

Age-Friendly Communities in Manitoba



Outdoor spaces and buildings



Housing



Transportation



Social participation

Eight age-friendly dimensions



Respect and social inclusion



Civic participation and employment



Communication and information



Community support and health services

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

Drawing on the World Health Organization's definition (WHO, 2007), an age-friendly community is seen as one that provides supports and opportunities in eight domains: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; respect and inclusion; social participation; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community supports and health services.

In 2010, the Centre on Aging conducted a project designed to find out where the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative is at approximately two years after it was launched. Given the short time frame since the Initiative was implemented, the focus was not on "outcomes"; rather, we wanted to take a first look at the communities that are part of the Initiative. The following is a summary of the larger report entitled *Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative: A first look*.

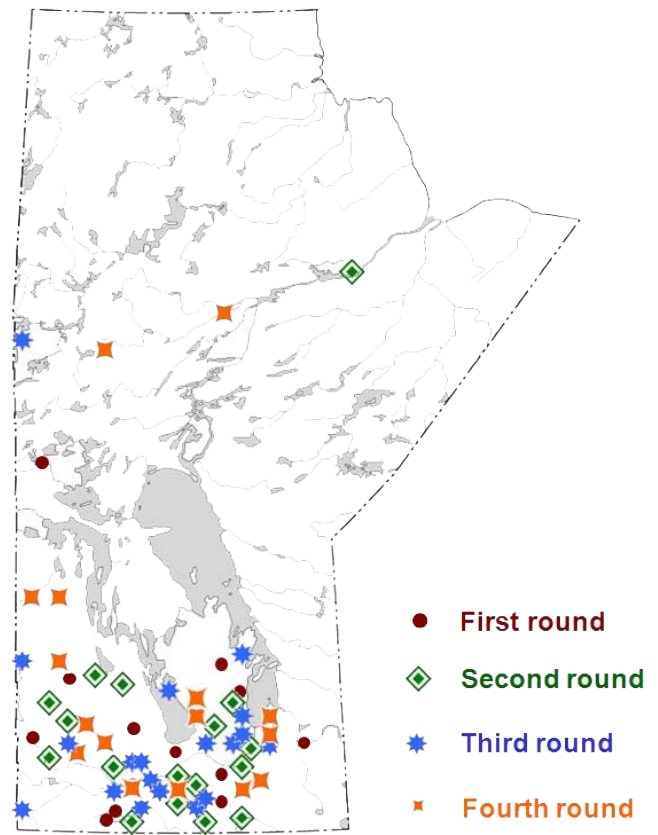
Profile of communities currently in the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative

After four intake rounds, 66 municipalities from all over Manitoba (including cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities) are now formally part of the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative.

The 66 municipalities encompass over 800,000 residents, or about 80% of the population of Manitoba. On average, 20% of the population in these municipalities was 65+ years old, suggesting that municipalities with older populations tended to join the Initiative first.

Communities that are part of the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative are similar to those that are not currently part of the Initiative when compared on other features such as income.

The map to the right shows the communities currently part of the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative.



Community priorities*

Age-friendly communities are given an opportunity to participate in a community consultation as a way of identifying priorities. Members of the community are invited to discuss how age-friendly their community is and what areas need improvement. Participants are also asked to complete an individual survey on their community's age-friendliness. A report highlighting the group discussion priorities and survey results is prepared for each community.

To date, 55 communities have held a community consultation, and a total of 1274 age-friendly surveys have been completed as part of the consultations.

On the following page is a list of the top five most and least age-friendly aspects identified by communities that completed a survey during a community consultation meeting.

* The information and findings in this brochure come from the analysis conducted with communities who had a consultation before July 2010

| Top five most age-friendly aspects | Top five least age-friendly aspects |
|--|---|
| Seniors are generally treated with respect | There are not enough paid job opportunities for seniors |
| Seniors feel safe when walking alone during the day | Public telephone answering services are not adapted to the needs of seniors |
| Snow clearing is done in a timely manner so walking and driving are safe | There is not enough subsidized housing for low-income seniors |
| There are enough parking spaces close to services and stores | The wait times to get into senior housing that provides supports to seniors (e.g., assisted living, PCH) are not reasonable |
| The road signs are easy to read and large enough | There is not enough housing that meets the needs of seniors |

The survey responses sometimes varied according to the type of community (city, town, village, rural municipality). For example, in cities 2% of residents felt there is enough housing that meets the needs of seniors; whereas in villages, 37% of residents felt there is enough housing.

The survey also includes open-ended questions where participants write down issues they believe need to be most urgently addressed to make their community more age-friendly. Sidewalks/streets and housing were the top two priority areas identified. This was followed by recreation; buildings/ accessibility; transportation; health services; community programs/services; communication/ information; civic participation/social inclusion; and safety.

What has happened in the communities?

To find out what has been happening since communities first became involved in the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative, telephone interviews were conducted with one representative from the Age-Friendly Advisory Committees of each of the 24 first two intake rounds.

Organization and management

- The majority of communities (91.7%) have established an Age-Friendly Advisory Committee.
- However, most of the Committees are not formally structured; for example, they do not have a Terms of Reference.

Promoting age-friendliness

Communities have started to raise public awareness and interest in this Initiative in various ways:

- Half of the communities have organized a special event or workshop in the community to promote the Initiative.
- The most popular method of promoting the age-friendly initiative has been an article in the local newspaper or radio announcements.

Becoming more age-friendly

Nearly two-thirds of communities told us they have started initiating projects to become more age-friendly. Examples of projects include:

- Installation of power doors to increase accessibility
- Creation of wheelchair accessible washrooms
- Establishment of handicap parking
- Improving sidewalks, walking trails, and curbs
- Development of congregate meal programs and grocery delivery programs
- Development of new intergenerational programs

“We are in the process of putting up a senior housing complex. It’s under construction and expected to be completed in June.”

“We were very fortunate to have a student working here last winter and fall. She created a senior resource booklet, which will be printed.”

Partnerships

- Half of the communities have built partnerships with businesses, schools, and churches with purposes such as providing financial support, helping to promote age-friendliness, and providing new opportunities.

Challenges

In discussing the challenges of becoming more age-friendly, awareness and buy-in, resources, and funding came up as important challenges in many communities.

Challenges related to awareness and municipal buy-in

“The greatest challenge has been communication and information. People need to have an understanding of how their life can be better, which can be looked at using the eight age-friendly dimensions”

“Changing ideology in the community is a slow process”

Challenges related to capacity

“Committee capacity, there is only so much they are able to do as a small group without assistance from the community.”

“Volunteerism has dried up. People are working on multiple committees and are tired.”

Funding issues

“In implementing changes, the biggest challenge is convincing people to sink money into accomplishing these things.”

If you have any additional questions about the full *Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative: A first look* report, contact the Age-Friendly Communities CURA project coordinator at 204.474.6583 or by email at aging@umanitoba.ca

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