

Cities benefit by being age-friendly for seniors

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Did you know that the North Shore has committed to being age friendly?

In 2012, the District of West Vancouver applied for and received a designation from the provincial government to be an Age Friendly community.

The City and the District of North Vancouver were similarly recognized in 2015. The Age Friendly B.C. recognition program is a partnership between B.C. Healthy Communities Society and the Ministry of Health.

Why make cities age-friendly? According to the World Health Organization, an age-friendly city encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.

They go on to say, that in practical terms, an age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

Following the 2015 designation, a group of people in North Vancouver, including municipal staff and community members, started working on their action plan which included priorities for meaningful change.

These priorities focused on issues and concerns about outdoor spaces and public buildings, public transportation, housing, social participation, respect and inclusion, employment and volunteerism, and health services.

The goals were put into a matrix that looked at what had been done, what could be done and what was thought most doable.

The matrix was brought to the Services to Seniors Coalition, a North Shore group of small businesses, organizations and individuals sponsored by Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society, to give them an overview of the eight goals in terms of the most promising for a community action response.

Among the goals identified were: an alternative transportation strategy, working on housing and homelessness strategies, promoting the benefits of retaining older workers and encouraging employers to plan for an aging work force, proactively assisting immigrant communities, and assisting in the development of a Dementia Friendly Plan for the North Shore.

What does an age-friendly community mean to you?

I want to live in an age-friendly community because it acknowledges that seniors are a resource not a burden to our community. Families and individuals are less stressed with a healthy aging population whose needs are acknowledged concretely. People recognize that seniors' knowledge and experience is valuable and useful in a vibrant forward-looking community.

It's great for our communities to be designated Age Friendly, but the work doesn't stop there. A lot of work needs to be done and it will be worth it.

As a senior, I for one will be supporting the work and assisting where I can. If you want to be involved contact the committee through Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 48 years and has worked for and with seniors for 20 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome. Email:

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