



# Healthy Aging

STRATHCONA COUNTY FRAMEWORK

## Acknowledgements

The Healthy Aging Strathcona County Framework represents the collective efforts of our community, and we would like to thank everyone who contributed to its development. We sincerely appreciate the participation of older adults, community organizations, service providers, and County staff who shared their perspectives and ideas during engagement sessions.





- Advocacy for a Seniors Centre
- Alberta Wildlife Carving Association
- Ardrossan 55+ Club
- Community Adult Learning and Literacy Society
- Drive Happiness
- Eastside Grannies
- Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
- Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council
- Healthy Aging Alberta
- Heartland Housing Foundation
- Josephburg Area 5 Seniors
- Leisure Days – Sherwood Park
- Linking Generations
- Men's Shed of Strathcona County
- SAFFRON
- Seniors United Now
- Sherwood Care
- Sherwood Park 55+ Club
- Sherwood Park Strathcona County Primary Care Network
- South Cooking Lake Seniors Center
- Strathcona County
  - Business Innovation and Communications
  - Family and Community Services
  - Recreation, Parks and Culture
  - Transit
  - Utilities
- Strathcona County Diversity Committee
- Strathcona County Library
- Strathcona County Museum and Archives
- Strathcona County Seniors Advisory Committee
- Volunteer Strathcona
- WESeniors Strathcona
- Widow to Widow
- Writers Foundation of Strathcona County

We would also like to acknowledge the participants of the Older Adult Engagement survey whose valuable responses have helped shape a framework that reflects our community's shared vision for healthy aging.

## Territorial Acknowledgements

Strathcona County is located on Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, North Saskatchewan River Territory. Strathcona County honours the First Peoples of this land. We recognize that we stand upon land that carries the footsteps of Cree, Métis and Blackfoot among many other Nations who have been here for thousands of years. Therefore, Strathcona County has an inherent responsibility to foster healthier relationships with First Peoples and further the Calls to Action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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## Introduction

Older adults are an integral part of our community, offering a wealth of experience and knowledge that enriches every aspect of life in Strathcona County. They are caregivers of loved ones while also playing a crucial role in the workforce and as community volunteers. Between disrupting outdated assumptions on aging and tackling life transitions, older adults are resilient and vital to our community.

**Strathcona County's older adult population continues to be the fastest-growing demographic, making healthy aging one of the most pressing issues facing our community today.<sup>1</sup>**

By prioritizing healthy aging, we are striving to build a future where older adults have access to the supports and services they need and feel more connected to each other and our community.

Promoting healthy aging throughout a community is a shared responsibility that demands a coordinated approach. By working collaboratively, we can identify priorities, share resources, exchange ideas and create solutions that effectively meet the needs of older adults and create a brighter future. To spearhead this collective effort, Strathcona County has developed the Healthy Aging Strathcona County (HASC) Framework.

1. Strathcona County 2024 Municipal Census

# What is healthy aging?

As we age, there are a range of factors that influence our experiences known as the six determinants of healthy aging. These factors extend beyond physical health to include social, economic and environmental factors that impact an older adult's ability to live independently and engage in their community. These six determinants were identified by Healthy Aging Alberta, a provincial network of community-based seniors-serving organizations, as a way to guide communities across Alberta to support healthy aging when planning services, programs and desired outcomes for older adults.

According to Healthy Aging Alberta<sup>2</sup>, Healthy aging is about more than just maintaining physical health over time. It also includes mental and emotional health, independence, quality of life, housing, and financial security. It's about being able to connect with others, stay engaged in our communities, and feel valued in society.

In developing the HASC Framework, Strathcona County adapted the six key determinants from Healthy Aging Alberta to fit our local context. Each determinant highlights an essential component of healthy aging and is embedded throughout the approach to supporting older adults in Strathcona County.

## Strathcona County's Six Determinants of Healthy Aging



### Physical Health

Physical activities where we move our bodies and eat well every day contribute to our quality of life.



### Social Environment/Socializing

Having people in our lives, learning new things, getting involved and doing enjoyable things help prevent us from feeling lonely and isolated.



### Personal Well-being and Mental Health

When things are tough or during times of change, being able to get what we need for our mental well-being helps us live better lives.



### Physical Environment

Having a suitable place to live, help in keeping up with our home and easy-to-use transportation, helps us maintain our independence.



### Social Support

Connecting with our network of friends, family and community supports for assistance during tough times is important for us all. These tough times could happen when our bills increase, when our health changes, or when we are grieving.



### Safety/Security

Having information and support to prevent us from being neglected or feeling unsafe, can improve our quality of life.

2. Healthy Aging Alberta. (2022). An introduction to the Healthy Aging Framework. Healthy Aging Alberta.





## The need for a healthy aging framework

The HASC Framework addresses the unique and diverse needs of older adults in Strathcona County and ensures we start with a shared foundation to help organizations and groups work together. It provides a clear path forward and a holistic, community-focused approach for supporting all aspects of healthy aging, including social connections, health, access to services, age-friendly spaces, community involvement, housing and financial security.

Research shows that we are more likely to achieve meaningful community change when we work together toward shared goals.<sup>3</sup>

The HASC Framework is locally grounded and was informed by community input, data and research. It is not just a product shaped by Strathcona County, but reflects the work of many community organizations and the voices of countless community members.

3. Tamarack Institute. (2021). Collective Impact Toolkit: Building Shared Goals for Community Change.

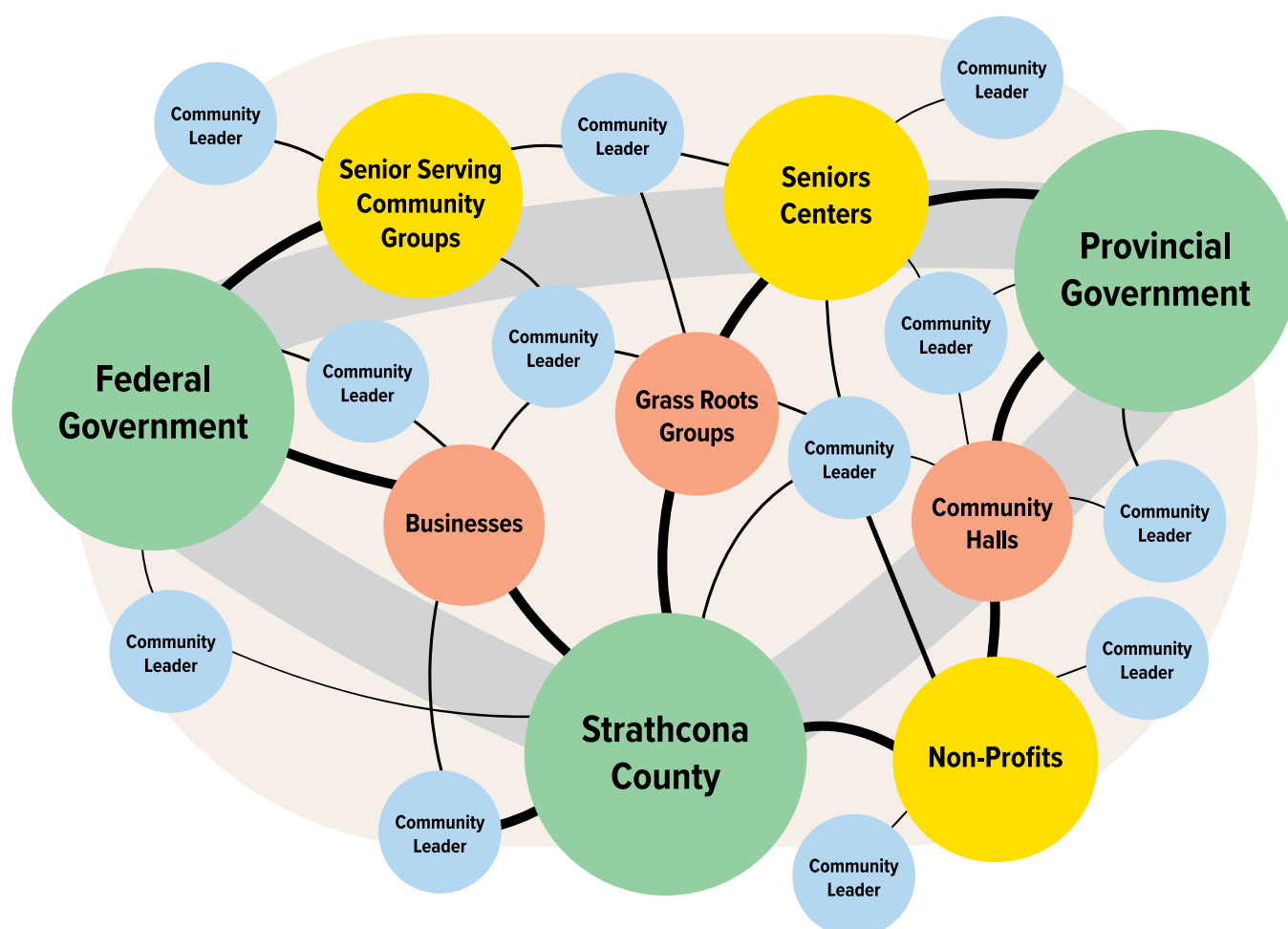
# Who is the framework for?

The HASC Framework is designed as a roadmap for community-based groups and organizations that serve older adults in Strathcona County, including seniors' centres, grassroots groups, clubs, businesses, non-profits and the municipality of Strathcona County. Each community organization plays a unique and crucial role in making the HASC Framework work.

Organizations may embed the HASC Framework in their work in different ways. For example, seniors' centres and community organizations may incorporate

the framework's principles and key actions into their daily programs. Non-profits and grassroots groups may use it to guide advocacy efforts, identify gaps in services and build on their strengths. For Strathcona County, this framework will serve as a guiding document to align programs, services and resources to support the vision of an age-friendly community.

## Community based system that supports older adults



# BACKGROUND

## Strathcona County's Older Adults

Older adults ages 55+ in Strathcona County represent a large and diverse group, spanning almost 50 years and four generations, all with distinct life experiences, interests and values.

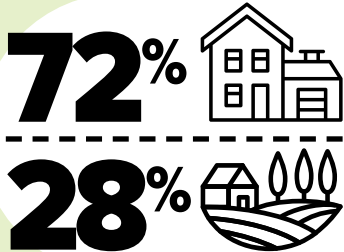
\*Older adults' references those who are 55+, unless specified elsewhere. 'Older adult households' are households in Strathcona County with at least one older adult resident (aged 55+).

# 33,798

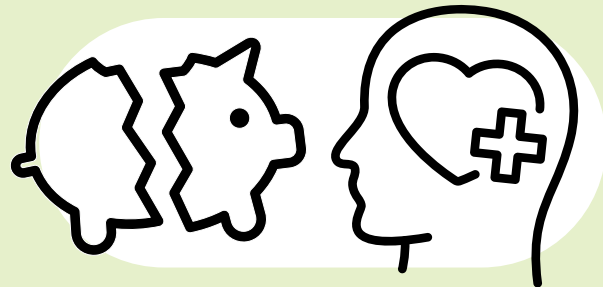
33,798 of Strathcona County residents are older adults, accounting for 34% of the County's population.\*

# ↑27%

The number of older adults seeking support from Family and Community Services Solutions Navigation, Early Intervention Counselling and Home Help services increased by 27% from 2023 to 2024.



In Strathcona County, 72% of older adults live in an urban area and 28% live in rural areas.\*



In 2024, older adults were most likely to seek support from Family and Community Services (Solutions Navigation and Counselling) for finance and mental health-related needs.



# 49%

20,074 of Strathcona County households are older adult households, accounting for nearly half (49%) of the County's households.\*



# 38%

38% of older adult households have an annual income under \$70,000 and 8% have an annual income under \$30,000.\*



# 91%

Own the place they live

91% of older adult households in Strathcona County own the place where they live and 9% rent.\*



## What we heard from older adults

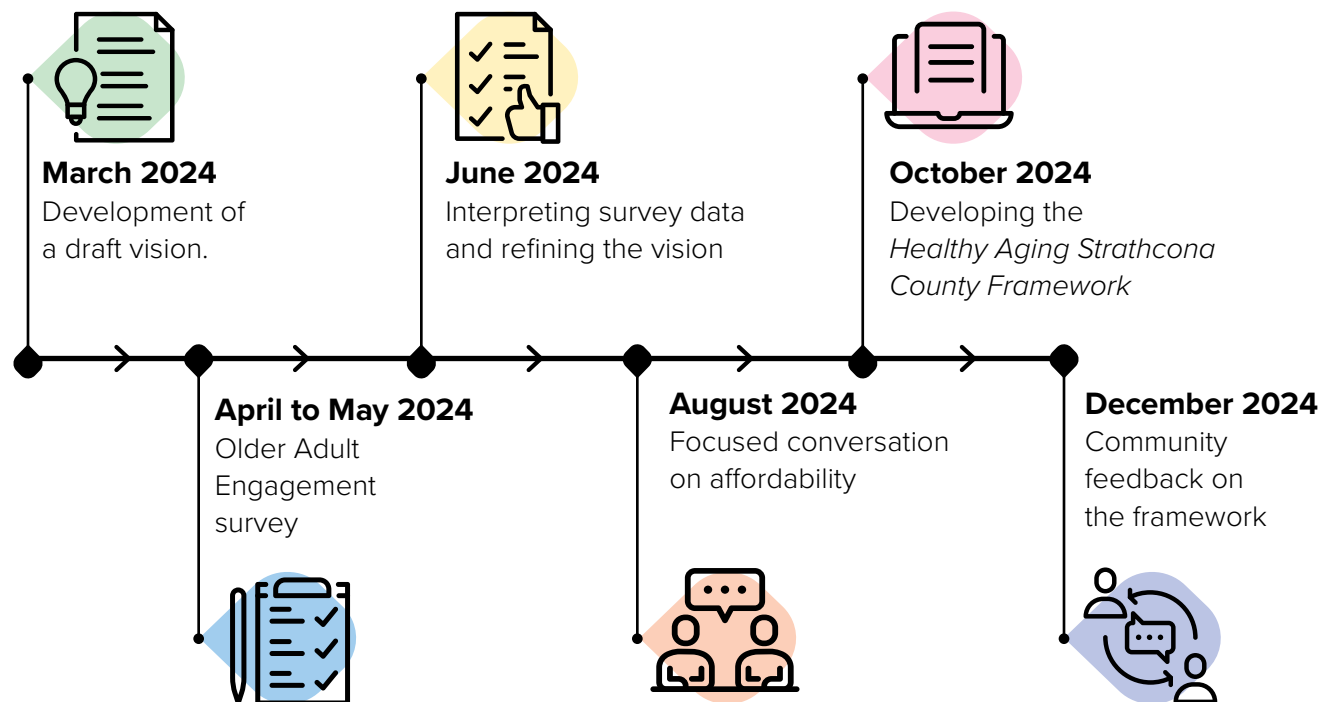
Strathcona County has a long history of serving and supporting older adults. Over the past several years, Strathcona County has supported two significant initiatives to gather valuable feedback, input and information on older adults.

In 2021, Strathcona County launched the Seniors' Supports and Services Project to explore how to best serve the older adult population. This project aimed to understand the needs, priorities and gaps in services for older adults, and through community feedback, identified three major themes in supporting seniors in our community: Belonging & Inclusion, Accessibility and Affordability.

In 2024, the second initiative, the Older Adults Engagement project, was designed to build on the Seniors Supports and Services project. The Older Adults Engagement project's purpose was to probe public interest and need for a seniors' centre as well as to better understand basic needs, social supports, safety, mental health, informal social networks and housing relating to older adults 55+ in Strathcona County. Additionally, the engagement provided valuable insights into how needs vary by age and location, highlighting the diversity within Strathcona County's older adults' population.

### Older Adults Engagement 2024 timeline

The HASC Framework was created alongside community which is reflected in the engagement sessions below.



Find a summary of the 2021 Seniors' Supports and Services Project and the 2024 Older Adults Engagement Project in the **Appendix**.



# Healthy Aging

## STRATHCONA COUNTY FRAMEWORK



This framework is the roadmap that guides our community toward a shared goal. The vision statement and guiding principles were created in collaboration with community organizations and set out to lay a foundation that we can all build on. **The “we” in the framework references the many community organizations and groups who support and serve older adults in Strathcona County and whose voices informed the development of the framework.** This includes senior’s centres, businesses, grassroots groups, clubs, non-profits, Strathcona County and older adults themselves. The framework will help us collectively plan for both current and future needs, ensuring older adults have the resources and opportunities to age well and continue being active, engaged members of our community. Below is the vision statement and guiding principles that will set Strathcona County and our community on the right path to achieving healthy aging.

## VISION STATEMENT

In Strathcona County, older adults feel included, safe, connected, supported and inspired. **Their views are valued, their voices are heard, and their range of needs are addressed.**

# Guiding principles

## Collaboration and partnership

We focus on building partnerships and trust within the older adults-serving organizations to ensure a cohesive support network for older adults.

## Older adults-centred

We are guided by older adults and their needs and experiences. We hear them, involve them in decision-making, respect their choices and provide support that is unique to their situation.

## Respect and dignity

We honour and respect all older adults' individuality, independence and dignity, and ensure they feel valued, engaged and supported within the community.

## Connectedness

We are committed to enabling strong formal and informal community networks that support meaningful social connections.



## Holistic approach

We address the physical, social, mental, environmental, spiritual, safety, well-being and affordability needs of older adults, recognizing the interconnectedness of these aspects in promoting healthy aging.

## Diversity, inclusion and belonging

We strive for a community in which all older adults have equitable access to resources, programs, services and opportunities, and feel included regardless of their age, background, abilities, socioeconomic status or urban/rural location. We strive to remove barriers and create accessible environments, services and information for all older adults.

# A path forward

To reach our shared vision for Strathcona County, we have identified four main focus areas based on what we heard during the Older Adults Engagement. These focus areas need special attention to drive progress and support the vision for healthy aging. Robust community services, age-friendly environments, social inclusion and network development emerged as key focus areas with the most potential for impact. These focus areas are meant to inspire specific actions to help achieve our shared outcomes. Given different delivery challenges for rural older adults, key actions may look different in rural and urban areas. The following sections outline each focus area, the outcomes and key actions to make this vision a reality.



# FOCUS AREA ONE

**Robust community services and supports:  
older adults know where and how to access a  
range of services, supports and information.**

## OUTCOME:

Older adults have access to a wide range of barrier-free well-being, social and support services to meet their diverse needs and support healthy aging.

## KEY ACTIONS:

- Strengthen older adults and caregivers' connections to community services and navigation supports.
- Coordinate and integrate services and programs to support a range of older adults' interests, needs and/or life transitions.
- Promote and enhance access to affordable community services and programs (recreation, culture, transportation, etc.).
- Enhance and develop resources and opportunities to enable older adults and their caregivers to plan for life transitions, maintain their independence and make informed decisions about their lives.
- Provide clear, timely, age-friendly information through proven communications strategies and platforms.
- Meaningfully engage older adults in the planning and development of a Sherwood Park seniors' centre.



# FOCUS AREA TWO

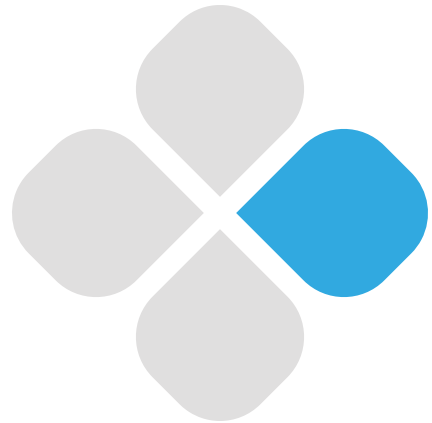
**Age-friendly community living: support for older adults to actively participate in community life.**

## OUTCOME:

The environments in which older adults live and spend their time are age friendly.

## KEY ACTIONS:

- Establish and enhance community spaces to be older adult-friendly where older adults feel valued and respected regardless of their age.
- Develop a shared understanding of what it means to be an age-friendly community.
- Promote and support the development of attainable housing options that enable aging in their community.
- Provide supports to enhance safety in the home, online and around the community.
- Develop and promote policies and programs that increase the affordability of essential services and basic needs for older adults.
- Develop and promote programs and services that support older adults to remain in or re-enter the workforce or access paid employment opportunities.





# FOCUS AREA THREE

**Connection and well-being: individuals have options and choices to spend time with others and expand social connections.**

## OUTCOME:

Older adults are connected and engaged within their community.

## KEY ACTIONS:

- Support older adults' connections to the communities they identify with, through shared activities of interest and effective communication channels (community halls, community leagues, seniors' centres, faith communities, etc.).
- Promote and provide volunteer opportunities for older adults to develop informal networks and opportunities to share their knowledge and skills.
- Develop and strengthen programs and events for older adults with a focus on building social connections.
- Strengthen older adults' access to informal and grassroots groups.
- Expand and support programs and initiatives that encourage intergenerational connections to address ageism, build stronger community bonds and mutual understanding.
- Enhance community partners' roles in encouraging participation and connection through purposeful outreach activities.



# FOCUS AREA FOUR

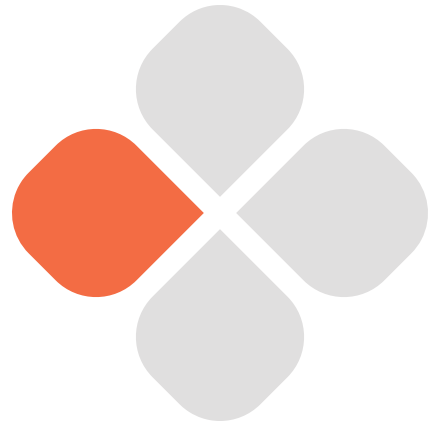
**Coordinated older adults' network: a network of partners and supports within the seniors' sector that enhance the community through collaboration and coordination.**

## OUTCOME:

Older adults-serving organizations and groups work collaboratively to support healthy aging in Strathcona County.

## KEY ACTIONS:

- Support and create opportunities for older adult engagement, leadership and capacity building.
- Strengthen relationships and build trust between older adults-serving organizations and groups to develop a connected network supporting older adults.
- Older adults-serving organizations and groups are mapped, know of each other and the roles each play in supporting healthy aging.
- Connect older adult leaders, support ongoing collaboration and community conversations and share resources to support older adults in Strathcona County.
- Support coordinated advocacy to the appropriate level of government (local, provincial and federal) for priority needs of older adults in Strathcona County.
- Collectively explore funding opportunities that directly support the strategic directions and outcomes of the Healthy Aging Strathcona County framework.



## Next steps

This framework provides Strathcona County and community organizations and groups with a flexible structure for future planning. It will help to drive change at both a grassroots level in community as well as at the municipal level.

Strathcona County is already taking action by including funding for planning a Sherwood Park seniors' centre in the 2025 County budget. Development of the seniors' centre and programming will be completed in alignment with the vision and outcomes identified in the framework to reflect the needs and priorities of older adults in our community.

Next steps in our community will vary across older adults-serving organizations and groups. Each community organization and group will adopt the key actions from the framework differently to support the unique work they do. These key actions will support community organizations and groups in decision-making and implementing real change, helping us collectively move toward the vision for healthy aging in Strathcona County.



To ensure we are making a difference, we will work together as a community to create a comprehensive evaluation plan in 2025. This plan will answer several key questions:

- Where were we before, where are we now and where do we want to be?
- How will we measure our progress towards achieving the vision and outcomes as a community?
- Who will collect the necessary information, and what data is most important to capture?
- Are there existing measurement strategies we can connect to?
- How will we measure improvement and success?

The evaluation plan will be built from consultation with community partners to reflect their important role in achieving the outcomes of the framework.

## Closing

The HASC Framework is the launch pad for building a more inclusive, supportive and vibrant community for older adults in Strathcona County. Success will be achieved through ongoing collaboration among individuals, families, organizations and local leaders. As we work together, we will create a future where every older adult feels valued, connected and supported.

# APPENDIX

## 2021 Seniors Supports and Services Project summary and findings

In 2021, Strathcona County engaged with older adults and the organizations that serve them through surveys and community conversations. Three major themes emerged from this engagement:

- **Belonging and Inclusion:**

The most prominent theme that emerged was the importance of connectedness and inclusion, highlighting the need for stronger social ties and community involvement to support older adults' well-being.

- **Affordability:**

Affordability was a major concern, particularly for older adults with lower incomes. Many relied on community halls and seniors' centres for affordable activities.

- **Accessibility:**

Accessibility issues were broad and included financial, transportation, technological and physical barriers. Ensuring that older adults can access the services and supports they need was seen as critical.



## 2024 Older Adult Engagement Summary and Findings

In 2024, Strathcona County engaged with older adults again and expanded its questions to better understand the needs and priorities of older adults in our community. To learn more about the Older Adult Engagement and healthy aging in Strathcona County visit [strathcona.ca/healthyaging](https://strathcona.ca/healthyaging). Below are key insights from the 2024 engagements:

- The needs of older adults were examined across six key determinants: physical health, social needs, personal well-being and mental health, physical environment, social support and safety/security. Results showed a wide range of needs that varied considerably across different age groups.
- Commonly ranked current and future needs included older adult-friendly recreation and gathering spaces, access to health care providers, clear information on available supports and services and affordable, accessible housing.
- The potential development of a seniors' centre was rated as important by approximately 71% of telephone respondents and 66% of online respondents. Interest varied by age group, with those aged 75-84 showing the highest levels of support — about 11%-13% higher than the 55-74 age range. Respondents aged 85+ and rural residents were less likely to feel a centre was important.
- Participants emphasized key challenges they faced, such as the rising cost of housing, food and transportation, particularly for those on fixed incomes.
- Older adults expressed a desire to remain in their homes and community but were worried about financial strain and the need for better access to in-home supports. Rural community members in particular felt disadvantaged by limited transportation options and access to urban services.
- Respondents highlighted the importance of staying socially connected, expressing a desire for more opportunities to contribute to and participate in social, recreational and cultural activities.
- Many older adults found it difficult to navigate the range of available programs and services. They called for improved communication and access to information through centralized, streamlined resources to help them understand and access support.



