



Township of Black River-Matheson

Seniors Action Plan



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Introduction:

The Seniors Community 'Action Plan', building directly on the Seniors Community Needs Assessment, identified 20 goals with a series of 59 actions that the Township can take in the short-term to help make Black River-Matheson a safer more engaging community for seniors and people with disabilities. This plan, over time, seeks to improve facilities and services for seniors and people with disabilities across the full spectrum, from fully independent older adults and seniors to those who are more vulnerable and need additional support. It is built on the needs assessment, what we learned from approximately 156 encounters with seniors, people with disabilities, caregivers, service providers and community leaders. The findings and actionable strategies within this report are consistent with other communities in Ontario and across Canada, as well as best practice research on improving and making communities more friendly and inclusive for seniors and people with disabilities (refer to the Seniors Community Needs Assessment completed as Phase I of this Project).

The Action Plan is comprehensive, covering all 8 domains of age-friendly communities identified by the World Health Organization:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Housing
3. Community Support and Health Services
4. Social Recreation and Cultural Participation
5. Transportation
6. Communication and Information
7. Civic Participation and Volunteering
8. Respect and Social Inclusion

The Action Plan development process required a number of steps. Initially a seniors and people with disabilities community needs assessment was completed. Then, using specific criteria - see [Table 1](#), the Black River-Matheson Seniors Advisory Committee and Township Senior Staff reviewed and ranked the identified needs as short-term, mid-term, and longer-term needs. The actual prioritized or ranked needs are outlined in [Table 2](#), using a color-coded system (green, yellow, red). The final step was to describe the short-term needs as goal statements and, within a logic model, identify specific strategies to address the goals, assigns accountabilities and timelines, and identify measures intended to help map success ([Table 3](#)).

Needs Prioritization - Explanation:

The Seniors Advisory Committee and Township staff used the prioritization criteria below to categorize the findings of the needs assessment as either: a short-term need (quick wins to be addressed immediately), medium-term need (to be addressed in the next 12 months) or longer-term want (to be addressed in the next 12 to 36 months). The main purpose of this ranking exercise was to determine an appropriate starting point for initiating improvement actions and reduce the long list of needs into a more manageable, staggered approach with some of the

needs to be addressed immediately and others to be strategically addressed over a 3-year timeframe.

Table 1: Prioritization Criteria

Priority Temporal Range:	Decision-Making Criteria:
Short-term needs (quick wins):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently started (underway) – continue work • Builds on past successes (expansion) • Has been recognized and is supported by the community • Good fit with the Township’s vision and strategic plan • Can be done within current budget
Medium-term need: Initiate action within 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently under consideration • Requires more planning – research before final decision is made • Requires more community consultation • Will fit within future budget projections • It is achievable – can be done in a timely manner
Longer-term need: Initiate action within 12 to 36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires more extensive time and planning • Significant budget required • Needs more community input and support

Needs Ranking Results - Explanation:

Table 2 provides information on all acknowledged needs (from the Seniors Advisory Community Needs Assessment) aligned with the 8 domains of age-friendly communities identified by the World Health Organization. The results from the needs ranking exercise are colour coded below (with associated ranking percentages): Green – for short-term need (quick wins to be addressed immediately); Yellow - for medium-term need (to be addressed in the next 12 months); and Red - for longer-term need (to be addressed in the next 12 to 36 months).

Table 2: Seniors Advisory Committee and Township Staff Needs Ranking Results

Needs:	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Direction #1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings:			
a) Bike, scooter, wheelchair lanes (dedicated)			100%
b) More seating/rest places/picnic tables	28%	57%	14%
c) Accessible washrooms	57%	14%	28%
d) More trails and walkways		43%	57%
e) More accessible buildings	57%	28%	14%
Direction #2: Transportation:			
a) Special accessible transit and volunteer drivers	14%	57%	28%
b) Public transit service/routes		14%	86%
c) Affordable taxi service	43%	43%	14%
d) Road repairs/maintenance (infrastructure improvements)	57%	14%	28%
e) Transportation mapping on what is available for seniors and people with disabilities	14%	71%	14%
Direction #3: Housing:			
a) More local retirement options	28%	28%	43%
b) More long-term care homes in the community	14%	14%	71%
c) Affordable accessible housing options generally for seniors and people with disabilities	28%	43%	28%
d) Rent subsidies and geared to income housing	14%	71%	14%
e) More aging in place supports for seniors and people with disabilities (meal delivery, housekeeping, personal care)	71%	28%	
f) Information on housing options	71%	14%	14%
Direction #4: Community Support and Health Services:			
a) Access to primary care services	57%	43%	
b) More home support care	71%	28%	
c) Local palliative care service	43%	28%	28%
d) Better access to memory – dementia supports	43%	28%	28%
e) More information on community services/supports and assistance navigating the support system	57%	43%	

Needs:	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Direction #5: Social, Recreational and Cultural Participation			
a) More social, recreational programs and events for seniors and people with disabilities	43%	57%	
b) Arts and cultural programming/events	14%	71%	14%
c) Intergenerational social, education and recreation programs for all age	14%	43%	43%
Direction #6: Communication and Information:			
a) More/better information on services, programs, activities, events	71%	14%	14%
b) Larger print materials in plain language	57%	28%	14%
c) Live in-person telephone information contacts	43%	14%	43%
Direction #7: Civic Participation and Volunteering:			
a) Employment and training opportunities for seniors and people with a disability	28%	57%	14%
b) More accessible public venues and buildings for increased community participation	28%	43%	28%
c) Support for volunteers (training and appreciation)	28%	57%	14%
Direction #8: Respect and Social Inclusion:			
a) More education and awareness promoting inclusion and diversity	57%	28%	14%
b) Intergenerational recreation and social programs		86%	14%
c) Cultural activities with people of all ages	43%	14%	43%
d) Intergenerational family activities	14%	43%	43%

Action Plan:

Table 3 offers a standard format - Logic Model 'Action Plan' Template (*from the Province of Ontario's – Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Toolkit*). The Action Plan is focussed on addressing the priority needs identified by the Seniors Advisory Committee and Staff; generally, all need areas scoring high (43% or higher) in the short-term/quick win category are addressed (green zone in Table 2 above).

Note, that to ensure continuity and comprehensiveness, all 8 domains of age-friendly communities identified by the World Health Organization are addressed in the Action Plan. To meet this goal, some needs that scored as low as 28% in the short-term were also included and operationalized in the Table below (e.g., specifically for the category of "Civic Participation and Volunteering").

The needs were rewritten as action 'goals' in the Action Plan, and specific strategies/tactics have been outlined to achieve each goal. Using a logic model template; accountabilities for achieving the goals, timelines and measures needed to identify success have also been included (see Table 3). Although the goals have been prioritized as areas to be addressed immediately and action initiated, it should be noted that due to their complexity, some goals may require more than 12 months to complete.

Table 3: Seniors Community Action Plan

WHO DOMAIN 1 - OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Increase the availability of accessible public venues/buildings.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ongoing compliance with AODA accessibility requirements for all businesses and facilities • Continue to advocate for better accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities • Educate businesses in addressing the needs of seniors and people with disabilities 	<p>Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Township</p> <p>Private Businesses</p>	<p>Immediate/Ongoing</p>	<p>- Identification and removal of barriers to access</p>
<p><u>Goal 2</u> – Provide more accessible washrooms in strategic locations for seniors and people with disabilities.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Seniors Advisory Committee’s mandate is to provide advice and recommendations to Council with regard to the removal of barriers and improving access for seniors and people with disabilities relating to Township facilities including accessible washrooms, seating, rest places and picnic tables • The Township will include recommendations for local planning to improve access to accessible washrooms by ensuring that they are barrier free 	<p>Seniors Committee</p> <p>Township</p>	<p>Immediate/Ongoing</p>	<p>- Adequate access to accessible washrooms in Township buildings</p>

WHO DOMAIN 2 – TRANSPORTATION

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Provide more affordable taxi services for seniors and people with disabilities.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore cost reduction strategies for seniors using taxi services through the new established ‘Transportation Planning Committee-Network’ (<i>see Goal 2 below</i>) • Consider off-peak time of day reductions for seniors and people with disabilities – offering transportation discounts 	<p>Township</p> <p>Private Taxi providers</p> <p>Transportation Committee</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of cost reduction solutions - Actual savings (%) for seniors and people with disabilities using taxi services
<p><u>Goal 2</u>- Improve Township roads and transportation infrastructure.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage service users, including seniors and people with disabilities in transportation planning • Establish a Transportation Planning Committee-Network • Prepare a 5-year transportation strategy/plan for the Township (and eventually a regional service) 	<p>Township</p> <p>Consumers</p> <p>Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Transportation Committee</p> <p>Neighbouring communities</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation Plan developed for the Township/Region

WHO DOMAIN 3 – HOUSING

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Provide more aging in place supports for seniors and people with disabilities (meal delivery, housekeeping, personal care).</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide home repair and maintenance supports • Review and advance creative solutions/designs that fosters aging in place with appropriate supports provided along the aging continuum • Meet with Ontario Health – Home and Community Division to review supports options and the application process (then publicize this information) 	<p>Township</p> <p>Ontario Health – Home and Community (local team)</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>County</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More repair & maintenance supports available - Number of creative solutions identified & implemented - # of volunteers helping - # of seniors able to stay in the home of their choice longer with support
<p><u>Goal 2</u> – Provide more information on housing options.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication between housing providers and the wider community on options • Create a housing registry for shared space with seniors and persons with disabilities 	<p>Private housing providers</p> <p>Township</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on options widely distributed - Registry in place and being accessed
<p><u>Goal 3</u> – Provide more accessible housing options generally for seniors and people with disabilities.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and offer grants for renovations to make homes more accessible and senior-friendly • Provide increased incentives for private builders and not-for-profit organizations • Seek increased funding for Township and wider Region for joint housing builds 	<p>Township</p> <p>Province of Ontario</p> <p>Government of Canada</p>	<p>Immediate Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in accessible housing units - More affordable accessible housing

WHO DOMAIN 4 - COMMUNITY SUPPORTS & HEALTH SERVICES

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> - Expand home care and access to primary care services.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore needs and options for improving home care and providing better access to primary care services • Meet with physicians to determine their willingness to provide house calls (electronic and in person) • Meet with Ontario Health – Home and Community to discuss home care community needs and improvement options 	<p>Township Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Ontario Health – Home and Community (local team)</p> <p>Medical Society</p> <p>Individual practitioners</p>	<p>Immediate / Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In home primary care available - More home care options available for seniors and persons with disabilities - Improved access for individual's requiring care (more options) - Wait times to access primary care reduced
<p><u>Goal 2</u> - Provide a local palliative care service.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore palliative care needs and service model options • Meet with Ontario Health (Local Team) to review needs and prepare a business case for enhanced palliative care for the Township 	<p>Township Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Ontario Health (Local Team)</p> <p>Hospital</p>	<p>Immediate / Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal meetings with Ontario Health - Palliative Care Service Business Case Completed

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 3</u> – Provide more information on community services/supports and assistance to seniors and people with disabilities to navigate the support system.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with seniors and people with disabilities to determine what types of information they require and the preferred method(s) of distribution/access • Increase dissemination of information about community services/ supports through electronic and conventional media • Establish a central information hub for seniors and people with disabilities to access information on services and activities • Survey seniors and people with disabilities at 6 months and 1 year to see if their information needs are being met 	<p>Township Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Local Media</p> <p>Library</p> <p>Service Providers</p>	<p>Immediate/Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information Hub operational - Better informed community - More seniors and people with disabilities accessing events, activities and services and supports
<p><u>Goal 4</u> – Provide memory care/dementia support.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support provincial ‘Dementia-Friendly’ initiatives • Prepare a local memory care/dementia support network 	<p>Ontario Health (Local Team)</p> <p>Alzheimer’s Society</p> <p>Township Seniors Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Immediate/Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - # of initiatives in place - Ongoing meetings with involved parties through ‘network’

WHO DOMAIN 5 - SOCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Provide more social, recreational programs and events for seniors and people with disabilities.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include older adult and people with disabilities feedback in the review and development on new programming and events planning • Examine the need and develop a business case for a dedicated seniors social /activity hub in the Township • Township to collaborate with long term care home and seniors service providers to offer transportation options to programs and events • Advocate (provincially) for more programming and events to combat ageism • Township to collaborate with community services providers to support senior fairs/forums on various topics (emergency preparedness, safety and abuse prevention, dementia and health and support services available to local residents) 	<p>Township</p> <p>Service Providers</p> <p>Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Province</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community engagement with seniors and people with disabilities - Types of social and recreation programs available - Types of events/fairs available - Number of seniors participating from LTC facilities

WHO DOMAIN 6 - COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION:

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Provide more/better information on services, programs, activities and events.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase dissemination of information about services through electronic and conventional media • Use multiple formats and media that appeal to older adults to advertise community events • Establish a central accessible information hub for seniors and people with disabilities listing services and activities 	<p>Township</p> <p>Service providers</p> <p>Newspaper - Media</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Library</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better access to information for target group(s) - Types of media used
<p><u>Goal 2</u> – Ensure that larger print materials are available in plain language.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify population most in need of this service and work directly with them to develop materials 	<p>Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Township</p> <p>Consumers</p> <p>Library</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Print materials are appropriate for all consumers/residents
<p><u>Goal 3</u> – Ensure the provision of live-in-person telephone information services at the Township.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that live-call operators are available for the Township during regular business hours • Implement a dedicated ‘live’ senior’s support telephone service. Providing information on services, social, cultural, learning and recreational programming for seniors and people with disabilities. 	<p>Township Library</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track calls that go to answering machine - % of calls answered live during regular business hours - Dedicated seniors call in support services established

WHO DOMAIN 7 - CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEERING:

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Increase employment and training opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a seniors and people with disabilities volunteer and people seeking employment registry and talent bank • Educate businesses on the availability of seniors and people with disabilities desire to work and contribute to society • Promote hiring of seniors and people with disabilities within their area of expertise • Enhance education and training (vocational) opportunities • Explore seniors and people with disabilities internship program opportunities • Identify and leverage government funding to provide subsidies for businesses hiring seniors and people with disabilities 	<p>Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Business Owners</p> <p>Township</p> <p>Province of Ontario</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>School Boards</p> <p>Job Banks</p> <p>Community College</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More employment and training opportunities - More seniors and people with disabilities seeking employment are successful - Partnerships that promote employment and training
<p><u>Goal 2</u> – Provide more support to volunteers (including training and appreciation).</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature more stories on volunteers on the Township web page and in local media, telling their story and recognizing their commitment • Conduct (annual) events that provided recognition and awards to volunteers • Provide time for volunteers to get together socially to share their experiences and acknowledge their contributions • Keep volunteers up-to-date, let them know the big picture and how they are contributing to this effort • Create a support network for volunteers that includes training opportunities and mentorship • Reward volunteers by investing in on-going skills development and training programs. Make this a part of the Townships volunteer recruitment process 	<p>Township</p> <p>Community Partners</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>Media</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - # of Volunteers - # of award events - Training and skills development opportunities - Stories in media promoting volunteers

WHO DOMAIN 8 - RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION:

Goals & Strategies:	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measures
<p><u>Goal 1</u> – Ensure the provision of more education and awareness promoting inclusion and diversity.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with community leaders to produce key messaging • Partner with Community College and the Library to develop an education and awareness approach to promoting inclusion and reducing racism • Special displays of materials and information promoting inclusiveness and diversity • Conduct research on similar communities to determine successes and promote knowledge transfer on what’s working 	<p>Township Seniors Advisory Committee</p> <p>Community College Library</p>	<p>Immediate/ Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More people informed about inclusion and racism - Education and awareness messaging and events - More accepting community
<p><u>Goal 2</u> – Ensure the provision of cultural activities with people of all ages.</p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue/promote joint programming cultural events with a cross section of providers (e.g., Museums, School Boards, Library, local service providers) • Establish story telling/family history groups • Create a web page link on culture that tells of stories promoting diversity and inclusion • Have cultural fairs and events celebrating different languages, food and clothing to promote awareness 	<p>Township Service providers</p> <p>School board Community College</p> <p>First Nations Library</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More people informed about different cultures - Events and education on different cultures - More people of all ages participating in these events

Moving Forward - Recommendations:

To succeed, the seniors action plan for Black River-Matheson will require the collective efforts of a broad range of stakeholders to come together to implement the recommended actions and ultimately become a more inclusive age-friendly community to all residents. To support the implementation of the goals and strategies identified in the above Community Action Plan, the following recommendations are being put forward for consideration to increase success, sustain momentum, and help the community to realize the full achievement of this Action Plan.

1. Establish a permanent inclusive community 'action plan' monitoring and evaluation committee that includes older adults and persons with disabilities (*alternately extend this mandate to the existing Township Seniors Advisory Committee*).

In reviewing experiences from other areas in Ontario, involved in inclusive age-friendly community planning, successful implementation of the seniors needs assessment action plan has been achieved through the establishment of a permanent monitoring and evaluation entity.

2. Obtain adoption of the seniors needs assessment action plan by Township Council and post the seniors needs assessment and action plan publicly.

Other communities have secured a local municipal resolution to actively, promote and work toward becoming an age-friendly inclusive community. This has included a signed resolution by municipal officials, an action plan, and ongoing media coverage of municipal commitments.

3. Secure a commitment to measuring activities, review the action plan quarterly and report on them publicly.

It is important to continually engage the community in measuring and reporting on the outcomes of the action plan. Outcomes of the age-friendly inclusive community plan must be documented in municipal performance reports along with evidence of the communication of results (e.g., print and online forms, web portals, town hall meetings, etc.).

4. Explore grant-funding opportunities to provide additional resources for implementation.

Numerous grants and funding opportunities are available at all levels of Government across Canada, many specifically available to special needs population such as seniors and persons with disabilities to live a more fulfilling active life. These funding sources are also available to support important community projects such as the development of a dedicated community centre for seniors and persons with disabilities.

5. Seek recognition as an 'age-friendly community' (AFC) from the Province of Ontario Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility

This Award has been established to celebrate the work of Ontario communities that are striving to become age-friendly and to showcase promising practices across the province. Communities selected for the Award demonstrate a strong commitment to key principles for creating age-friendly inclusive communities, including engagement with local seniors, collaboration with a diversity of community partners, and significant impact on the local community.

Formal recognition from Ontario enables your community to have access to streamlined eligibility for national recognition through the Pan-Canadian AFC Recognition Framework developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). PHAC's endorsement will also trigger the World Health Organization to invite your community to join its Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

As a recipient of this award, your community's initiative will also be showcased on the websites of both the provincial government: www.ontario.ca/seniors, and the Age-Friendly Communities Planning Outreach Initiative: www.agefriendlyontario.ca.

6. Plan and facilitate community 'Age-Friendly Call to Action'

This Call to Action is intended to bring stakeholders together to share the recommendations within the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan, identify shared priorities, and seek out champions to move forward on action items.

7. Identify or confirm an Age-Friendly Inclusive Community Coordinator role or position

The coordinator may be established as a new, part-time position, or as part of an existing municipal role. Primary responsibilities may include facilitating meetings, monitoring the action plan implementation, annual reporting on successes/progress, developing content for local age-friendly communications, seeking out funding opportunities, liaising with community partners, and assisting to develop promotional and outreach for local activities and events.