



## Steering Committee Report to the Community

2019–2021



More Calgarians are living longer, healthier lives. To meet this new reality, we need to find innovative approaches to the opportunities and challenges of an aging population. The Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy provides a roadmap for Calgarians and local organizations to work together to make Calgary a place where everyone can age well.



# Introduction

Age-Friendly Calgary (AFC) is a collaboration between citizens, stakeholders and service providers. Together, we are improving supports for Calgary's older adults. Council approved the Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy and Implementation Plan in 2015 and an updated plan was completed in 2019.

AFC is led by a Steering Committee with representatives from the following organizations and sectors:

- Alberta Health Services
- Calgary Police Service
- The City of Calgary
- Dementia Network of Calgary and Area
- Immigrant-serving agencies
- Non-profit seniors housing
- Community based senior service providers
- University of Calgary
- Older Adult Advisory Table (OAAT) Co-chairs

The AFC Steering Committee helps to advance the Seniors Age-Friendly Implementation Plan for 2019-2022.

This Report to the Community highlights the progress that has been made on AFC initiatives between June 2019 and November 2021.

# Age-Friendly Calgary's Older Adult Advisory Table

AFC's Older Adult Advisory Table (OAAT) members act in an advisory capacity to support the Steering Committee, action teams and Age-Friendly staff in developing and implementing the Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy.

OAAT has provided input into a number of City initiatives including:

- Changing Perceptions of Aging Meet-Up
- Seniors' Week planning
- Social Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- The Guide for Local Area Planning
- Calgary Transit Seniors & Youth Fare Review
- Liveable Streets: Plus 15 Wayfinding Improvements
- Elections Calgary
- Ageism: Update on recommendations for policy and training tools for The City
- Age-Friendly Built Form and Building Design
- Digital Equity Strategy



# Supporting organizations during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on older adults and seniors-serving organizations. It changed our understanding of need, priorities, and service delivery.

AFC was part of The City's pandemic response efforts. Our role included:

- sharing information about initiatives and program changes.
- amplifying concerns internally and externally.
- working with our partners to connect older adults with rides to vaccination appointments.
- reassessing AFC's and senior sector priorities through a survey and community conversations.

Top priorities include:

- Social isolation
- Mental health concerns
- Access to information and services
- Access to technology and transportation
- Service coordination with partner agencies



# Supporting the creation of a Community-Based Seniors Serving Sector

The Community-Based Seniors' Serving Sector initiative, recently renamed Healthy Aging Alberta, focuses on developing a coordinated sector in Alberta. This initiative seeks to create a provincial network of organizations who are united by a shared vision: **for Alberta to become one of the best places in the world to grow older.**

Age-Friendly Calgary, carya, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, and Sage Seniors Association participated in a Community-Based Seniors' Serving Sector Engagement Project across Alberta in fall 2019 funded by the Ministry of Seniors and Housing that resulted in the report: "[What We Heard.](#)"

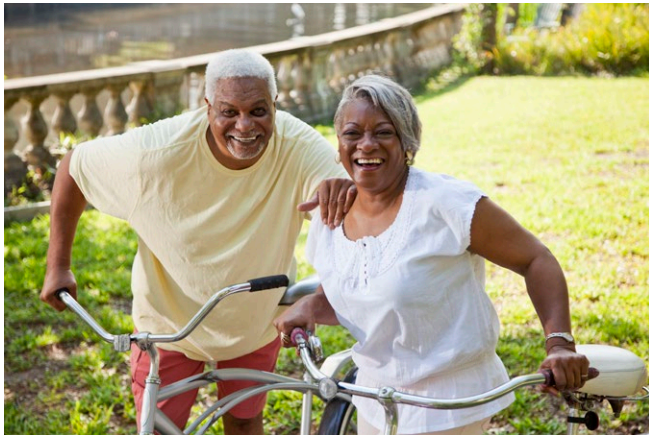
Responding to recommendations in that report and the needs of older adults during the pandemic, AFC, its other engagement partners, and United Way of Calgary supported the rapid creation of a digital knowledge and learning hub for seniors' serving organizations. The hub is called Healthy Aging Collaborative Online Resources and Education ([CORE](#)) Alberta. The CORE Alberta Platform has also allowed organizations to share information, connect virtually and problem solve issues together.

CORE Alberta groups connected to AFC include the Caregivers Focused Coalition and the Alberta Age-Friendly Community of Practice.

AFC currently sits on the interim [Community Leadership Council \(CLC\)](#) to support the development of a community-based seniors' serving sector in Alberta.

In 2021, Healthy Aging Alberta received two years of funding from the Civil Society Fund to support the development of a sector, including regional capacity development and projects in the Calgary zone, supported by a new Regional Community Developer position. This work has included Healthy Aging Framework adaptation and the Sector Systems Mapping project. Initial meetings about a funders table have also taken place.

# Age-Friendly Calgary feature initiatives



## PROMOTING AN AGE-POSITIVE CULTURE SHIFT

Promoting an age-positive culture shift is a key component to fostering an age-friendly community that treats everyone equitably.

Often, older people in our society are marginalized and their contributions minimized. Education and open discussion are key to addressing these issues.

AFC has shared information and hosted discussions about what it means to age in our society through community presentations and through the Changing Perceptions of Aging in Calgary Meetup Group. The group is for people of all ages who are interested in discussing topics related to aging, addressing ageism, and exploring what an aging population means for Calgary. Meetups are held online, the second Tuesday of each month and are free to

attend. As of December 2021, there are 307 members of the Age-Friendly Meetup Group, and events have covered topics as diverse as representation of older adults in the media, creative aging, technology and ageism.

During Seniors' Week 2020, AFC focused on the theme of resilience, and supported organizations to host events online. For Seniors' Week 2021 AFC focused on the theme of connections and stories of older adults addressing social isolation. There were five feature events that helped to connect older adults and Calgarians through music, film, acting, and education. The Music Mile, National Music Centre and AFC partnered to create Eldersong, a new Seniors' Week event that featured seven local senior musicians sharing their talent and stories of how music has inspired them. This event positively showcased older adults, allowing viewers to see them living life to the fullest. To date there have been 445 views on YouTube and 1300 people tuned in to watch the live Facebook stream. An Older Adult Advisory Table member was instrumental in seeing this event come to fruition, with intent to expand for 2022.

AFC is also proud to support and promote projects by our community partners that challenge current perceptions of aging, such as the THIRD ACTION Film Festival and the Top 7 over 70 awards.





### MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR OLDER ADULTS

People who are living with mental illness, poverty and homelessness (or the risk of homelessness) often appear to age more quickly than others. As early as age 45 or 50, they may experience needs that we usually expect to see with much older people.

This population may be further marginalized by community support and housing services that were not designed to support people experiencing the combined effects of aging, poverty and mental health.

The Mental Health and Housing Action Team, and education sub-committee provided a successful workshop to social housing providers in 2020 called Brain, Trauma, Toxic Stress and What It Means for Older Adults. This workshop provided housing providers with trauma-informed care strategies when dealing with residents who have mental health issues. In June 2021 they promoted a workshop called Psychological First Aid for a Pandemic to support mental health and housing staff dealing with personal stress and the impact the pandemic has on clients.

### INFORMATION LISTINGS AND RESOURCES FOR OLDER ADULTS

Improving access to information, services and programs is a key factor in reducing the social isolation of older adults. AFC is working with service providers to support better understanding of each other’s services, so they can work together to achieve shared goals.

In March 2020, the Access to Information and Services Action Team took an important role in the pandemic response through the distribution of essential numbers; supporting seniors-serving organizations in obtaining accurate information and identifying emerging issues and gaps.

<b>9-1-1 Emergency (24-Hour)</b>	<b>403-SENIORS (403-736-4677) The Way In</b>
For EMERGENCY medical, fire and police response. Call the non-emergency police line at <b>403-266-1234</b> to report an incident that is not an emergency.	Information, advice and help accessing programs and benefits for older adults.
<b>8-1-1 Health Link (24-Hour)</b>	<b>403-266-HELP (403-266-4357) Distress Centre and SeniorConnect (24-Hour)</b>
Health advice (including dementia advice) from a registered nurse.	Crisis support and urgent social work response (including if you are concerned about a senior at risk in the community).
<b>3-1-1 City of Calgary (24-Hour)</b>	<b>403-943-1500 Access Mental Health</b>
Information on all City of Calgary services. <b>www.calgary.ca</b>	Non-urgent advice on navigating the addiction and mental health system.
<b>2-1-1 Community Resources (24-Hour)</b>	<b>403-705-3250 Elder Abuse Resource Line (24-Hour)</b>
Information and referrals for community and social services. <b>www.ab.211.ca</b>	Confidential information and support, or to report a suspected case of elder abuse.



## ACTIVE AGING

Since March 2020, Calgary Recreation has continued to provide opportunities for older adults, while adapting to comply with COVID-19 public health restrictions. During the summer of 2020 Calgary Parks and Recreation collaborated on an outdoor COVID-friendly program called Explore Parks Together. In Fall 2020 the program was adapted and called Active in Nature, understanding that older adults were looking for safe, outdoor programs even in colder weather. In 2021, to accommodate demand, the program was expanded into a weekly offering. In addition, a Fitness and Nature Skills series was created for adults wanting to take their learning to the next level. COVID-19 safe activities during Seniors' Week and Active Aging week were provided outdoors.

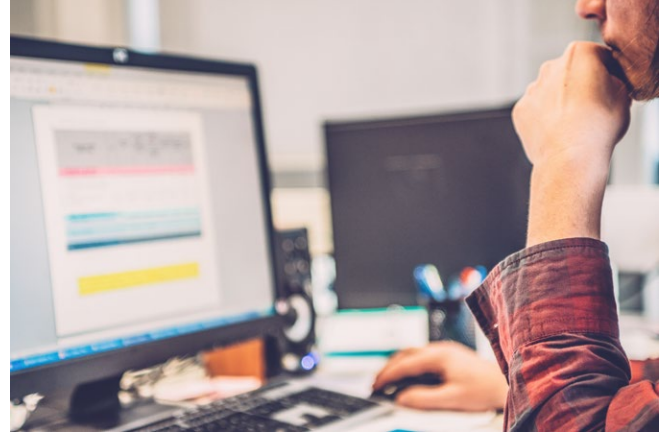
Calgary Recreation is continuing to collaborate with post-secondary institutions on seven research projects to support high quality recreation programming, identify social outcomes of participation and address service delivery for older adults in the COVID-19 environment.

Five projects with the University of Calgary Faculty of Kinesiology relate to social participation and social outcomes in physical activity:

- Support for social participation and physical literacy for older adults
- Assessing social outcomes in group physical activity for older adults with and without vulnerabilities
- Moving together: building an academic-municipal-community partnership to support physical activity and social inclusion among older adults
- Social participation, physical activity, and resilience among older adults living alone
- Understanding challenges to supporting older adults' participation in physical activities in the wake of COVID-19

The following projects were completed by Mount Royal University School of Nursing & Midwifery:

- 2020: Health messaging for recreation delivery
- 2021: COVID-19 and its mental and social effects on adults 55+



### ACTIVE AGING ACTION TEAM

The Active Aging Action Team is a collaboration of organizations working to provide active opportunities for older adults. The team began meeting in fall 2019 and now includes 10 organizations that work to support the participation and inclusion of older adults. Networking and supporting organizations around COVID-19 protocols for older adults has been the focus.

The action team has also planned the Active Aging pillar of the Social Isolation Campaign which focuses on opportunities for making connections.

### ANTI-AGEISM

In 2020, the Age-Friendly Calgary anti-ageism group provided direction to a summer student from the Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging for a research project. The student completed a rapid review report of anti-ageism tools, which was used to inform the age identify factor in the adaptation of the Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tools for City of Calgary staff. In 2021, AFC worked with an MSW practicum student and City of Calgary staff to support the adaptation of a GBA+ tool into an Equity Analysis tool. The project sought feedback from the AFC anti-ageism group about the research findings and the new Equity Analysis training approach.

The Equity Analysis tool and training is being piloted in the City of Calgary and age considerations have been embedded into the training to illuminate the age lens when conducting analysis. The training will be revised based on the feedback from the pilot in 2022.



### **AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING RESEARCH PROJECT**

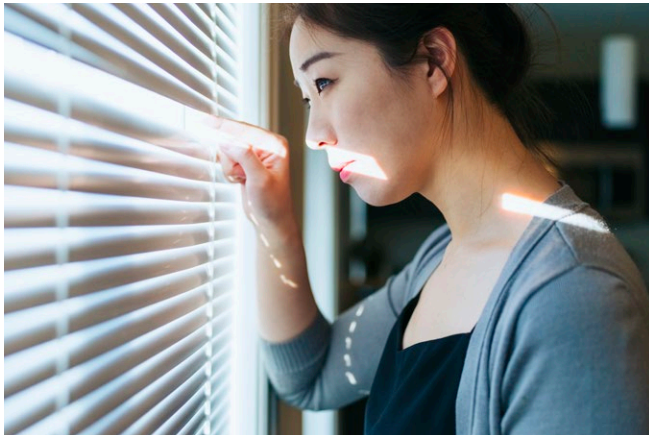
Age-Friendly Calgary, with the support of Planning and Development at The City, collaborated with the Brenda Stafford Centre on Aging to provide direction to a summer student, who completed a scoping review report. The report outlined recommendations on age-friendly and adaptable housing options. In order to advance one of those recommendations, AFC worked alongside partners from Planning and Development at The City, Accessible Homes, United Way and a summer student from the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Calgary to conduct background research. This research focused on key building form and design considerations for older adults in Calgary.

The project resulted in illustrations and a rapid literature review, that will form the basis of an idea book for older adults to navigate the tradeoffs in the current housing supply. It will also inform discussions about the need for and benefits of a variety of housing options. In the next year, AFC will seek input from older adults and other stakeholders to develop the idea book.

### **RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SOCIAL ISOLATION**

Prolonged social isolation and loneliness can negatively impact an older adult's physical and mental health. Older adults are at higher risk for social isolation and loneliness due to the changes in health and life circumstances that can occur over time. Approximately 30% of Canadian seniors were already at risk of becoming socially isolated before distancing measures were implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19. There is an opportunity to help prevent prolonged social isolation and its associated impacts for older adults during the pandemic.

In conjunction with Seniors' Week, AFC, United Way, Calgary Seniors' Resource Society and numerous community organizations launched a Social Isolation Awareness Campaign with opportunities to get involved throughout the year. #Stayconnectedyc promotes awareness and support of older adults who may be socially isolated. The campaign helps to educate Calgarians about the impacts of social isolation on older adults and facilitates connections by providing resources and ideas to those who want to take part. It also promotes how we can all play a role in making meaningful social connections, whether it's you, a neighbour, a friend, or a family member who is at risk of social isolation. To learn more visit [calgary.ca/stayconnected](https://calgary.ca/stayconnected).



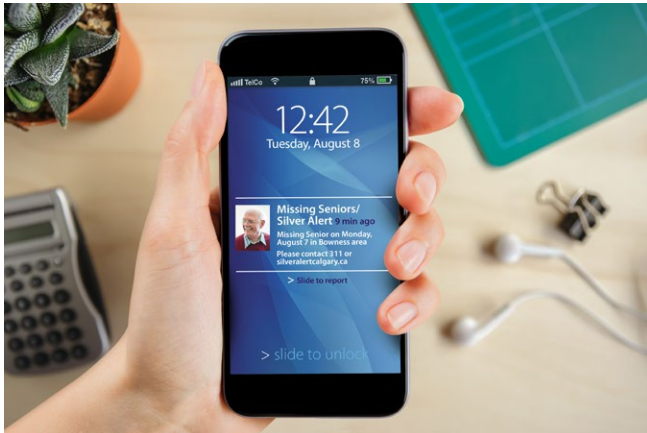
## PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO ELDER ABUSE

Elder abuse is any action or inaction that causes harm to the health and well-being of an older adult. Elder abuse can take several forms, including financial, emotional, physical, sexual, medication and neglect. Elder abuse is often committed by a person in a position of trust, such as a family member, friend or caregiver.

Members of the Coordinated Community Response to Elder Abuse Action Team piloted the “Let’s talk about elder abuse” session in September 2019 and developed a template for organizations hosting their own sessions. The sessions were designed

to increase coordination among service providers through communication, network building, referral and professional education. AFC also supported Immigrant Services Calgary and other community partners to develop elder abuse prevention training and multi-lingual resources based on the “It’s Not Right” program. The program is a best practice approach to teaching neighbours, friends and family to recognize warning signs, and how to respond safely and effectively to elder abuse. Members also promoted and shared with the public the [elder abuse brochure](#), available in 10 languages, through community associations, organizations, senior centres and Federation of Calgary Communities. In June 2020, the Elder Abuse Action Team transitioned to an aligned initiative, Calgary Elder Abuse Awareness Collective (CEAAC), led by community partners. CEAAC hosted a virtual “Let’s talk about elder abuse” workshop for service providers.

To mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2019, members participated in a social media campaign that was coordinated by the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario. In 2020, members supported Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council campaign to “Grow the Conversation” in the community.



## MISSING SENIORS/SILVER ALERT

In Calgary, approximately 180 vulnerable seniors are reported missing each year. These incidents place a tremendous toll on family members, friends and neighbours of the missing person, and often require the involvement of costly emergency services. Silver Alert systems engage the community in locating missing older people who have cognitive challenges.

The Calgary Older Adult Resource Network is an aligned initiative that has developed a resource package for caregivers of vulnerable seniors who are at risk of going missing. It is available online with options for having printed material available and will be officially launched in April 2022. Over the past two years, the group has connected with similar groups across Canada and internationally to consult and share the most updated information that is available. They are participating in discussions to create a Canada-wide alert system for vulnerable older adults who are at risk of going missing.

## CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Caregivers assisting older adults who are family members or friends often face complex challenges. Many do not identify as caregivers and therefore do not seek help as caregivers when needed. Others find it a challenge to locate and access services that can help them.

The Caregiver Support aligned initiative has developed strong ties with Caregivers Alberta and with a province-wide forum on caregiver support. This network has provided opportunities for identifying common caregiver themes, organized events on CORE Alberta, and promoted province-wide online supports for caregivers. They provided input into how the pandemic has impacted Home Care services and the direction Home Care needs to take moving forward.

# Aligned projects and achievements that benefit Calgary's aging population

Although these projects and achievements were not led by Age-Friendly Calgary, they have contributed to Calgary becoming a more age-friendly city:

- Dementia Network Calgary has advocated for the needs of caregivers and older adults living in long-term care throughout the pandemic through its advocacy action team. The network recently conducted research on small care homes in Alberta. Additional community gatherings and conversations to explore this topic will take place in 2022.
- Calgary City Council approved a Social Wellbeing Policy and created a Social Wellbeing Advisory Committee, which identified principles that help The City of Calgary to achieve social wellbeing for all Calgarians, including older adults. An Older Adult Advisory Table (OAAT) member sits on the Social Wellbeing Advisory Committee to represent AFC.
- Igniting Neighbours For Kind Communities collective impact initiative has been supporting isolated older adults throughout the pandemic to make connections through its nine collaborative projects. The initiative has also been a key community partner in the AFC Stay Connected social isolation awareness campaign.



- The fourth annual THIRD ACTION Film Festival aims to make an age-positive culture shift by reframing the narrative around aging. In 2021, it featured 23 films, over nine screenings and 14 speakers, and will plan for an in-person event in 2022.





# What can you do to help Calgary become more age-friendly?

1. Volunteer your time and skills throughout your life. It is a good way to meet people, learn new things and make a difference for others.
2. Find out where to go for help if you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse: [Essential numbers for seniors](#).
3. [Sign up](#) to the Changing Perceptions of Aging Meetup Group, attend monthly meetings to learn more about aging and ageism, or suggest a topic for a presentation.
4. Increase the font size on your letters, emails, and other documents to make them easier to read.
5. Learn how you can prepare your current or future home to be accessible for older family members and for yourself as you age. Consider how accessible your home would be if you could not climb stairs due to accident or illness.
6. Offer to support a family caregiver by delivering groceries, cutting their grass, shoveling snow, walking their dog, or providing care for a few hours, while the caregiver takes a break.
7. Through the Age-Friendly Calgary newsletter or [City of Calgary Engage Page](#), you can learn about opportunities to provide your input on the direction of certain projects happening in Calgary.

## Visit [calgary.ca/AgeFriendly](http://calgary.ca/AgeFriendly) to:

- read the Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy and Implementation Plan 2015-2018 and the revised 2019-2022 implementation plan.
- [sign up](#) for the AFC email newsletter and learn about opportunities to be involved in AFC initiatives.
- read statistical information about Calgary's aging population.
- learn more about available City of Calgary programs and services for older adults.
- gain access to AFC resources and project updates.
- find out about the AFC Older Adult Advisory Table recruitment process and apply to become a member, or encourage someone you know to apply.

## Collaborating partners

In 2019, the inaugural Age-Friendly Calgary annual event brought together community partners involved in the initiative to share current achievements, network and identify ways to improve working together and connecting with others. The 2020 and 2021 events were not held because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



## 2019-2021 community partners:

Alberta Health Services  
Alzheimer Society of Calgary  
Bethany Care Society  
Calgary Association of Lifelong Learners (CALL)  
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society  
Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association  
Calgary Homeless Foundation  
Calgary Police Service  
Calgary Seniors' Resource Society  
carya  
Community members  
Confederation Park 55+ Activity Centre  
Dementia Network Calgary  
Distress Centre Calgary  
Foothills PCN  
Government of Alberta (Alberta Ministry of Health, Alberta Community & Social Services, Alberta Seniors and Housing)  
HomeFront Calgary  
Hospice Calgary  
Immigrant Services Calgary  
Jewish Family Service Calgary  
Kerby Centre  
MCG Careers  
Options Plus  
Silvera for Seniors  
Talent Pool  
The City of Calgary  
The Way In Network  
Trinity Place Foundation of Alberta  
United Way of Calgary and Area  
Vecova recreation  
University of Calgary  
YMCA Calgary

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of many more organizations who participated in the Social Isolation Awareness Campaign, aligned initiatives and as part of the AFC network.

**Contact 311 for more information.**



In partnership with

