

Hamilton: A City for All Ages Project Update

It has been nearly two years since the Hamilton Council on Aging released its report “Hamilton: A City for All Ages”. Information contained in this 2010 report was generated by older adults in a series of focus groups that were held across the city. It recognizes the efforts made by governments, the non-profit sector and the community in general that make Hamilton age-friendly. It also identifies ninety two recommendations that denote areas for improvements. The age-friendly lens examines housing, transportation, health and community services, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, communication and information, social participation and outdoor spaces and buildings. This vision of an age-friendly city comes from work done by the World Health Organization and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Since that time, the Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) has continued to ask that each of us be conscious of how actions in both our work and personal lives affect or could affect older adults. They have provided examples of the gap between what is and what should be through Walkability Studies, an assessment of the accessibility of grocery stores and pharmacies and other such initiatives. These reports are posted on the HCoA website www.coahamilton.ca.

With the HCoA receiving a second Ontario Trillium Foundation grant, Council President Dr. Margaret Denton initiated conversations with, United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton and Social Planning and Research Council that have led to the coming together of a new collaborative. The Hamilton Age-Friendly Collaborative (HAFC) will be a catalyst for change in expanding and improving the ways in which Hamilton and its communities are age-friendly. The collaborative partners include the United Way of Burlington Hamilton, the Seniors Advisory Committee to City Council, the Social Planning and Research Council, Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, and the Aboriginal Health Centre. Government partners include the City of Hamilton with representatives from Public Health, Recreation, Housing, Human Services and Long-term Care and a provincial representative from Regional Services. The Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) is also a participant. HAFC is looking to engage business partners as the process unfolds.

It is early days still for the Hamilton Age-Friendly Collaborative and the group is in the process of figuring out how we can best achieve our goals and build on what’s already working in this community. With so much happening in Hamilton, the first order of business is to get a solid understanding of what is available to older adults and what is in the works that will or could affect older adults – without duplicating efforts. There will be opportunities for participation from the broader public as a series of subcommittees will be struck over the next year. Stay tuned!

This truly is a community effort that will build momentum and lead to Hamilton truly being a city for all ages.