

north shore news

Seattle programs inspire

Wash.'s amalgamated treatment of programs for the elderly cover all the bases

[Tom Carney](#) / North Shore News

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I'm just back from a weekend away in Seattle.

Money Magazine ranked Seattle 10th on its list of best places in America for a healthy retirement. Let's see if the Emerald City has something to teach us about how to deliver services to seniors.

The Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens in Seattle offers a wealth of services including referrals, an employment resource centre, a utility assistance program, computer training classes, arts and special events as well as a Gold Card that entitles cardholders to discounts on a variety of things around town. We have a long way to go before we catch up to Seattle on this one.

Establishing a seniors' advisory council that reports directly to each of the three North Shore municipal councils would be a good place to start.

The Area Agency on Aging for Seattle and King County delivers a comprehensive service program for older adults, families, caregivers and people with disabilities.

It's the mix of services that interests me here. I'm not aware of a single agency on the North Shore that has a mandate to provide services to seniors, caregivers and the disabled all under one roof.

Indeed the whole spectrum of service delivery in Seattle is marked by a much closer collaboration between the delivery of services to seniors and the disabled than we see on the North Shore.

I think Seattle may be on to something here and I'd like to see a local agency like the Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society research this model further.

We have numerous information lines on the North Shore but I'm not aware of a service here like Seattle Medfinds that focuses exclusively on alternate health care providers, holistic therapies and natural health remedies or a service like the Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound, a consumer governed, non-profit health care system that

co-ordinates care and coverage for members in their own operated medical facilities.

There are numerous directories and searchable online databases of seniors housing and retirement communities here and in Seattle.

Senior Outlook in Seattle takes this one step further with accommodation listings that contain floor plans, virtual tours, maps and photos, and information about amenities on their website.

Thinking of moving? SNAP for Seniors in Seattle offers a searchable database of listings for more than 200,000 seniors service providers in the United States.

Seniors Services of King County is the most comprehensive nonprofit agency serving seniors and their families in Washington State. Serving approximately 50,000 clients a year, their programs include adult day centres, caregiver and fitness programs, Meals on Wheels, mobile markets, transportation and senior activity centres throughout the city.

Again, we have those services but the amalgamation of services under one umbrella is quite different from the model we have here.

Is bigger really better? Seattle thinks so and the North Shore municipalities have been urging their smaller service providers to amalgamate for years now.

I'm not convinced that is the way to go but there is no harm in trying something new.

Speaking of which, Seattle's Merrill Gardens Retirement Community shares a space with college students and is the first retirement community to get its own government liquor store.

I haven't checked it out myself but as your representative that oversight will be corrected on my next visit to Seattle.

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