

# BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



## Age-Friendly Communities

There is a growing proportion of older adults in York Region. While aging is a fact of life, the increasing number of people entering later life is part of a global demographic trend. To ensure York Region is “age-friendly”, it’s important to anticipate and respond to a range of age-related needs. The World Health Organization says, age-friendly communities “adapt, create and put in place policies, services, settings and structures that support and enable people to age actively”.

Health is not just about lifestyle choices, it’s about where you live. Community design affects personal well-being, physical and mental health, and social supports. It’s even more important as people age. When older adults live in complete, healthy, and age-friendly communities they have access to a variety of housing options; they can choose to walk, bike, roll or use transit to conveniently access nearby amenities including stores, employment, and recreation; and can age in place. Good design can improve mental health and help delay or minimize the severity of chronic diseases or disabilities, including those injuries from falls.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675

[york.ca/HealthyBuiltEnvironment](http://york.ca/HealthyBuiltEnvironment)

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## DID YOU KNOW?

- For the first time, the number of seniors now exceeds the number of children in York Region and by 2051, close to one in four (23%) York Region residents will be over the age of 65. (Source: York Region Plan to Support Seniors)
- Good community design supports healthy aging, social connectedness, and independent living.
- Research indicates that older adults thrive and remain independent longer when they live in a neighbourhood that supports physical activity and social interaction.
- Features that benefit older adults benefit other age groups. Communities that work for older adults, work for everyone.
- Older adults can age healthily in place and participate in their community.

**York Region**

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## You make a difference when you...

- Share your ideas on issues important to your community (e.g., age-friendly community design, access to affordable transportation, mixed-use housing, frequency of public transit and safe walking areas)
- Learn about plans for development, re-development and age-friendly community design in your municipality
- Speak to your neighbours about issues affecting your community and ways to address them in your constituency
- Organize and participate in community activities (e.g., community centres, faith groups, charities and clubs)
- Use parks and community facilities/resources in your neighbourhood
- Learn more about your municipality's official plan and how it can be used to promote an age-friendly community

## Municipalities show leadership when they...

- Develop a dedicated group or Committee to help prioritize the needs of older adults and Age-Friendly Communities
- Focus on the needs of aging residents when making community decisions; features that benefit older adults, benefit other age groups
- Consult with older adults in community planning
- Respond to the needs of older residents when drafting zoning bylaws. Flexible bylaws allow for innovative housing solutions to better serve older adults and the community in general
- Identify and fix barriers to transportation (e.g., accessible bus stops and ramps)
- Promote barrier-free buildings and streets to better serve freedom of movement and overall independence for aging community members
- Strive for equity by planning and adapting infrastructure, programs and services for older adults

**BE AN ACTIVE PARTNER WHERE YOU LIVE, LEARN, WORK AND PLAY.**  
Participate in building healthy communities!