CITY OF MERRITT | 2016

# Our Merritt: Age-Friendly Action Plan

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to motivate cities to ensure they are offering supportive and empowering living environments for their aging populations, the World Health Organization (WHO) published *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide.* The WHO specifies that an age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of aging residents with varying needs and capabilities. Making cities more age-friendly is a necessary response to help promote the well-being and contributions of aging urban residents and to keep cities thriving. It encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security, in order to enhance quality of life as people age.

Currently, Merritt's own population of aging residents accounts for more than one third of the total population. As outlined in the City of Merritt's Official Community Plan, 13% growth is projected for residents 65 years and older in the coming years. As such, the City has been keenly aware of the need for proactive measures to effectively address and respond to the changing and diversifying population. With the development of the Age-Friendly Action Plan, Merritt will be more equipped to respond to the needs of an aging population in terms of housing, health care, accessibility and community services and will continue to provide a healthy, attractive and safe environment for all age groups.

The City of Merritt provided opportunities for community residents to be engaged and welcomed their opinion throughout the age-friendly planning process. Public consultation took place from June to September 2015; including a community assessment survey (distributed online and by hardcopy); seniors focus group, which described the advantages and barriers aging residents experience living in Merritt; and an open house, which provided residents the opportunity to interact with fellow community members and give valuable input on the Action Plan and its goals. In addition, input was also collected from multiple agencies and organizations as well as from City staff and the Age-Friendly Advisory Group.

The following Age-Friendly Action Plan details the City of Merritt's current conditions, as evaluated by the WHO Age-Friendly Community Framework, and identifies future action and implementation recommendations in order to effectively respond to the needs of the aging population. In addition, it also provides concise indicators in order to evaluate the success of the plan. This plan is intended to be a 'living document' and will continue to be evaluated and updated to ensure it remains relevant for the residents of Merritt.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was prepared for all existing and future residents of Merritt.

We would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to the residents of the community for their support, interest and contributions to making Merritt an Age-Friendly Community. We would also like to thank the members of the Age-Friendly Advisory Group and Seniors Focus Group participants. Without the efforts of these individuals this Action Plan would not be possible.

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*Interior Health Authority*
*Merritt ASK Wellness Society*
*Merritt and District Chamber of Commerce*
*Merritt Senior Citizens Association*
*Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure*
*Nicola Tribal Association*
*Nicola Valley Institute of Technology*
*Nicola Valley Senior Housing Society*
*Rebekah Lodge #33*
*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*
*The Florentine Retirement Community*
*Thompson-Nicola Regional District*

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The City of Merritt would also like to thank the Merritt Herald for contributing photos to the document.

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# 1.0 PART ONE: PROJECT BACKGROUND

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is presently in the midst of a significant shift in its demographic makeup, with the proportion of individuals over 60 years of age growing faster than any other age group[1]. In certain developed countries the number of older people is predicted to exceed the number of children[2]. This is of specific relevance to Canada as it was recently estimated that, for the first time, the number of persons aged 65 years or older exceeded the number of children aged 0 to 14 years[3]. Largely due to the aging of baby boomers and extensions in life expectancy, the number of seniors in Canada could double over the next 25 years[4].

The overall aging of the population presents a wide array of both opportunities and challenges to the communities that house them. In part due to the World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Cities Initiative, these communities are beginning to understand that seniors are not all identical, but are a diverse group with diverse lifestyles, incomes, health statuses and needs[5]. Launched in 2006, this initiative has helped to draw attention to the needs of seniors and what can be done at the community level to improve overall older adults' quality of life.

The City of Merritt recognizes that as its residents age, it is becoming increasingly more important to address the needs and challenges facing its aging population. This includes tackling issues such as housing, health care, accessibility and community services. Presently, the City is home to over 1,365 aging adults and growing, accounting for 19.2% of the population. In an effort to respond proactively to this aging population, the City of Merritt is taking the steps to ensure that structures, programs and services are in place to position itself as an age-friendly community.

*Our Merritt: Age-Friendly Action Plan* provides an in-depth assessment of what it is presently like to age within the City of Merritt. The purpose of this document is to not only provide the reader with insight into Merritt's current age-friendly practices, but to provide goals and direction for its age-friendly future. The action plan also identifies specific actions and recommendations that can be implemented to ensure that Merritt's age-friendly goals are met.

[1] World Health Organization, 2002. Active Aging: A Policy Framework
[2] United Nations, 2002. Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
[3] Statistics Canada, 2015. Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors 2013-2014.
[4] National Seniors Council, 2014.Report on the Isolation of Seniors.
[5] Health Canada, 1998.Principles of the National Framework on Aging: A Policy Guide.

## 1.2 AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES: WHAT ARE THEY?

With much of the worlds' population growing older, the World Health Organization (WHO) has stressed the importance of building age-friendly cities and promoting Active Aging in communities. As a concept, Active Aging refers to the capacity for individuals to continue to participate fully in their communities throughout all stages of life. It is influenced by such factors as economic, social, physical and health services[6]. In recognition of this, the WHO established the Age-Friendly Cities Initiative which encourages municipalities to enhance and improve their services, structures, programs and built environments for older populations. Through this initiative, the Age-Friendly Cities Framework was established. This framework (which is discussed at length in **Section 1.4**) has helped many municipalities to assess their own age-friendliness by examining elements such as transportation, housing and community services.

At its core, an age-friendly city is one that ensures aging residents are supported, respected and encouraged to participate in community life. For example, in an age-friendly city, public buildings have accessible entry-ways including push-button accesses and level surfaces. Aging residents have strong social networks and have the ability to participate in a variety of affordable and inclusive community programs. In an age-friendly city, aging residents have a range of affordable transportation options which could include a network of trusted volunteer drivers or a safe and efficient public transit system. An age-friendly city provides security for its aging residents. In turn, it will also provide the same support and encouragement to all residents, regardless of age. Improvements made to a community to benefit seniors, will have the same benefits for young families and individuals with disabilities.

***"Improvements made to a community to benefit seniors, will have the same benefits for young families and individuals with disabilities."***

With the population of Merritt continuing to age, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure that the city is well-equipped to provide a safe, secure and inclusive environment. The following page offers a glimpse into the current demographic make-up of Merritt and demonstrates the need to be better prepared for the future.

### *What is Active Aging?*

*"Active aging is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age."*

- World Health Organization

Active aging allows people to realize their potential for physical, social and mental well-being throughout their life course and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capacities, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they require assistance.

### *What is an Age-Friendly City?*

An Age-Friendly City encourages active aging by ensuring that appropriate services and programs are in place to help older adults live their life to its fullest potential. This can include items such as overall building accessibility, housing affordability or access to adequate healthcare. Essentially, an Age-Friendly City ensures that its aging residents, regardless of ability, need or capacity, are included in all aspects of community life and are recognized for the valuable contributions they make.

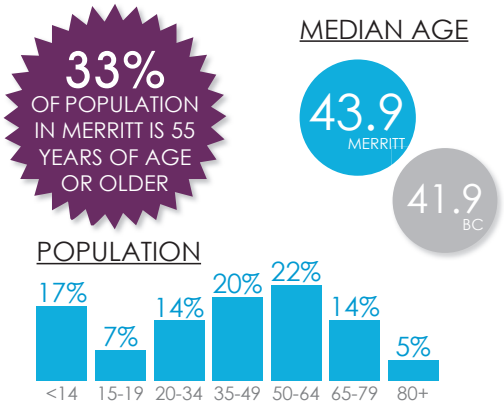
[6] World Health Organization, 2002. Active Aging: A Policy Framework

## 1.3 COMMUNITY PROFILE

In an effort to assess what it is like to live in Merritt as an aging resident, it is important to understand the current characteristics of Merritt and the people that reside within the City. As such, a detailed examination of current demographics was undertaken. In addition to these population demographics, a scan of community services available to aging residents was undertaken through the existing conditions assessment. The information learned from the existing conditions assessment identified the types of services available to aging residents in Merritt and potential gaps in services and programs. This information can be found in **Appendix A**.

### POPULATION

The Province of British Columbia has a higher proportion of aging residents than other areas of the country. A portion of this population can be found in smaller, more rural cities. Presently there are an estimated 1,365 residents are over the age of 65 residing in Merritt. This accounts for 19.2% of the total population (7,100 as of 2011). Additionally, when compared to the provincial average individuals over the age of 65 (15.7%), Merritt has a higher proportion of senior residents.

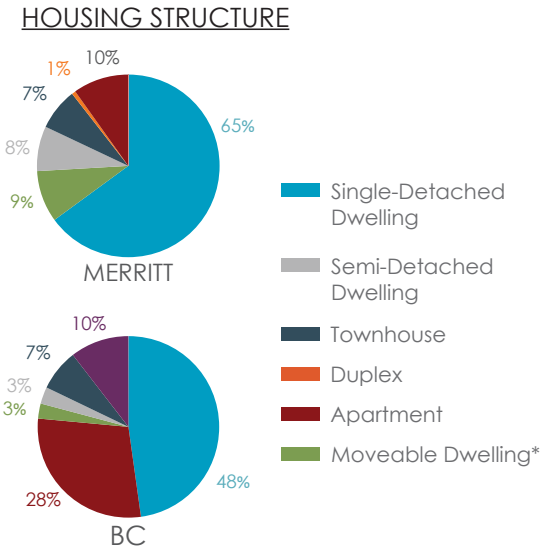



### SOCIAL ISOLATION

Among these aging residents living in Merritt, approximately 27.2% are living alone. This statistic is important to bring attention to as it is a factor leading to risk of social isolation; that is, seniors experiencing low quantity and quality of contact with others. The residents who experience social isolation are at risk for higher levels of depression and suicide ideation. Additionally, social isolation can lead to an increased risk of dementia and decreased physical well-being, and is linked to shorter life spans[7].

### HOUSING + ECONOMICS

The city consists primarily of single-detached homes (65%), with opportunities for aging residents to downsize into apartments, townhouses and duplexes. The median household income of all residents in Merritt is $59,769 with 70% of residents owning their home. Related to this, approximately 13% of residents are spending more than 30% of their income on the cost of shelter, which is an indicator used to identify housing affordability.




[7] The National Seniors Council, 2014. Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors 2013-2014.
Community statistics from Statistics Canada Census of Canada Profiles 2006 and 2011.
*The Statistics Canada definition of Moveable Dwelling includes mobile homes and other moveable dwellings such as houseboats

## 1.4 AGE-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

In response to changing demographics and to assist communities with the creation of enhanced, livable environments for residents of all ages, the World Health Organization launched its Global Age-Friendly Cities Framework. The framework is used to encourage municipalities to become more age-friendly by examining the community through the eyes of its aging residents to uncover areas of opportunity and improvement[8]. The framework highlights eight interconnected elements that influence active aging. These elements include:

### OUTDOOR SPACES + BUILDINGS

The condition, quality and design of the physical environment including parks, sidewalks and buildings, have a significant influence on the mobility, independence and quality of life of aging residents.

### TRANSPORTATION

As people age, there is a tendency to rely more on public transportation. The availability of accessible transportation options aids in the ability of aging residents to participate in the community and increases access to community and health services.

### HOUSING

Appropriate housing structure, location, design and a wide variety of available housing choices can have a significant impact on the independence of aging residents. Appropriate housing can allow people to age in place comfortably within the community.

### SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

The ability and opportunity to actively participate in social, cultural and recreational pursuits has a positive influence on the physical and mental well-being of aging residents.

[8] World Health Organization, 2007. Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide

## COMMUNICATION + INFORMATION

Access to and the wide distribution of clear, relevant information is essential for aging residents to be able to maintain strong social ties and community connections.

## RESPECT + SOCIAL INCLUSION

Aging residents should continue to be respected for the roles and contributions to the community. The provision of outreach to aging residents and opportunities to participate in community life can help to mitigate isolation.

## CIVIC PARTICIPATION + EMPLOYMENT

Aging residents offer a variety of skills, knowledge and experiences that can provide benefits to the community. Aging residents should be able to contribute to their communities through paid and unpaid employment for as long as they would like to or are able to do so.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORTS + HEALTH SERVICES

In order for aging residents to successfully age in place, the community should offer sufficient good quality and accessible healthcare and community programs and services. Doing this will allow residents in the community to receive appropriate care.

# 2.0 PART TWO: APPROACH, VISION + DIRECTION

## 2.1 PROJECT APPROACH

The *Our Merritt: Age-Friendly Action Plan* was developed using a five-phase approach. This included a comprehensive community review and one-day walkabout. This was accompanied by an existing conditions assessment, in which the physical conditions of Merritt's built environment were assessed, based on the age-friendly checklist and best practices. Additionally, there was regular communication with the Age-Friendly Advisory Group, a comprehensive public engagement strategy, and visioning session (**Figure 2.1**). The comprehensive approach taken to complete the action plan helped to ensure that a thorough examination of the community was undertaken. A major component of the plan process was community consultation. Without the insights and learned knowledge from local area residents, the plan would not be possible. This section provides more information regarding details of the public engagement strategy, which included the establishment of an Age-Friendly Advisory Group, a community survey, a seniors focus group and a community open house. For more details on the public engagement process, see **Appendix B**.

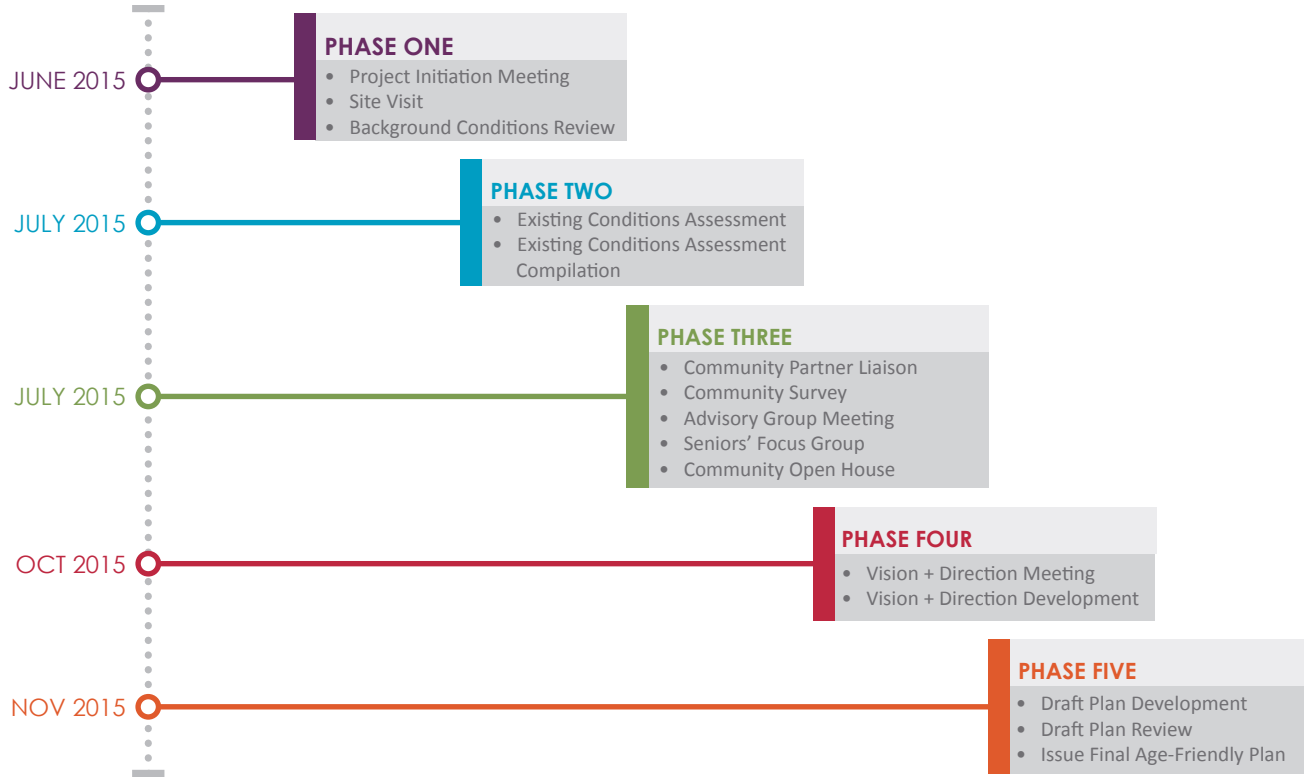



Figure 2.1: Project Timeline

## Age-Friendly Advisory Group

The intent of the formation of the Merritt Age-Friendly Advisory Group was to aid in the development of the Age-Friendly Action Plan by raising public awareness and interest in the establishment of an age-friendly community. Advisory Group members were strategically selected as a means to achieve a broad spectrum of ideas, knowledge and experience as it related to aging in Merritt. Members ranged from BC Transit employees and healthcare professionals to Seniors Association coordinator and long-term residents. Once established, the Age-Friendly Advisory Group was tasked with completing an assessment of the age-friendly conditions within Merritt as well as reaching out to the broader community to increase awareness regarding the project. The members of the Age-Friendly Advisory Group were a crucial avenue for other members of the community to provide comments to or receive feedback about the plan process.

## Community Survey

The first element of wider public engagement that was used was the community survey. Launched in July 2015, the online community survey was intended to reach a wide segment of the city's population. The survey was approached using the WHO Elements of Age-Friendly Cities and provided residents the opportunity to voice their opinion on what Merritt is currently doing well in terms of age-friendliness, and provide feedback on what elements may need improvement. The community survey was highly successful with the amount of resident responses far surpassing expected participation rates. The amount of feedback gathered from the community helped to attain a clearer view on the needs of aging residents within Merritt.

## Seniors Focus Group

A seniors focus group was organized to attain more individualized feedback regarding life as a senior or a caregiver to seniors within the community. The focus group was held at the Merritt Seniors' Centre, and focused on obtaining information and feedback based on the fundamental WHO Elements of Age-Friendly Cities. Spanning two hours, the focus group showcased meaningful conversations about what it is like to age in Merritt. The insights provided during this session proved to be highly valuable for the development of the Action Plan.

*Discussion at the Community Open House*

## Community Open House

In September 2015, the City of Merritt held a community open house with the purpose of increasing awareness of the project and communicating the importance of offering a community accessible to all ages. The open house also provided an additional opportunity for residents to provide feedback on the project and give further insight into their experiences in Merritt. The open house offered a variety of fun and interactive activities including a community mapping exercise which drew attention to age-friendly assets in Merritt as well as locations that could be improved. The responses and feedback gained from the activities helped to form the vision and direction for the project.

*Open House Display Panels*

## 2.2 VISION + DIRECTION

### Vision

Visions help provide direction, purpose and a collective ideal which the community works collaboratively to achieve. The valued comments, ideas and feedback received from the community through all avenues of public engagement were the basis in which the vision and direction of the Age-Friendly Action Plan were established. Informed by the feedback gathered from local residents, City staff and the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee worked collaboratively to form a vision for an age-friendly future in Merritt.

*"Our vision for Merritt is to be an age-friendly community in which residents of all ages, cultures and backgrounds feel welcomed and recognized for their contributions to the city and are encouraged to lead active, safe and enriched lives. The City of Merritt will ensure that the community remains an age-friendly place to live by continuing to nurture strong social connections; foster inter-generational inclusion and respect; ensure safe and accessible environments; and expand important programs and services for older adults."*

### Goals

Goals act as building blocks, forming part of the overall vision for a community. They provide clarity as to the steps that will be taken to achieve the vision. The City of Merritt has established a set of clearly identified goals that will keep the city and its residents focused on achieving its collective vision for an Age-Friendly Merritt. The age-friendly goals for the City of Merritt are as follows:

1. ***Sidewalks, pathways and pedestrian crossings will be safe and accessible for all residents:*** The community identified areas within the city that impeded mobility (i.e. pedestrian crossings along Nicola Avenue).

2. ***Local businesses respect aging residents and accommodate for their distinct needs:*** There are many existing buildings that do not meet accessibility standards (i.e. push-button accesses).

3. ***Aging residents can easily access programs and services both locally and regionally using safe and reliable transportation options:*** The community identified difficulties when using public transportation (i.e. limited regional service).

4. ***Residents of all ages will have access to affordable and diverse housing options:*** The community identified a need for more housing options as they age (i.e. seniors-specific housing facilities).

5 ***Home maintenance services and renovation options are affordable and available to aging residents:*** The community expressed the desire to better age in place (i.e. home modification services).

6 ***Local events and activities will be affordable and accessible to all residents:*** This will help individuals that are unable to participate in community activities due to financial stress or inaccessible venue locations (i.e. lack of voluntary transportation services).

7 ***Outreach will be available to older residents at risk of social isolation:*** There are members of the community that do not have strong social networks or rarely participate in community life.

8 ***Intergenerational programming will be encouraged and promoted:*** The community welcomes increased opportunity for more integration and interaction between residents of all ages.

9 ***Learning opportunities will be available to all residents:*** Aging residents would like to have access to a wider variety of educational programming (i.e. computer literacy programs).

10 ***The City of Merritt will provide clear and transparent information to aging residents of the community:*** Aging residents were unaware of some community services and seniors-specific programming available to them.

11 ***Aging residents will have the opportunity to obtain meaningful employment:*** There are many aging residents that would like to continue to work but are unable to find employment options that fit with their post-retirement lifestyle (i.e. flexible part-time employment).

12 ***Aging residents have access to adequate community services, programs and healthcare:*** The community identified a need for more information regarding services available to them as well as access to existing services (i.e. increased regional transportation services).

# 3.0 PART THREE: AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN

## 3.1 PLAN STRUCTURE

*Our Merritt* has been informed by background research, best practices in age-friendly planning and, most importantly, the comments and feedback gathered from local residents through the community engagement process. The information and knowledge collected helped to develop and refine specific recommendations and actions that can be used to achieve the vision and goals set forth in this plan. This action plan is structured around the eight age-friendly elements as identified within the WHO Framework for Age-Friendly Cities. The elements include Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Transportation; Housing; Social Participation; Respect and Social Inclusion; Communication and Information; Civic Participation and Employment; and Community Support and Health Services.

Each of the Age-Friendly elements are presented using the following format:

Summary of Element - The summary will provide a brief introduction to the element (ex: transportation) and its significance to promoting an age-friendliness for the residents of Merritt as well as outline features of the community that were examined as part of the assessment process.

Existing Age-Friendly Assets - This section summarizes the programs, services and features that are currently offered to Merritt's older population.

Potential Improvement Areas - This section details the common issues and concerns raised by residents through the public engagement process.

Recommended Actions
The Implementation Plan (see **Section 4.0**) incorporates the goals that were formed as a direct result of the public engagement process into a series of achievable actions. These recommended actions have been outlined in **Appendix D**. The recommended actions provide options for the City in their effort to reach their age-friendly goals.

# OUTDOOR SPACES + BUILDINGS

*The condition, quality and design of the physical environment including parks, sidewalks and buildings, have a significant influence on the mobility, independence and quality of life of aging residents.*

Accessible and safe public spaces and buildings can have a positive impact on aging residents' health and quality of life by allowing all residents to move freely about the community. As such, Merritt's physical environment can have a significant influence on the ability of aging residents to fully participate in community life. Are Merritt's sidewalks and pathways well maintained and free from obstructions? Do park spaces such as Central Park or Rotary Park provide adequate shelter and seating? Do pedestrians feel safe using Merritt's crosswalks? Are City buildings designed to be accessible to all residents? These questions and many more were considered when assessing the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- There are numerous open spaces and parks, both programmed and un-programmed, that are assets to the community as they provide opportunity for social and recreational activities.
- There are a sufficient number of benches and rest areas located in the downtown core available to aging residents who may need to take a break while going about their day.
- Streetscape improvements, such as curb extensions and new curb ramps, have been made to downtown streets including Quilchena Avenue and Garcia Street. These improvements have enhanced accessibility by shortening crossing distances across roadways and creating level curb ramps for easier use by pedestrians and individuals using wheelchairs.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Pedestrian safety was perceived as an issue with many residents indicating feeling unsafe crossing roadways such as Nicola Avenue and Voght Street (i.e. crossing times are too short, pedestrians need to be more visible).
- Residents identified pathways and sidewalks that presented challenges to mobility, as such, Merritt should ensure barrier-free public walkways (i.e. widened sidewalks, improved maintenance and level surfaces). Following a review by the Project Team, suggested areas of enhancement have been identified in **Appendix C**.
- Access to public washrooms becomes more important as you age, therefore, an increased number of safe and accessible public washrooms should be located within the city to allow for greater participation in local events.
- While the downtown core has numerous places for aging residents to stop and rest, residents identified a need for an increased number of benches and rest areas in the surrounding community.

- Snow removal assistance programs are needed as not all residents feel capable of clearing snow from walkways and driveways, leading to the dangerous buildup of snow and ice in winter months.
- Renovations are needed for local buildings as not all business entrances are accessible to aging residents or residents with mobility challenges (i.e. automatic door openers, even floor surfaces, wide doorways).
- To allow for more residents to take part in local events and to protect aging residents on hot days, shaded areas should be created in Spirit Square.
- Downtown economic development should be emphasized as most businesses close in the early evening (i.e. after 6pm) leading to less pedestrian traffic during the evening and perceived personal safety issues.

# TRANSPORTATION

*As people age, there is a tendency to rely more on public transportation. The availability of accessible transportation options aids in the ability of aging residents to participate in the community and increases access to community and health services.*

The ability of aging residents to travel within their community can influence their level of community participation. Therefore, it is important to ensure that all residents within Merritt have sufficient access to safe, reliable and affordable public transportation options. Are bus stops conveniently located and accessible? Do local bus services offer priority seating for seniors? Do bus services run on time? Can aging residents get to appointments in larger centres, such as Kamloops or Kelowna? These questions, and many more, were considered when assessing Transportation in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- There are local and affordable transit routes offered by BC Transit that can also accommodate motorized mobility scooters.
- BC Transit staff are friendly, helpful and respectful of all passengers, regardless of age.
- There is a weekly regional transportation service that is available for residents (i.e. for out of town appointments, to visit family, etc.).
- The City has worked to create multi-use trails, such as the recently completed Voght Street corridor, to provide safe opportunities for active transportation (i.e. cycling and walking).
- There are numerous pathways and trails within the City offering active transportation routes as well as recreational opportunities.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- In order to complete daily errands and stay connected, residents with mobility issues identified a need for a specialized transportation service within Merritt as BC Transit does not offer this service (i.e. HandyDART) within the city at this time.
- Aging residents expressed a desire for more public transportation options, as such, increased BC Transit servicing (i.e. Sunday Service) would be beneficial.
- All local bus stops should follow accessibility standards (i.e. benches, sheltered areas, etc.) as residents voiced concern over safety and ease of use of public transit for aging residents and those with mobility issues.
- Many aging residents travel outside the community for medical appointments, therefore regional transportation services should be offered on a more regular basis to allow for greater mobility for aging residents.
- Availability of affordable transportation services should be increased to provide affordable and safe transportation options for aging residents who are no longer able to drive. Some residents felt limited to the services they could use due to not having a car, unable to use public transit, and being reliant on others.

# HOUSING

*Appropriate housing structure, location, design and a wide variety of available housing choices can have a significant impact on the independence of aging residents. Proper housing can allow people to age-in-place comfortably within the community.*

Access to adequate and safe forms of housing is vital to all residents' overall health and well-being. As residents continue to age, their housing needs change. To accommodate for these changing needs, Merritt must continue to consider critical elements such as affordability, accessibility, location and design. Are there affordable home maintenance services available to aging residents? Does Merritt offer both existing residents and potential residents sufficient choice in housing style? Are dedicated seniors housing units, such as the Florentine or Nicola Meadows, located in close proximity to community services? These questions and many more were considered when assessing Housing in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- A variety of residential housing choices and styles are located near community services, shops and recreational facilities.
- The existing zoning bylaw accommodates both secondary suites and detached secondary suites, which can help to make housing more affordable or allow for live in assistance where needed.
- The City of Merritt Official Community Plan encourages the development of appropriate housing designed for aging residents.
- Government-subsidized/assisted living options, such as the Florentine and Nicola Meadows, exist within the city.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Many residents expressed the desire to age-in-place, therefore there is a need for more affordable home modification and general maintenance services (i.e. widened entryways, hand rail installation, modified cabinet heights, etc.) to help them stay as independent as possible within their existing homes.
- Housing costs for aging residents often exceed the standard measure of affordability (30% of income spent on housing costs), as such, Merritt should continue to examine ways to increase the amount of affordable housing units.
- Aging residents who can no longer stay within their own homes or may need more assistance, expressed a desire for more accessible housing and rental options specific to seniors.
- Waiting lists for retirement housing can be restrictive and can result in a need to relocate outside of Merritt, as such, the development of more retirement housing units should be promoted.

# SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

*The ability and opportunity to actively participate in social, cultural and recreational pursuits have a positive influence on the physical and mental well-being of aging residents.*

Social participation includes the ability of residents to get involved, stay active and take part in all that community life has to offer. Active participation by seniors not only benefits the individual, but provides significant benefits to the community as a whole. As such, Merritt must examine features such as affordability, variety and barriers to participation. Are event venues, such as the Civic Centre or the Nicola Memorial Arena, conveniently located and accessible? Are events and activities in Merritt affordable and inclusive of all residents? Is there a wide variety of events, activities and programs for residents to participate in? These questions and many more were considered when assessing Social Participation in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- Merritt has a very active Seniors Association offering opportunities for participation in a variety of affordable activities and events such as floor curling, exercise classes, crafts and more.
- There are a variety of community groups and organizations for residents to participate in (i.e. Rotary Club, Royal Canadian Legion, Community Choir, Elks Lodge, etc.).
- Free and affordable events and activities provide opportunities for social interaction and participation (i.e. Canada Day, annual parade, New Year's Eve, Rodeo Fair Days, etc.).
- Merritt Library offers good services and programs (i.e. crib, crafts, book club, etc.).

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Residents who do not actively participate in the community and social activities are at risk of social isolation. Outreach to these individuals should be encouraged and promoted through local programming.
- Residents indicated that low participation could occasionally be attributed to misinformation, therefore accurate, convenient and up-to-date information regarding community events should be ensured.
- Access to or lack of available transportation can limit accessibility to events and activities, resulting in isolation, as such, a variety of affordable, local transportation options should be explored (i.e. volunteer drivers network).
- Seniors' confidence to take part in social activities can be affected when physical abilities deteriorate (i.e. eye sight and balance). Proper training and education on geriatric needs should be available to program coordinators and service providers to help encourage participation.
- Private community courses and activities can exceed affordability threshold. Merritt should examine ways to provide affordable local programming (i.e. partnerships with local educational facilities).

# RESPECT + SOCIAL INCLUSION

*Aging residents should continue to be respected for their roles and contributions to the community. The provision of outreach to aging residents and opportunities to participate in community life can help to mitigate isolation.*

Socially isolated seniors are less able to participate fully in the community, which can have significant impacts on mental health and well-being[9]. The City of Merritt should promote awareness of all residents value to the community. Are aging residents treated kindly and with respect? Do City staff consult aging residents and welcome their contributions to the community? Are there opportunities for intergenerational involvement in Merritt? Are there outreach programs in place to help aging residents who may be at risk of social isolation? These questions and many more were considered when assessing Respect and Social Inclusion in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- The community generally offers a good level of respect for aging residents.
- Merritt offers services and information for outreach to new members of the community through Welcome Wagon program.
- Merritt Seniors' Association is an excellent support and resource system for aging residents.
- There is priority seating signage in buses encouraging younger commuters to give up their seats for the elderly.
- One local grocery store offers home delivery of groceries.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Aging residents welcome more opportunity for intergenerational involvement.
- Aging volunteers expressed a desire for more recognition for their contributions to the community.
- Community lacks resources to educate greater public about aging individuals and their significant value to society.
- Some aging residents do not feel regularly consulted by the community.

[9] The National Seniors Council, 2014. Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors 2013- 2014.

# COMMUNICATION + INFORMATION

*Access to and the wide distribution of clear, relevant information is essential for aging residents to be able to maintain strong social ties and community connections.*

Proper communication and information is essential to ensuring that Merritt's aging population is aware of programs, services and opportunities available to them within the community. Is information about Merritt programs and services readily available and easy to access? Are members of City staff friendly and helpful to aging residents? Do aging residents have access to public computers? Is the information that the City distributes easy to read and printed in legible font sizes? These questions and many more were considered when assessing Communication and Information in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- The Government Access Building is seen as a good source of community information.
- The City of Merritt staff are friendly, informative and knowledgeable.
- There is a Community Events calendar located on the City webpage to provide information about local events to residents.
- Local newspapers are considered trustworthy and convenient sources of information as they provide a snap shot of the community.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Some aging residents have difficulty accessing information through the internet due to computer literacy therefore it is important to develop programming that will assist in learning new technologies (i.e. computer classes, e-mail access tutorials).
- The community should recognize that some aging residents do not desire to use computers and therefore information about activities and events could be better advertised through multiple mediums (i.e. community newsletters, newspaper).
- Many seniors who expressed concern that they do not know where to go for services or unaware of what is available would benefit from the creation of a master list of senior-specific services.

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION + EMPLOYMENT

*Aging residents offer a variety of skills, knowledge and experiences that can provide benefits to the community. Aging residents should be able to contribute to their communities through paid and unpaid employment for as long as they would like to or are able to do so.*

The aging residents within Merritt form a vibrant segment of the community through their active volunteerism and willingness to contribute to the community. To facilitate this, Merritt must review any barriers to civic participation and employment. Are aging residents encouraged to participate on committees and councils in Merritt? Are there a range of opportunities for aging residents to obtain meaningful work? Are aging residents provided the opportunity to learn new technologies? These questions and many more were considered when assessing Civic Participation and Employment in Merritt.

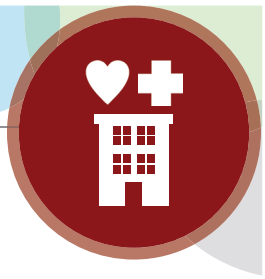
## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- There is a variety of opportunities for aging residents to volunteer and contribute their time to community events and activities.
- Local volunteers feel that working with the community is rewarding especially when helping others.
- The Local Government considered to be receptive to written contact, as is the Federal Government.
- Recognition of involvement is highly valued particularly through volunteer functions and financial assistance to community groups.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- As primary industries are logging, mining, and ranching, aging residents and those with mobility issues expressed difficulty obtaining meaningful work.
- Many aging residents desire flexible work hours and are finding that part-time work is significantly more challenging to find than full-time work.
- Volunteer opportunities should be promoted and new positions made available as aging residents who regularly volunteer their time indicated that they may be "burning out" due to being overly committed.

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT + HEALTH SERVICES



*In order for aging residents to successfully age in place, the community should offer sufficient good quality and accessible healthcare as well as community programs and services. In doing so, residents do not have to move from their communities to receive appropriate care.*

Merritt's aging population is highly valued for its knowledge and contributions, which is why the ability of these residents to age in place is important to the City. With many seniors being able to stay within their own home for longer, the demand for home care and health services will increase, making this element all the more important to Merritt. Are health and social services, such as the Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre, reached easily by all means of transportation? Do aging residents have access to home care services if needed? Are aging residents aware of health and social services available to them within the community and greater region? These questions and many more were considered when assessing Community Support and Health Services in Merritt.

## EXISTING AGE-FRIENDLY ASSETS

- Health services are conveniently located and accessible by public transportation.
- The medical professionals available within the community are friendly and provide good care.
- There is a Nurse Practitioner available to ensure outreach to seniors.
- Specialized health services are offered to the community on a scheduled basis.
- Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre offers 24/7 emergency services, rehabilitation and physiotherapy, public health, mental health, home and community care nursing services, home support, laboratory and x-ray services and there are eight acute care inpatient beds.
- Grants In Aid are available for promoting increased community services by non-profit organizations.
- Weekly transportation is available for medical appointment in Kamloops.
- Free medical services are offered on occasion (i.e. annual vaccinations for seniors).
- Future health and financial planning services appear to be readily available (public and private).

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- Many aging residents were perceived to be unaware of the spectrum of services available to them. Health services information and opportunities for seniors need to be made widely available (i.e. regular advertisement, posting on city webpage or newsletter).
- There is a lack of funding for and availability of affordable seniors-specific private medical support services (i.e. home care, care-givers, home delivery of grocery shopping, and medical services where multiple needs are required).
- There is a need for more home care options to cater to all stages of aging and levels of need.
- Continue to examine ways to expand and enhance the Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre.

# 4.0 PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

## 4.1 GOALS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

An implementation plan has been developed with the specific purpose of offering guidance and direction through recommended action items to assist the City of Merritt in achieving their goals and objectives for an age-friendly community. The implementation plan is specifically linked to the goals and objectives within the Age-Friendly Action Plan, which evolved as part of the comprehensive planning process.

Implementation of the Merritt's Age-Friendly Action Plan is a critical step in achieving success and the recommended actions and corresponding tasks will require strong partnerships with City departments, City Council, and other community partners. The development of Merritt's Age-Friendly Action Plan started at City Hall. For this reason, it is logical that the City's role, in conjunction with a specific committee, take the primary lead in the implementation of the Age-Friendly Action Plan. Early and ongoing communication is required and will result in increased success and enhanced age-friendly features for the community. It is equally necessary to recognize the implementation of the Age-Friendly Action Plan will require sufficient resources. From inception to completion, City departments must maintain close communication to ensure internal efforts - departmental work plans, budgeting and capital works planning – are coordinated.

The Implementation Plan for the City of Merritt can be found in **Appendix D**. It includes information and actions necessary in achieving the Age-Friendly Action Plan's desired goals and objectives. The structure of the implementation plan and its' corresponding timeframe are described on the follow page.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN COMPONENTS

### RECOMMENDED ACTION
The action that the City and its partners initiate, with the purpose of achieving positive age-friendly results for the community. Please note recommended actions within the implementation plan may be applied to other age-friendly features and may not necessarily be limited to the feature it is identified within.

### TIMEFRAME
The estimated period of time in which a recommended action should be successfully achieved. The time estimates have been broken down into the following categories:

- Immediate: *6 months - 1 year*
- Short Term: *1 - 3 years*
- Medium Term: *3 -5 years*
- Long Term: *5+ years*

### OUTCOME
Fundamental goal / objective in undertaking a recommended action

### PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
A quantifiable indicator used to measure or monitor the success of the recommended action

### RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT
Internal City department that should lead the implementation of a recommended action

### PARTNER(S)
Internal City departments and community stakeholders that may be well-positioned to establish partnerships, with the purpose of successfully achieving a recommended action

### COST/RESOURCES
Estimated hard / soft cost to the City when undertaking a recommended action

### POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S)
Funding sources that could potentially help finance the recommended action

## REFERENCES AND AGE-FRIENDLY RESOURCES


- Age-Friendly Workplaces: Promoting older worker participation
  *http://www.seniors.gc.ca/eng/working/fptf/promoting.shtml*
- B.C. Seniors' Home Renovation Tax Credit
  *http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/income-taxes/personal/credits/seniors-renovation*
- HealthLinkBC: Seniors' Health
  *http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/commonhealthconcerns/seniorshealth/*
- Health Canada, 1998. Principles of the National Framework on Aging: A Policy Guide.
- National Seniors Council, 2014. Report on Isolation of Seniors 2013-2014.
- Statistics Canada, 2006. 2006 Census of Canada.
- Statistics Canada, 2011. 2011 Census of Canada.
- Statistics Canada, 2015. Canada's population estimates: Age and Sex, July 1, 2015.
- United Nations, 2002. Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
- World Health Organization, 2002. Active Aging: A Policy Framework
- World Health Organization, 2007. Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide.

# APPENDIX A |
## Existing Conditions Assessment

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www.mmmgrouplimited.com

September 18, 2015

City of Merritt
Sean O'Flaherty, Development Services Manager
2185 Voght Street
Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Dear Sean,

**Re: Merritt Age-Friendly Plan: Existing Conditions Assessment**

The City of Merritt has initiated the process of developing an Age-Friendly Plan. The plan will help to ensure that active aging is encouraged for all residents and that the community has the tools to adapt its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capabilities. In order to aid in this process MMM Group Limited (MMM) conducted an extensive assessment of the existing physical conditions of the city as they pertain to aging-in-place.

The following document is a summary of Merritt's existing conditions assessment. This assessment can be used as a tool to further identify key priority areas as the City continues to develop its Age-Friendly Plan.

## STUDY AREA

The Existing Conditions Assessment (ECA) was conducted within the municipal boundaries of the City of Merritt. While the focus of the assessment was primarily within the central business district, MMM assessed multiple areas outside the central business district. Generally, the ECA consisted of reviewing and assessing low density residential housing areas (single and multiple family housing), the central business district, parks and open space areas, and industrial areas.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The Existing Conditions Assessment was completed using the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Committee of Officials' Checklist of Age-Friendly Features on the morning of May 5, 2015. Weather conditions were rainy and wet, with temperature of 14 degrees Celsius.

Merritt was assessed primarily on its physical features and attributes, as a community's physical environment has a strong influence on personal mobility, safety from injury, security of crime, health behaviours and social participation. Follow-up research on social and cultural age-friendly features

were undertaken in the following days. The ECA concluded that while the city of Merritt may be walkable for an able-bodied resident, improvements could be made to further aid accessibility and mobility for all ages. A summary of the findings from the ECA can be reviewed on the following pages.

**Outdoor Spaces + Buildings**

Age-friendly

- Plenty of highly valued, well maintained parks and gardens with good availability of outdoor seating and upgraded paths, cycle paths and walkways;
- Generally safe daytime environment;
- Local amenities are good with satisfactory services and customer service arrangements with convenient access;
- Some retailers are very receptive to improving access for mobility challenged patrons (i.e. CIBC).

Age-unfriendly

- Processes for reporting incidents such as footpath damage are time-consuming;
- Unfriendly pedestrian crossings and pedestrian crossing timers on some sets of traffic lights allowing insufficient time for people to cross the road (i.e. crosswalks near Desert Inn, Grand Hotel Inn, post office, Voght / Nicola)
    - Drivers do not always yield / give-way to crossing pedestrians
- Pedestrians and cyclists compete to use pathways (i.e. lack of pedestrian / cyclist lane separation);
- Perceived unsafe night-time environment; isolated anti-social behaviour following the closure of evening establishments leave some people feeling vulnerable;
- Inadequate or subdued lighting due to overgrown trees;
- Some services, venues and government buildings are not directly accessible by public transit service;
- Lack of seated benches outside the central business district;
- Some people are limited to the amount and variety of services they could use due to not having a car, unable to use public transit, and being reliant on others;
- Seasonal water pooling and ice within public walkway areas are unsafe and increase risk factor for mobility challenged;

- Hedges encroach within public walkway areas;
- Spirit Square lacks shaded areas, which can create concern for younger and older demographics on hot summer days;
- Sidewalk snow clearing needs more attention during heavy snowfall periods.

**Transportation**

Age-friendly

- Public transit is affordable, reliable, accessible, and on-time;
- BC Transit service make efforts to assist aging individuals with their journey by assisting them with awkward items (i.e. heavy grocery bags), where possible;
- Bus drivers are courteous;
- Roads are generally well maintained;
- Posted speed limits are reasonable.

Age-unfriendly

- Transit schedules could be improved, increase frequency within select areas of city, and offer some Sunday service;
- Some bus routes do not offer optimal transfer times;
- Some bus stops could include better drop-off areas with improved surfacing, and improved siting to increase safety for mobility-challenged;
- Lack of specialized transit system / program (i.e. HandyDart)
- Difficulty accessing transportation can result in isolation;
- Cars parked close to corners create hazards;
- Road maintenance and obstructions can be difficult for mobility challenged individuals;

**Housing**

Age-friendly

- Many seniors live in well-constructed houses, making it easy to move around;
- Retirement villages are well designed with lovely gardens;
- It is beneficial living in close proximity to services, shops and recreational facilities;
- Seniors generally feel safe in homes during the day;
- Living within Merritt is enjoyable and most wish to ‘age in place”;
- Range of housing options are available;
- Smaller dwellings such as townhouses and apartments are available;
- Small numbers of dedicated seniors housing available;
- Availability of government-subsidized / assisted living housing (i.e. Florentine and Nicola Meadows).

Age-unfriendly

- Readily-availability of affordable open-market rental housing is insufficient;
- Housing unaffordable for most seniors (e.g. seniors housing budget often exceeds standard 30% threshold);
- Concerns about accessibility of multi-level homes or availability of one-level homes as individuals become less mobile;
- Home maintenance and private support services are not always readily available or affordable;
- Some houses are older and need improvement / renovations to make them more age-friendly which is costly;
- Location of houses affects lifestyle in terms of accessing services and community activities;
- Shortage of rentals;
- Difficult to downsize due to being “asset rich and cash poor”;
- Lack of varied care levels that cater for all stages of aging;

- Lack of subsidized housing and assisted living buildings;
- Waiting lists for retirement housing can be restrictive and can result in a need to relocate outside of Merritt;
- Buying homes and accessing retirement villages depends on available finance.

**Respect + Inclusion**

Age-friendly

- Merritt Senior's Association is an excellent support and resource system;
- Many feel respect and inclusion are reciprocal and require effort, self-motivation and inner happiness;
- There is generally a good level of respect for seniors by the general community;
- Seniors-specific activities are sometimes available through community;
- Seniors-specific activities are always available at the Senior's Association;
- One grocery store offers a home delivery of groceries for service fee;
- Priority seating signage in buses encouraging younger commuters to give up their seats for the elderly.

Age-unfriendly

- Community lacks resources to educate greater public about aging individuals and their value;
- Changes in community and family structures impact the community's social fabric;
- Lack of intergenerational programs offered;
- Basic day-to-day costs can be too high for seniors on fixed budgets;
- Less financially able seniors can feel isolated when there is a lack of good access to affordable activities;
- Volunteers can experience "burn out";
- Many organisations do not reply or take too long to respond;
- Senior residents are only being asked to join associations and committees if the topic relates to seniors or aged care.

**Social Participation**

Age-friendly

- Free and affordable events and activities provide opportunities for social interaction and participation (i.e. Canada Day, annual parade, New Year's Eve, Rodeo Fair Days, etc.);
- Event locations and venues are conveniently located within Merritt;
- Merritt Library offers good services and programs (i.e. crib, crafts, book club, etc.);
- Volunteer's involvement in community events and activities is appreciated.

Age-unfriendly

- Access to or lack of transport at times can limit accessibility to events and activities, resulting in isolation;
- Private community courses, activities, and programe can exceed affordability threshold;
- Those without access to extended family or social networks are more likely to have difficulty socialising in their community;
- Seniors' confidence to take part in social activities can be affected when physical abilities deteriorate (i.e. eye sight and balance).

**Civic Participation + Employment**

Age-friendly

- Recognition of involvement is highly valued particularly through volunteer functions and financial assistance to community groups;
- Volunteering is a social activity and provides company for those who may otherwise become isolated;
- Working with local community is rewarding especially when helping others;
- A range of volunteer roles are available;
- Volunteering improves one's health both physically and mentally;
- Seniors can participate by emailing / writing letters to local, Provincial and Federal government;
- Local Government considered to be receptive to written contact, as was Federal Government

Age-unfriendly

- Lack of employment opportunities that are local, fitting, and and meaningful;
- Discrimination in the work place due to age and how others view their ability to contribute;
- Part-time work is significantly more challenging to find that full-time work.

**Community Support + Health Services**

Age-friendly

- Significant availability of public healthcare services available from the Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre (i.e. acute care inpatient beds and includes a 24/7 emergency department; rehabilitation and physiotherapy; public health; mental health; home and community care; nursing and home support; and lab and x-ray);
- A range of community support services exists to assist seniors;
- Access to specialized medical / health services (i.e. elective surgery) is available locally;
- Weekly transportation available for medical appointment in Kamloops;
- Good ambulance, police, and fire service and adequate response times;
- Free medical services (i.e. annual vaccinations for seniors);
- Accessing information via the internet for the computer literate;
- Future health and financial planning services appear to be readily available (public and private).

Interior Health

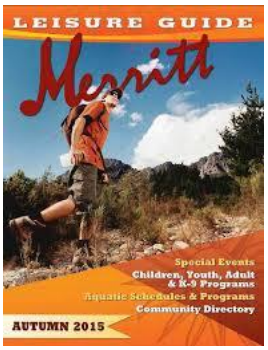
Age-unfriendly

- Cost of services, value for money and waiting lists for services can occur;
- Gaps exist in community support and health services (i.e. health services are available based on income level);
- Lack of funding for specific seniors' services (i.e. home care, etc.);
- Lack of affordable private medical support services (i.e. care-givers, home delivery of grocery shopping, and medical services where multiple needs are required);
- There is a perception that many seniors are not aware of the spectrum of available health services – seniors advocate is needed.

**Communication + Information**

Age-friendly

- Government Access Building is good source of information / resources;
- City of Merritt staff are friendly;
- Local newspapers are considered a good source of information as they provide a snap shot of the community;
- Seniors enjoy reading positive local stories;
- Various computer savvy seniors have computers and educational computer programs.




MERRITT HERALD

NEWS

Age-unfriendly

- Some seniors have difficulty accessing information through the internet due to lack of computer literacy;
- Readily available information about activities and events could be better advertised through multiple mediums;
- Some seniors living in retirement villages feel isolated when there is a lack of information;
- Many seniors feel they miss out on information as they are not computer savvy / literate.

**CONCLUSION**

The results of the Merritt Existing Conditions Assessment resulted in various findings. Generally, the city of Merritt offers a diverse range of age-friendly features. Such features are not only friendly for an older demographic, but for youth, adults, and mobility challenged. Merritt's compact downtown, convenient street patterns and network, community health services, recreation services, and a variety of parks and open space areas present significant age-friendly assets for the community.

The existing conditions assessment discovered opportunities for the City and community as a whole to further enhance safe, convenient and sufficient access or linkages between existing community assets, features, and amenities. Possible suggestions that will be reviewed include, but are not limited to: sidewalk infrastructure improvements to allow for ease of movement between the numerous community amenities, address seasonal water pooling and winter ice surfaces, centralized information / communication hub, and exploring additional computer / technology literacy classes at the Merritt library.

# APPENDIX B |
## Public Engagement Report

MMM GROUP

# MEETING REPORT

**Date:** July 29, 2015
**Date of meeting:** June 23, 2015
**Location:** Merritt, BC
**Purpose:** Age-Friendly Action Plan Seniors Focus Group

**Project:** Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan
**Project Number:** 5215051-000
**Author:** RT

| Attendees: | E-Mail/Phone Number |
|---|---|
| | |

**DISTRIBUTION: All**

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| Item | General Dialogue |
|---|---|

**1** Introduction: What is it like to live in Merritt as an Aging Individual?

- Public transportation is good in town
  - Getting out of town is an issue
  - Public transportation may be difficult for some
- Housing
  - Not enough seniors housing close to downtown
  - Crossing Nicola Avenue is very difficult

**2** Outdoor Spaces and Buildings: Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- Not enough safe places to go with Scooter
- Desert Inn cross walk is unsafe
  - No lighting
  - Blind corner – not visible
- Grand Hotel crossing
  - Lighted but some drivers ignore it

**Item** **General Dialogue**

- Post Office crossing
  - People do not pay attention
  - Need traffic calming, speed bumps, hatched line painting across street like in front of major grocery stores
- Voght and Nicola crossing
  - Not enough time to cross the street
- All pedestrians have issues, not just seniors
- Complaints of bikes and skateboards on sidewalks – enforcement and signage
- Nicola Avenue traffic is hard to cross (both for pedestrian and scooter)
  - Scary
  - The speed limit needs to be enforced
- Walking:
  - More benches are needed in Merritt
  - The amount of benches are better than it once was though
  - Benches are observed to be used by those actually resting
  - Benches are centralized downtown, more needed elsewhere in the community
- Sidewalk
  - In winter, the snow piles impeded accessibility
    - Streets need to be ploughed differently
    - Residents are required to clear their own sidewalks
      - Some residents are unable to do this
    - Give someone an annual position to clear sidewalks
    - Merritt needs better snow removal
- Security
  - Generally feel safe
    - Do not run into problems often
  - A few isolated incidents
    - Gun pulled on someone and now they do not go more than 2 blocks from their home at night
- RBC and CIBC
  - Have improved in terms of accessibility
  - RBC parking lot still has a lot of weeds
- Canada Café – great restaurant, but not accessible

**3** <u>Transportation:</u> Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- "I do not use it", "I have my own car"
- Some stops are not safe for wheelchairs
- Bus stops with wheel chair accessible signs could be installed
- Only 2 in group use transit – to go to Wal-mart and downtown
- Most Drive
- "he said, she said" problems when reporting issues about transit as most people do not want to use their names
- Is transit affordable? Yes.
  - Some enjoy the ride around town
- Transit is on time (Colletville route)
- Programs and services for transit are available but may not be enough

**Item** **General Dialogue**

- Merritt transit is a fixed route, therefore drivers cannot veer from their designated route to make special trips for seniors
    - Will take minors or young children closer to their homes
- Transit drivers are trained to load wheelchairs but are not allowed to help passengers with bags
- No specialized service to help passengers with transit
    - HandyDART is not in Merritt
        - Would be used if brought in, there has been an increase in wheelchair and scooter use in Merritt
- Buses can carry scooters
- Bus Signage
    - Could be improved
    - Bus stop signs are blocked by overgrown hedges
    - Need to be more visible
- Want more bus shelters and benches
- The bus stop near the hospital and school needs improvement

**4** Housing: Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- Services are available to check-in on you to see if you're doing alright
- Able to have your home modified to fit her needs
    - Doorways, hardwood flooring – Nicola Manor
- Need more accessible homes in Merritt (Physically and Economically)
- Mobile Homes are not accessible
- Modular homes can be accessible
- Seniors on a pension do not have enough more for $1000-1050 rent
- Not enough subsidized housing in Merritt
- Trade Winds is government run
- Access to housing has tried to be addressed by the City but Merritt is continually growing
- Easy to build an accessible home but it is too costly to renovate an existing home
    - Many cannot afford to renovate
- There are 2 assisted living buildings
- The wait list for assisted living is several years
- 280 square foot room plus ensuite at Nicola Avenue is too small
- Sizing of homes is dependent on how much you can afford
- Demand for a building would be increased if it has an elevator
- The Florentine
    - There are many empty rooms
    - Could be subsidized
    - Implementation – grants
- Storage for scooters is beneficial

**Item** **General Dialogue**

**5** Respect and Social Inclusion: Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- No respect for seniors
  - From younger kids and adults
  - This is a societal thing
  - Some people park in handicap parking stalls who do not need them
  - People need an attitude shift
- Positive experiences
  - People in Merritt open and hold doors for you
  - Merritt is a very friendly community
  - Grocery stores are accessible
    - Some have extra wheelchairs so that you do not have to load your own

**6** Social Participation: Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- Newer residents have the opportunity to volunteer as long-time residents have reached a “burn out” stage from volunteering
- Some seniors won’t ask to join in on something and instead will wait for someone to ask them
  - They do not take the initiative
- Events:
  - Seniors Centre has tons of activities and is affordable (only 50 cents)
  - There are not enough volunteers to organize more events
  - There is a lot of double programming (the same activity offered in different locations)
    - With differing prices
- When you go out in Merritt, where are you going?
  - Farmers Market (across from the A&W)
  - Wal-Mart
  - Canadian Tire
  - Cooper’s
  - The pool
  - The Library (“very nice staff”
  - Rotary Park (has an open stage)
  - Central Park
  - Spirit Square (“too hot, no shade”
  - Church
  - There is no dancing available like in Keremeos (“they have daytime dancing”)

| Item | General Dialogue |
|---|---|

**7** <u>Civic Participation and Employment:</u> Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- We used to have a choir at the Seniors centre
- There is a community choir
- Events that they participate in:
  - Christmas Dinner
  - Music in the Park
  - Christmas Concert
  - Ballet class concert
  - Community Garden
  - Bus Christmas Light Tour
- They don't really approach the City on many items
- They feel that Merritt is a "last minute community" meaning that there are a lot of no-shows for events
- If the Seniors Centre hall didn't exist, there may not be as much seniors participation
- In terms of employment, logging, mining and ranching are the main industry
  - Hard to find work as someone with a disability
  - Limited opportunities for diverse work
- Lots of opportunity to volunteer, not enough opportunity for a variety of jobs
- Employers will let you work 1-2 days a week in some areas but not prevalent enough
- Work vs. meaningful work is an issue
- There is an opportunity for people to do yard work for seniors
- Big brothers program helps to instill respect

**8** <u>Community Support and Health Services:</u> Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements

- Government provides services for housekeeper, etc. but if you do not qualify for it you must pay for it
- Many seniors may not be aware of services – need an advocate
- Home support available, but you must qualify
- Seniors club tries to get the word out (information)
  - Seniors Club offers so many activities and services
- Health services are accessible based on income level
- Barriers to health services
  - Hill to hospital
  - The perception of personal safety
- The doctors are all downtown
- There is no full hospital
- Believe that there are good doctors and that give good care
- There are no specialists, but "small towns don't always have those"
- The Nurse Practitioner – available to make sure people do not fall through the cracks
- Some specialists come in from other cities

| Item | General Dialogue |
|---|---|
| 9 | <u>Communication and Information:</u> Discussion of positive experiences, negative experiences and ideas about improvements<br>• A lot of seniors do not have computers<br>  ○ Cannot see the screens<br>• Local papers are the best form of communication – everyone gets the paper<br>• Paper is better than radio/tv – Merritt radio does not have a lot of listeners<br>• People with computers and who know how to use them have no time for surveys, but aging residents who want to participate do not have access<br>• The girls at the front desk at the City of Merritt are very good<br>• Flyers are a good form of communication<br>• A lot of seniors do not know where to go for services or are unaware of what is available<br>  ○ This can also be said for all ages<br>• Centralized Information is needed<br>• The Government Access building is good for information |

**MMM Group Ltd.**

**Rachelle Trovato, MPlan**
Community Planner
TrovatoR@mmm.ca

MMM GROUP

# INTER-OFFICE MEMO

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| To: | City of Merritt | Date: | September 28, 2015 |
| From: | Rachelle Trovato | Job No.: | 5215051-000 |
| Subject: | City of Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Community Open House | CC: | Davin Shillong, Joe Mocilac |

## INTRODUCTION

The following document provides a brief summary of the public open house that was hosted in relation to the City of Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan in Merritt, BC. This summary identifies details of the open house including location, resident attendance totals (see Appendix A), information provided to participants, and feedback received from participants.

## NOTIFICATION

Specific to the September 23, 2015 Open House, the following methods of communication were used to notify the public:

- **Website: www.merrit.ca/age-friendly-action-plan**
  The City of Merritt has created and launched a section of the municipality's website specifically targeted at providing information about the Age-Friendly Action Plan to City residents. The webpage offers background information pertaining to the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities Project and frequently asked questions regarding the Age-Friendly Action Plan. The webpage was used to notify residents of opportunities for participation in the project process.

- **Website: www.q101.ca/latest-news/6351-open-house.html**
  The Community Open House was advertised on the local Q101 Merritt's Music Mix radio station website on September 23rd. The write up included the date, time and location of the open house as well as further information regarding what the Age-Friendly Action Plan could entail.

- **Email Notification: Project Stakeholders**
  On Thursday, September 17th, project stakeholders were notified about the Community Open House via email. The email included the time, date and location of the event as well as a direct link to the City's webpage for more information. Approximately 30 stakeholders were reached via this notification.

- **Newspaper: The Merritt Herald**
  In an effort to reach a broader audience, the City of Merritt placed an advertisement in the September 17th edition of the Merritt Herald. This advertisement specified the date, location and time of event as well as further information pertaining to Age-Friendly Communities.

- **Facebook: City of Merritt Media Release Page**
  On September 15th, the City of Merritt notified its followers about the Community Open House through Facebook. The post included information pertaining to the date, location and time of event and reached 248 people (with two 'shares' and four 'likes').

## OPEN HOUSE INFORMATION

The primary purpose of this Open House was threefold: 1) Introduce the City of Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan project to the community and to gain valuable feedback from residents on what being 'age-friendly' means to them; 2) Identify what current Age-Friendly elements Merritt is successfully responding to; 3) What Age-Friendly elements in Merritt may require improvements.

The information provided at the Open House included a total of nine oversized display panels. The display panels were printed at a larger format for easy reading and clarity. Of the nine display panels, two panels were used to convey background information regarding the project. The information included:

- Welcome
- Context
- Project Timeline
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Community Demographics

The remaining seven panels provided participants the opportunity to voice their opinion on what being age-friendly means to them, how age-friendly the City currently is and which elements of an age-friendly community they believe the Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan should prioritize. These panels included the following exercises:

- 'A Great Place to Age'
- 'Measuring Up'
- 'What Merritt Needs Most'
- 'Gap Analysis'
- 'My Age-Friendly Merritt Wish List' (printed using two panels)
- 'Final Thoughts'

In addition to the large display panels, participants were provided the opportunity to supply further remarks via a Community Open House comment form. The Project Team received a total of 4 completed comment forms (see Appendix B)

Each of the Open House Panels can be reviewed in Appendix C.

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The Community Open House provided the opportunity for participants to voice their opinion on a variety of topics geared towards building an age-friendly city. The variety of activities presented to Open House participants were centred on assessing the current age-friendly status of Merritt, including existing age-friendly features and those that may need to be improved upon. There were two representatives from MMM Group Limited present at the Open House as well as a representative from the City of Merritt. The representatives were available to respond to any questions participants may have had regarding the Open House activities or any comments or concerns regarding the project.

Participants of the Open House identified existing age-friendly assets of Merritt to include the multitude of parks and open spaces. A majority of participants expressed interest in improving open spaces and public buildings as well as housing opportunities within the city; including improved pedestrian crossings and pathways, assisted living options and accessible housing features. More specifically, residents expressed the desire for improvements to the built environment that show consideration for safety which include sidewalk maintenance, street lighting, adequate rest areas and accommodation for

wheelchairs, walkers and scooters. Comments were also heard regarding outreach to those at risk of social isolation, including daily phone calls for seniors living on their own. Additionally, residents expressed concern regarding communication and information within the community and transportation needs for seniors.

**CONCLUSION**

The City of Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Open House was hosted on Wednesday, September 23, 2015 at the Merritt Civic Centre located at 1950 Mamette Avenue in Merritt, BC and received a total of 15 participants. The primary purpose of the Open House was to notify area residents and stakeholders of the City of Merritt's intention to develop an Age-Friendly Action Plan for the City and to attain feedback and comments from residents regarding their goals for an age-friendly Merritt. The Open House was conducted using an informal 'drop-in' format that provided background information to participants on multiple oversized display panels. In addition, attendees were also invited to participate in a variety of activities geared towards attaining feedback on resident's goals and objectives for the Age-Friendly Action Plan.

The Open House resulted in several written and verbal comments supplied to the project team, with most participants agreeing with the need for the City of Merritt to create an action plan that helps the aging population. Many participants indicated a desire for improvements made to Merritt's open spaces and public buildings as well as increased housing opportunities, improved communication within the community and transportation options for seniors.

MMM GROUP

**INTER-OFFICE MEMO**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| To: | City of Merritt | Date: | September 28, 2015 |
| From: | Rachelle Trovato | Job No.: | 5215051-000 |
| Subject: | City of Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Community Open House | CC: | Davin Shillong, Joe Mocilac |

**APPENDIX A – Community Open House Sign-in Sheet**

## Sign-In Sheet

| Name | Neighbourhood | City | Phone/Email |
|---|---|---|---|
| [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | |
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City of Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan
Community Open House: September 23, 2015

MMM GROUP

MMM GROUP

**INTER-OFFICE MEMO**

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|---|---|---|---|
| To: | City of Merritt | Date: | September 28, 2015 |
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**APPENDIX B – Community Open House Comment Forms**

# Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Open House Comment Form

Based on the information presented at the September 23, 2015 Open House, please take the time to answer the following questions. Your comments will provide valuable feedback on what the community liked best about the presentation.

1. Was the information provided at this community open house informative and helpful to furthering your understanding of the project?

   Yes ☒ No ☐ Undecided ☐

2. What three (3) elements / features did you like most about the open house?

   a. Charts - layed out the gathered information in a clear, easily understood format.

   b. Opportunity to make suggestions

   c. Having representatives to discuss things with.

3. If you have any additional comments about the Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan project, please let us know in the space provided below.

   There should be a heavy emphasis on alternative access for foot + pedal traffic.

Name: [redacted] Email: [redacted]

**Please provide this comment sheet to an open house staff representative or submit it within the comment box. Thank you for your participation!*

# Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Open House Comment Form

Based on the information presented at the September 23, 2015 Open House, please take the time to answer the following questions. Your comments will provide valuable feedback on what the community liked best about the presentation.

1. Was the information provided at this community open house informative and helpful to furthering your understanding of the project?

   Yes ☑ No ☐ Undecided ☐

2. What three (3) elements / features did you like most about the open house?

   a. Well presented

   b. Opportunity to hear & see what others ideas are

   c.

3. If you have any additional comments about the Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan project, please let us know in the space provided below.

Name: [redacted] Email: [redacted]

**Please provide this comment sheet to an open house staff representative or submit it within the comment box. Thank you for your participation!*

# Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Open House Comment Form

Based on the information presented at the September 23, 2015 Open House, please take the time to answer the following questions. Your comments will provide valuable feedback on what the community liked best about the presentation.

1. Was the information provided at this community open house informative and helpful to furthering your understanding of the project?

   Yes ☑ No ☐ Undecided ☐

2. What three (3) elements / features did you like most about the open house?

   a. Opened up Discution with others

   b. Lack of Dialoge Between groups

   c. May Need a Seniors Commity to Kikstart further Discussion

3. If you have any additional comments about the Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan project, please let us know in the space provided below.

Name: [redacted] Email: [redacted]

**Please provide this comment sheet to an open house staff representative or submit it within the comment box. Thank you for your participation!*

# Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan Open House Comment Form

Based on the information presented at the September 23, 2015 Open House, please take the time to answer the following questions. Your comments will provide valuable feedback on what the community liked best about the presentation.

1. Was the information provided at this community open house informative and helpful to furthering your understanding of the project?

   Yes ☒ No ☐ Undecided ☐

2. What three (3) elements / features did you like most about the open house?

   a. Map locations

   b. Transportion needed for seniors

   c. Interaction between people that where there.

3. If you have any additional comments about the Merritt Age-Friendly Action Plan project, please let us know in the space provided below.

Name: [redacted] Email: _____

**Please provide this comment sheet to an open house staff representative or submit it within the comment box. Thank you for your participation!*

# APPENDIX C |
## Infrastructure Improvements

# INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

*Note: When improvements are being made to existing roadways, provision for sidewalks and bike lanes should be incorporated in the roadway cross section.*

# APPENDIX D |
## Implementation Plan

## FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS:

- **CMHC -** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- **CRA** - Canada Revenue Agency
- **FCM**- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- **IHA** - Interior Health Authority
- **LNIB**- Lower Nicola Indian Band
- **MoTI**- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- **NHSP** - New Horizons for Seniors Program
- **NVIT**- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
- **STAR Canada**- Seniors Transportation Access and Resources
- **TNRD** - Thompson-Nicola Regional District
- **UBCM SHSI**- Union of BC Municipalities Seniors Housing and Support Initiative
- **UDI**- Urban Development Institute

# 1. OUTDOOR SPACES + BUILDINGS

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 | Implement a voluntary snow removal program (i.e. Snow Angels) as incentive for able-bodied residents to help out others in clearing snow. | Short Term | Increased safety and accessibility for all residents during winter months | Number of program volunteers | Bylaw Enforcement | • Community-at-large<br>• Volunteer group | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| 1.2 | Continue to conduct yearly sidewalk and pathway audits to determine need for maintenance, replacement or new infrastructure. Improvements made as required. | Ongoing | Residents can move about freely within the community | Number of sidewalks audited and improved | Engineering / Public Works | | Internal City Staff time | UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 1.3 | Continue to audit all pedestrian crossings to ensure they are safe and accessible (i.e. appropriate crossing times, installation of crosswalk timers). Improvements made as required. | Ongoing | Residents can safely access pedestrian crossings | Number of crosswalks audited and improved | Engineering / Public Works | • Planning and Development<br>• MoTI | Internal City Staff time | UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 1.4 | Continue to enhance cycling infrastructure (i.e. multi-use pathways, bike lanes) | Ongoing | Increased safety for both pedestrians and cyclists | Number of new bike lanes and multi-use pathways | Planning and Development | Engineering / Public Works | Internal City Staff time | • BikeBC<br>• Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund<br>• FCM<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 1.5 | Examine the parks, pathways and open spaces holistically to enhance connections within the system (i.e. linked multi-use pathways to parks) | Long Term | Increased safety and opportunities for cycling, pedestrian and scooter use | Number of completed pathway, trail and sidewalk connections | Parks & Recreation | • Planning and Development<br>• Engineering / Public Works | • Internal City Staff time; or<br>• $40,000 study | • UBCM<br>• FCM<br>• Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund |
| 1.6 | Improve intersection connections, wheelchair ramps, etc. | Ongoing | Safer and enhanced mobility access | Volume of intersection improvements | Engineering / Public Works | • Planning and Development<br>• MoTI | $3,000-$8,000 / intersection. Allow an annual budget of $30,000 | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 1.7 | Promote the placement of rest areas spaced at regular intervals along major pedestrian routes (i.e. bench dedication programs) | Medium Term | More seated rest areas for residents | Number of new benches in community | Parks & Recreation | • Planning and Development<br>• Engineering / Public Works | • Internal City Staff time<br>• $10,000 annual allowance | UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 1.8 | Create an age-friendly pamphlet and/or informative website for business owners on the economic benefits of supporting age-friendliness | Short Term | Awareness among business owners of the importance and benefits of accessible buildings | Number of local businesses implementing Age-Friendly Strategies | Corporate Administration | Chamber of Commerce | • Internal City Staff time<br>• $8,000 | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• NHSP |
| 1.9 | Create Age-Friendly 'branding' that recognizes local businesses that meet age-friendly and accessibility standards | Short Term | Increase the number of local businesses making age-friendly improvements | Number of local businesses receiving recognition | Corporate Administration | • Economic Development<br>• Seniors Association | Internal City Staff time | |
| 1.10 | Encourage commercial/retail building renovations to comply with accessibility standards through grants | Medium Term | Increase building accessibility and safety for residents | Number of local businesses renovating existing buildings | Planning and Development | Planning and Development | • Internal City Staff time<br>• City tax revenue loss | • BC Hydro<br>• Fortis BC |
| 1.11 | Research and build upon initiatives to promote business/commercial activity downtown later into the evening (ex: Kelowna's Small Shop at Night) | Medium Term | Increase pedestrian activity in the downtown core during evening hours | Number of businesses open later in the night | Economic Development / Planning and Development | Chamber of Commerce | | Southern Development Institute Trust |

# 2. TRANSPORTATION

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2.1** | Complete study to determine feasibility of establishing a specialized transportation service to service the community (i.e. HandyDART) | Medium Term | Increased city-wide and regional mobility for aging residents and residents with mobility challenges | Volume of service subscribers / users | Planning and Development | BC Transit | $15,000 | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• STAR Canada |
| **2.2** | Assess local transit stops for alignment with accessibility standards (i.e. weather-proof seating, sufficient lighting, sheltered areas); ensure design consistency | Long Term | Promote the use of public transportation by older residents | • Assessment Study<br>• Number of bus stops assessed and improved | Engineering / Public Works | BC Transit | $5,000 - 10,000 (assessment report) | • BC Transit<br>• NHSP<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| **2.3** | Conduct walkabout analysis of local bus stops to ensure all residents are within 500m of a bus stop and to determine the need for new locations | Short Term | Ensure all areas of the City are well-serviced by public transportation | Community serviced by bus stops within 500m walkshed | Planning and Development | BC Transit | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM<br>• NHSP |
| **2.4** | Create a network of assisted transportation volunteer drivers | Short Term | Increased availability of affordable transportation options for those who need assistance | Volume of service subscribers / users | Corporate Administration | • TNRD<br>• IHA<br>• Seniors Association<br>• NVIT | • Internal City Staff time<br>• Personal volunteer time | STAR Canada |
| **2.5** | Establish senior discount taxi fare program (both locally and regionally) | Medium Term | Increase affordability of taxi services for older residents | Number of taxi companies offering discounts for older residents | Economic Development | Local taxi operators | Internal City Staff time | CRA Tax Incentive |
| **2.6** | Examine feasibility of increased regional transit services with coordinated bus route schedules/timing, and 'Sunday Service' | Medium Term | • Enable all residents to access regional services through public transportation<br>• Increased flexibility in transportation options | Increased scheduling and destinations for regional transit | Planning and Development | • BC Transit<br>• MoTI<br>• Engineering / Public Works<br>• TNRD | • Internal City Staff time<br>• $10,000 (business case) | • BC Transit<br>• NHSP<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| **2.7** | Complete needs-analysis for consideration of amending Zoning Bylaw to increase required number of disabled parking stalls | Medium Term | Ensure older adults and residents with reduced mobility have access to designated parking stalls | Number of designated parking stalls for disabled individuals | Planning and Development | Engineering / Public Works | • Internal City Staff time<br>• $5,000- 10,000 study | • STAR Canada<br>• NHSP<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| **2.8** | Monitor existing roadways for improvements (i.e. clearly painted markings and even paving surfaces) | Ongoing | • Promote safe and well-maintained roadways within the City<br>• Roadway Management System | Annual report | Engineering / Public Works | • MoTI<br>• Bylaw Enforcement<br>• Community-at-Large | Internal City Staff time | |
| **2.9** | Integration of age-friendly routes incorporated into the City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) | Medium Term | Stand-alone chapter within TMP identifying safe age-friendly routes, paths, etc. | Transportation Master Plan | Engineering / Public Works | • MoTI<br>• Planning and Development<br>• Parks and Recreation | $20,000 (partial) | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• STAR Canada<br>• NHSP |

# 3. HOUSING

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3.1** | Lobby for more subsidized assisted living options within the city | Long Term | Provide increased volume of affordable housing options for seniors in need | Volume of senior's subsidized housing units | • Corporate Administration<br>• City Council | • BC Housing<br>• CMHC | Internal City Staff time | • Community Partnership Initiatives<br>• CMHC<br>• BC Housing |
| **3.2** | Promote the creation of new affordable housing units or innovative housing forms through incentives (i.e. reduced development cost charges, Basement Suite or Detached Secondary Suite Grant Initiatives) | Long Term | • Increased affordable housing units<br>• Increase opportunities for smaller, more affordable forms of housing | • Number of affordable housing units in new developments<br>• Number of new rental suites completed and existing suites upgraded | Planning and Development | • Engineering / Public Works<br>• UDI<br>• CMHC<br>• Economic Development | Internal City Staff time | • CMHC<br>• BC Housing |
| **3.3** | Create and maintain a local Seniors Housing Directory to include rates, availability, amenities, etc. | Ongoing | Increase awareness of seniors housing options and availability | Frequency of updates, posts, and volume of subscribers / users | Corporate Administration | • Planning and Development<br>• Seniors' Association<br>• CMHC<br>• BC Housing | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• BC Housing |
| **3.4** | Provide assistance for home renovation and adaptation through grants | Medium Term | Promote aging-in-place | Number of households receiving grants for renovations | Planning and Development | Seniors' Association | Internal City Staff time | • BC Hydro<br>• Fortis BC |
| **3.5** | Create and distribute an Aging-In-Place Housing Checklist for older residents to promote self-evaluation of existing dwelling and awareness of future housing needs. | Short Term | Promote an increased awareness of housing suitability for those older residents who wish to age-in-place | Number of Aging-in-Place Housing Checklists completed | Planning and Development | • Corporate Administration<br>• BC Housing<br>• CMHC<br>• Seniors' Association | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• BC Housing |
| **3.6** | Promote the conversion of unoccupied spaces above shops into housing units through methods such as development grants or tax reductions to owners | Medium Term | Increase proximity of housing to local services | Number of second-level shop spaces being converted to housing units | Planning and Development | • Economic Development<br>• BC Housing | Internal City Staff time | BC Housing |
| **3.7** | Incentivize the creation of mixed-use developments (i.e. combined commercial and residential uses) through decreased Development Cost Charges or tax incentives | Medium Term | Increase proximity of housing to local services | Increase in mixed-use development building permits | Planning and Development | • Engineering / Public Works<br>• UDI<br>• Economic Development | Internal City Staff time | |
| **3.8** | Consider partnerships with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology for affordable maintenance and renovation services (i.e. tradesman work) | Medium Term | Provide affordable home maintenance options while helping provide valuable work experience for post secondary students | • Program establishment and launch<br>• Volume of aging residents enrolled within program | Corporate Administration | • NVIT<br>• Economic Development<br>• Ministry of Education | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |

# 4. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.1** | Ensure events are held in venues that adhere to accessibility standards (i.e. proper seating, lighting, shelter from elements, etc.) | Short Term | Increased participation rate of aging residents at community events and increased social connections | Number of aging residents participating at community events | Parks and Recreation | Corporate Administration | Internal City Staff time | NHSP (seating, lighting, etc.) |
| **4.2** | Compile a publication with all businesses, programs and activities that offer discounts to seniors - encouraging local businesses to participate with free advertising | Short Term | Increase the affordability of local services for aging residents | Number of local businesses participating in publication and offering discounts to older adults | • Economic Development<br>• Parks and Recreation | Chamber of Commerce | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• SDIT |
| **4.3** | Partner with local professionals and students to develop a seniors-based program offering affordable, volunteer-led activities and classes (i.e. yoga, art, cooking, etc.) | Medium Term | Older adults will have increased access to affordable activities and the opportunity to increase or develop their own skillset | Volume of subscribers / users | Parks and Recreation | • NVIT<br>• Local Professionals<br>• Seniors' Association<br>• School District #58 | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| **4.4** | Establish educational programs for service providers to learn more about geriatric care | Medium Term | With more trained professionals, aging residents with mobility issues and disabilities will be more comfortable to participate in activities | Number of trained professionals | Corporate Administration | Interior Health Authority | Internal City Staff time | IHA |

# 5. RESPECT + SOCIAL INCLUSION

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5.1** | Develop and implement volunteer programming such as 'Good Morning Calls' or 'Friendly Visitor' / 'Living Alone' safety programs as safety and support to seniors at risk of social isolation | Short Term | Aging residents feel included and cared for | Volume of program participants | Parks and Recreation | • Seniors Association<br>• Interior Community Services<br>• IHA | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| **5.2** | Work with School District #58 to establish programs such as 'Reading Buddies' | Medium Term | Local schools will be provided with volunteer support | Number of aging adults participating in program | Parks and Recreation | • School District #58<br>• Seniors Association | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| **5.3** | Research the feasibility of locating child-minding facilities within assisted living facilities or Seniors' Association | Long Term | Increased interaction between aging residents and youth | Establishment of combined facility | Parks and Recreation | • Local Daycare Centre<br>• BC Housing<br>• Seniors Association | Internal City Staff time | |
| **5.4** | Facilitate opportunities for aging residents to share local knowledge including culture, history and traditions (i.e. guest speakers or volunteer-led classes) | Medium Term | Encourage the transfer of knowledge and skills between aging residents and youth | Number of residents participating in program | Parks and Recreation | • School District #58<br>• Community-at-Large<br>• LNIB<br>• NVIT | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| **5.5** | Increase participation of aging residents on local committees | Short Term | Community will gain the perspective of aging residents on all matters, not just senior-specific issues | Number of aging residents as committee members | • Corporate Administration<br>• Council | All City Departments | Internal City Staff time | |
| **5.6** | Establish after-school work programs for local students to meet needs for senior services (i.e. grocery, meal delivery, shopping assistance, etc.) | Medium Term | Increased interaction between aging residents and youth while providing support and assistance and student work experience exposure | Volume of participants within program | Parks and Recreation | School District #58 | Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| **5.7** | Declare National Seniors Day (Oct. 1) as a municipal and community celebratory day with planned events | Short Term | Community to appreciate and celebrate seniors and for seniors to feel appreciated and respected | October 1 is formally declared as National Seniors Day | • Council<br>• Corporate Administration | • Parks and Recreation<br>• Seniors' Association | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• NHSP |
| **5.8** | Support the creation of a community garden in the central business district. | Short Term | Faciliate increated interaction between aging residents and youth while providing an opportunity for increased food security. | Establishment of community garden | Planning and Development | Scw'exmx Community Health Services Society | Internal City Staff time | Aboriginal Community Food Action Initiative Grant |

# 6. COMMUNICATION + INFORMATION

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6.1 | Development and implement guest speaker / presentation program targeted at providing health, wellness, and technology information and learning to aging residents | Short Term | • Increase lifestyle learning and awareness for aging residents<br>• Increase technological skills of aging residents | • Volume / demand of program participants<br>• Frequency of coordinated learning opportunities | Parks and Recreation | • Corporate Administration<br>• Seniors Association<br>• TNRD (Regional Library)<br>• NVIT | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• NHSP |
| 6.2 | Develop, enhance, and maintain a comprehensive Seniors Resource Directory (SRD) webpage on the City's website to serve as a communications resource hub for aging residents and those with challenges (physical, cognitive, etc.) Hardcopy newsletter to be produced quarterly for pick-up at central location | Short Term | Residents have digital and hardcopy access to information regarding age-friendly matters, resources, activities, and programs | • Volume of webpage visits<br>• Volume of subscribers | Parks and Recreation | • Corporate Administration<br>• Economic Development<br>• Engineering and Public Works<br>• Information Technology<br>• BC Housing<br>• Seniors Association<br>• IHA<br>• Other stakeholders / businesses offering Seniors service | Internal City Staff time | • NHSP<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 6.3 | Create a Seniors' Coordinator or Social Planning position to lead age-friendly initiatives, provide information outreach, and work collaboratively with community stakeholders in development of programs and services | Long Term | Older adults in the community will have a trusted individual to speak with for assistance and accurate information | Creation of Seniors' coordinator | • Council<br>• Corporate Administration | Parks and Recreation | $25,000- 50,000 /year | |
| 6.4 | Develop and implement a public consultation and engagement policy that specifically addresses effective communication methods for aging and youth residents. | Short Term | Effective community consultation tool that is supported and implemented by Council for use by City Staff and community-at-large | City Council endorsed document | Planning and Development | Corporate Administration | • Internal City Staff time<br>• $10,000-20,000 Community Planning Consultant Document | • NHSP<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| 6.5 | Update all City policy documents to reflect age-friendly actions and recommendations within Merritt's Age-Friendly Plan | Medium Term | Age-friendly community initiatives are encouraged and supported by updating all relevant City policy documents that enable the goals and recommendations of the Age-Friendly Plan | City policy documents are updated and aligned with Age-Friendly Plan | • Council<br>• Corporate Administration | All City Departments | Internal City Staff time | UBCM SHSI Grant |

# 7. CIVIC PARTICIPATION + EMPLOYMENT

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7.1** | Establish a Seniors' work placement program that: a) promotes and effectively communicates the benefits of employing aging residents; and b) matches resident skill sets for paid and unpaid work opportunities | Medium Term | Increased opportunity for older residents to obtain meaningful work that utilizes their skillset | Number of older residents participating in program | Corporate Administration | • Economic Development<br>• Seniors' Association<br>• Chamber of Commerce<br>• Other stakeholders / businesses offering Seniors service | Internal City Staff time | |
| **7.2** | Examine opportunities to create more volunteer positions for older residents within the City (i.e. community event volunteers, volunteer parks services) | Medium Term | Increase the variety of volunteer positions available to older residents | Number of older residents participating in program | Parks and Recreation | • Economic Development<br>• Seniors Association<br>• Chamber of Commerce<br>• Other stakeholders / businesses offering Seniors service | Internal City Staff time | |
| **7.3** | Continue to promote volunteer recognition as a means to recruit new volunteers for community events and programs | Ongoing | Increase the number of local volunteers to prevent volunteer "burn out" | Number of new volunteers | Corporate Administration | • Economic Development<br>• Parks and Recreation | Internal City Staff time | |
| **7.4** | Educate business owners on the benefits of employing older, skilled employees (i.e. pamphlet or website) | Short Term | • Increase the number of employment opportunities for older residents<br>• Business owners benefit from employing seniors | Feedback received from participating business owners | Economic Development | • Economic Development<br>• Parks and Recreation | Internal City Staff time | • NHSP<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant |
| **7.5** | Establish a volunteer community-wide age-friendly committee led by the City of Merritt and is comprised of members of municipal staff and council, community leaders, representatives from the non-profit and business communities that meet quarterly to assist in the advancement and evaluation of progress made in implementing the Age-Friendly Action Plan | Immediate | A group of individuals serving a set term on the committee that meet regularly to ensure the goals, objectives, and actions identified within the age-friendly plan are progressing; and To identify required updates and changes to the age-friendly plan as may be required. | • Creation of committee;<br>• Coordination of quarterly meetings | • Council<br>• Corporate Administration | • Economic Development<br>• Parks and Recreation | Internal City Staff time | |

# 8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT + HEALTH SERVICES

| | RECOMMENDED ACTION | TIMEFRAME | OUTCOME | PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT | PARTNER(S) | COST/RESOURCES | POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCE(S) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8.1** | Develop and implement a volunteer program targeted at attracting local volunteers to help and assist residents suffering from physical and cognitive challenges with in-home care | Medium Term | • Increased availability and affordability of in-home care services | Volume of volunteers and service subscribers | Parks and Recreation | • Economic Development<br>• NVIT<br>• IHA | Internal City Staff time | • UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• NHSP |
| **8.2** | Consider partnerships with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to assist residents with health care services (i.e. nursing aid, health care assistants) through a formal 'career and personal planning' and / or co-op education program | Medium Term | • Enhance availability and affordability of informal health care services options<br>• Provide valuable and meaningful work experience for students | • Creation of program<br>• Student enrollment<br>• Program service demand | Corporate Administration | • NVIT<br>• IHA<br>• Economic Development | Internal City Staff time | |
| **8.3** | Continue to support IHA with development and enhancement of existing healthcare programs, grant funding, and promote and attract health specialists, including geriatric care professionals, within the community | Ongoing | • Awareness and prioritization of community health and wellness needs<br>• Relocation / placement of healthcare specialists within community | • Heightened community awareness of health and wellness needs<br>• Additional healthcare specialists within community | Corporate Administration | • Economic Development<br>• IHA | Internal City Staff time | |
| **8.4** | Develop an informal regional transportation program specifically targeted at providing transportation to residents for medical / healthcare appointments outside the community (i.e. Kamloops, Kelowna) | Medium Term | Increased availability of affordable and safe transportation options for those in need | Number of residents and volunteers registered for service | Parks and Recreation | • Economic Development<br>• BC Transit<br>• TNRD<br>• STAR Canada<br>• Seniors' Association<br>• IHA<br>• Other stakeholders / businesses offering Seniors service | Internal City Staff time | • STAR Canada<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• NHSP |
| **8.5** | Develop and offer age-friendly community support coursework / curriculum that educates how to effectively communicate with aging residents and those who may suffer from challenges (.e. physical, cognitive, etc.). The developed curriculum would be offered to front-line customer service professionals with the purpose of educating how to effectively communicate with people's diverse needs | Medium Term | • More efficient and effective communication for residents within customer service needs<br>• Heightened awareness of needs and demands of community residents | • Age-friendly course is development and deployed<br>• Volume of course participants<br>• Frequency demand for course | Corporate Administration | • Parks and Recreation<br>• Economic Development<br>• Seniors' Association<br>• IHA | • Cost of organization to assist with curriculum development<br>• Internal City Staff time | NHSP |
| **8.6** | Examine the feasibility of increased regional transit services with coordinated bus route schedules/timing | Medium Term | Enable all residents to access regional services through public transportation | Regional BC Transit service | Engineering and Public Works | • TNRD<br>• Planning and Development<br>• BC Transit | $10,000- 20,000 Planning Consultant Feasibility Study | • STAR Canada<br>• BC Transit<br>• UBCM SHSI Grant<br>• NHSP |