests that “respect and social inclusion of older adults depend on more than societal change: factors such as culture, gender and health status and economic status play a larger role” (p. 45). Language is also an important part of creating a sense of belonging and an inclusive age-friendly community (Sinha, 2012).



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According to UWGWD (2009), older adults in Guelph suggested that, “negative stereotypes about older adults continue to exist” and “there is [a] lack of consultations with older adults when planning takes place” (p. 11). Participants described the need for an aging strategy throughout all departments in Guelph and Wellington County. They suggested “more intergenerational programs in high schools and across the community” to help increase the “sense of community, respect and responsibility”. They also suggested introducing ways to build a sense of community, including “using knowledge of older adults to educate younger ones” and snow removal and lawn mowing programs (p. 11).

In a report written by the UWGWD Social Planning Council (2008a), it was identified that social isolation is a local issue that numerous seniors face. This report suggested that local service providers are aware that there are socially isolated seniors in our community, yet it is a challenge to determine who these seniors are and where they are located (UWGWD, 2008a). In a report for the Guelph Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination (Schumann & Robson, 2012), older adults living in low-income situations also expressed feelings of social isolation and neglect in their community. Older adults suggested the need for “buddy systems, partnering with schools and volunteer programs” to help promote social inclusion for older adults living in low income (Schumann & Robson, 2012, p. 4).

Intergenerational activities with different groups of people and residents help create a culture of community and sense of belonging, and prevent social isolation (Hospice Wellington representative, informational interview, May 2014).

II. Rights, Equity and Inclusion

The extent to which older adults are able to participate in social, civic, and economic life in the community impacts their perceptions of community and how they experience social participation (WHO, 2007). Sinha (2012) recommended that the “Ontario government should encourage all of its communities to consider the needs of all of its older members and to ensure that public services, media and faith communities are respectful of the diversity of needs amongst older persons and willing to accommodate them” (p. 29). In this section, elder abuse and neglect, older adult immigrants, and hearing needs will be addressed.

Elder abuse and neglect

Although there is limited data regarding elder abuse and neglect in Guelph, there are various support services available for older adults experiencing abuse. The Guelph-Wellington Action Committee on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (2014) have an





elder abuse committee which provides support for financial, emotional, physical, sexual or neglectful abuse. Furthermore, the Seniors At-Risk Network and St. Joseph's Outreach Program are identified as local supports for older adults experiencing abuse or neglect (St. Joseph's Health Care Centre, 2014).

A lack of legal resources for older adults that are on a limited outcome is becoming an increasingly relevant issue (Seniors At Risk Community Response Network representative, informational interview, May 2014).

In Guelph, the immigrant population aged 65 years and older is 5620 (Statistics Canada, 2011f). In an attempt to meet the needs of the growing immigrant older population and promote inclusiveness, Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington recently undertook Project Wisdom, which focuses on raising awareness regarding older adult immigrants' experiences of elder abuse. In a presentation of Project Wisdom, Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington (2011) suggested that older adults who are immigrants might experience unique complexities when dealing with elder abuse due to cultural and linguistic barriers. Further, these complexities should be taken into consideration by the various systems that older adult immigrants interact with (Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, 2011).

Recognizing the needs of older adult immigrants

The needs of immigrant seniors should be investigated, and there is a need to recognize the changing face of older adults in the community (GWSA representative, informational interview, May 2014).

Project Wisdom (Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, 2011) emphasized the importance of considering complexities when working with older adult immigrants. This report emphasized the importance of comprehending elder abuse through a cultural lens and the need for easily accessible translators who can provide translation services for older adults living in Guelph.

Older adults with hearing needs

The Guelph branch of the Canadian Hearing Society provides accessibility, counseling, employment and hearing clinic services to residents in Guelph Wellington with hearing





impairment, including hearing care counseling for older adults with hearing loss (Canadian Hearing Society, 2014).

DIMENSION FIVE: CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

According to the WHO (2007), an age-friendly community provides options for older adults to continue to contribute to their communities through paid or voluntary work and to be engaged in the political process. Older adults can contribute to their communities by volunteering and helping family and friends (WHO, 2007). In addition, some older adults face economic barriers to their retirement and must continue to earn paid employment (WHO, 2007). The WHO outlines the following factors as important considerations when assessing the civic participation and employment of older adults in a city:

- **Employment:** range of employment options for older adults, and protection from discrimination based on age.
- **Volunteerism:** range of volunteering options, the skills and interests of older adults matched to positions, and volunteers well supported in their voluntary work.
- **Training:** post-retirement training, retraining, and volunteer training opportunities are available.
- **Accessibility:** opportunities for volunteer or paid work well-known and promoted, transportation should be available, and workplaces adapted to meet the needs of disabled people.
- **Civic participation:** advisory councils and boards of organizations include older people, and support older adults to participate in meetings and civic events.
- **Entrepreneurship:** self-employment of older adults is supported by the public and private sector through financing and other support.
- **Valued Contributions:** Older people are respected and acknowledged for their contributions, employers are sensitive to the needs of older adults, and the benefits of employing older adults are promoted.
- **Pay:** older adults who are working are compensated fairly for their work, and volunteers reimbursed for expenses incurred while volunteering.

Information gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with the WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following discussion will provide an overview of information relevant to the civic participation and employment of older adults in the City of Guelph, informed by the age-friendly factors outlined by the WHO's (2007) civic participation and employment



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dimension. The key themes evident in this dimension are employment opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and income.

I. Employment Opportunities

The WHO (2007) suggests that an age-friendly community should provide a range of employment opportunities to match the skill and experience of older adults. Moreover, support should be provided for older adults to work, including incentives for employers who hire older adults, and government sponsored employment programs. Job opportunities available to older adults are often menial, low-paid, or generally undesirable (WHO, 2007).

This section considers labour force status for older adults, the most common work industries that employ older adults in Guelph, and income.

Labor force status of older adults in the Guelph CMA

According to Statistics Canada's National Household Survey (2011j), there are approximately 10,755 (14.4%) employed older adults aged 55 to 64 years in the City of Guelph. Among older adults 65 years and older, approximately 1660 (15%) are employed in the labor force. In the Guelph CMA, there are approximately 13,015 employed adults 55 years and older employed in the labor force, of which approximately 390 (3%) are 75 years or older (Statistics Canada, 2011c).

Work industry of older adults in the Guelph CMA

According to Statistics Canada's National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011b), the most common industries among older adults aged 55 to 74 in the Guelph CMA are: educational services; professional, scientific and technical services; transportation equipment manufacturing; ambulatory health care services; and food and drinking places. Among those age 75 years and over, older adults are employed in farming, professional, scientific, and technical services, educational services, and ambulatory health care services.

The WHO (2007) suggests that the inability to match the skills and needs of older adults with the needs of employers largely influences the kind of work older adults are able to access. To address this barrier, the *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* (WHO, 2007) report suggests better advertising of positions, creating databases to match older workers with jobs, and developing a register listing older people's skills for potential employers to consult.

In Guelph, there is currently no employment database that is focused specifically on employment for older adults. However, the Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph





recommends an employment agency focusing on employees who are 55 years and older be implemented over the next four to six years by community and social services (The Osborne Group, 2012).

While not limited to older adults, Community Living Guelph Wellington (CLGW) facilitates employment support services to support the employment needs of older adults with intellectual disabilities. These services are outlined on their website, "clgw.ca". Through these services, older adults are able to access a variety of opportunities for training and experience, including:

- Vocational training opportunities at Adult Rehabilitative Centre (ARC) Industries, Production Works, and Fergus Woodworking, and
- Securing employment in the community through the Supported Employment Program.

ARC Industries provides employment training and support to approximately 125 people who have intellectual disabilities, including older adults. CLGW has also facilitated the Supported Employment Program for individuals with intellectual disabilities, including older adults, who are searching for paid employment in the community (CLGW, 2014).

Income

As older adults are living longer, there are increasing concerns regarding resources and support for older adults. As suggested by UWGWD Social Planning Council (2008b), "increasingly, seniors are required to find financial resources to support themselves and this can be problematic particularly for seniors with low-incomes" (p. 2). According to the National Household Survey, 1,125 (7.4%) of the 15,105 older adults 65 years and older were living in low-income in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2011g).

Out of the 8,700 older women with income status, 950 lived in low-income (10.4%). In contrast, 220 of the 6,405 older men (3.4%) with income status lived in low-income (Statistics Canada, 2011g). In 2013, individuals aged 55 to 64 year made up 9% of County of Wellington Ontario Works total caseload (County of Wellington Social Services, 2013). According to older adults living in low-income who participated in a focus group conducted by the Poverty Task Force (PTF), there exist few resources for food, housing, transportation, and health care; a lack of social opportunities available to older adults living in low-income; and a lack of accessible public spaces and information around community events (Schumann & Robson, 2012).

The PTF recommended the City of Guelph provide more information regarding programs and accessibility for older adults living in low-income. The PTF also



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recommended the City of Guelph expand the Fee Assistance in Recreation (FAIR) program to allow older adults to participate in more than one program per session (Schumann & Robson, 2012). The FAIR program provides older adults whose financial situation limits their ability to participate in recreation programs with discounts on passes and classes (Volunteer Centre Guelph-Wellington, 2013).

II. Volunteer Opportunities

According to the WHO (2007), there are numerous benefits associated with older adults volunteering, including a sense of self-worth, of feeling active, and maintaining health and social connections. The following section reviews the number of older adults in Guelph that are involved in volunteer activities, the types of volunteer activities, and support available to older adults who wish to volunteer.

Opportunities for older adults volunteering in Guelph

The Volunteer Centre operates the website “www.seniorsengaged.ca” with the goal of ensuring that older adults in Guelph have the information they need to actively engage in their community (Seniors Engaged, 2014). The Seniors Engaged website posts weekly recruitment ads listing various volunteer opportunities for older adults with community organizations, such as The Canadian Red Cross Society, YMCA, Wyndham House, 10 Carden, and Habitat for Humanity.

The UWGWD (2009) consulted a group of older adults about the age-friendliness of their communities. Based on the data collected through these consultations, the UWGWD outlined several positive aspects of the Guelph community related to the civic participation and employment of the older adults consulted, as well as areas of improvement. According to their report, the older adults suggested that there are many volunteer opportunities that are relatively easy to access through the Volunteer Centre of Guelph-Wellington. These older adults also suggested that a shift in how volunteers are recruited and connected to positions would help make the process of volunteering easier for older adults in Guelph (UWGWD, 2009).

Volunteerism among older adults in Guelph

According to the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey, 49.6% of older adults aged 55 to 64 years have volunteered in the City of Guelph in the past year, while 54.9% of adults aged 65 to 74 years have volunteered, and 48.1% of adults aged 75 and older have volunteered (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012).

In addition to noting the number of older adults who volunteered in the previous year, the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey asked participants about providing unpaid



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help to other people in their communities in the previous year. According to the report, *Selected Aspects of Wellbeing Among Older Adult Residents of Guelph*, 53.7% of adults aged 55 to 64 years, 43.2% of adults aged 65 to 74 years, and 43.3% of adults aged 75 and older have provided unpaid help with shopping, driving and appointments. Older adults also provided unpaid domestic help in their home; administrative help, such as taxes, banking, and paying bills; health-related and personal care; and teaching, coaching, and tutoring (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012).

Civic participation of older adults in Guelph

Older adults were also asked about their civic participation as part of the Guelph Wellbeing Survey (Hilbrecht et al., 2012). Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Civic Participation Among Older Adults in Guelph

Member or participant of union or professional association	26.3%
Member or participant of political party	15.1%
Member or participant of sports organization	32.5%
Member or participant of cultural, educational, or hobby organization	28.9%
Member or participant of religious-affiliated group	26.9%
Member or participant of school group, <u>neighbourhood</u> group, civic or community association	14.1%
Member or participant of service club or fraternal organization	12.2%
Member or participant of public interest group	13.5%
Member or participant of other organized group or activity	28.1%

DIMENSION SIX: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Access to information allows older adults to stay connected with events and people. It also allows them to receive timely and practical information with which to manage their lives and meet their personal needs (WHO, 2007). According to the WHO (2007), older adults in cities in the developed world are able to access a variety of information from many different general and specialized media for older adults. However, older adults from cities across the world expressed fear of missing information and being left out of the mainstream. The effective distribution of information that is accessible to older adults with varying capacities and resources is crucial to active aging. The WHO (2007)





notes that governments and voluntary organizations have a major role in ensuring that information relevant to the needs and interests of older adults is readily available. The following are characteristics of age-friendly communication and information systems in a city:

- Regular and reliable distribution of information by government or voluntary organizations, and information disseminated to reach older people where they conduct their usual activities of daily life;
- Accessibility of printed information;
- Accessibility of automated communication and equipment; and
- Access to computers and the Internet, at no or minimal charge, in public places such as government offices, community centres and libraries, and support for older adult users (WHO, 2007).

Information gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with the WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following discussion will provide an overview of information relevant to communication and information for older adults in the City of Guelph, informed by the factors for age-friendly communication and information dimension as outlined by the WHO (2007). The key themes evident in this dimension are availability of information, accessibility of information, and language of older adults.

I. Availability of Information

The WHO (2007) identifies the lack of available information as a frequent barrier for older adults. The older adults that participated in the WHO's (2007) *Age-friendly Communities: A Guide* report described the importance of information that "reaches older adults in their daily lives and activities, through direct personal delivery, telephone and distribution in key locations: community centers and bulletin boards, public services, libraries, stores, doctor's offices and health clinics" (p. 60). This section will discuss the availability of information for older adults in Guelph, and the preferred locations and mediums through which older adults in Guelph would like to receive information.

The older adults that participated in the UWGWD (2009) consultations identified several positive aspects regarding the communication of information to older adults in Guelph. The City of Guelph was identified as integral to disseminating information relevant to older adults' needs (UWGWD, 2009). These older adults suggested that to improve the dissemination of information, community bulletins could be placed in grocery stores, post offices, banks, library entrances, churches, and drug stores, and that letters of appreciation could be sent to stores that have community bulletins (UWGWD, 2009).



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However, the older adults who participated also indicated that in general, older adults in Guelph do not have enough knowledge of services available to them, and that while information may be available, it can be hard for older adults to find (UWGWD, 2009). The challenge to older adults of knowing what is available and how to find the services one needs is also identified as a concern within the *Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph* report (The Osborne Group, 2012).

Information available in Guelph

The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association (GWSA) provides information about services for older adults in the City of Guelph, and online links to sites providing information that may be of interest to older adults, such as Greyhound Bus Lines and SNAP Guelph on the Help Desk page of their website, “www.gwsa-guelph.ca”. Further, the GWSA facilitates the Community Support Services Initiative to assist older adults in accessing appropriate community resources through peer support.

Another source of information for older adults in the City of Guelph is the Volunteer Centre, whose website includes a searchable directory of community services which can be accessed by older adults seeking names and locations of organizations and services that may be of interest to them (Volunteer Centre, 2014). Their “seniorsengaged.ca” website provides older adults access to a list of services, and to opportunities for volunteering and community involvement.

Preferred medium for information for older adults in the City of Guelph

It is important for older adults to be able to access information that is relevant to their needs in locations and formats that are convenient to their daily lives (WHO, 2007). To gather information about where residents in the City of Guelph typically find information about the City, Oracle Poll Research conducted a telephone survey on behalf of the City of Guelph. Generally, the older adults that participated in the survey rely on print newspapers to find information (Table 4) (Oracle Poll Research, 2014).

Table 4
Where Older Adults in the City of Guelph Find Information about the City

	Age 55 to 64 years	Age 65 years and older
Guelph Tribune	35.9%	27.9%
Guelph.ca corporate website	5.8%	12.2%
Social Media (Facebook,	10.9%	2.5%





	Age 55 to 64 years	Age 65 years and older
Twitter)		
Guelph Mercury	28.2%	23.4%
Radio (CJOY/Magic)	7.7%	11.2%
Word of Mouth	5.8%	11.7%
City Council Meetings	0.6%	0.5%
Call City Hall	-	1.0%
Television	2.6%	6.6%
Newsletter/Flyer	0.6%	-
Internet	-	1.0%
Don't Know	1.9%	2.0%

Note: Adapted from Oracle Poll Research, 2014, p. 5.

II. Accessibility of information

In addition to the effective distribution of information in locations convenient for older adults, it is important that older adults can access this information comfortably within their abilities. According to the WHO (2007), the most prominent barrier to communicating with older adults is the visual and auditory presentation of information. Among the older adults who participated in the WHO's (2007) *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* report, the most prevalent barriers related to the presentation of information included:

- font size on text materials is often too small,
- page layout is confusing with too much information concentrated in a small space,
- auditory communication is spoken too quickly, and
- official forms, for example those required to receive services and benefits, are especially difficult for older adults to understand.

According to the older adults who participated in the UWGWD project *Age-Friendly Communities* (UWGWD, 2009), system navigation is a challenge to accessing information in the City of Guelph. These older adults highlighted the important role of the GWSA in advocating for older adults, and the need for more support for older adults to access the social service system. The older adults also stated print materials need to be made in larger print, and automated telephone systems need to be adapted to the needs of older adults (UWGWD, 2009).



**Information technology**

Information technology, such as computers and the internet, can facilitate the comprehensive and convenient dissemination of information to older adults (WHO, 2007). However, many of the older adults who participated in the WHO's (2007) report *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* experienced a sense of exclusion because they do not use computers and the Internet. Computer training that is adapted to the individual needs and pace of learning of older adults can engage older adults in the use of computers and the internet (WHO, 2007).

According to the older adults who participated in the UWGWD (2009) report, technology is a major barrier to older adults accessing information. In particular, the use of the internet to share information is a challenge for older adults who are not computer literate. In order to address information technology concerns, older adults suggested that assistance should be provided for older adults to use computers and the Internet. In spite of these challenges, the older adults that participated noted that there are several locations in the City with free internet access, facilitating the use of the internet as a system of communication for older adults who do not have access to a computer at home (UWGWD, 2009).

III. Language of Older Adults

The WHO (2007) outlined that a basic communication system of written, broadcast media, and telephone that reaches every resident is key to the age-friendliness of a city. In order to foster inclusivity and ensure every resident has access to information, it is important to engage older adults that may face language barriers in their access to print information and the oral communication of information.

The first language of many older adults in Guelph is one of the two official languages, either English or French. According to the 2011 Census, 22,334 individuals in Guelph aged 55 years and older reported that their first language was English. The number of Francophone older adult residents in Guelph was 510 in 2011. There are 6,535 older adults in Guelph whose first language is a non-official language (Statistics Canada, 2011d).

Among older adults who most often speak a non-official language at home, 820 are age 55 to 59 years, 665 are age 60 to 64 years, 515 are 65 to 69 years, 490 are 70 to 74 years, and 910 are 75 years and older (Statistics Canada, 2011e). Older adults who most often speak a non-official language may face barriers in accessing printed and oral information about community events or activities, and social services if that information is only available in English or French.



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DIMENSION SEVEN: COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

The availability of good quality, appropriate, and accessible care and support is vital to older adults maintaining health and independence in their communities (WHO, 2007). The following factors are seen as important considerations when assessing the age-friendliness of the community support and health services in a city:

- Accessibility of health and social services and residential care facilities,
- Quality of services for older adults and level of knowledge and training of service professionals,
- Voluntary support to assist older people in a wide range of health and community settings, and
- Emergency planning and care for older adults (WHO, 2007).

Information gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with the WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following overview of information relevant to community support and health services for older adults in the City of Guelph is informed by the factors for age-friendly community support and health services as outlined by the WHO's (2007) dimension. The key themes evident in this dimension are physical and mental health needs, availability of accessible care, community support services and long-term and end-of-life services.

I. Physical and Mental Health Needs of Older Adults in the City of Guelph

It is important to understand the healthcare needs of older adults in the City of Guelph in order to facilitate greater access to health-care services for older adults, and improve the equity and quality of these services. The following section will discuss information related to the physical and mental health of older adults in the City of Guelph.

Physical health

According to the *Selected Aspects of the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey* report (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012), the majority of older adults in Guelph rate their physical health as either *good* or *very good*. Among older adults aged 75 and over, 3.3% rate their physical health as *poor* and 16.8% rate their physical health as *fair*.

Mental health

The Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey also asked residents of Guelph to rate their mental health, with responses ranging from *poor* to *excellent*. The majority of older adults indicated their mental health was either *good* or *very good*. Less than 0.4% of





older adults reported their mental health was *poor* and an average of 20.6% reported their mental health was *excellent*. On average, mental health ratings were fairly consistent across the three age categories (55 to 64, 65 to 74, and 75+). One exception was that a greater number of older adults 75+ reported their mental health was *good* (38.3%) than those from 55 to 64 and 65 to 74 age categories (26.4% and 27.4%, respectively) (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2012).

Older adults who participated in the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey also reported on emotional wellbeing and the stress of senior residents related to leisure activities (Smale, 2012a). Figure 6 displays the responses from adults 55 years and older to the question “My leisure contributes to my emotional wellbeing”. Responses ranged from *very strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

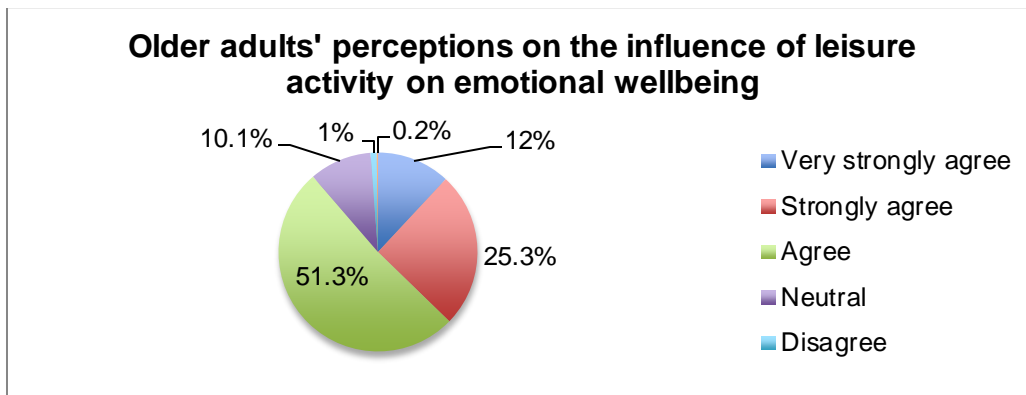


Figure 6. Older adults’ perceptions on the influence of leisure activity on emotional wellbeing. Adapted from *Guelph Wellbeing Survey Age Group Comparisons*, 2012, p. 54.

With respect to the question “My leisure activities help me relieve stress”, 83.3% of older adults in Guelph *agree, strongly agree, or very strongly agree* that leisure activities help them relieve stress. In contrast, only 2% *disagree* and 14.7% were *neutral*.

Thus, while the majority of older adult residents in the City of Guelph self-report that their physical and mental health is *good* or *very good*, there are still a number of older adults that report their health as *fair* or *poor*. Overall, physical health ratings tended to be lower than mental health ratings. As outlined in the report *Living Longer Living Well: Highlights and Key Recommendations*, it is important that healthcare services in the City of Guelph have the capacity to address the range of older adults health care needs with quality care, and that older adults with varying capacities are able to access these





services (Sinha, 2012). The following section will point to the availability and quality of health care for older adults in the City of Guelph.

A major concern for older adults is continuity of care. One of the services provided at the hospital is transitional or in-home care for patients who are released from the hospital, yet it is difficult to ensure that those supports are accessed and/or maintained after patients have been discharged (Guelph General Hospital representative, informational interview, May 2014).

II. Availability of Accessible Care of Older Adults in the City of Guelph

Guelph is served by three fully equipped and staffed hospitals offering all necessary medical services, and over 150 physicians with general practices and medical specialists (City of Guelph, 2012). According to the WHO (2007), having easily accessible health care services that meet their needs is fundamentally important to older adults. Thus, specific forms of care for older adults, such as geriatric clinic services, adult day centres, mental health services, respite care, and rehabilitation must be available to older adults (WHO, 2007).

The Osborne Group (2012) sought input from older adults, caregivers, and service providers for older adults, key informants, and staff from a range of departments and organizations that provide services relevant to older adults in the City of Guelph. Many of the individuals who participated described positive experiences with health care services in the City of Guelph, including the Family Health Team, support by the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) for those who need palliative care, Hospice Wellington and its new facility, rehabilitation services at St. Joseph's and the West End Centre, emergency medical services, and walk-in clinics.

According to the *Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph* report (The Osborne Group, 2012), the most common complaint among participants was the lack of sufficient health support services to help people stay at home or return home to full functioning after hospitalization. Further, the participants noted a lack of health care worker consistency, which was reported to lead to varied quality of support day to day and challenges in the development of trusting relationships between older adults and health care workers.

III. Community Support Services

Accessible and available community support services facilitate healthy aging for older adults by connecting them with the knowledge, resources and opportunities to maintain their wellbeing. According to the report *Living Longer, Living Well: Highlights and Key*



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Recommendations (Sinha, 2012), providing the right care, in the right place, at the right time means that the province will have to strengthen and invest in home care and community support service sectors. Sinha (2012) suggests that providing a wider range of home care and community support services will allow more older adults to remain independent and age in the place of their choice, rather than requiring costly and sometimes less desirable living options.

Further, the development of more progressive, fairer, and sustainable financing systems would enhance overall access, equity, quality, value, and choice around the provision of community care services to older adults. For example, the report recommends enhancing access to clinic-based physiotherapy services, especially for those on limited incomes who often forgo this therapy when prescribed due to their financial means (Sinha, 2012).

According to the *Older Adult Strategy for City of Guelph* report (The Osborne Group, 2012), older adults identified several non-medical supports in the City of Guelph that are highly valued, including: Seniors for Seniors, Snow Angels, Meals on Wheels, Behaviour supports, Seniors-At-Risk coordination, EMS, Vial of Life program, and CREMS. This report also identified the need for caregiver support, such as accommodation from employers in order to care for older adults and assist them to age in place.

The *Older Adult Strategy for the City of Guelph* report (The Osborne Group, 2012) also highlights the GWSA outreach programs as a positive source of non-medical support. As noted earlier, the GWSA maintains community support services programs that connect older adults with opportunities for inclusion and participation through activity groups and education programs facilitated by the GWSA. Participation in the community support services programs does not require membership in the GWSA, and participation is either free or has a nominal fee. GWSA programs include a focus on nutrition and wellness, physical activity, and support, outlined on their website (GWSA, 2014).

IV. Respite and End-of-Life Care

As noted earlier, and according to the WHO (2007), the lack of adequate and affordable residential facilities for older adults no longer able to live in their own homes is a common problem for older adults. Further, the report *Living Longer, Living Well: Highlights and Key Recommendations* (Sinha, 2012) notes that long-term care homes provide care to some of the most vulnerable older adults in our society. Thus, it is important that long-term care homes train staff to provide the best possible care to older



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adults, and facilitate the type of care and care environments that older adults need (Smith, 2004).

In the City of Guelph, Hospice Wellington provides health care, emotional support, and practical assistance to individuals and families facing a life-threatening illness, extending through bereavement (Hospice Wellington, 2014). According to Hospice Wellington's (2013) *Overview of Performance for 2012/2013* report, Hospice Wellington had 287 residents in 2012/2013, which is a 28% increase from the previous year. The average age of the residents of Hospice Wellington is 79 years old, and 69% of clients were admitted with cancer. The average length of stay for clients at Hospice Wellington, most of whom are older adults, was 10 days.

DIMENSION EIGHT: OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

The WHO (2007) describes and defines age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings using the following criteria:

- **Clean and pleasant environment:** outside environment and public buildings must be clean and free from noise and unpleasant smell.
- **Public buildings and services:** accessible public buildings with accessible washrooms and services in close proximity to where older adults live, and specialized customer services. Public buildings must have the following features: elevators, ramps, adequate signs and directions, railings on stairs, non-slippery floors, adequate, and accessible public toilets.
- **Green spaces:** Safe and well maintained parks and public spaces with accessible and adequate public toilets and seating.
- Walkways and pavements are well maintained, non slippery, wheelchair accessible, and age-friendly.
- **Roads:** Well designed, maintained, non-slippery roads with safe crossing, pavements and cycle paths. Age-friendly pedestrian crossing lights with visual and audio signals, and allow sufficient time for older adults to cross safely.

Accessible and safe outdoor spaces and public buildings create an enabling environment and improved quality of life. In these spaces, older adults feel safe, are more independent, are able to move freely, and are enabled to age comfortably (WHO, 2007). An age-friendly environment should be free from violence, danger, crime, drugs and harm by others, and one where older adults can feel secure in their living environment (WHO, 2007).



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Information Gathered: Document reviews and informational interviews with the WSSN in Guelph-Wellington

The following overview of information relevant to outdoor spaces and public buildings for older adults in the City of Guelph is informed by the factors for age-friendly community support and health services dimension as outlined by the WHO (2007). The key themes evident in this dimension are public spaces and local parks and older adults feelings of safety in Guelph.

I. Public Spaces and Local Parks

The 2007 WHO report highlighted the importance of green spaces, the availability of seating area and accessible toilets in public spaces, and the accessibility of sidewalks, pavements, cycle paths and traffic signs, to enhancing the age friendliness of a city.

Accessible public spaces

During its preliminary investigation on age-friendly communities, the UWGWD (2009) organized a focus group discussion with older adults in Guelph and North Wellington, during which participants identified the following positive areas of their communities and areas that needed improvement.

Positive feedback

- Good green spaces for older adults –many parks that have lots of seats/benches to sit.

Areas that require improvement

- Snow removal services – many sidewalks in Guelph are slippery and unsafe in the winter.
- Sidewalks – need for more walk and cycle friendly sidewalks.
- Driveways – cracked and in older adults cause a steep incline on the sidewalks.
- Lack of public fountains and accessible washrooms in public spaces.

II. Older Adults Feelings of Safety in Guelph

The Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey measured older adults' feelings of safety in Guelph and perceived accessibility of local parks, recreational and cultural facilities. Overall, according to the *Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey, Preliminary Results and Selected Comparisons* (Smale, 2012a) report:



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Only about 10% of Guelph residents did not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods at night...Smaller percentages of Guelph residents in the southern parts of the city (Wards 5 = 7.7% and 6 = 7.6%) do not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods, whereas almost twice as many residents who do not feel safe live in the more northern Wards of the city (Wards 4 = 13.8% and 2 = 13.2%) (p.12).

While this feedback does not specifically address older adults, a significant number of older adults participated in the survey. Of the approximately 1,400 Guelph residents who responded to the Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey, approximately 23% were between the ages of 55 and 64 years, 14.5% were between the ages of 65 to 74 years, and 7% were 75 years or older.

CONCLUSIONS

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This report includes information from documents and interviews that provide a snapshot of the current status of the City of Guelph as an age-friendly city, as measured against the WHO dimensions. Through the information gathered, it is evident that there is a wide spectrum of research and associated reports emerging about older adults in Guelph. For each of the eight dimensions outlined by the WHO (2007), publicly available information was available that captured various aspects of each dimension in the context of Guelph.

This report is intended as a first step in compiling the information already known about older adults in Guelph. It is hoped that the Guelph community will continue to build on this document and the information it contains, perhaps by updating it over the next few years and ensuring reports are added as they are released. It is also hoped that this report can be used to start or further the dialogue regarding older adults in our community.

This community profile could also be used by the City of Guelph and other organizations to consolidate baseline data that can be used to support a variety of activities, for example, those related to priority setting, performance measurement, and planning of public amenities, services, programs and activities that meet the needs of older adults.





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² All census data used in this literature review were collected during the 2011 Census and 2011 National Household Survey conducted by Statistics Canada. Data were obtained through the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Data Consortium, part of the Community Data Program.



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APPENDIX A: DEVELOPING AN OLDER ADULT COMMUNITY PROFILE

A number of municipalities across Ontario have developed age-friendly community profiles to establish a snapshot of their community's age-friendly status and to develop priorities within the community.

Table 1 illustrates several municipalities that have developed age-friendly community profiles and implemented strategies to make their communities age-friendly.

Table 1

Age-Friendly Initiatives in Municipalities Across Ontario

Municipality	Start Date of Age Friendly Communities Initiative	Key Stakeholders
Thunder Bay	June 2006	Centre for Research and Education on Aging and Health (CERAH), Age-Friendly Thunder Bay Stakeholder Committee
Ottawa	March 2013	The Council on Aging of Ottawa, City of Ottawa, CARP, The United Way of Ottawa
Kingston	October 2011	City of Kingston, Seniors Advisory Committee
Hamilton	2009	City of Hamilton, McMaster University, Disabled and Aged Regional Transportation System (DARTS)
Peterborough	2011	Peterborough Social Planning Council (PSPC), the City of Peterborough and the Senior's Planning Table.

Note: Data compiled from the following reports: Age-Friendly Stakeholder Committee, 2010; City of Kingston, 2011; City of Ottawa, 2012; Hamilton Council on Aging, 2010; and Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2012.



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