



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: January 21, 2025
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: February 5, 2025
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
SUBJECT: Older Persons Strategic Framework and 2025 Early Actions

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve the *Older Persons Strategic Framework* and 2025 Early Actions contained in Appendix A of this report.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back to Council in Q4 2025 with a 2026 implementation plan that identifies timelines and deliverables for next steps.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to submit an application to join the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, and request that the Mayor write a letter in support of this application.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council's approval of the *Older Persons Strategic Framework* ("Framework") which would establish a comprehensive, overarching approach for the City of Vancouver's work to engage and support the aging population.

The Framework will progress Council's priority to ensure that Vancouver is an age-friendly city, through:

- Articulating a shared vision and goals to address the needs of older persons;
- A holistic, collaborative approach across City departments and with external partners; and
- Concrete and implementable annual action plans to achieve the vision and goals.

The Framework is aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly Cities (AFC) Framework and builds upon previous City initiatives focused on the aging population, including the Age-Friendly Action Plan (2013), the Park Board Community Dialogue: Serving Our Seniors Outcomes Report (2015), the Age-Friendly Solutions Lab (2019) and the Seniors Housing Strategy (2024).

Should Council approve the Framework, staff would implement the identified 2025 Early Actions including planned engagement in Q2 2025 to support implementation planning for 2026 and beyond. Staff will return to Council in Q4 2025 with an update on the 2025 Early Actions, and an implementation plan for 2026.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- Vibrant Vancouver: City Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026 ([RTS 15933](#), [October 31, 2023](#))
- Age-Friendly Action Plan ([RTS 9639](#), [June 26, 2013](#))
- Healthy City Strategy ([RTS 10493](#), [October 29, 2014](#))
- Accessibility Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan ([RTS 14734](#), [July 19, 2022](#))
- Seniors Housing Strategy ([RTS 16307](#), [July 23, 2024](#))
- Spaces to Thrive: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2031 ([RTS 14727](#), [December 8, 2021](#))
- Transportation 2040 ([RTS 9315](#), [September 20, 2011](#))

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

The population of Vancouver is aging. As of the 2021 Census, 110,000 Vancouverites are 65 years of age or older, making up 17% of the city's population. This age group grew at five times the rate of the under-65 population from 2016 to 2021. Another 84,000 people, or 13% of the population, are 55 to 64 years of age.

Responding to the needs of this growing population requires a cohesive and strategic City-wide approach to how the City plans and delivers programs, services and infrastructure to ensure that older persons remain connected, active and healthy in their communities. Enabling older persons to age well also requires the commitment and collaboration of the City and many agencies, including not-for-profit organizations, Vancouver Coastal Health and the private sector.

The development of this Framework has also been informed by both prior City efforts and a broad range of interjurisdictional research of approaches to supporting older persons. From 2013-2015, the City had an Age-Friendly Action Plan with more than 60 actions to help make Vancouver a more safe, inclusive and engaging city for seniors. The City has also been recognized as an Age-Friendly BC Community by the Province of BC in 2014, and has recently adopted a Seniors Housing Strategy.

Discussion

Older Persons Strategic Framework and 2025 Early Actions

Staff are seeking Council approval of the *Older Persons Strategic Framework* (“Framework”), as outlined in Appendix A, which will establish a holistic and comprehensive approach to the City of Vancouver’s work in engaging and supporting the aging population.

The Framework is an overarching document that establishes a vision and cohesive direction for how the City of Vancouver will improve the lives of older persons. The Framework identifies key domains of work within the City’s operations and policies, outlines areas for collaboration with external partners, and presents an opportunity to strategically progress Council’s priority to ensure that Vancouver is a city equitable for older persons.

This approach is aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly Cities (AFC) Framework, which is considered the international standard in guiding municipalities to becoming more inclusive and supportive of older persons. The WHO AFC Framework involves applying an aging lens across all facets of a city.



Figure 1. World Health Organization Age-friendly Cities Framework.

The *Older Persons Strategic Framework* envisions Vancouver as a city where older persons are valued, engaged, and supported. To achieve that vision, the Framework will ensure that the City integrates a strategic aging lens across the City’s work, as well as delivers and enables programs, services, facilities, and built environments that are inclusive and supportive of the aging population. Because a municipality does not have jurisdiction over every factor that impacts the lived experiences of older persons, the Framework also emphasizes cross-sectoral collaboration and advocacy to highlight the important role that other agencies and partners play in ensuring that Vancouver becomes and remains a great place to age.

The Framework has six domains, which are framed as goals beginning with “Older persons in Vancouver...”:

1. ... are engaged and included;
2. ... are connected and informed;
3. ... live in a home that supports aging in the right place;
4. ... can get around with dignity;
5. ... have access to spaces and places that meet their needs; and
6. ... are supported by programs and services that enable health and wellbeing.

Each domain is aligned with one or more of the eight domains in the WHO AFC Framework (see Figure 1) and has multiple related strategic objectives. The following table summarizes the areas of focus for the strategic objectives in each domain. The full Framework and strategic objectives can be found in Appendix A.

Domain	Areas of Focus for Strategic Objectives
... are engaged and included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social connections • Civic activities • Volunteering and employment • Ageism
... are connected and informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System navigation • Communication • Education and training • Days of recognition
... live in a home that supports aging in the right place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and related supports
... can get around with dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation services and infrastructure • Wayfinding
... have access to spaces and places that meet their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities • Public realm improvements • Public washrooms • Local businesses
... are supported by programs and services that enable health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs and services through City sites • Community organizations • City grants • Alignment of community and health services • Emergency preparedness

As a part of establishing a comprehensive City-wide approach, the Framework will also include a focus on aligning actions from current City initiatives, including the recently adopted Seniors Housing Strategy, the Accessibility Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan, and the forthcoming refresh of the Healthy City Strategy.

The Framework is built on foundations of diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure that the unique needs of older persons with equity-impacted identities are prioritized, including persons with dementia, Indigenous Elders and older persons from the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and urban Indigenous communities, racialized and immigrant older persons, older persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ older persons. The Framework also recognizes the important role that family and friend caregivers play in the lives of older persons, and the value of intergenerational relationships.

From Framework to Action

The Framework will act as a long-term document guiding the City towards its vision, and how we work to embed considerations related to older persons across the City and our collaborations with external partners. This will be supplemented by annual implementation plans that identify concrete actions that move us further towards that vision. This will allow the City to make meaningful progress towards the vision, while being nimble and responsive to the evolving landscape and opportunities.

Next Steps

Should Council approve the Framework, staff would:

- Implement initiatives in support of the identified 2025 Early Actions, including planned engagement in Q2 2025 to support 2026 implementation plan development; and
- Return to Council in Q4 2025 with a 2026 implementation plan that identifies timelines and deliverables for next steps towards the vision.

The Framework and subsequent implementation will be led and coordinated through the Strategy and Project Support Office in the Office of the City Manager in collaboration with staff from across City and Park Board departments, and community partners. Staff will continue to provide regular updates to the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee, and will ensure that the needs of an aging population are considered holistically.

Joining the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

This report recommends joining the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (“Network”). This Network connects cities, communities and organizations worldwide with the common vision of making their community a great place to grow older. As a response to global population aging and urbanisation, this Network focuses on action at the local level that fosters the full participation of older persons in community. The mission of this Network is to stimulate and enable cities and communities around the world to become increasingly age-friendly by:

- Inspiring change by showing what can be done and how it can be done;
- Connecting cities and communities worldwide to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and experience; and
- Supporting cities and communities to find appropriate innovative and evidence-based solutions.

There are currently more than 1700 cities and communities in 60 countries in this Network,

covering over 330 million people worldwide. More than 100 cities and communities in Canada are part of this Network, including six in BC (Cranbrook, Maple Ridge, Oliver, Saanich, Surrey and West Vancouver).

Membership in the Network is not an accreditation for age-friendliness. Rather, it reflects the commitment of a city or community to listen to the needs of the local aging population, assess and monitor its age-friendliness, and work collaboratively with older persons and across sectors to create age-friendly physical and social environments. Membership is also a commitment to share experience, achievements and lessons learnt with other cities and communities.

To join the Network, a city or community submits an application form that includes a letter from the Mayor. There is no membership fee, but participation in the Network requires a commitment to work towards age-friendliness following the four steps of Engage and Understand, Plan, Act, and Measure, actively participate in the Network, and share and promote the values and principles of the Network:

- Respect for diversity;
- Equity;
- Participation, contributions and rights of older persons;
- Co-design and co-creation;
- Combining both bottom-up and top-down approaches; and
- Life-course approach that encourages intergenerational relations and solidarity.

Should Council direct staff to apply for membership in the Network, the adoption and ongoing implementation of the *Older Persons Strategic Framework* could serve as a commitment to work towards age-friendliness.

Financial Implications

The 2025 Early Actions identified in the *Older Persons Strategic Framework* are funded out of existing departmental budgets in the 2025 Operating Budget, comprised of work programs already underway or planned for 2025.

Staff will return in early Q4 2025 with an update on implementation of 2025 Early Actions and an implementation plan for 2026 actions under the *Older Persons Strategic Framework* for Council's consideration, which will include proposed allocation of existing resources, pending any additional investments that may be approved by Council in the Operating Budgets for 2026 or future years.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A OLDER PERSONS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND 2025 EARLY ACTIONS

The population of Vancouver is aging. As of the 2021 Census, 110,000 Vancouverites are 65 years of age or older, making up 17% of the city's population. This age group grew at five times the rate of the under-65 population from 2016 to 2021. Another 84,000 people, or 13% of the population, are 55 to 64 years of age.

Population aging has important implications for how the City of Vancouver plans and delivers programs, services and infrastructure to ensure that older persons remain connected, active and healthy in their communities. Policy decisions at the municipal level can significantly impact the social determinants of health and other factors that make a city inclusive, accessible and liveable for people of all ages.

Enabling older persons to age well also requires the commitment and collaboration of the City and many agencies, including not-for-profit organizations, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the private sector. Greater coordination and shared accountability are necessary to improve the lives of older persons.

Objective and Approach

The *Older Persons Strategic Framework* ("Framework") represents the City's renewed commitment to the aging population and will guide the efforts of the City and stakeholders to engage and support older persons. This Framework builds upon the achievements of previous and current City plans, strategies and initiatives to guide planning and policy development across departments by taking a comprehensive approach to ensure that Vancouver is city equitable for older persons.

Framework Overview

The vision for the Framework is:

Vancouver is a city where older persons are valued, engaged and supported

By this, we mean that older persons are appreciated, connected and integrated with their community, and empowered to participate in all aspects of City life.

To achieve this vision, this Framework outlines:

- The mission of the City in support of the vision
- Domains with goals and strategic objectives that provide specificity to the vision and frame the development of specific strategies and implementation actions
- Foundational ways of working
- Specific Early Actions the City will implement beginning in 2025

Older Persons Strategic Framework

Vision:	Vancouver is a city where older persons are valued, engaged and supported
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Mission:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We integrate a strategic aging lens in all our work to ensure that older persons can live well in Vancouver We deliver and enable programs, services, facilities and built environments that are inclusive and supportive of older persons to make Vancouver a great place to age We work with partners to become a city equitable for the aging population
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Older persons in Vancouver...					
... are engaged and included	... are connected and informed	... live in a home that supports aging in the right place	... can get around with dignity	... have access to spaces and places that meet their needs	... are supported by programs and services that enable health and wellbeing

Foundations:	Diversity, equity and inclusion	Community connections	Whole City Approach	Cross-sectoral collaboration and advocacy
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Mission

The mission for the Framework is:

- We integrate a strategic aging lens in all our work to ensure that older persons can live well in Vancouver.
- We deliver and enable programs, services, facilities and built environments that are inclusive and supportive of older persons to make Vancouver a great place to age.
- We work with partners to become a city equitable for the aging population.

Domains

The Framework has six domains which provide specificity to the vision and mission. The domains are deliberately framed as goals in person-centred language beginning with “Older persons in Vancouver...”:

1. ... are engaged and included;
2. ... are connected and informed;
3. ... live in a home that supports aging in the right place;
4. ... can get around with dignity;
5. ... have access to spaces and places that meet their needs; and

6. ... are supported by programs and services that enable health and wellbeing.

These domains are aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly Cities (AFC) Framework, which is considered the international “gold standard” to guide municipalities in becoming more inclusive and supportive. This approach is intended to provide consistent and cohesive direction to the City’s ongoing work in response to the aging population. For the Vancouver context, the eight domains of the WHO AFC Framework have been condensed into six.

Foundations

The foundations of this Framework underpin the ways that the City will work to achieve the goals of the domains, and become a city more inclusive for the aging population.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

All the efforts under the Framework will have at their core the tenets of intersectionality and diversity, equity and inclusion to address the broad diversity of the aging population. This work will be inclusive of persons with dementia, Indigenous Elders and older persons including from local Nations and urban Indigenous communities, and older persons with other equity-impacted identities (e.g., racialized and immigrant older persons, older persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ older persons).

Community Connections

This Framework highlights the importance of community connections by recognizing the value and role of family and friend caregivers of older persons. Family and friend caregivers are essential in supporting older adults and ensuring they can participate in civic life. The Framework also recognizes the benefits of intergenerational relationships in helping both older and younger persons connect with, support, and learn from one another.

Whole City Approach

The WHO AFC Framework involves applying an aging lens across all facets of a city. The *Older Persons Strategic Framework* will be implemented through a cross-departmental and collaborative approach to ensure that work considers the holistic experience of older persons.

Cross-sector Collaboration and Advocacy

The municipal government alone cannot make Vancouver a city equitable for the aging population. Older persons interact with many other agencies as part of living in Vancouver, and the City does not have jurisdiction for every facet of daily life that older persons require to live well. Collaboration or partnership with other entities will be essential for Vancouver to become and remain a great place to age, such as:

- Community organizations and private businesses
- Provincial and federal governments, including the BC Seniors Advocate

- Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care
- Metro Vancouver
- TransLink
- Research institutions
- Funders

Collaboration with other municipalities striving to be equitable for the aging population will also be important. Aging is not an opportunity specific to Vancouver, and there is much Vancouver can learn from other cities. Speaking as one voice with other municipalities will also enable greater recognition and support from senior orders of government.

2025 Early Actions

The following tables outline the proposed specific 2025 actions under each of the domains in support of the vision. If approved by Council, staff will implement these actions and carry out engagement to support the development of a 2026 implementation plan.

Domain 1: Older persons in Vancouver... are engaged and included

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	2025 EARLY ACTIONS
<p>A. Social connections help to reduce and prevent isolation and loneliness.</p> <p>B. Participation in elections, public engagements, and other civic activities are supported.</p> <p>C. Volunteer and employment opportunities enable meaningful contributions.</p> <p>D. Ageism is openly recognized and addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to carry out awareness campaigns focused on ageism and older persons [new]

Domain 2: Older persons in Vancouver... are connected and informed

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	2025 EARLY ACTIONS
<p>A. System navigation and information supports overcome digital and connectivity barriers.</p> <p>B. City communication channels follow accessibility best practices.</p> <p>C. Staff are knowledgeable about older persons and how to best interact with them.</p> <p>D. Days of recognition are acknowledged and celebrated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support older persons to overcome digital literacy barriers by enabling digital connection to ensure access to critical services [ongoing] • Update content about programs, services and resources for older persons on the City website to ensure access to accurate information [new] • Celebrate aging and raise awareness of issues impacting older persons by recognizing significant dates [ongoing]

Domain 3: Older persons in Vancouver... live in a home that supports aging in the right place

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	2025 EARLY ACTIONS
<p>A. Sufficient affordable and appropriate housing for older persons exists in all neighbourhoods.</p> <p>B. Homes are safe, designed to accessibility standards and foster connections with neighbours.</p> <p>C. Multi-unit residential buildings with a high proportion of older persons include integrated programs and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue implementation of the Seniors Housing Strategy by carrying out early actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline the development of seniors social housing within neighbourhoods throughout the city through pre-zoning within Vancouver's Social Housing Initiative [new] • Improve the knowledge of older persons who rent and organizations that support them through a renter awareness campaign focused on the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy [ongoing]

Domain 4: Older persons in Vancouver... can get around with dignity

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	2025 EARLY ACTIONS
<p>A. Transportation services facilitate community participation.</p> <p>B. Infrastructure investments and wayfinding enable mobility, access, safety and active transportation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate a strategic aging lens to continue delivering transportation infrastructure and programs, including new and widened sidewalks, sidewalk repairs, curb ramps, traffic signals, bus stops, bike lanes and greenways [ongoing] • Accelerate programs to increase safety for older pedestrians, including more leading pedestrian intervals, flashing beacons and longer pedestrian walk times [ongoing] • Integrate a strategic aging lens in the delivery of new public plazas [ongoing] • Update transportation safety strategy with a focus on people who face higher risk of serious injury or death from incidents involving motor vehicles, including older persons [new]

Domain 5: Older persons in Vancouver... have access to spaces and places that meet their needs

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	2025 EARLY ACTIONS
<p>A. Spaces and facilities for older persons of all abilities are in place around the city.</p> <p>B. Public realm improvements consider the needs of older persons and foster social and community connection for all ages.</p> <p>C. Public washrooms are available and accessible.</p> <p>D. Local businesses are accessible to, and supportive of, older persons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure progress on new spaces for older persons (e.g., 55+ Seniors Centre at Oakridge Civic Centre, Sunset Seniors Centre) [ongoing] • Integrate a strategic aging lens in community and citywide planning (e.g., Villages planning program) [ongoing] • Identify opportunities to support implementation of the Older Persons Strategic Framework in the 2027-2030 Capital Plan [new] • Explore how to better support Vancouver Coastal Health to delivery facilities for older persons [new]

Domain 6: Older persons in Vancouver... are supported by programs and services that enable health and wellbeing

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	2025 EARLY ACTIONS
<p>A. Community-engaged programs and services are enhanced through City sites.</p> <p>B. Community organizations are coordinated and supported to collaborate.</p> <p>C. City grants continue to support community organizations to delivery key programs, services and infrastructure for older persons.</p> <p>D. Community and health services and aligned.</p> <p>E. Supports are in place to prepare for emergencies and climate change impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and convene the Network of Organizations in Vancouver on Aging (NOVA) to encourage coordination and collaboration of community organizations working in aging [new] • Explore the expansion of multi-year funding to select organizations with a mandate to serve older persons [new] • Re-constitute the Vancouver Older Persons Funders Table to better coordinate financial resources with partners [new] • Complete an analysis of current programs and services for older persons at community centres to help identify strengths and gaps [new] • Liaise with Providence Health Care on the launch of the Centre for Healthy Aging at the New St. Paul’s Hospital [new]

Cross-Cutting Actions

While the actions above are aligned with each of the specific domains, the following actions are considered cross-cutting because they cannot be categorized to any single domain.

Ongoing:

- Enhance the Healthy City Strategy to include a life course approach; and
- Maintain ongoing liaison with senior governments on issues of importance to older persons.

New:

- Explore opportunities to discuss aging-related priorities at the Social Issues; Subcommittee of the Metro Vancouver Regional Planning Advisory Committee;
- Work with BC Healthy Communities and potentially the Union of BC Municipalities to activate a network of Age-Friendly BC Communities to learn from one another and support broader advocacy efforts;
- Formalize a cross-departmental approach to support delivery of priorities for the aging population;
- Provide regular updates about progress on the Older Persons Strategic Framework and Early Actions to the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee; and
- Apply to join the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

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