

# Age-friendly communities



## The issue

- Algoma has a greater proportion of seniors aged 65 years and older (23.7%), compared to the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) region (20.6%) and Ontario (16.7%).<sup>1</sup>
- By 2026, residents aged 65 years and older are projected to represent 30.4% of Algoma's population, and 34.1% in 2036.<sup>1</sup>
- Aging is an economic issue. Policies that strategically address seniors' physical and social environments can be a cost-effective way for municipalities to reduce costs associated with health and social service use, while helping residents stay healthy and active in their communities.
  - This concept is called 'age-friendly' community design.
- Many older adults in Algoma live with one or more chronic conditions, such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and arthritis.<sup>1</sup> However, this does not mean that they cannot enjoy a healthy lifestyle that is rich in social and physical activity. Age-friendly communities can help with this.



## Return on Investment

- Policies, services, and structures that foster age-friendly communities help seniors live safely, enjoy good health, and remain active in their communities.<sup>2</sup>
- Age-friendly communities may positively impact senior health, including conditions such as depression, perceived stress and mental health, overall wellbeing, and physical health.<sup>3</sup> Better health → decreased service use → increased cost savings for municipalities.
- Economic and social benefits of age-friendly communities include: labor force growth, taxes and consumption, transfer of cash and property to younger generations, population retention, social cohesion, and various social and cultural contributions to society.<sup>4</sup>



## Policy options for Municipal Governments

- Prioritize healthy aging in **Official Plans**; e.g., address the following using an age-friendly lens: management of outdoor areas and public buildings, affordable and safe housing, affordable and accessible public transportation, and volunteer and employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup>
  - Age-friendly city indicators have been developed.<sup>5</sup> Indicators help ensure that interventions are comprehensive, measurable, and effective.
- **Zoning bylaws** can allow for mixed and non-traditional housing arrangements to support residents of all ages; e.g., universal design, accessibility units, and multiple housing types within neighbourhoods.<sup>6</sup>
- **Partner** with stakeholders of varying expertise to develop an action plan.<sup>2</sup> Stakeholders may include: seniors, city planners, public health, caregivers, charities, and government service providers.

Interested in building a healthy community? Contact Algoma Public Health at 705-942-4646 ext.3066 or [info@algomapublichealth.com](mailto:info@algomapublichealth.com).

## References

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