



# Committee Report

<b>To:</b>	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
<b>Committee Date:</b>	February 24, 2022
<b>Subject / Report No:</b>	Addendum to PDR-CW-14-21 / AFC Final Report
<b>Title:</b>	Grey County Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Stephanie Lacey-Avon
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Randy Scherzer
<b>Lower Tier(s) Affected:</b>	All Municipalities in Grey County
<b>Status:</b>	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CC35-22; Recommendation adopted by Council March 10, 2022 per Resolution CC22-22;

## Recommendation

- 1. That Report Addendum to PDR-CW-14-21 regarding the County's Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan project be received; and**
- 2. That the Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan be endorsed which will help guide corporate strategic plans and priorities; and**
- 3. That staff be directed to develop a proposed workplan to move forward with the actions/recommendations identified in the Plan in collaboration with local municipalities and other community partners; and**
- 4. That staff be directed to share the Strategy and Action Plan with all member municipalities for their information, with a presentation to local councils should that be requested.**

## Executive Summary

The County was approved for funding from the Province through the Inclusive Community Grants Program to undertake an Age Friendly Community (AFC) Strategy and Action Plan. By proceeding with the creation of an AFC plan, the County will have the framework established to help support future AFC related grant applications and guide strategic plans and priorities. The County retained WSP Canada Inc. through an RFP process to assist with this project. Since late May 2021, County staff, alongside the consulting team have been working on completing the project milestones to meet the funding requirement deadline, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. This project has been highly collaborative with the stakeholder committee, members of the public, key community organizations, local municipalities, and County staff. Staff are pleased to present the

final AFC Strategy and Action Plan to Grey County COW for endorsement.

## Background and Discussion

The County was approved for funding from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility through the Inclusive Community Grants Program project for 2020-21 to 2021-22, to undertake an Age Friendly Community (AFC) Strategy and Action Plan. The County retained WSP Canada Inc. through an RFP process to assist with this project. The project builds on recent policy and research initiatives undertaken by the County (i.e., Grey County Official Plan, Age-Friendly study by University of Guelph students, Grey Bruce Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, Hanover Owen Sound Task Force, Climate Change Action Plan, etc.) and other community organizations.

By proceeding with the creation of an AFC plan, the County will have the framework established that will help support future AFC related grant applications and guide strategic plans and priorities. This roadmap will help ensure future decisions and actions reflect and respond to the needs of everyone, including youth, working-age, older adults, and people with disabilities.

As of 2021, Grey County's median age is 49.3, whereas provincially it is 40.7. 24% of Grey's population is 65 years and over, compared to only 14.8% aged 0-14 years. It is known that Grey County continues to be an attractive place for retirees to settle, as a more 'relaxed' lifestyle can be achieved while also being in proximity to recreational, health services, and other essential amenities. Furthermore, as Grey County's population continues to age, we are far from achieving population replacement rates. Supporting young families is a vital component to encouraging the continuation of a vibrant community. In any society, the measure of health and wellbeing of a collective can only be best understood from how the most vulnerable are treated. Arguably, there is a significant number of vulnerable residents in Grey County, inclusive of those beyond the two listed age demographics.

Prioritizing a more inclusive lens to decision-making, program development, and community investment will add to the strength of the County as being recognized and defined as a great place to live for all ages. Findings from the Community Wellbeing Survey (2018) identified that those living in Grey are satisfied with their personal relationships (74.4%), access to parks and recreational opportunities (74.6%), and the environmental quality of their neighbourhood (85.2%). Whereas there were high self-reported rates of poor physical wellbeing (37.7% dissatisfied or neutral), sense of belonging to this community (44% dissatisfied or neutral), and access to arts and cultural opportunities in my community (45.1% dissatisfied or neutral). There is a missed opportunity cost for the community if we are not working toward improving the overall quality of life for all ages. This requires continued leadership by government and community members, working together to ensure policies, programs and services are inclusive to support social and physical environments designed for people to remain in their community and participate in community life.

This strategy and action plan primarily focus on the World Health Organization's (WHO) eight age-friendly community domains: hard infrastructure - outdoor spaces and public buildings, transportation, housing, and soft infrastructure - respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, community and information, community support and health services, and social participation. Additional provincial resources were used to inform the foundation of this work - [Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Toolkit \(2021\)](#) and

[Creating a More Inclusive Ontario - Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations \(2021\).](#)

The *Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations (2021)* provides a general framework for this strategy and action plan.



Figure 1: AFC Process Province of Ontario (2021)

This project had three main phases.

- **Phase 1 – Draft Age Friendly Community Strategy**
  - *Project Background* – introduction to Age-Friendly concept;
  - *Municipal Policy Influences* – assessment of background documents, policies and plans that will inform the remainder of the project;
  - *Approach, Vision and Direction* – exploration of the engagement efforts, combined with WSP’s team analysis of local context and resources. These inputs were used to generate the Vision and Goals for the Strategy and Action Plan – being high-level guiding principles that will inform short- and medium-term implementation actions.
- **Phase 2 – Develop Age Friendly Community Action Plan**
  - *Implementation Priorities* – take the goals and principles articulated in the Strategy and refine them into an ambitious yet achievable Action Plan – identifying leads, timelines, and resource allocation to ensure successful implementation.
- **Phase 3 – Implementation**
  - County staff, local municipal stakeholders, and members of the public will begin project implementation, through guidance from the *Implementation and Monitoring* strategies provided through the Action Plan. There will be key performance indicators (KPIs) through which to measure successful implementation. Scorecards will be provided detailing timelines, high-level cost estimates for each item, department/persons responsible.

Both the County and WSP saw this project being highly collaborative with the stakeholder committee, members of the public, key community organizations, local municipalities, and County staff.

Because of the uncertainty with the pandemic (COVID-19) and a relatively short project timeline, the County opted to rely solely on virtual public engagement, mail, and telephone strategies to connect with Grey's community.

The following includes the extent of public engagement completed for this project:

- **Community Visioning Workshops (x4)**
  - Stakeholder, Municipal Staff, Agency Partners, and the Public
- **Key Representative Interviews**
- **Focus Groups (x4)**
  - M'Wikwedong,
  - Grey Bruce Poverty Task Force,
  - Agricultural Advisory / Economic Development Advisory Groups,
  - Grey Bruce Council on Aging
- **Community Conversation Workshops (x4)**
  - Workshop #1 (AFC dimensions 1 & 2)
  - Workshop #2 (AFC dimensions 3 & 4)
  - Workshop #3 (AFC dimensions 5 & 6)
  - Workshop #4 (AFC dimensions 7 & 8)
- **Community Audit** (locations visited – Owen Sound, the Town of Meaford, the town of Thornbury, the Village of Chatsworth, the Town of Markdale, the Village of Flesherton, the Community of Eugenia, and the Town of Dundalk, with additional stops at some of the conservation areas within the County).
- **AFC Survey** (paper and online versions – total 195 participants, 17,533 responses, and 464 comments)
- **Online Ideation Board**
- **AFC Strategy Video**
- **Stakeholder Committee Meetings (x4)**
- **Community Action Plan Discussion Series (x9)**
  - Agricultural Advisory / Economic Development Advisory Groups, Grey Bruce Poverty Task Force, Grey Bruce Council on Aging, M'Wikwedong, Municipal Staff, Launch Pad, JDSS Grade 9 Class, Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Public.
  - Grey County internal staff (GBLIP, Economic Development, Administrative and Accessibility Coordinator, Social Services, Housing, Transportation, Planning, Communications, LTC, & Paramedics)

Based on the feedback from key stakeholders and members of the public, the vision statement for the Grey County Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan is as follows:

"Grey County and its communities will create inclusive opportunities for people of all ages to actively participate in all stages of life, and to thrive physically and economically, with dignity and independence"

The reports completed throughout this project include:

1. [AFC Strategy and Action Plan Background Review Report July 2021](#)
2. [Visioning Workshop Summary July 2021](#)
3. [AFC Final Community Strategy Nov 2021](#)
4. [AFC Engagement Findings Nov 2021](#)
5. [AFC Action Plan Feb 2022](#)

Staff uncovered that the people and organizations of Grey County are already carrying out a lot of great work, guiding this area be a vibrant, accessible, and enjoyable place to live for all ages. Some of the key policy direction at the County where AFC planning is already being considered includes: planning policies that prioritize safe and accessible design, robust trail system and planning for active transportation (CTMP & RTMP), commitment across the County and lower-tier municipalities to provide a range of housing types and prioritizing affordable and attainable options, acknowledging the need for supportive housing, commitment in planning policy to support the provision of accessible public spaces, and the County acknowledging the need to support a variety of employment opportunities, and offering accessible notification and communication methods. Additional local AFC related successes and areas of improvement were identified by cross-referencing the findings from the Audit, public survey, and background assessment. The following are some examples:

<b>AFC Dimension</b>	<b>Existing Assets</b>	<b>Opportunities for Improvement</b>
Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	Parks & open spaces are widely available County wide	Public seating and rest areas along streets are limited
Transportation	Roads are generally well maintained; parking is widely available	Pedestrian crossings are not consistently timed to permit safe crossing for people with reduced mobility
Housing	Partner organizations within Grey County are working to provide supportive living environments	There are not enough smaller units or "in-between" options for people who want to remain in their community but cannot remain in their family home
Social Participation	Recreation or community centres are accessible to many Grey County residents living in urban areas	Low number of activities, events and programs targeted towards youth in the area

Respect and Social Inclusion	Staff and other front-line workers are viewed as friendly and supportive	Lack of educational training for employers around cultural sensitivity
Communication & Information	Grey Bruce 211 is a well-known and very well-used resource	Internet connectivity in the County varies widely by geography – in rural areas, high speed connectivity is not as frequent
Civic Participation & Employment	Wide range of volunteer options available in Grey County to meet a variety of individual interests and desires	Training programs to gain new skills, reskill for a second career or add credentials at a mid-career point are not widely available, limiting options for workers at all stages of life
Community Support & Health Services	Delivery services and home-based supports are available in some areas of the County	Mental health services and supports are limited

It will be important to build on the momentum established throughout the completion of this project and move toward project implementation. There is excitement from the community that there will be a Strategy and guiding document (Action Plan) to better communicate and inform the value and importance of age-friendly community planning.

A key recommendation from this plan is to hire a dedicated staff at the County who can focus on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these actions going forward. In addition to overseeing the implementation of this Plan, the Age-Friendly Community Coordinator (AFC Coordinator) would work alongside partners to ensure recommended actions are being implemented effectively. Without a dedicated AFC Coordinator, it will be challenging for the County to manage and coordinate the implementation of all these actions (116 total). Additionally, it is recommended that the County proceeds in receiving an AFC designation through the World Health Organization (WHO) to demonstrate the work that has been completed to make Grey County more age-friendly, and to help justify the need for funding to support the implementation of actions in this Plan. These will both be further identified throughout the creation of the workplan and recommended to be initiated throughout the beginning stages of project implementation. The workplan will be created in collaboration with local municipalities and other community partners and will be brought back to Council for consideration.

Priorities have been defined under each AFC dimension to communicate how each action item ties into the bigger picture. To assist with implementation, each action item includes details around timing/priority, action lead, potential partners, and performance indicators (where possible). To supplement the Action Plan, it is recommended the County undertake a progress review every 2 years and prepare a Progress Report Card.

Staff understand the need to be mindful of all the other projects, reports, and plans that may overlap with some of the Action Items in the AFC Plan. Regular collaboration and communication will be required by all stakeholders to alleviate duplicating efforts, and to strengthen implementation by working together and sharing resources. Priorities identified throughout this project may not align with the priorities identified by local municipalities, community organizations, and/or other. The County sees this project as offering the foundation to steer efforts toward achieving age-friendly community outcomes, should that be the respective interest of all parties involved. Collectively, implementation of this project will help meet the needs of all residents including youth, working-age, older adults, and people with disabilities.

As Grey County provides such a diverse landscape, the experiences of those living in a City, Town, Village or Hamlet tend to differ when compared to those living in the more remote countryside. The Strategy and Action Plan consider the various lived experiences of residents across the County to ensure they reflect the needs and priorities of all and provide realistic and feasible recommendations for all communities in Grey County.

Staff are appreciative of the financial support received from the province for the completion of this project. We also want to commend the consulting team, WSP, for guiding this project from start to finish. And the support from the stakeholder committee and all of those who were involved throughout the various engagement processes for this Plan creation. This project has captured the community voices around what it would mean and what it would take to create a more age-friendly Grey County.

## Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are currently no legal or legislative considerations.

## Financial and Resource Implications

This project was primarily funded through the Inclusive Community Grant received by the Ontario government, totaling \$60,000. The remaining project costs being \$10,215 were funded using funds included in the approved 2021 budget for this project.

## Relevant Consultation

- Internal: All County departments were consulted as part of this study.
- External: Municipal staff, community organizations (i.e., Grey County Accessibility Advisory Committee, Grey Bruce Council on Aging, YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce, Grey Bruce Public Health, Economic Development and Agricultural Advisory Group, M'Wikwedong, Launch Pad, Grey Bruce Poverty Task Force, Libraries, Alzheimer's Society Grey Bruce, Georgian College, Southeast Grey Community Health Centre, CMHA, Parks & Rec Departments), and the public.

## Appendices and Attachments

1. [AFC Strategy and Action Plan Background Review Report July 2021](#)

2. [Visioning Workshop Summary July 2021](#)
3. [AFC Final Community Strategy Nov 2021](#)
4. [AFC Engagement Findings Nov 2021](#)
5. [AFC Action Plan Feb 2022](#)