

# The Age-Friendly Action Plan 2013 - 2015

A Safe, Inclusive and  
Engaging City for Seniors





# The Age-Friendly Action Plan 2013-2015

The Age-Friendly Action Plan is a series of more than 60 actions that the City will take to help make Vancouver a safer, more inclusive and engaging place for seniors. More than half of these actions are already underway.

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**Our goal is to improve facilities and services for seniors from fully independent older adults and seniors to those who are more vulnerable and need additional support.**

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We built on what we learned from consultations with more than 400 Vancouver seniors, caregivers, and seniors' organizations through the 2012 Seniors Dialogues Project, as well as our work on dementia with our partners.

The plan aligns with key building blocks of the Healthy City Strategy (in development)\* and is informed by two of its guiding principles: improving health and well-being for all and addressing inequities.

\* Learn more about the Healthy City Strategy at [vancouver.ca/healthycity](http://vancouver.ca/healthycity)



# WHAT IS AN AGE-FRIENDLY CITY?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an age-friendly city is one that “encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.”

“Quality of life” is explained in three ways:

- **Society:** Seniors are supported to age actively, enjoy good health, remain independent, and stay involved in communities.
- **Economy:** Businesses are better able to support older workers and benefit from support of older customers.
- **Physical environment:** Buildings and streets are safe and barrier-free, with better access to local businesses and facilities. Cities have more green spaces.

Everyone benefits when we have safer streets and sidewalks, more inclusive and accessible facilities and services, and significant contributions to our communities from seniors.

# HOW WE DEVELOPED THE AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN

The plan was developed through a process that featured:

- Seniors Dialogues sessions (fall 2012)
- consultations with Seniors and Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committees
- staff workshop on dementia with Alzheimer Society of BC and United Way of the Lower Mainland
- roundtables with City departments, Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver Public Library, Fire and Rescue Services and Vancouver Coastal Health.

## A closer look at the Seniors Dialogues

The purpose of the Seniors Dialogues was to engage with older adults, caregivers, and community agencies that support seniors and caregivers on how the City can ensure that its facilities and services are age-friendly.

We gathered the varied perspectives of the city’s older adult population on what an age-friendly city should look like by involving a diverse group of older adults who reflect the overall diversity of Vancouver’s seniors population.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

More than 400 participants took part in the process, most through one of the six Seniors Dialogues that were held across the city.

Community members were also invited to participate by calling the Seniors Dialogues hotline via the City's 3-1-1 customer service line or by email. Additional community input was gathered through two focus groups. Eight interviews were also held with key service providers who help or conduct outreach to isolated seniors and a representative from a seniors' residence community.

Participants included seniors from a range of ages and diverse communities:

- 24 per cent of dialogue participants were between the ages of 55 and 64 years
- 51 per cent were between the ages of 65 and 80
- 7 per cent were over the age of 81.

At least:

- 8 per cent participants identified as Aboriginal/First Nations
- 28 per cent participants identified as visible minorities
- 5 per cent participants lived in Canada for less than three years.

## Identifying opportunities for the City

The Dialogues identified a number of opportunities for the City to ensure services and facilities are age-friendly.

These include:

- enhancing mobility
- making information about supports and services for seniors accessible
- building community capacity.

## Identifying opportunities for senior government

Some of the opportunities identified by the Dialogues fall outside of the City's jurisdiction. In these areas, we have a role in advocating on behalf of older adults in Vancouver and facilitating partnerships with other levels of government and community stakeholders.

These opportunities include:

- housing
- medical and social supports
- mobility
- basic needs.

# Priority Actions & Initiatives

What is the City doing to make Vancouver age-friendly and to address the needs of persons with dementia? What else can we do?

From the Seniors Dialogues community engagement process and stakeholder consultations on dementia, we heard and analyzed a broad range of perspectives and noted recurring ones.

The process, including the Dialogues, helped create the Age-Friendly Action Plan, its six themes, and its more than 60 actions.

All departments of the City of Vancouver (including Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services, Police, Park Board and Public Library) will work with our advisory committees and community and government partners to lead and collaborate on completing the actions.







# Active & Healthy Living

Through the Vancouver Food Strategy, we are increasing the access seniors have to fresh produce.

New community gardens on City property will be built for accessibility. Caregivers for low-income seniors will continue to get free admission to Park Board recreation facilities.

We will partner to offer more dementia-friendly, caregiver-inclusive recreation programs.

## Implemented actions already underway

1. Offer dementia-friendly seniors' fitness programming at community centres.
  - For example, Minds in Motion is low-impact aerobics for people experiencing early stage memory loss due to dementia and their caregivers. It's offered in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of BC.
2. Employ dedicated seniors' workers at community centres that specialize in recreational programming for seniors.
3. Provide access to Park Board facilities for low-income seniors with Leisure Access Cards.
4. Provide free access for caregivers accompanying seniors at Park Board facilities and programs.

5. Make community kitchens available in community centres for use by organizations offering intergenerational and multicultural community food preparation programs.

- For example, Britannia, Hastings, Strathcona and Kitsilano Community Centres currently offer community kitchens.

6. Make community gardens on City property accessible by 2010.

7. Carry out the Vancouver Food Strategy's food access initiatives.

- For example, the Westside Food Collaborative is a mobile produce market for seniors.

8. Share Community Garden Accessibility Guidelines with all new community gardens.

## Upcoming actions

9. Explore opportunities to expand seniors' hubs and program models, such as those developed at Kitsilano Community Centre, Kerrisdale Community Centre, and South Vancouver Neighbourhood House that include:
  - active programming for persons with dementia
  - caregiver education
  - caregiver and family supports.
10. Partner with the Alzheimer Society of BC to provide training to all Park Board seniors' workers and programmers on making existing recreation programs more dementia-friendly and caregiver-inclusive.

# Human Services

Our Tenant and Disaster Assistance programs already help seniors maintain or find new housing after fires.

In 2013, we awarded \$500,000 in grants to organizations that help vulnerable seniors continue to live at home, feel less isolated, prepare healthy food, and practice life-long learning.

We will collaborate more with Vancouver Coastal Health on seniors' issues, and create new partnerships for more dementia-friendly adult programs.

## Implemented actions already underway

1. Help seniors maintain, find, or relocate their home with the Tenant Assistance and Disaster Assistance programs.
2. Provide meeting spaces in community centres at low or no cost to dementia and caregiver support groups, when possible.
3. Make available space in community centres and other Park Board facilities for informational workshops, such as "Understanding Dementia", offered through the Alzheimer Society of BC and VCH's First Link program.
4. Provide community centre programs to connect seniors to each other and to opportunities for dialogue and self-expression.
  - For example, the Arts and Health project holds weekly arts workshops for seniors.

5. Provide free locations for seniors to visit and socialize at Parks Board facilities.
6. Offer social service grants to support a large range of organizations that serve at-risk and vulnerable seniors, including residents with dementia, to enhance their safety, security, and ability to live independently.
7. Make library branch meeting rooms available free of charge to not-for-profit groups where possible.

## Recently started actions

8. Enhance collaboration and coordination with Vancouver Coastal Health through a new joint COV-VCH Memorandum of Understanding and Healthy City Steering Committee on seniors' issues (such as home care supports and long-term residential care).

## Upcoming actions

9. Offer training on dementia for City grant recipients working with seniors.
10. Develop partnerships to offer more dementia-friendly, caregiver-inclusive adult programs, including multilingual and multicultural programs, in our network of library branches for 2014.





# Physical Built Environment

The City is making streets and sidewalks more accessible and reviewing accessibility in areas seniors live or gather. We will also plan for more benches and bus shelters in these areas.

We are reviewing bylaws to improve accessibility in the home, so seniors can age in place, and working to secure funding for a seniors' centre in southeast Vancouver.

## Implemented actions already underway

1. Maintain and improve streets and sidewalks to increase accessibility, with no-lip curbs and curb cuts.
2. Install countdown timers at key intersections and adjust crosswalk times to accommodate people with slower walk speeds.
3. Partner with other levels of government, non-profit housing providers, and the development industry, to:
  - expand the availability of supportive and affordable housing
  - encourage new rental housing construction
  - expand the continuum of housing options available to seniors.
4. Revise the Building Bylaw to improve accessibility and allow more seniors to age in place.
5. Support a range of affordable housing options to meet the diverse needs of the community, including housing suitable for seniors, as a guiding principle in community planning processes.

6. Consider legibility of public spaces (ease of navigation and easily-recognizable features) and building accessibility in design guidelines.
7. Contribute \$2.5 million capital funding to the development of a seniors' centre in southeast Vancouver.

## Recently started actions

8. Review transportation infrastructure in areas where seniors live or congregate (such as the presence of curb ramps, crosswalks, traffic signals, lighting).

## Upcoming actions

9. Identify key locations for bus shelters for seniors, in partnership with Planning staff during upcoming planning processes. Prioritize providing bus shelters in these locations.
10. Inventory benches in public spaces, in partnership with Planning staff during upcoming planning processes. Focus new bench placement on addressing gaps.
11. Work with seniors to secure funding for seniors' centre in southeast Vancouver.
12. Encourage donor opportunities for benches in areas with high populations of seniors.
13. Give consideration to age-friendly amenities in future community planning.

# Safety & Emergency Services

Beyond existing Vancouver Police programs dedicated to mental health and elder abuse, we will create an organization-wide alert network for locating missing vulnerable persons.

All fire halls will become safe places for vulnerable persons and seniors in need.

## Implemented actions already underway

1. Offer community education and support for witnesses with dementia through the VPD Elder Abuse Unit, in partnership with Family Services.
2. Link individuals with cognitive impairments or psychiatric problems to health services through the VPD dedicated mental health car.

## Recently started actions

3. Create an internal alert protocol on missing vulnerable persons, including people suffering from dementia and other cognitive disabilities, in partnership with Engineering and other City departments.

## Upcoming actions

4. Utilize all 20 City fire halls as places where vulnerable people, including seniors, can go for safety, first aid, or referrals.
5. Resume and expand the “Eye Watch” initiative to train key frontline City staff about enhancing safety: approaching or responding to lost or confused people (including those who may have dementia or other cognitive disabilities) and being a good witness.







# Training & Awareness

The City will enhance employee training for serving and helping vulnerable populations.

We will raise awareness about seniors' health and overcoming the stigma of dementia by holding public workshops and proclaiming January 2014 as Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

Finally, we will develop guidelines on designing information materials for seniors.

## Implemented actions already underway

1. Provide text-to-text telephone (TTY) services at 3-1-1 for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.
2. Design the City website to W3C guidelines for accessibility.
3. Provide a high-level introduction to working with vulnerable populations, including seniors, as part of the City's customer service training.
4. Hold periodic workshops on dementia by Alzheimer Society of BC for Park Board staff.
5. Host periodic public information events, such as "Understanding Dementia", at Park Board facilities.
6. Train and create protocols for Vancouver Police on working with vulnerable populations, including seniors and persons with cognitive disabilities.
7. Include resource materials on dementia in the library collection.

## Upcoming actions

8. Develop guidelines for design of information and outreach materials targeted towards seniors, in line with corporate standards and industry best practice.
9. Seek the Corporate Management Team's (CMT) direction for all City departments to:
  - adopt the design guidelines for information and outreach materials with seniors
  - work with Corporate Communications to design and produce project-specific materials.
10. Train Vancouver Fire and Rescue staff to recognize and support citizens dealing with dementia and other forms of mental health disorientation, as an implementation partner of the Age-Friendly Action Plan, through the Healthy City Strategy.
11. Ensure that 3-1-1 staff have information to share with the public about BC Housing's Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) and Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) programs, and include information about these programs on the City's website.
12. Incorporate specific content on vulnerable populations into the City's customer service and respectful workplace training for front-line staff, and distribute materials about dementia.
13. Source and coordinate the distribution of takeaway informational materials about dementia for all staff who receive CityLearn's Exceptional Customer Service training module. *(continued on page 18)*

## Training & Awareness

(continued)

14. Distribute awareness information on dementia to businesses through business improvement associations (BIAs) and other groups.
15. Formally recognize Alzheimer's Awareness Month in January 2014.
16. Deliver an information session on dementia for City Council and the Park Board.
17. Coordinate two pilot information sessions for staff about better serving seniors and people with dementia (delivered by Alzheimer Society of BC).
18. Host a public dialogue on dementia and vulnerable seniors, including multicultural seniors, to share information and help to overcome the stigma of diagnosis.
19. Distribute multilingual and culturally-sensitive public education materials about dementia in a variety of formats through library branches and programs.
20. Host a series of public dialogues or informational events in library branches on healthy eating practices and resources for seniors.

# Coordination & Monitoring

We will implement and track progress on the Age-Friendly Action Plan with community stakeholders through our Healthy City Strategy.

Also, we will seek recognition as an "Age-Friendly Community".

## Upcoming actions

1. Coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Age-Friendly Action Plan through the Healthy City Strategy.
2. Seek recognition of Vancouver as an "Age-Friendly Community" by the Ministry of Health and Province of BC.
3. Partner with Cross-Cultural Seniors Network, SPARC BC, and other stakeholders to host a series of multicultural seniors dialogues to assist in implementing and monitoring the Age-Friendly Action Plan.





Thank you to the following organizations for their assistance and support in creating the Age-Friendly Action Plan:

- Alzheimer Society of BC
- Association of Neighbourhood Houses
- City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- City of Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee
- SPARC BC
- Union of BC Municipalities
- United Way of the Lower Mainland
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Vancouver Foundation
- Seniors Dialogues participants and partners



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To read more about this plan,  
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