

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

7. Advancing Efforts for an Age-Friendly City of Vancouver

Submitted by: Councillors Swanson and Boyle

WHEREAS

1. According to the 2016 Canadian census, there are more than 95,570 persons aged 65 and older living in Vancouver, accounting for approximately 15.1% of the city's total population. Moreover, the population of adults over the age of 65 in the province of British Columbia is expected to rise approximately 63% by the year 2041;
2. Older persons living on their own are at increased risk of experiencing homelessness. A large proportion of older persons in Vancouver are living on their own. Currently, 21% of all households in Vancouver are senior-led and it is estimated that over the course of the next decade, 23-25% of households in the city will be led by persons over the age of 65. According to data from the 2016 census, approximately 16.6% of all senior-led renter households were spending 50% or more of their income on their housing costs, making them housing insecure and placing them at increased risk of eviction. The majority of these individuals are single women. Moreover, the social housing waitlist for older adults has increased by 54% between 2014 to 2019 and individuals over the age of 65 represent 37% of the region's waitlist;
3. Older persons can face unique barriers to civic participation such as health limitations, mobility challenges, and cognitive decline. In fact, 52,700 individuals 65 and older (55%) in Vancouver reported that they have specific health and activity limitations, including 20,660 older persons who reported permanent challenges and 24,045 older adults who sometimes experience challenges. These barriers put older persons at increased risk of experiencing social isolation, loneliness, and economic vulnerability;
4. Recent health and climate emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the heat dome, have disproportionately impacted older persons. The BC Seniors Advocate indicated that residents of long-term care and assisted living homes were 33 times more likely to die from COVID. 99 people in Vancouver died during the heat dome, many of them older adults. Vancouver Fire Fighters reported waiting 11 hours for a BC Ambulance for an elderly person. These crises have highlighted the seriousness and urgency of addressing existing gaps in policies, systems, housing, community services and programs to prevent further devastating impacts on many people living in the city, including on older persons;

5. The World Health Organization has declared 2021-2030 as the Decade of Healthy Ageing and has incorporated additional metrics under the Healthy Cities strategy toward improving quality of life specifically for older persons (mitigation of poverty, food security, expand opportunities for civic engagement, opportunities for lifelong learning, age and gender equality, job opportunities, internet access and digital support, housing, etc.);
6. The City of Vancouver has a long history of working toward age-friendly improvements in municipal planning. In 2013, the City of Vancouver initiated the Age-friendly Action Plan (2013-2015) and identified a series of over 60 actions that the City can take to help make Vancouver a more safe, inclusive, and engaging city for seniors. In the following year, Vancouver joined the World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Cities initiative 2014 to 2025. Under this initiative, the City of Vancouver completed two reports: Phase 1 A Healthy City for All: Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy (2014) and Phase 2 Healthy City Strategy – Four Year Action Plan (2015-2018);
7. To extend work on the Age Friendly Action Plan, the City of Vancouver Planning department held a workshop entitled: Age-Friendly Action Research Lab Co-initiating Workshop at Creekside Community Centre on September 24, 2018 engaging members of the Older Persons and Elders community. This work then led to the two additional workshops on March 8 and April 15, 2019 engaging more members of the Seniors' community;
8. The Older Persons and Elders community was very excited by their engagement in 2018 and 2019 workshops which was to lead to the creation of Strategy for Older Persons and Elders. This work was interrupted during COVID-19;
9. Municipalities such as Richmond, Surrey, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal have adopted dedicated planning capacity within municipal resources to support the needs of older persons. Their efforts have resulted in comprehensive planning and formal partnerships and MOUs across different levels of government, multi-agencies, and community organizations specifically focused on supporting Healthy Ageing;
10. Gaps and challenges remain in municipal planning for older persons and elders in the City of Vancouver. On September 28, 2021, City Council convened *2050: An Expert Discussion on Planning and Growth* where each consultant noted that the Vancouver Plan was devoid of any strategies to address the impacts of the demographic shift in population. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to expand housing options in all neighbourhoods and community programs and services to best meet the evolving needs of our aging population;
11. The City of Vancouver's social policy team is working hard on a number of important Council directed initiatives, including [Poverty Reduction](#), [Access Without Fear](#) for residents with precarious immigration status, Sex Worker Safety

initiatives, social policy grants, and more. This team is spread thin. Without a dedicated planner for Older Persons and Elders, the City of Vancouver's has struggled to keep up with best practices in social policy development to address the needs of seniors, and to ensure that our growing population of older persons and Elders can engage and participate fully in civic and community life; and

12. The Seniors Advisory Committee has asked its two Councillor Liaisons to put forward this motion to City Council.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to explore and report back as soon as possible, without detracting from work on other equity items currently being undertaken (some of which may also benefit older persons and elders), on a plan to advance efforts to make Vancouver an age-friendly city, with an ongoing intersectional approach, including consideration of:
 - i. Redirecting selected staff to complete the creation of Phase 3 – Age-Friendly City in consultation with the Seniors' Advisory Committee and community partners as the next step toward the development of a Strategy for Older Persons and Elders.
 - ii. Reviewing the recent Reports by the World Health Organization and the United Nations to embrace the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) inform and refresh the City of Vancouver's Healthy Cities strategy.
 - iii. Updating the Equity Framework and the Vancouver Plan to better address the lack of adequate planning for Older Persons and Elders.
 - iv. Working to develop a Memorandum of Understanding and Planning Committee with the Provincial Health Services Authority, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, BC Ministry of Housing and Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation to participate in a planning process with community partners to better address the needs and interests of older persons and elders.
 - v. Ensuring that the needs of racialized, gender diverse, and low income Older Persons, and older people with disabilities, are prioritized.
- B. THAT this report back include consideration of the Seniors Advisory Committee's request that the City of Vancouver reassign resources, without detracting from work on other equity items currently being undertaken, to provide a dedicated full-time planning position to focus on older persons and elders with an intersectional lens across city departments and liaise with external agencies, a position which could include the following:
 - i. Provide expertise to City Council on issues related to population aging.
 - ii. Complete the co-development and implementation of the City of Vancouver's strategic plans, policies, and protocols to better

- reflect the needs and interests of older persons and elders in collaboration and coordination of partners.
- iii. Identify, collect data, and analyze challenges experienced by the City of Vancouver's aging population to provide evidence-informed recommendations for improvements to City Council.
 - iv. Develop reports and deliver presentations on aging issues for older persons in Vancouver.
 - v. Represent the City of Vancouver at community tables, partner meetings, and stakeholder events related to healthy aging, equity, emergency preparedness, climate change, transportation, food security, housing, homelessness and other city-related programs and services that impact older persons and elders.
 - vi. Act as a resource and staff liaison to guide the work of the City of Vancouver's Seniors' Advisory Committee.
 - vii. Provide training and education on issues related to aging to all municipal employees and elected representatives.
 - viii. Consult and work with community partners in the design and delivery of senior services to benefit from the experience, skills, knowledge, and resources our growing community of older persons and elders have to offer and would be delighted to contribute.
 - ix. Strengthen relationships with provincial governments and agencies, federal government (CMHC, New Horizons, Employment and Social Development Canada) and other Seniors' Planners in Metro Vancouver (currently Richmond and Surrey) in collaboration with the non-profit sector to secure municipal investment in housing for older persons and elders, infrastructure, programs and services.
 - x. Collaborate with community partners to keep abreast of national and international initiatives that have expanded housing options for seniors (e.g. Co-housing, Lifetime Neighbourhoods, Resident-driven senior homes, Apartments for Life, Homeshare, Dementia Villages, Compassionate Communities, Home Modification) including housing for older persons who are homeless and low income renters.

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