



City of New Westminster

Report to Council

To: New Westminster City Council in Regular Council **Meeting Date:** March 9, 2026

From: Jackie Teed, Director, Planning & Development **Report No.:** 2026-101

Re: **The New Westminster Age-Friendly Strategy**

Staff Recommendation

THAT the New Westminster Age-Friendly Strategy, included as Attachment 1 to the report titled “The New Westminster Age-Friendly Strategy” dated March 9, 2026 from the Director, Planning and Development, be endorsed, and that staff be directed to proceed with its implementation.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council’s endorsement of the New Westminster Age-Friendly Strategy as included in Attachment 1.

Background

The City of New Westminster (the City) is committed to supporting its aging population and planning for an age-friendly community. In 2018, the City was officially recognized as an Age-Friendly British Columbia Community. Leading up to this recognition, the City developed two key plans: the *Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan* (2016) and the *Age-Friendly Community Strategy* (2017). The 2017 Strategy focused on addressing both the current and future needs of an aging population, with a vision of an accessible, inclusive and welcoming city where seniors can stay active, connected and lead meaningful lives.

Following the adoption of the 2017 Strategy, staff began to implement its actions; however, the COVID-19 pandemic paused these efforts as staff redirected their attention to addressing the urgent needs of vulnerable residents, including older adults and people living with disabilities and health conditions. Since then, older adults have faced increasing challenges, such as social isolation associated with the pandemic; the impacts of climate change and extreme weather; rising living costs (especially for food and housing); and limited access to supports that promote safe and dignified aging.

In 2024, City Council supported a successful application for funding from the BC Healthy Communities Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program to update the City's 2017 Strategy. This grant offered a timely opportunity to build on the original Strategy, while ensuring that the City's approach remains relevant, coordinated, equitable and responsive to the needs of all older adults in New Westminster.

At the December 2, 2024 Regular Meeting, Council endorsed a work plan to update the City's 2017 Strategy. This report presents the New Westminster Age-Friendly Strategy (the Strategy) for Council's endorsement prior to staff commencing implementation.

Analysis

Demographic Trends

New Westminster's population of older adults is projected to significantly grow at a faster rate than other age groups. The number of residents aged 65 and older is expected to increase from 13,978 in 2024 to 23,693 in 2046, representing a 70% increase compared to a 54% increase across all other age groups. By 2046, older adults are expected to comprise 17% of the city's total population, up from 15% in 2024. The largest cohorts within this population are projected to be residents aged 65 to 69, followed by those aged 75 to 79.

This demographic shift presents both opportunities and challenges when planning for an age-friendly city. Older adults bring valuable knowledge and lived experience that can enrich the broader community. At the same time, this projected growth highlights the need for proactive planning to ensure that civic facilities, infrastructure, programs and services are responsive to the evolving needs of an aging population.

Equity Considerations in Planning for an Aging Population

Older adults in New Westminster are not a homogenous group, and the aging experience varies significantly among individuals. While many will remain active, connected and well supported, others will face barriers to healthy aging, such as cultural and language challenges, isolation, limited mobility, low-income, poor health, and restricted access to services. These factors can affect their ability to meet their basic needs; maintain social connections; and live safely, independently and with dignity.

Given this diversity of experiences, equity-focused planning is essential. Targeted, accessible and inclusive policies, programs and services are required to ensure that all older adults, regardless of their circumstances, are encompassed in the City's updated vision for an age-friendly community.

Discussion

Key Pillars in Updating the Age-Friendly Strategy

The update Strategy is organized around six key pillars that include:

1. An Equity Lens – Applied an age-friendly equity lens across strategic priorities, including community belonging, housing, transportation, and a people-centred economy.
2. Partnerships and Collaboration – Strengthened inter-departmental coordination and worked with key community partners to support shared actions.
3. Inclusive Engagement – Directly engaged older adults with diverse lived experiences, including those facing isolation, poverty and settlement challenges.
4. Learning from Practice – Integrated lessons from recent City-involved initiatives such as the Seniors Housing Collaborative, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s Seniors Housing Stability Solutions Lab, and the Seniors Integrated Supports Pilot.
5. Evidence-Informed Planning – Reviewed current research, government and health authority reports, and explored promising policies and programs that improve quality of life for older adults.
6. Climate and Emergency Readiness – Updated strategies to support vulnerable older adults in responding to and adapting to climate-related emergency events.

Age-Friendly Strategy Working Group

The update began with the formation of an Age-Friendly Strategy Working Group, which brought together staff, older adults with diverse lived experiences, community partners, and external organizations. Community representatives played a key role in supporting outreach and engagement, ensuring that the needs of older adults directly informed action formation. The Working Group identified opportunities for coordinated action, strengthened cross-sector collaboration, and promoted resources to support social connections and well-being for older adults. Honorariums were provided to older adult members to recognize their lived experience and participation on the Working Group.

Inter-departmental Review and Collaboration

The update also included a comprehensive inter-departmental review of the 2017 Strategy, involving all departments that directly influence the experience of older adults. Department representatives, all of which also participated in the Working Group: assessed completed, ongoing and pending action items from 2017; determined which actions to retain, update or remove; and, identified new actions for the Strategy. This process fostered shared ownership of the Strategy and reinforced each department’s role in building an age-friendly city.

Updated Strategy Themes

Building on the key pillars and the insights from the Working Group, and the inter-departmental review, the Strategy reinforces an updated vision of city as a community where older adults feel connected, informed, safe and supported. This vision is anchored in core principles of diversity, equity, reconciliation, and co-production, and grounded in the conviction that all older adults deserve autonomy, dignity, visibility, and a meaningful voice in shaping the decisions that impact their lives. The Strategy also recognizes that different levels of government and diverse service providers play essential roles in cross-sectoral collaboration to coordinate, deliver and/or fund on age-friendly programs and services for older adults.

In the Strategy, the term “older adult” is used instead of “senior” to be more inclusive and to avoid negative stereotypes about aging and dependence. For the purposes of the Strategy, the term older adult refers to people aged 55 and over, recognizing that the experience of aging varies for each individual.

Recommended Actions

The Strategy identifies 59 recommended actions to advance the vision of the city as a community where older adults feel connected, informed, safe and supported. Actions are organized under each vision category and grouped according to the World Health Organization’s age-friendly framework domains, which include:

- Safe – Outdoor spaces, buildings, transportation, and emergency preparedness
- Supported – Community supports (health and food security) and housing
- Connected – Involvement and social participation
- Informed – Communication and information

To support implementation, each recommended action also identifies its intended reach, level of difficulty, and departmental lead. Reach indicates whether an action applies to all older adults or targets those who may face higher risk due to factors such as disability, language barriers, or low-income. Level of difficulty differentiates between actions that are simple and those that are more complex, with simpler actions requiring fewer resources or less time to implement. The departmental lead specifies the City department or division responsible for supporting implementation and for engaging with older adults and community organizations, with assistance from the proposed Age-Friendly Implementation Working Group outlined in the next section.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

The Implementation Matrix

The Strategy applies an equity lens to implementation through a matrix that prioritizes initiatives based on reach and level of difficulty, with an emphasis on supporting older adults most at-risk in the short-term. The matrix identifies four action categories:

1. Easy Wins, which deliver high impact for at-risk older adults and can be implemented quickly using existing resources;
2. Future Successes, which also deliver high impact for at-risk older adults but require greater effort, resources, or approvals and benefit from early scoping and planning;
3. Nurturing Impact, which includes simple actions with broad reach that require sustained attention to achieve equitable outcomes; and,
4. Reviewing Viability, which encompasses complex, broad actions requiring coordinated effort, significant resources, and ongoing monitoring to ensure feasibility, equity, and long-term benefit for older adults.

The Age-Friendly Implementation Working Group

A key step in implementing the Strategy is transitioning the Strategy Update Working Group into a Strategy Implementation Working Group to maintain continuity, leverage established relationships, and efficiently shift from planning to action. The group will bring together City staff, older adults with diverse lived experiences, and community partners to: implement recommended actions; provide expertise to integrate the needs of older adults into planning, policy, programs and services; and identify opportunities for coordinated action on complex challenges.

Financial Implications

To support implementation of the proposed Strategy, \$15,000 has been allocated in the Planning and Development Department's 2026 operating budget. This funding is intended to support the Strategy Implementation Working Group Coordinator and honorariums for older adults with lived experience, should Council endorse the updated Strategy. Staff will also explore grant and partnership opportunities to support specific actions in the Strategy and will seek Council approval if additional funding beyond that allocated is needed. Most actions prioritized for implementation in the first two years are not expected to require additional funding.

Next Steps

Pending endorsement of the Strategy, City staff, in collaboration with the Strategy Implementation Working Group, will develop an annual Action Plan guided by the Implementation Matrix. Actions will be prioritized based on available resources and capacity. Staff will also prepare an annual progress report identifying implementation status, key challenges, and reasons for partial or non-implementation, such as limited resources or difficulty engaging community partners. The report will also inform future updates to the Strategy to address emergent issues.

Inter-departmental Liaison

The Strategy Update and Implementation Working Groups include representatives from multiple City departments and divisions, including Community Services, Engineering, Emergency Management, Parks and Recreation, and Planning and Development. The Strategy was also informed by input from the Community Health Specialist of the Fraser Health Authority, which would continue to participate in the Implementation Working Group.

Attachment

Attachment 1 The New Westminster Age-Friendly Strategy (2026)

Report Approval

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Agreed By

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