

Outdoor Spaces, Buildings and Safety



Community Consultations

In 2008, the Manitoba government launched the Age-Friendly Initiative, formally inviting communities throughout Manitoba to join the Initiative and work toward becoming more age-friendly.

Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative communities are provided with an opportunity to participate in a community consultation as a way of identifying priorities. The consultations are made possible through a partnership between the Manitoba Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat and the University of Manitoba's Centre on Aging, as part of the Age-Friendly Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) project. During the community consultations, which are facilitated by CURA staff, people are invited to discuss their views on how age-friendly their community is and what areas need improvement. Prior to the group discussion, a survey is distributed to get individual views on how age-friendly the community is.

By the end of March 2011, the Age-Friendly CURA team conducted consultations in 46 communities. Forty-nine (49) communities completed an age-friendly survey for a total of 1274 surveys. Summarized here are the collective group discussions and survey responses related to outdoor spaces/buildings and safety.

Group Discussion Summary

During the community consultation, participants engage in a facilitated group discussion to identify priorities needed to make their community more age-friendly. By highlighting what is working well in the community and what needs improvement, the CURA team prepares a report for each community reflecting the discussion. The completed report is shared with the community's Age-Friendly Committee.

The CURA team combined and summarized priorities and potential actions from all the community consultation reports (until March 2011). All of the 46 communities mentioned priorities related to outdoor spaces/buildings, and 19 communities mentioned priorities related to safety. What follows is a summary of the most commonly identified outdoor spaces/buildings and safety-related themes that emerged from the discussions.

Community consultation reports can be found on the Age-Friendly Manitoba website: <http://www.agefriendlymanitoba.ca>

Access (buildings)

Building entrances:

- Install automatic doors (if not possible, replace existing heavy doors with lighter doors and ensure that they open away from ramps).
- Add ramps to building entrances or re-design existing ramps to ensure that slopes are gradual and that they are easy to maneuver (i.e. no sharp turns, wide enough).

Access within buildings:

- Ensure that all people can easily navigate inside buildings (e.g., install elevators/lifts, widen aisles, remove obstacles, provide benches for resting).

Public washrooms:

- Add public washrooms.
- Renovate existing public washrooms (e.g., increase door width and room size, add raised toilets and grab rails).
- Ensure that public washrooms are accessible for everyone, including those in wheelchairs and families with small children.
- Post visible signs to clearly identify the location of public washrooms.

Access during winter:

- Ensure snow and ice are removed from building entrances and sidewalks leading to businesses.
- Apply sand to reduce slipping at business approaches.

Access (outdoor spaces)

- Install crosswalks at specific community locations and ensure that they are clearly identified (e.g., large signs, clearly painted lines, lighting).

Sidewalks:

- Repair broken and uneven sidewalks.
- Ensure that sidewalks are free from snow and ice and sanded during the winter months.
- Trim overhanging tree branches/hedges .

Common Themes

Availability

- Add benches throughout the community (e.g., walking trails, parks, business areas, senior housing units).

Handi-cap parking:

- Add handi-cap parking spaces, along with clearly identifiable signage.
- Monitor and enforce the use of handi-cap spaces, so they remain available for those who need them.

Sidewalks:

- Add sidewalks to identified areas.
- Extend and connect existing sidewalks.
- Create walking trails/pathways for recreational use (e.g., walking, biking, skiing).

Safety

- Increase community signage and ensure that signs are in visible locations. For example, add crosswalk signage; signage to identify key town locations; and signs for motorists (e.g., speed, parking).
- Review existing speed limits and assess whether these need to be reduced at specific community locations (e.g., school zones).
- Increase awareness of street safety and adherence to traffic rules for motorists (e.g., proper stopping for pedestrians at crosswalks, reversing from angled parking spots).
- Increase lighting where needed (e.g., back lanes, residential streets, walking paths).
- Expand the RCMP/police presence in the community.

Emergency preparedness:

- Develop concise emergency plans (e.g., guide, pamphlet, checklist).
- Ensure that all residents, especially seniors, are informed about what to do in the case of a community emergency (i.e. where to go, who to contact). For example, post guides in senior apartments, hold public meetings, etc..
- Make certain that all roads are easily identifiable by emergency personnel (e.g., included in GPS system) and that home owners visibly display house numbers.

Outdoor Spaces, Buildings and Safety Summary

The following section summarizes responses from the 49 communities to the outdoor spaces/buildings and safety-related questions of the survey:

- Over two-thirds of those that completed the survey felt that road signs are easy to read and large enough for older drivers in their community.
- One-half of respondents indicated that there are sidewalks linking residences and essential services in most or all areas of their community; however, 58% felt that sidewalks in most or all areas are not well maintained.
- Over 70% of those that completed the survey agreed that snow clearing is done in a timely manner.
- While one-half of respondents felt that there are enough street crosswalks in busy business areas, 45% felt that there are not enough crosswalks in busy residential or recreational areas.
- Approximately 60% of those that completed the survey felt that there are not enough public washrooms in key areas of their community, and slightly over 50% felt that public washrooms do not accommodate people with wheelchairs.
- Slightly over one-half of respondents indicated that most or all public buildings are not easily accessible to everybody.
- Approximately 30% indicated that crime and vandalism are a problem in their community.
- Over 80% of those that completed the survey agreed that seniors feel safe when walking alone during the day; 43% felt that seniors feel safe when walking alone at night.



Outdoor Spaces, Buildings and Safety Summary

	Percent Responding (%)		
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings			
The road signs in my community are easy to read and large enough for older drivers.	69.3	17.3	13.4
There are sidewalks linking residences and essential services in most or all areas of my community.	50.9	42.0	7.1
Sidewalks in most or all areas of my community are well maintained.	33.3	58.1	8.6
Snow clearing is done in a timely manner so walking and driving are safe.	71.4	21.3	7.3
There are enough street crosswalks in busy business areas.	50.2	40.6	9.2
There are enough street crosswalks in busy residential and/or recreation areas.	40.3	45.3	14.3
There are enough public washrooms in key areas of my community (e.g., business and recreation areas).	27.6	59.9	12.6
Public washrooms accommodate people with wheelchairs in my community.	20.8	52.7	26.5
Most or all businesses and public buildings are easily accessible to everybody (e.g., have wheelchair ramps, automatic doors).	33.6	54.2	12.2
Safety			
Crime and vandalism are a problem in my community.	30.5	54.9	14.6
Seniors feel safe when walking alone during the day in my community.	82.9	7.5	9.7
Seniors feel safe when walking alone during the night in my community.	43.2	27.9	28.8



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Download the PDF from <http://umanitoba.ca/centres/aging/>

Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba | 338 Isbister Building | Winnipeg MB R3T 2N2
Tel: (204) 474-8754 | Fax: (204) 474-7576 | E-mail: aging@umanitoba.ca



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