

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** June 13, 2022

From: Emilie K. Adin, Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development **File:** 04.0925.03

Item #: 2022-414

Subject: **Council Resolution in Support of the City of New Westminster's Application under the Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to submit an application under the Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program, as outlined in this report, and that the City accept overall grant management of the project and related activities.

PURPOSE

This report is to seek Council direction for staff to submit an application under the Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program, for the proposed project and related activities as outlined in this report, and for the City to accept overall grant management of the project and related activities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 16th 2022, BC Healthy Communities announced a new round of grant funding opportunities under the Age-friendly Communities Grant Program. This grant program provides funding, resources and capacity-building supports to help Indigenous and local governments support older adults to age-in-place, and live active, socially engaged, and independent lives. There are two grant streams under the current grant program: the Planning stream for communities developing Age-Friendly Plans (up to \$25,000); and, the Projects stream for communities to carry out previously identified Age-Friendly Actions (\$15,000). As the City has already developed its Age-Friendly Community Strategy, staff are seeking Council direction to applying for funding under the Project stream.

The COVID 19 pandemic, the heat dome and wildfire season of summer 2021, and the catastrophic flooding that followed, has been a wake-up call for many BC communities. Directly related to aging in place, these events provided evidence that seniors independent living residences, particularly those serving frail and low-income seniors, are particularly vulnerable. One crucial factor has underlined all of these challenges: the more socially isolated the senior residents, the more vulnerable they are in such emergency situations. These events have also highlighted that an Age-Friendly community must foster strong social networks as a vital component for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of senior residents, and has underscored the importance of local collective action to strengthen community connections and resilience.

Recognizing the correlation between emergency preparedness and social connectedness, the City's Community Planning section and Emergency Management Office, along with the Senior Services Society of BC, have identified an interest in piloting the Connect and Prepare approach at BC Housing's Ross Tower building. Ross Tower, which includes 96 units of subsidized housing, serves a highly vulnerable population, including a high proportion of frail and live-alone seniors with observed low levels of social connectedness and interaction. Connect and Prepare presents an innovative approach to building community emergency preparedness and resilience by strengthening social connections between neighbors.

The Connect and Prepare Pilot Project at Ross Tower would meet several domains of an Age-Friendly community, and, as such, would be eligible for funding under the Projects stream of the Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program. If directed by Council, staff would seek the full \$15,000 to support this initiative. The project would introduce innovative strategies to meet climate and emergency management needs for vulnerable seniors in independent living residences. Tenants would be guided to develop their skills to build stronger social networks as a foundation of community resilience, and take collaborative action to prepare for acute emergencies and chronic stresses, especially related to climate change. This project would also pilot an emergent Age-Friendly planning priority for vulnerable seniors that is centred on equity, sustainability, and the creation of multi-sectoral partnerships.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented to Council for consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to submit an application to the Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program as outlined in this report, and that the City accept overall grant management of the project and related activities.
2. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Staff Memo

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst

This report was reviewed by:

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning

This report was approved by:

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Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer