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Family and Community Support Services

CITY OF GRANDE prairie

# AGING WELL TOGETHER

## 2025 Priorities & Goals



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# Executive Summary

In 2024, City Council asked Administration for more information about the needs of older adults and seniors living in Grande Prairie. This launched an initial research and review process that involved learning more about Alberta's age-friendly communities and the Healthy Aging Framework, reviewing action plans from other communities, and compiling a list of the City's current strategies, plans, and programs aimed at making the community more age-friendly and improving the quality of life for all residents.[1]

In January 2024, City Administration launched the Aging Well Together initiative, public engagement sessions and a survey, to gather feedback from residents 55+ on how to make Grande Prairie more age-friendly. The results were shared with Council, who endorsed moving forward with development of the City of Grande Prairie's Aging Well Together Priorities document, a dedicated plan to improve the age-friendliness of Grande Prairie in 2025.

## Demographic Profile

Grande Prairie's median age is currently 34, but our population is aging. From 2016 to 2021, the number of residents aged 65 and older living in Grande Prairie increased by 31.2%. This age group now represents 9.2% of the population, with an additional 10.1% individuals aged 55 to 64. Furthermore, 10.3% of the Indigenous population living in Grande Prairie are 55 years of age or older.[2]

As Alberta's population ages and grows, projections indicate that by 2031, seniors will outnumber children aged 0 to 14. Grande Prairie is expected to follow this trend, though its rapidly growing working population may result in a slightly lower ratio of seniors to other age groups when compared to the provincial average. However, by 2051, seniors could comprise up to 20% of Alberta's population, with the population aged 80 and older increasing from 3% to 7%.[3] The current data and population projections underscore the need to address both the challenges and opportunities of an aging population.

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[1] Please see Appendices A-D.

[2] Statistics Canada, *Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2023), accessed November 21, 2024, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

[3] Government of Alberta, *Population Projects: Alberta and Census Divisions, 2023-2051*, Treasury Board and Finance (July 5, 2023), https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/90a09f08-c52c-43bd-b48a-fda5187273b9/resource/cb65532d-d722-4121-9120-2cf40503ce20/download/tbf-population-projections-2023-2051-alberta-census-divisions.pdf

**Priorities**

1. Accessibility, Mobility, and Connectivity
2. Communication & Technology
3. Affordable Living
4. Social Participation, Recreation, and Wellness
5. Community Supports and Health Services

## 1. Accessibility, Mobility, and Connectivity

Enhancing accessibility, mobility, and connectivity to support residents 55+ as they navigate the community.

**Goals:**

- Develop more outdoor walking groups for the parks and trails, tailored to residents 55+.
- Explore the feasibility of piloting priority parking spaces at City facilities and parks.
- Assess the location of pedestrian crosswalks near seniors' lodges and identify where more benches may be required along walking paths.
- Provide learning opportunities and/or resources for residents to learn about navigating transit apps, planning routes, and applying for accessible transit options.

## 2. Communication & Technology

Improving access to information and technology for residents 55+, helping them stay informed about community services and build digital skills to stay connected and secure.

**Goals:**

- Increase awareness of key communication platforms like AccessGP and the City's Community Event Calendar.
- Promote and encourage participation in digital literacy programs at the Grande Prairie Public Library that support residents 55+ in developing technological skills.
- Collaborate with Seniors Outreach on developing a community newsletter designed specifically for residents 55+.

## 3. Affordable Living

Supporting residents 55+ with affordability by improving food security and raising awareness of resources to ease the cost of living.

**Goals:**

- Raise awareness of City programs that help to improve affordability for residents 55+, such as the Transit Access Program and Recreation Access Program.
- Partner with community organizations to host workshops on benefits and supports for residents 55+.
- Collaborate with community organizations to enhance food and financial security for residents 55+.

## 4. Social Participation, Recreation, and Wellness

Encouraging active lifestyles for residents 55+ with affordable recreation, intergenerational connection, and civic involvement opportunities.

**Goals:**

- Explore opportunities to add more older adult-specific classes or times to seasonal recreation schedules.
- Collaborate with community organizations to build more intergenerational, mentorship, and volunteer programs for residents 55+.
- Engage existing groups, clubs, and networks to gather feedback from residents 55+ in the implementation of the Aging Well Together priorities and goals.

## 5. Community Supports & Health Services

Providing residents 55+ with the support to age in place safely and with dignity, using social prescribing and community partnerships to meet their diverse needs.

**Goals:**

- Develop printed resources on community supports for residents 55+.
- Promote existing non-medical home support services that facilitate aging in place.
- Collaborate with community partners to build a social prescribing system.

# Summary of Goals

### Accessibility, Mobility, & Connectivity

1. Develop more outdoor walking groups for the parks and trails, tailored to residents 55+.
2. Explore the feasibility of piloting priority parking spaces at City facilities and parks.
3. Assess the location of pedestrian crosswalks near seniors' lodges and identify where more benches may be required along walking paths.
4. Provide learning opportunities and/or resources for residents to learn about navigating transit apps, planning routes, and applying for accessible transit options.

### Communication & Technology

5. Increase awareness of key communication platforms like AccessGP and the City's Community Event Calendar.
6. Promote and encourage participation in digital literacy programs at the Grande Prairie Public Library that support residents 55+ in developing technological skills.
7. Collaborate with Seniors Outreach on developing a community newsletter designed specifically for residents 55+.

### Affordable Living

8. Raise awareness of City programs that help to improve affordability for residents 55+, such as the Transit Access Program and Recreation Access Program.
9. Partner with community organizations to host workshops on benefits and supports for residents 55+.
10. Collaborate with community organizations to enhance food and financial security for residents 55+.

### Social Participation, Recreation, and Wellness

11. Explore opportunities to add more older adult-specific classes or times to seasonal recreation schedules.
12. Collaborate with community organizations to build more intergenerational, mentorship, and volunteer programs for residents 55+
13. Engage existing groups, clubs, and networks to gather feedback from residents 55+ in the implementation of the Aging Well Together priorities and goals.

### Community Supports and Health Services

14. Develop printed resources on community supports for residents 55+.
15. Promote existing non-medical home support services that facilitate aging in place.
16. Collaborate with community partners to build a social prescribing system.

## Conclusion

The City of Grande Prairie's Aging Well Together Priorities reflect our dedication to creating an inclusive, supportive, and age-friendly community for residents of all ages. By addressing the priority focus areas identified from community engagement, the plan outlines actionable goals to enhance quality of life and build an age-friendly community. Through collaborative efforts between City departments, community organizations, and residents, the plan prioritizes transparency, sustainability, and adaptability. Addressing these priorities as a community will position Grande Prairie as a leader in supporting residents 55+, enabling them to thrive while aging well together today and well beyond 2025.

# Appendix A: Aging Well Together Timeline



# Appendix B: Age-Friendly Communities

In October 2023, the government of Alberta released updated guidelines for age-friendly communities through the document titled **Building Age-Friendly Communities: A Guide for Local Action**.[4] This guide targets municipalities, offering insights and steps to enhance age-friendliness at the local level. This guide helped to inspire the City's Aging Well Together engagement sessions and this action plan.

Age-friendly communities can be found globally and across Canada and are growing in numbers within Alberta. When building age-friendly communities, there are eight key features that are reviewed for their age-friendliness.

## Key Features of an Age-Friendly Community

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Outdoor spaces and buildings should prioritize accessibility, safety, and maintenance, with well-lit, accessible pathways, prompt snow removal, and convenient public restrooms. Essential services must be easily reachable, and benches placed regularly for community convenience.

2. Transportation

An age-friendly community prioritizes well-maintained, well-lit roads with clear signage, accessible parking, and pedestrian-friendly crossings. Transportation services are reliable, affordable, and accessible, with information readily available to support the mobility needs of seniors and those with disabilities.

3. Housing

An age-friendly community provides affordable housing options near essential services, catering to seniors, people with disabilities, and young families. Supports for aging in place and housing with universal design are prioritized, with accessible financial assistance for home modifications.

4. Social Participation

An age-friendly community offers a variety of accessible, intergenerational events and activities that cater to all ages and abilities. These activities are well-publicized, located in accessible venues, and supported by affordable transportation. Additionally, efforts are made to prevent social isolation through outreach and fostering a culture of inclusion.

[4] Government of Alberta, *Building Age-friendly Communities: A Guide for Local Action* (2023).

5. **Respect and Social Inclusion**

An age-friendly community ensures that all citizens are treated with respect and empathy, offering programs that promote understanding among youth and providing opportunities for everyone to participate in community discussions. Service providers are attentive to diverse needs, and all community activities and events are made accessible to everyone.

6. **Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities**

An age-friendly community encourages diverse civic participation and flexible volunteer opportunities, while employment practices support diversity, flexibility, and ongoing development. Accessible transportation and adaptable workplaces enable all citizens to engage in civic and work activities.

7. **Communication and Information**

An age-friendly community ensures regular, reliable communication about events and programs, accessible to all through various channels in common public spaces. Information is provided in clear, easy-to-read formats, with options for alternate formats and support for those who are socially isolated. Access to literacy programs and public internet services are also prioritized.

8. **Community Support and Health Services**

An age-friendly community offers accessible and affordable health and home support services, including personal care and meal options, with convenient delivery services. Health facilities and housing are located near essential services and accessible by various transportation means. Citizens are well-informed about available services, and emergency planning considers the needs of all residents.

## Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition Award

Alberta's Age-Friendly Recognition Award encourages communities to embrace age-friendly principles by following the process outlined on their website.[5] However, communities have the autonomy to identify priorities and build action plans to address gaps.

[5] Government of Alberta, *Age-Friendly Alberta Recognition Award* (2023), https://www.alberta.ca/age-friendly-alberta-recognition-award

# Appendix C: Healthy Aging Alberta

According to Healthy Aging Alberta, the six determinants of healthy aging are "inter-related categories that identify the things that 'determine' our ability to remain healthy as we age."[6] The City's role is in addressing the six determinants of healthy aging is to collaborate with community-based organizations to ensure robust support systems are available for residents as they age.

## The Six Determinants of Health Aging

1. **Physical and Mental Health**

Staying physically and mentally healthy can help delay aging-related issues and prevent chronic diseases. Keeping your brain and mental health strong can reduce memory loss and improve overall quality of life. Regular exercise also helps maintain independence.

2. **Social Environment and Engagement**

Having supportive social connections, continuing to learn, taking on leadership roles, and enjoying activities with peers are important for staying healthy as people age. These factors can help prevent loneliness and social isolation, which can greatly increase the risk of early death.

3. **Social Support**

Having access to social support during times of crisis, change, or grief can reduce the risk of illness and death, while also helping to ease emotional and mental distress.

4. **Personal Wellbeing**

Being able to access resources to meet physical and emotional needs, especially during tough times, helps people cope better, build resilience, and improve their quality of life.

5. **Physical Environment**

Safe housing, home support services, and affordable, easy-to-access transportation are important factors in helping older adults stay independent.

6. **Safety and Security**

[6] Healthy Aging Alberta, *An Introduction to the Healthy Aging Framework* (April 2023).

Having access to resources and information that protect against financial insecurity, abuse, and neglect improves health, wellbeing, and quality of life, while reducing the risk of disability and early death.

# Appendix D: Policy Landscape

The City of Grande Prairie has many plans and strategies in place that outline goals intended to enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages. Improving the age-friendliness of Grande Prairie connects with many existing statutes, master plans, and City documents, including, but not limited to, the following:

### 1. Council's Strategic Priorities[7]

Council approved the City's **Strategic Plan 2022-2025** on May 2, 2022, to guide decisions throughout their term. The primary focus is on enhancing Quality of Life for residents of all ages, ensuring Grande Prairie is a place where residents "want to live, learn, work, and play."

### 2. The Municipal Development Plan (Bylaw C-1462)[8]

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a key long-term strategic document required by law that guides land use and development in Grande Prairie. Adopted by City Council as a bylaw, it shapes the city's future growth, promoting orderly and beneficial development while balancing social, environmental, and economic needs.

The MDP provides direction on land use, transportation, and municipal services, and ensures consistency with other statutory plans. It aims to maintain a high quality of life and guides development over the span of 20-25 years, with periodic updates.

### 3. Social Sustainability Framework 2018: A Map for the Road Ahead[9]

The Framework is designed to act as the guiding policy document for the City of Grande Prairie's Community Social Development department. It is designed to help align investment priorities with community values and evidence-based best practice and reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who live in Grande Prairie.

### 4. FCSS Funding Framework: Investing in Social Inclusion, 2023-2026[10]

The City of Grande Prairie has partnered with the Government of Alberta to deliver the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program since 1966-67. FCSS is an 80/20 funding partnership focused on prevention-based social initiatives to enhance community well-being. Administered by the Housing & Community

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[7] City of Grande Prairie, *Strategic Plan 2022-2025*.

[8] City of Grande Prairie, *Municipal Development Plan, Bylaw C-1462* (2024), https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2024-01/bc%201462%20MDP%20for%20Web%20with%20Maps.pdf

[9] City of Grande Prairie, *Social Sustainability Framework 2018: A Map for the Road Ahead* (2018), https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2022-01/social_sustainability_framework_2018_full_version.pdf

[10] City of Grande Prairie, *FCSS Funding Framework: Investing in Social Inclusion, 2023-2026* (2023), https://issuu.com/cityofgp/docs/fcss_funding_framework_-_web

Development department, FCSS fundings helps individuals and families build coping skills, foster healthy relationships, and engage in the community. Housing & Community Development regularly collaborates with stakeholders to strengthen the social safety net and better support those in need.

### 5. Public Engagement Framework[11]

The Public Engagement Framework outlines how the City of Grande Prairie fosters community involvement through public engagement initiatives. The framework is designed to ensure transparent, inclusive, and effective communication between the City and its residents.

### 6. Grande Prairie Transportation Master Plan[12]

The Grande Prairie Transportation Master Plan provides an overview of the city's transportation system and suggests a list of priority improvements for infrastructure, programs, and policies. These goals aim to ensure the system grows safely and meets the needs of the city as it expands.

### 7. Recreation & Culture Strategy[13]

The City of Grande Prairie Recreation and Culture Strategy provides a 12-year plan for future investments in facilities, services, and programs. It sets long-term priorities aligned with the City's capital plans and guides service delivery and partnerships to meet residents' needs. With Council's support, the strategy requires detailed planning and collaboration with community partners, with key decisions to be made based on staff reports and plans.

### 8. Indigenous Relations Framework[14]

Grande Prairie is a rapidly growing community known for its rich history, culture, and resources. The City is committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, and this framework outlines ways to promote equity and collaboration for both urban and non-urban Indigenous people.

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[11] City of Grande Prairie, *Public Engagement Framework* (April 2024), https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/docs/communications/Public%20Engagement%20Framework.pdf

[12] City of Grande Prairie, *Grande Prairie Transportation Master Plan* (April 2020), https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2022-01/transportation_master_plan_2020.pdf

[13] City of Grande Prairie, *Recreation & Culture Strategy* (January 2023), https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024-04-24%20Grande%20Prairie%20Strategy-SM.pdf

[14] City of Grande Prairie, *Indigenous Relations Framework* (August 2023), https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/Indigenous%20Relations%20Framework%202023.pdf

## Appendix E: What We Heard: Summary




The Aging Well Together survey and open house sessions launched in January and February 2024 aimed to identify the needs of older adults and seniors in Grande Prairie by engaging residents 55+, along with community organizations and service providers. Through public open house sessions and a comprehensive survey, the initiative focused on the overarching question "**how can we make our community more age-friendly?**".

Discussions held at the engagement sessions, guided by the Building Age-Friendly Communities framework, centered on key areas such as accessibility, mobility, communication, the cost of living, social inclusion, and community supports.

Furthermore, the Aging Well Together survey, with 434 respondents, provided valuable insights into the challenges and needs of the aging population in Grande Prairie.

The full **Aging Well Together: What We Heard** report can be found on the City's website.[15]

[15] City of Grande Prairie, *Aging Well Together: What We Heard.*

# Appendix F: References


City of Grande Prairie. *Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030* (Draft). https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2023-08/Grande%20Prairie%20Affordable%20Housing%20Strategy%20-%20Nov%2022%202019%20v1.1.pdf

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