Age-Friendly Community Initiatives: Lessons from Toronto

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Introductions

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Sunnybrook Research Institute

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OBJECTIVES

1. OVERVIEW OF THE TORONTO SENIORS STRATEGY
2. PILOT – AGING IMPROVEMENT AREAS INDICATORS
3. AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PROJECT – KENSINGTON CHINATOWN NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
The Toronto Seniors Strategy
The City must be ready to address the growing number of diverse older adults.

The number of older adults is forecasted to grow by up to 60% in the next 20 years.

Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. 2012
Residents want an age-friendly approach to service delivery that supports people of all ages, including Toronto’s older adults, to live active, socially engaged, healthy, and independent lives.

“There has to be more support put in place to assist seniors in remaining in their own homes.”

“[It is] important not to forget that a large majority of older adults are capable, active, independent and a resource to the community. We are part of the solution as well as the ‘problem.’”

The way in which government services currently are designed, resourced, organised and delivered, often disadvantages older adults who are vulnerable.
Top 5 System Barriers

1. We do little to empower older adults and caregivers.
2. We don’t know what we don’t know.
3. We don’t talk to each other well.
4. We plan in silos and not as a system.
5. We plan for today and not for tomorrow.
Overview

- The Toronto Seniors Strategy outlines the beginning of an ongoing process to make Toronto more age-friendly.

- The Strategy was developed to achieve better results for older adults using limited resources.

- Focus is on issues that fall within the City’s authority to plan, manage, and deliver.
To ensure alignment with other communities in Canada, the Strategy is organized using the World Health Organization’s framework for age-friendliness:

1. Respect & Social Inclusion
2. Civic Engagement, Volunteering & Employment
3. Social Participation
4. Community Support & Health Services
5. Housing
6. Transportation
7. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
8. Communications & Information
For each theme, issues are identified. These are based on what we heard from consultations, insights from demographic research, and gaps identified after taking an inventory of what the City does currently.

From the 25 identified issues, we developed 25 broad recommendations to address each issue. These recommendations define the strategic direction the City will take to address older adult issues.

Each recommendation contains a series of short, medium, and long-term actions proposed by City ABCDs. These define the specific, implementable steps the City will take to accomplish each recommendation.
Each recommended action in the Strategy contains three key elements for accountability and monitoring:

- Clearly identified lead program area with responsibility to implement
- Timeframe for implementation
- Identified measure(s) to track the status of each action

The wellbeing of Toronto’s older adults in Toronto will also be monitored to provide context for the ongoing implementation of the strategy.
Key Accomplishments 1.0

- 1,000+ new park and street benches
- A new *Services for Seniors in Toronto* Guide
- New training on how to recognize and support vulnerable residents for City staff
- New event dedicated to the needs of older workers during Workforce Development Month (October)
- Expanded Paramedicine Program
- $2.7M for home repairs
- Larger print signs at intersections
- $1.75M for community services in high-need TCH buildings
- More time to cross the street at intersections with traffic lights
Expanded Table Mandate

- **Monitor** implementation of 1.0
- **Co-create** 2.0

**Toronto Seniors Strategy**
2013 Strategy defines initial framework and goals for implementation

- **Implement**
  - City program areas implement Strategy recommendations

- **Monitor**
  - City tracks the progress of Strategy implementation

- **Continual Monitoring and Refinement**

- **Report**
  - Staff reports to Council on current status and revisions to Strategy

- **Review**
  - City reviews progress with community partners and Toronto Seniors’ Forum

- **Refine**
  - Based on feedback, City proposes adjustments to Strategy
Pilot – Aging Improvement Areas
PILOT – Improvement Areas

- Five indicators were selected for preliminary analysis to identify pilot Aging Improvement Areas.
KCN Age-Friendly Initiative
Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
SELECTION OF THE KCN

City of Toronto identified the top 10 ‘Aging Improvement Areas’, with the KCN ranking #6.

- High rate of older adults (65+ years; 2,561 ~ 14% of the community) who live alone (~ 40%).
- High rates of poverty
- High proportion of persons of Chinese descent with Chinese n.o.s, Cantonese & Mandarin being the top 3 mother & home languages.
KCN has one of the highest poverty rates.
ETHNICITY

Top-5 Birth Country for All Immigrants

- China: 4,020
- Viet Nam: 655
- Other places of birth in Asia: 370
- Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: 330
- Other places of birth in Americas: 290

Top-5 Ethnic Origins

- Chinese: 7,285
- Canadian: 1,995
- English: 1,865
- Irish: 1,505
- Scottish: 1,320

Source: 2011 Census / National Household Survey
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Date of Publication: October 2014
Contact: spar@toronto.ca
### Language

#### Top-10 Non-Official Mother Tongue Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese, n.o.s.</td>
<td>2,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>2,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>1,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog (Pilipino, etc.)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukien</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Top-10 Non-Official Home Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>1,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>1,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese, n.o.s.</td>
<td>1,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian (Farsi)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Knowledge of Official Languages

- **English Only**: 72%
  - City Rate: 86%
- **French Only**: 0%
  - City Rate: 0%
- **English and French**: 10%
  - City Rate: 9%
- **Neither Official Language**: 17%
  - City Rate: 5%

Source: 2011 Census / National Household Survey

Wellbeing Toronto: [www.toronto.ca/wellbeing](http://www.toronto.ca/wellbeing)

Demographics: [www.toronto.ca/demographics](http://www.toronto.ca/demographics)

Prepared by Social Policy, Analysis & Research

Social Development, Finance & Administration
KCN Action Plan
PROJECT STEPS

1. SCOPING REVIEW
   - Social Isolation / Loneliness in Seniors.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN
   - Social / health resources – survey + qualitative interviews.

3. CONSENSUS MEETING
   - Identify priorities for promoting age-friendly principles.

4. ACTION PLAN
   - Short-term & long-term strategies.

Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
SCOPING REVIEW

What is known about social isolation & loneliness in urban-dwelling Asian older adults?

PEER-REVIEW & GREY LITERATURE

EVIDENCE-BASE ON FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL ISOLATION & LONELINESS

DEVELOP PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS / PRIORITIES AT THE PRACTICE & POLICY LEVEL

WHO Dimensions

✓ Practice
✓ Policy
✓ Research

Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
KEY FINDINGS

1. Social Participation
   - Positive social support.
   - Public spaces for socializing.

2. Community Support & Health Services
   - More advertising of community services.
   - Chinese-speaking community/health professionals.

3. Housing* (focus was on living arrangements)
   - Living alone can be a risk factor to isolation & loneliness.

4. Communication & Information
   - More outreach by community services is needed.
   - Doing outreach through Chinese older adults.

Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
KEY FINDINGS

5. Respect & Social Inclusion
• Disrespect can come from family members (e.g., adult children).

6. Outdoor Spaces & Public Buildings
• Need for Chinese symbols & language on commercial & public buildings.
• Need for ample public areas for socializing.

7. Transportation
• Unilingual signage / unfamiliar routes.
• Inadequate & insufficient public transportation.

8. Civic Participation & Employment
• Financial security & command of English language helps civic participation & volunteering.
RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES

• Recruit a broad representation of Chinese older adults living in the KCN to obtain a depiction of facilitators / barriers to social participation.

1 HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES USED / RANKING OF PERCEIVED USEFULNESS

2 CHARACTERIZE SOCIAL WELL-BEING

SURVEY 100 CHINESE OLDER ADULTS IN THE KCN

FOCUS GROUPS WITH ~ 20 KCN OLDER ADULTS & KCN PRACTITIONERS
*Expand on survey findings
CONSENSUS MEETING

One-day consensus meeting to develop an age-friendly city action plan for the KCN

- 30 to 50 key stakeholders will be invited to participate in a one-day meeting to identify top priorities for promoting age-friendly principles in the KCN & develop an action plan (short-term & long-term goals).

- Priorities will be generated from the scoping review, survey data, focus groups & meeting attendees.

Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
## TRIANGULATION OF PRIORITIES EXAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>OLDER ADULTS</th>
<th>PRACTITIONERS</th>
<th>LITERATURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More outreach by community services are needed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Chinese symbols &amp; language on commercial &amp; public buildings.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to understand the composition of older adults’ social networks &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections at home &amp; in the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs &amp; services that address issues of disrespect, ageism &amp; filial</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piety in Chinese families.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More opportunities for civic engagement &amp; volunteering.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create accessible documents on municipal planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action plan will be evidence-based & tailored for the KCN by taking in key perspectives of all relevant stakeholders.

- Help further the City of Toronto’s age-friendly strategy.
- Serve as a template for future age-friendly initiatives.
PROJECT TIMELINE

1. Scoping review completed + accepted for publication.
2. Environmental scan completed.
3. Telephone surveys + focus groups with seniors in progress; End-date December 2016; practitioner focus group completed.
5. Host one day meeting on Thurs. March 2, 2017 to create action plan for the KCN.

Funding provided by the Government of Ontario
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NICE NETWORK MANAGER
KCN PROJECT LEAD
Need to Standardize conversations about “age-friendliness” so we are able to move from homes, to neighbourhoods, to communities, to cities, to societies that are age-friendly

The various lenses of vulnerability and inequity are difficult to capture in the current “age-friendly” framework

Need to promote reciprocal relationships: older adults engaged and participating → opportunities

Focus on intersection of built and social environments: congregate dining

Lessons Learned (so far!)

Difficult to assess, measure and evaluate ‘age-friendliness’: sets up dichotomy of age-friendly and age-unfriendly

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