

No One Left Behind- How the City of Edmonton Foster's Age-Friendliness

The World Health Organization (WHO) distinguishes population aging and rapid urbanization as two increasing trends that contribute to the current and future composition of cities worldwide (WHO, 2007). The majority of the world's population are housed in urban centers, with an increased proportion of those aging in cities (McCrillis et al., 2021). As the process of aging is a natural phenomenon and part of the human experience, the urgent call for cities to prepare themselves for this occurrence is essential to the quality of life for all citizens.

The WHO's Global Age-friendly Cities Guide (2007) creates an essential structure and set of age-friendly checklists that can be applied to cities worldwide to improve their urban environments for an aging population. The guide's approach to age-friendly cities became increasingly popular, as the guide became a core document governing the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities that was established in 2010. The City of Edmonton became a member of this network in 2010, as Edmonton recognized the exponential growth of their senior population. This change in Edmonton's population will introduce new challenges for planners and policymakers working in municipal governments. Therefore, recognizing that in becoming an age-friendly city, Edmonton communities can become inclusive and equitable places that leave no one behind – especially the most vulnerable older people. Equitable societies, in turn, have benefits for everyone. With an increase in the proportion of seniors living in Edmonton, the need to foster an inclusive and accommodating city that will meet the needs of seniors is paramount.

This paper aims to examine how the City of Edmonton fosters age-friendliness through the City Council's commitment to age-friendliness, multi-stakeholder collaboration with the broader

senior-serving sector, and community building and social connections. Three [n=3] key informant interviews with representatives from Age-Friendly Edmonton and Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council were completed. The policy documents and plans chosen provided a perspective on age-friendly action within the City of Edmonton. Therefore, a thorough document analysis of one global age-friendly document and three municipal age-friendly documents gave context to the action plans implemented to encourage age-friendliness. I analyzed one public document outlining the age-friendly strategies created by the WHO and three public documents discussing age-friendly strategies in the City of Edmonton. The following documents are: 1) *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (World Health Organization, 2007), 2) *A Vision for Age-Friendly Edmonton- Action Plan* (City of Edmonton, 2011), 3) *Age-Friendly Edmonton: The First Five Years* (City of Edmonton, 2018), and 4) *Access Design Guide* (City of Edmonton, 2020).

The review identified key strengths in the City of Edmonton's age-friendly approach and opportunities to create more age-friendly interventions. The City of Edmonton's approach to age-friendliness in Edmonton identified ways that urban planning can be used as a tool to foster supportive physical and social environments for seniors.