

## PART 5 | ALBERNI VALLEY AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN

### 5.1 AGE-FRIENDLY FRAMEWORK

An action plan is useful for setting and prioritizing actions to make a community more accessible and inclusive. It may also create opportunities for community members to become leaders and champions for the initiative.

Throughout the development of this assessment and action plan, the WHO themes were used as a guiding framework for all aspects of the report content. Although broad, these themes provide guidance to reflect on all aspects of community through an age-friendly lens that affect all members, with a focus on seniors. Ten age-friendly goals (shown to the right) were developed from the framework, assessment and community perspective, and are included in order of community priority based on the public input received. Additional action planning details are included in Appendix E.

The age-friendly goals are stated in each of the following eight themes. The themes also include a summary of the project findings based on:

- A snapshot of community engagement results, including key voices, from the survey and Community Workshop.
- Common issues identified in the context of research and community engagement.
- Proposed objectives and future actions for what can be done next.

A summary of age-friendly features included in current ACRD documents that benefit all residents, including seniors in the Alberni Valley is included in Part 3.

Next steps further refine the proposed objectives and actions with recommended priority actions to be considered and undertaken, including a timeline for achievement. Priority action items are linked to possible community leads and/or partners to provide guidance for future collaboration and discussion.

### ALBERNI VALLEY AGE-FRIENDLY GOALS

(listed in order of community priority based on input received):

1. **Community support & health:** Increase access to community support and timely health services for all seniors, including for those who are most vulnerable.
2. **Housing:** Facilitate and support a range of suitable and affordable housing options for people of all ages, including seniors, and people with mobility challenges.
3. **Transportation:** Improve access to a range of affordable and appropriate transportation options.
4. **Communication & information:** Regularly and effectively communicate information on services, emergency response, home support, and social activities.
5. **Respect & social inclusion:** Provide opportunities for social participation for people of all ages, abilities and cultures, including seniors.
6. **Civic participation & employment:** Formalize civic and corporate commitment to making the Alberni Valley a more age-friendly community.
7. **Outdoor spaces & buildings:** Ensure public spaces, trails and buildings are easily accessed with many opportunities for all ages and abilities, including seniors, to enjoy and appreciate.
8. **Communication & information:** Build individual and community resiliency, with emphasis on emergency planning.
9. **Civic participation & employment:** Strengthen opportunities for civic participation, volunteerism, and employment.
10. **Social participation:** Ensure seniors have access to a range of recreational and social activities within the communities where they live.

Creating an age-friendly community is a complex process with many different players. The influence of federal and provincial policies, limited funding, lack of local government resources, and reliance on local organizations and aging volunteers, make it challenging to address some of the key priorities for seniors, such as healthcare and affordable housing.

## 5.2 AGE-FRIENDLY THEMES & GOALS

### THEME 1: COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

**Goal 1: Increased access to community support and timely health services for all seniors, including for those who are most vulnerable.**



Access to health and support services are integral to maintaining health and independence in the Alberni Valley. Seniors frequently note concerns over the availability of high quality health care that is accessible and meets their needs. A wider range of health services, options of home care, well-located services, and residential facilities are some strategies for creating age-friendly health services.

#### Community perspective

“Health” was a dominant theme throughout the community engagement. At the Working Group meetings and Community Workshop the presence of health agencies and social groups was cited as positive. At these meetings, the need for a more robust home support system and additional mental health supports were also discussed.

Overall, 24% of survey respondents responded that their health was “excellent” when compared to most people their age. However, 62% of Alberni Valley residents responded that declining health is something that worries them about thinking about their future older adult years. Respondents felt very strongly that the Alberni Valley would benefit from additional information on local health and support services, and especially more home care support and services.

**Community input highlighted there is a great need and desire for opportunities for residents to grow their own food:**

*“Lots of agriculture, so access to local food products.”*

*“We need more farmers growing food locally. Programs that help seniors access affordable locally grown food.”*

#### Key issues identified:

- Services, such as in-home care are not affordable and inadequate.
- Need for more nurse practitioners and physicians.
- Limited health services and specialists available without leaving town, including very limited clinic hours.
- Need for mental health supports.
- Need for affordable transportation to in and out-of-town medical appointments.

**Proposed objectives and future actions:**

Many of the community support and health objectives and actions are beyond the capacity of the ACRD. However, political support and advocacy from the ACRD remains a vital role in their implementation and achievement, some of which is included in the mandate of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional Hospital District and Alberni Clayoquot Health Network (ACHN). The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the pressing need for improved access to health and support services in the community.

**Objective 1.1: Support the improvement of health care services available to seniors in the Alberni Valley.****Objective 1.2: Support improved transportation options for in and out-of-town appointments and services.**

Actions focus on:

- Increasing awareness and capacity of existing programs and services.
- Engaging with and supporting health care providers, including Better at Home, to identify social needs and utilize community resources to support seniors in managing their health and health care, while aiming at reducing social isolation.
- Supporting the establishment of, and working with, organizations to expand volunteer patient support program, which accompanies seniors to out-of-town appointments.
- Lobbying for increased handyDART services in the Alberni Valley.
- Collaborating for better use of technology to mitigate travel or in-person appointments.
- Developing or expanding neighbourhood programs or community hubs.
- Recruiting physicians and community health care workers.

**Objective 1.3: Develop strategies to reach more seniors who lack access to services.**

- Actions focus on supporting Island Health, the ACHN, and other organizations such as Echo Sunshine Club and the Alberni Valley Seniors' Services Sector Cooperative to develop or expand services to improve outreach to disconnected or socially isolated seniors.

**Objective 1.4: Identify resources for community projects and programs that promote and support healthy aging, and age-friendly neighbourhoods and communities.**

Actions focus on:

- Supporting Island Health, the ACHN, and other organizations and/or levels of government to identify, promote, pursue and support existing opportunities to fund and develop age-friendly projects and programs.
- Support for increased opportunities around food security to access and grow local food, and improve knowledge of low cost food programs (e.g. North Island College Market Gardner Program in partnership with Port Alberni Shelter Society, and other mentorship programs between youth and seniors for growing food and skills related to post harvest).
- Establishing a community hub at a vacant school with adult and child daycare, a senior's community centre, community garden, farmer's market stalls, community watch, and at an accessible location.
- Increasing collaboration with established agriculture agencies and organizations such as the ACRD Agriculture Support Workers, Alberni Farmers' Institute, Farmers' Markets, and community associations.

**Objective 1.5: Encourage the ACRD to support mental health in the Alberni Valley.**

- Actions focus on increasing community connectivity between the City of Port Alberni, ACRD and rural communities to promote social interactions and reduce social isolation, increase access to green and open spaces, and prioritize initiatives to strengthen community identity and sense of belonging through programming, collaboration, and partnerships.
- Some suggestions for next steps include updating policies in the ACRD AV OCPs, and collaborating with programs such as Echo Sunshine Club, and others.

## THEME 2: HOUSING

### Goal 2: Facilitate and support a range of suitable and affordable housing options for people of all ages, including seniors, and people with mobility challenges.



Access to a range of safe, diverse, affordable, and accessible housing options, both public and private, is vital to the well-being, health, independence and quality of life of seniors. Housing that is designed to be adaptable and accessible enables seniors to age in place and ensures that they can remain in their community of choice as long as possible. Approximately 80% of the time of people aged 70 years and older is spent at home and in their immediate surroundings, hence the importance of appropriate housing and high quality physical environment (Age UK).

#### Community perspective

When asked about living independently, 68% of respondents expressed that it is extremely important for them to live independently as they age. Additionally, 25% of respondents indicated that moving into more suitable housing is what worries them most when asked, “What worries you most thinking about your future adult years?”.

**Community input highlighted there is a need for both housing for all ages and housing specific to those 55 years and older:**

*“There are affordable housing shortages for all demographics in this town.”*

*“Eliminate 55+ only housing - community includes everyone.”*

*“We need 55+ housing options at Sproat Lake.” “Build more facilities to house 55+.”*

#### Key issues identified:

- Lack of affordable housing.
- Transportation from housing in rural areas to appointments, etc.
- Demand for in-home services, including maintenance, that allow residents to age safely in their homes.
- Availability of housing supports.
- Limited housing stock available for rural residents wanting to downsize in their community.
- Insufficient housing options that support aging in place – seniors housing, cooperative housing, cohousing, and smaller units are all unavailable.

#### Proposed objectives and future actions:

**Objective 2.1: Support the development of a range of suitable and affordable housing options for seniors in the Alberni Valley.**

**Objective 2.2: Investigate ACRD strategies to support age-friendly housing in the ACRD.**

**Objective 2.3: Incorporate age-friendly provisions in EA OCPs.**

**Objective 2.4: Improve the accessibility of housing in the Alberni Valley.**

Actions focus on:

- Undertaking a Housing Needs Report for the Alberni Valley, and an Attainable Housing Policy focusing on lower income seniors.
- Working with local and other partners to help identify demand and future housing needs for alternative, safe, affordable, and accessible housing.
- The need for more assisted living/long-term care facilities in the Alberni Valley.
- Working with local and other partners such as BC Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and non-profits to encourage a range of housing types to meet the needs of seniors and citizens with special needs. Also, to allow seniors to age in place, including exploring opportunities for funding and permits to live on agricultural properties in the Agricultural Land Reserve once retired from farming.

Some suggestions for next steps:

- Include healthy and inclusionary policies in the AV OCPs (including resident housing, affordable housing in new developments, density bonusing, and inclusionary housing policies).
- Encouraging the development of affordable rental housing for seniors.
- Supporting the construction of assisted living/long-term care facilities.
- Developing adaptable housing standards to guide future development.
- Advocating and working with the City of Port Alberni, other local partners, local governments, and levels of government, such as BC Housing and CMHC.

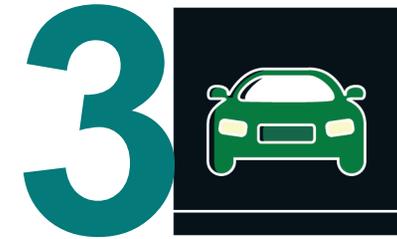
**Objective 2.5: Implement strategies for seniors with financial challenges to stay in their homes.**

- Actions focus on expanding home repair and maintenance programs for seniors, and increasing awareness of and funding opportunities for affordability programs and affordable housing.
- Some next steps include utilizing Provincial Social Welfare Programs, and working with local non-profits such as the Port Alberni Shelter Society and the Alberni Valley Seniors' Services Sector Cooperative.

## THEME 3: TRANSPORTATION

### Goal 3: Improve access to a range of affordable and appropriate transportation options.

Public transportation is an important option for seniors who may not be able to drive a vehicle. As with active transportation, access to public transportation options helps to ensure that seniors are able to safely and comfortably carry out daily tasks such as working, volunteering, shopping or attending appointments. Accessible and affordable public transportation is also vital to supporting participation in the social, cultural, and recreational life of a community, thereby decreasing the risk of social isolation.



Research has shown that the consequences of poor transportation include missed medical appointments, difficulty shopping for nutritious food and medicine, increased social isolation, and pushing older adults to leave their homes and move to residential care. Investment in all transportation modes, including walking and cycling paths, ride shares, community buses, and transit networks, becomes increasingly more important as the population ages in the Alberni Valley.

#### Community perspective

Throughout the community engagement, residents noted the importance of, and need for, multiple modes of transportation in the Alberni Valley. Over 70% of survey respondents answered that accessible, affordable, and safe transportation is either “extremely important” or “very important” to them. Almost all (97%) of survey respondents indicated that they drive themselves to get around for things like shopping, medical appointments, and errands. This further highlights the importance of planning now for when respondents will not be able to drive themselves.

#### Community input highlighted there is a need for improved transportation in the AV:

*“Better transportation routes in rural areas”.*

*“Safe walking paths along rural roads that connect communities together. So many roads unsafe to walk.”*

*“I hope that work will come out of this to strengthen public transportation, fix pedestrian infrastructure, welcoming public areas, and safe, separated bike infrastructure.”*

*“Need a walk/path way along Beaver Creek Rd for the safety of all who don't drive or just enjoy walking or biking.”*

*“Would be desirable to have some transit service along Faber and Stirling Arm, even if just for daytime trips for shopping, appointments, etc.”*

#### Key issues identified:

- General lack of transportation options.
- Poor connectivity and accessibility for dedicated active transportation networks (walking routes, biking routes).
- Current level of bus service does not adequately support an independent senior.

- Taxis are too expensive to use as a viable mode of transportation.
- Traveling at night is difficult; many do not feel safe in dark or winter conditions.
- Inability of those without cars to get to goods and services in many rural areas.

**Proposed objectives and future actions:**

**Objective 3.1: Improve pedestrian safety in the Alberni Valley.**

**Objective 3.2: Calm traffic and improve safety for pedestrians at high priority areas.**

**Objective 3.3: Integrate transit-oriented design including alternative transportation methods.**

Actions focus on working with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) to:

- Increase accessibility and pedestrian safety measures, especially near schools, seniors housing, and at key crossings.
- Install pedestrian activated lights for road crossings at key locations.
- Improve pedestrian and cycling access, and traffic calming mechanisms (such as landscaped medians) focusing on major roads such as Beaver Creek Road, Cherry Creek Road, and Highway 4, and integrate objectives into the AV OCPs including transportation junctions with the City of Port Alberni.
- Address arterial densification/prioritize corridor development in OCP policies and goals, by increasing the density on main corridors to increase the viability of transit services.
- Pursue funding to conduct a Street and Intersection Pedestrian Safety Study and Action Plan.

**Objective 3.4: Support the development of community and organization led convenient and affordable transportation options.**

**Objective 3.5: Continue to plan and advocate for convenient and affordable transportation options with the Province (MoTI) and BC Transit.**

**Objective 3.6: Actively pursue funding opportunities to support transportation in the Alberni Valley.**

Actions focus on:

- Supporting alternative transportation options (volunteer driver programs, community shuttles, development of a community co-op bus program, and utilizing school buses when not in use).
- Supporting and advocating for existing low-cost medical and non-medical transportation, such as Wheels for Wellness (low-cost transportation for non-emergency physician-related medical care).
- Exploring funding options, including provincial, federal, and municipal grants, for rideshare programs to provide funding and support to volunteer drivers.

## THEME 4: COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

**Goal 4: Regularly and effectively communicate information on services, emergency response, home support, and social activities.**

**Goal 8: Build individual and community resiliency, with emphasis on emergency planning.**



Staying connected with community events and people, having access to timely information, and having opportunities for lifelong learning is necessary for creating an age-friendly community. Evolving communications technologies can create barriers for those who do not know how, or do not have the means, to access them. Reaching everyone with the right information, at the right time, using the right medium is extremely challenging and is vitally important. Simple changes, such as age-friendly formatting and design, and distributing information through a variety of avenues, can help to reach more community members and ease frustration and other difficulties.

### Community perspective

When asked about the importance of accessing community information, 66% of respondents say it is extremely or very important to access information in one source, and 60% of respondents say it is extremely or very important to make information available in person. Social media was the preferred method of getting information about activities, events and/or news (72% of respondents), followed by newspaper (64%), and word of mouth (55%). At the Working Group meetings and Community Workshop, enhancing the communication of existing services was recommended as a way of improving the age-friendliness of the Alberni Valley.

### Community input highlighted there is a need for improved communication and information in the AV:

*“There should be a central “info” source for people that age, perhaps in the form of a pamphlet, so that amenities can turn into benefits once you know of their existence.”*

*“I for one know I would take dance, cooking, swimming, hiking and anything dog training related if it were offered in a Port Alberni Activity Guide like the Nanaimo one.”*

### Key issues identified:

- Lack of central resource for senior’s information (physical location, print location, online location).
- Need to formalize/expand existing informal communication support networks.
- Lack of cell service in rural areas.
- Impacts on transportation (bridge out) and communicating in an emergency.
- ACRD and City websites could be improved to better serve seniors.

### Proposed objectives and future actions:

**Objective 4.1: Enhance the level of dialogue and coordination among the ACRD, agencies that support seniors, and seniors.**

**Objective 4.2: Broaden the ACRDs information dissemination in the Alberni Valley.**

Actions focus on:

- Working with community partners to develop an awareness campaign to ensure seniors know who to contact regarding services, especially health and social services, in the Alberni Valley.
- Increasing options for public community bulletin boards and online community boards, with current news and resources in places seniors frequent, and developing a community resource directory.
- Continuing to evaluate the progress of the AV AF Plan and communicate progress.

Some suggestions for next steps include:

- Creating a joint City of Port Alberni and ACRD AV Age-Friendly Committee, as well as collaborating with community partners.
- Expanding information sharing within the Alberni Valley with regular newsletters in each Electoral Area, and better utilizing the Community Hall's Facebook pages, as a means of information sharing.
- The ACRD could utilize more platforms for communication and information, instead of only the ACRD website and Twitter.
- Utilize existing groups such as the ACHN, Echo Sunshine Club, North Island College (ElderCollege and Joy of Learning courses), Hospice volunteers, and the Alberni Valley Seniors' Services Sector Cooperative.

**Objective 4.3: Strengthen bonds with local stakeholders, partners, and First Nation communities.**

Actions focus on exploring ways to reach out to First Nations Elders to identify needs and areas of mutual support and interest.

Some suggestions for next steps include collaborating with the Port Alberni Friendship Centre to reach out in their monthly newsletter, and host a community-to-community dialogue to connect stakeholders across the Alberni Valley and local First Nations.

**Objective 4.4: Ensure seniors are informed and well prepared, before, during and after an emergency.**

Many of the actions are a part of the Alberni Valley Emergency Program and focus on:

- Developing and implementing strategies to disseminate emergency preparedness information to seniors, and involving more seniors and people with disabilities with this and safety programs across generations.
- Exploring options for a more flexible model for volunteers to not require a long-term commitment.
- Providing training on preparedness to seniors, caregivers and their families and organizations serving seniors, as well as involving seniors in the training of an emergency notification system, and creation of an emergency preparedness package, and any related programming.
- Some suggestions for next steps include collaborating with local partners and care homes, such as Alberni Lifeline, North Island College (ElderCollege) and others, when there are air quality advisories, or to provide other important emergency notifications and information.

## THEME 5: RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

### Goal 5: Provide opportunities for social participation for people of all ages, abilities and cultures, including seniors.

Attitudes and behaviours towards older people can vary greatly based on circumstances. Elders are often regarded with respect, yet their needs for social services and inclusion in community may not be fully considered. Age-friendly communities take a holistic approach to foster inclusive and respectful relationships between all ages.



#### Community perspective

While many responses showed Alberni Valley residents have frequent social interactions, 16% of residents responded that they interact with their family, friends, or neighbours once or less per week. Over 90% of all respondents are very satisfied with relationships with family and/or friends, while 41% stated they feel left out or a lack of companionship. Alberni Valley residents also stated it is extremely important to have accessible community events (78%), and activities involving young and older people (74%). At Working Group meetings and the Community Workshop, residents communicated that they would like to see more intergenerational knowledge sharing and social interactions, and many seniors want to contribute to and feel connected to their community.

#### Community input highlighted there is a great need and desire to be respectful, and for opportunities for social inclusion:

*“Encourage people from all walks of life to look after and respect each other regardless of age. We all have an important part to play in our community.”*

*“Social isolation is a major issue culturally we put a strong emphasis on being independent but as we age we need opportunities to support each other.”*

*“I feel like services for families are lacking and that more events to bring seniors and families together would be good.”*

*“Would love to see more positive events for youth and youth interaction with elders in the community.”*

#### Key issues identified:

- Activities aimed at intergenerational mingling are lacking and would help to improve the resiliency of the community as a whole.
- Need to connect seniors with local schools, and a desire to share knowledge with younger generations.
- Need for targeted outreach to isolated seniors.
- Need for greater inclusion of seniors in community events.

**Proposed objectives and future actions:**

**Objective 5.1: Use an age-friendly approach in ACRD rural planning initiatives.**

**Objective 5.2: Educate Regional District employees, boards, and commissions about the impacts of age, disability, and memory loss.**

Actions focus on:

- Encouraging seniors to participate more in the local government public participation process, such as OCP updates, and appointing an ACRD and City of Port Alberni staff champion to work on existing and future age-friendly plans and initiatives.
- Evidence-based cultural training for aging health and human services professionals, and creating a Regional District “no wrong door” information and assistance program.

**Objective 5.3: Create opportunities for intergenerational activities, services, housing, and other programs.**

**Objective 5.4: Foster community integration and inclusion.**

**Objective 5.5: Welcome, encourage, and celebrate the inclusion of seniors in community events.**

**Objective 5.6: Help local community groups and businesses become more aware of the needs and interests of seniors.**

Actions focus on:

- Partnering with schools, non-profits, First Nations, and other community organizations to provide opportunities for seniors and intergenerational programming, such as storytelling, technology training, and student volunteer programs at the high school, and initiating an “adopt-a-grandparent” or Elder tutoring program.
- Establishing clear and meaningful accessibility guidelines for community events, especially around communicating with seniors, accessible transportation, seating, and washroom facilities.
- Collaborating with local agencies, businesses, organizations, and places of worship to explore ways of better engaging and supporting seniors in the community.
- Some suggestions for next steps include: establishing an event or program associated with Seniors Week, International Day of Older Persons, Grandparents Day, Family Day or another similar occasion, and developing communication material to welcome and inform seniors that are new to the Alberni Valley.

## THEME 6: CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT

**Goal 6: Formalize civic and corporate commitment to making the Alberni Valley a more age-friendly community.**

**Goal 9: Strengthen opportunities for civic participation, volunteerism, and employment.**



Older people continue to contribute to their community long after retirement. This demographic includes the highest numbers of people engaged in volunteerism and the political process. Many have a desire to continue working and can, especially if supported by tailoring employment opportunities to their needs.

### Community perspective

When asked, “What are some opportunities for improving the age-friendliness of the Alberni Valley?”, the Working Group responded that most of the volunteers are seniors and that they would like to see the number of senior volunteers grow. As a whole, Alberni Valley survey respondents expressed interest in more opportunities for volunteering and paid work. This is indicative of a number of things: the need to communicate available volunteer and work opportunities in an accessible way, a desire for additional volunteer and employment opportunities, and capacity for additional volunteer and employment opportunities.

### Community input highlighted there is a great need and desire for opportunities for volunteering:

*What I most look forward to as I age: “Staying healthy and being able to volunteer and give to others including my family.”*

*“I volunteer with Special Olympics and interact with a lot of people with physical and intellectual disabilities. A lot of them have difficulty accessing many programs and buildings in the area.”*

*“Encourage volunteers to participate in local affairs.”*

### Key issues identified:

- Targeted communications, specifically for seniors, regarding activities and available resources in the community are needed.
- Need for more coordinated and better communicated information regarding volunteer opportunities in the community for seniors.
- Barriers to volunteering need to be overcome - awareness, mobility, motivation, incentives, and concerns over the amount of commitment needed to volunteer and contribute to the community.
- Need for more senior involvement in civic decision-making.

### Proposed objectives and future actions:

**Objective 6.1: Develop and implement an Age-Friendly Plan.**

Actions focus on collaborating on the implementation of the AV AF Plan through applying for joint ACRD and City of Port Alberni Age-Friendly Community recognition from BC Healthy Communities, auditing policies and bylaws through an age-friendly lens, and forming a joint ACRD and City of Port Alberni Age-Friendly Committee.

**Objective 6.2: Determine strategies for all ACRD meeting rooms and gathering places.**

Actions focus on implementing and/or improving audio-visual systems and assisted listening needs of all ACRD and City owned or leased rooms, event spaces and gathering places, and ensuring ACRD and City meetings are available for public viewing.

**Objective 6.3: Mobilize the wisdom and experience of seniors, and provide them opportunities to live with passion and purpose.**

Actions focus on collaborating with local businesses on senior's needs and hiring advantages, encouraging them to recruit, hire and retain seniors, and define age-friendly businesses with a brand and certification process (senior specific logo to identify senior friendly business).

**Objective 6.4: Include seniors in preserving and sharing of community history.**

**Objective 6.5: Increase the civic participation and active engagement of seniors in the Alberni Valley.**

**Objective 6.6: Provide opportunities for seniors to actively participate in local governance.**

Actions focus on:

- Creating more flexible options for older volunteers.
- Encouraging partnerships between local organizations to promote joint lifelong learning programs, and advocating for the establishment of, and support existing, community, neighbourhood, and resident associations, such as collaborating with Community Futures Alberni-Clayoquot, the Alberni Valley EA Community Halls, North Island College (NIC), and the Rural Crime Watch program in partnership with the RCMP.
- Collaborating with First Nations, education providers (such as NIC ElderCollege), local government and other community partners to identify ways to preserve and pass down history, heritage and stories.

**Objective 6.7: Provide opportunities for seniors to better support one another where possible.**

**Objective 6.8: Increase the active engagement of seniors in the community.**

Actions focus on:

- Exploring the necessary tools for establishing a seniors sharing service where peer-to-peer support can take place, and establishment of a repair café for seniors where volunteers can exchange and trade services and skills.
- Collaborating to recruit volunteers to support the AV AF Plan actions, and hosting an annual volunteer fair.

## THEME 7: OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

### Goal 7: Ensure public spaces, trails and buildings are easily accessed with many opportunities for all ages and abilities, including seniors, to enjoy and appreciate.



The public realm, including outdoor spaces such as parks, trails and buildings, affects the quality of life for older people and their ability to age in place. The quality of the public realm can impact mobility, access, and safety. Age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings are pleasant, clean, have high-quality green spaces, include places to rest, such as benches, are accessible, and include safe pedestrian crossings. The rural nature of the Alberni Valley provides many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, but there must be careful consideration for the needs of seniors to access and enjoy outdoor spaces and buildings.

#### Community perspective

When survey respondents were asked to rate features in their community, 65% rated green or open spaces (trails, community gardens, etc.) that are within walking/rolling distance to their home as excellent or good, while 47% rated public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people with different abilities as poor or that they didn't know. In terms of pedestrian crossings, 46% of all respondents rated safe crosswalks as poor. Community Workshop attendees identified accessible trails and connectivity for walking as high priorities to increase the age-friendliness of the Alberni Valley.

#### Community input highlighted there is a great need for improvements to outdoor spaces in the AV:

*"In the valley, there are not enough places for us to ride our bikes safely and would love there to be flat bike trails around the valley ... We would be thrilled if there were safe biking trails in our valley."*

*"Better lighting, cross walks and sidewalks on main streets and popular walking areas."*

*"The way to keep people walking which makes them healthier is to please provide better walking areas."*

#### Key issues identified:

- Need for more places to rest and distance between rest places when out in the community.
- Accessibility of public buildings and facilities for people with different physical abilities.
- Lack of accessible public restrooms, clear signage, lighting in public spaces, connectivity for walking, and safe crosswalks.
- Need for additional neighbourhood watch programs or improving advertising and involvement of existing ones.
- Accessible trails: Log Train Trail and Inlet Trail could have more access to get on and off trail, smaller routes with signage, degree of difficulty, and parking visibility.

#### Proposed objectives and future actions:

**Objective 7.1: Complete an accessibility assessment of public buildings and outdoor spaces.**

**Objective 7.2: Include a commitment to accessibility and inclusion in the EA OCPs.**

Actions focus on:

- Developing trail guidelines to respond to the needs of seniors and people with special needs, disabilities, and/or mobility challenges.
- Collaborating to pursue universal accessibility throughout all trails, sidewalks, parks and public facilities by considering the needs of all users (pathway grades, surface materials, traffic signals, and signage), and promoting the application of universal design and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to the built and social environments.

**Objective 7.3: Create walkable and accessible communities.**

Actions focus on:

- Working with the MoTI and other partners to improve connectivity for walking, expanding on existing community walking trails, and developing new trails in the Alberni Valley EAs.
- Working with the MoTI to establishing a roadside, multi-use pathway along main roads (Beaver Creek Road, Cherry Creek Road, and Highway 4).
- Encouraging development of new and retrofit of existing parks to include accessible sidewalks, trails and infrastructure.

**Objective 7.4: Actively pursue and support funding opportunities for outdoor spaces, buildings, and public facilities.**

**Objective 7.5: Increase the number of age-friendly amenities located on pathways and trails.**

Actions focus on:

- Exploring partnerships and grant opportunities to help fund parks and trails.
- Exploring internal and external funding opportunities for pedestrian upgrades that benefit seniors directly, including increased lighting and street furniture.

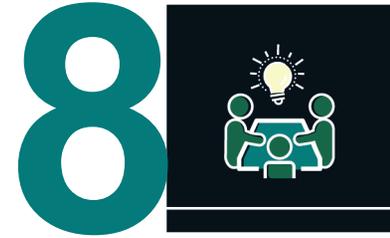
**Objective 7.6: Improve access to nature, parks, open spaces, and trails for people of all ages and abilities, and enhance signage and wayfinding.**

- Improving wayfinding signage throughout the Alberni Valley, and consider signage for age-friendly trails that indicates difficulty level and length of trail.
- Improving access to public washroom facilities.
- Working with the Air Quality Council on educating and informing about the importance of clean air and air quality issues, and encourage clean air lifestyles and business practices.

## THEME 8: SOCIAL & CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

### Goal 10: Ensure seniors have access to a range of recreational and social activities within the communities where they live.

Community engagement is a contributing factor in creating the types of communities where people want to live, work and raise their families. The social and cultural life of a community flourishes when seniors are able to fully contribute their knowledge, experience, skills and talents as volunteers, artists, participants, and patrons.



#### Community perspective

It is apparent that Alberni Valley residents have a desire to be involved socially and culturally. The Community Workshop reiterated a need to build hubs or utilize community halls, to facilitate social participation. When asked how important it is to have opportunities for social and cultural participation in their community many survey respondents answered that it is extremely and very important to have: accessible community events (82%), activities involving younger and older people (75%), recreation programs and activities geared towards seniors (73%), and a variety of cultural activities for diverse populations (63%).

**Community input highlighted there is a great need and desire for increased opportunities for social and cultural participation:**

*“Would love to see more positive events for youth and youth interaction with elders in the community.”*

*“More events to bring seniors and families together would be good.”*

*“More adult events during the evenings.”*

#### Key issues identified:

- Timing and cost of programming.
- Lack of options in own community (each Electoral Area).
- Seniors feel isolated, especially in rural areas and express need for more community outreach.
- Lack of transportation from rural areas, and lack of accessible transportation, to attend events.

#### Proposed objectives and future actions:

**Objective 8.1: Strengthen intergenerational, culturally informed, and age-friendly programming.**

**Objective 8.2: Increase accessibility to programming for seniors.**

Actions focus on collaborating to:

- Support accessible and inclusive community events, groups, places, art and cultural experiences, and North Island College and the ElderCollege to expand lifelong learning opportunities for seniors.

- Evaluate senior’s programming needs, explore ways to offer low cost program rates and drop in fees for lower income seniors, and explore new seniors and intergenerational programming, to encourage participation and support active living in all seniors.

**Objective 8.3: Establish a senior’s centre/hub/gathering place within the Alberni Valley.**

Actions focus on working with partners to evaluate funding and location options for senior's gathering spaces within the AV EAs, assessing the appropriateness of Community Halls as potential senior gathering spaces, and funding a senior’s gathering space, coordinator to oversee services, and manage volunteers.

**Objective 8.4: Identify gaps in serving the social participation needs of seniors at risk of social isolation, and develop strategies to reach out to them.**

Actions focus on working with university partners to use technology and surveys to increase access to information and services with emphasis on seniors and adults with disabilities, and examining social isolation data.

### 5.3 NEXT STEPS & PRIORITY ACTIONS

Creating a more age-friendly Alberni Valley in alignment with WHO guidelines is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders. Transformative, age-friendly community change involves building on community strengths and the coordination from all levels of government - First Nations, the private sector, the non-profit sector, and the community. An implementation plan that influences change through legislative tools, funding, and the collaboration and ingenuity of all stakeholders is central to the achievement of each goal and objective which were previously highlighted. In consultation with stakeholders, the following 12 priority actions for immediate consideration are highlighted for seniors in the Alberni Valley to be included, respected, and supported to age well, and contribute through active participation in their community.

#### WHAT ALBERNI VALLEY SENIORS LOOK FORWARD TO AS THEY AGE:

*“Enjoying outdoor activities, access to lake, rivers, parks, etc. Social activities.”*

*“All the senior programs.”*

*“The social aspects of retirement. More free time to do the things I like to do spend more time volunteering locally.”*

*“Continuing to be able to contribute to society.”*

*“Seeing my kids grow up, getting grandchildren, continuing to volunteer for my community.”*

*“Continuing to maintain my health.”*

*“Being able to continue what I do now. Keeping physically active, walking in neighbourhoods and on trails, gardening, family time, small town friendly atmosphere.”*

Each priority action aligns with several goal areas, focuses on the ACRD role as a leader, and aligns with shared identified community principles:

- Inclusivity - a place for all ages and abilities;
- Recognize and build on the strengths of the community;
- Collaborates with all stakeholders;
- Promotes participation and respect of all within the community;
- Meets the housing, recreation and health needs of all residents, including facilities for every age and varying mobility requirements of community members;
- Good communication of programs and emergency responses; and
- Ingenuity, resource mobilization and innovation.

RECOMMENDED SHORT-TERM PRIORITY ACTIONS		
PRIORITY ACTION & TIMEFRAME	INDICATOR(S)	SUGGESTED LEAD AGENCY / AGENCIES
Aligns with all Age-Friendly Action Plan Goals #1-10		
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 1: INTEGRATE AF ACTION PLAN</b> Integrate the AV Age-Friendly Action Plan (AF Plan) items into staff work plans and annual reporting.</p> <p><b>Short-term (0-2 years), ongoing</b></p>	<p>Age-friendly planning is included in ACRD work plans and strategic planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 2: FORM AN AF COMMITTEE</b> Form an inclusive Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee (AFSAC), and be recognized as an Age-Friendly Community by the Ministry of Health and Province of BC.</p> <p><b>Short-term (0-2 years), ongoing</b></p>	<p>Age-Friendly Committee is formalized.</p> <p>The ACRD is recognized as an Age-Friendly Community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> <li>• Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION &amp; FUNDING STRATEGY</b> Develop an implementation and funding strategy related to the AF Plan.</p> <p><b>Short-term (0-2 years), ongoing</b></p>	<p>The strategy is ratified by key stakeholders.</p> <p>Grant applications are submitted and innovative funding sources are explored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> <li>• Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 4: ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION</b> Advocate and promote alternative transportation options including delivery systems, virtual healthcare, volunteer driver programs, community shuttles, and development of a co-op bus program for community.</p> <p><b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b></p> <p>Survey respondent: What do you look forward to as you age: <i>“Being Able To Go Out &amp; About With The Handy Dart”</i></p>	<p>Increased transportation options for seniors are promoted and utilized.</p> <p>Transportation planning addresses the unique needs of seniors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Echo Sunshine Club</li> <li>• Health providers</li> <li>• BC Transit</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 5: AF DESIGN POLICY &amp; CHECKLIST</b> Develop an Age-Friendly Design Policy and Checklist to audit existing and plan for new ACRD-owned parks and infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b></p>	<p>Checklist is used for all new initiatives.</p> <p>Improved and more accessible parks and infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> <li>• Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) funding future capital plans</li> </ul>

Aligns with Age-Friendly Action Plan Goals #1, 3-6, 8-10		
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 6: FUNDING FOR PROGRAMMING &amp; HUBS</b> Apply for funding to expand integrated programming and intergenerational community hubs to reduce social isolation of seniors and their caregivers.</p> <p><b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b> <b>Long-term (5+ years), ongoing</b></p> <p>Survey respondent: <i>“Social isolation is a major issue culturally we put a strong emphasis on being independent but as we age we need opportunities to support each other”</i></p>	<p>Increased number of seniors participating in community programs and/or events.</p> <p>Senior led intergenerational programming is launched.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee</li> <li>• ACRD</li> <li>• Community Halls/Centres</li> <li>• City of Port Alberni</li> <li>• Alberni Clayoquot Health Network (ACHN)</li> <li>• Vancouver Island University (VIU)</li> <li>• North Island College (NIC)</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 7: VOLUNTEER BANK</b> Launch a virtual volunteer bank, matching people’s skills and interest to the community’s needs.</p> <p><b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b></p>	<p>Increased number of seniors volunteering.</p> <p>Volunteer opportunities clearly promoted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee</li> <li>• ACRD</li> <li>• City of Port Alberni</li> <li>• Echo Sunshine Club</li> <li>• NIC ElderCollege</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 8: INCREASED ER COMMUNICATION</b> Update and implement strategies to involve more seniors and people with disabilities in intergenerational neighbourhood emergency preparation, information dissemination, and safety programs.</p> <p><b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b></p> <p>Survey respondents: <i>“There should be a central “info” source for people that age, perhaps in the form of a pamphlet, so that amenities can turn into benefits once you know of their existence.”</i></p>	<p>Emergency plans address the needs of seniors including issues related to pandemics.</p> <p>Multiple forms of communication are used related to emergency responses.</p> <p>Updated websites that are more age-friendly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberni Valley Emergency Program</li> <li>• North Island College</li> </ul>
Aligns with Age-Friendly Action Plan Goals #1, 2, 4 & 5, 8-10		
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 9: RESOURCE DIRECTORY &amp; AWARENESS CAMPAIGN</b></p>	<p>Seniors are better informed about community resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> </ul>

<p>Develop a Community Resource Directory with age-friendly branding to identify the services and programs offered locally and regionally. Create an awareness campaign related to the Age-Friendly Plan and related actions.</p> <p><b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b></p> <p>Survey respondents:  <i>“Relaxation and good health. Being able to have a seniors community centre to go to for socializing. Having access to medical care and help as I age including grocery services, meals on wheels, in home personal care needs and access to mental health care. All if these services at an affordable rate based on income.”</i></p> <p><i>“Going to library; reading; swimming at new pool; community service; Sproat Lake; more beach time.”</i></p>	<p>Increased number of seniors participating in community services and programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee</li> <li>• City of Port Alberni</li> <li>• Echo Sunshine Club</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 10: HOUSING NEEDS REPORT</b>  Undertake a Housing Needs Assessment and Report that, in part, identifies the future housing needs of the Alberni Valley’s aging population and explores ways to meet those needs.</p> <p><b>Short-term (0-2 years), ongoing (needs to be updated every 5 years)</b></p> <p>Survey respondent: <i>“In 10 years, where do you see yourself living?: Hopefully in my own home or perhaps a senior building”</i></p>	<p>Current and future housing needs are identified and prioritized.</p> <p>Additional housing targeted for seniors is built and/or made available.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> <li>• UBCM</li> <li>• City of Port Alberni</li> <li>• Alberni Clayoquot Health Network</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aligns with Age-Friendly Action Plan Goals #1, 4-7, 9 &amp; 10</b></p>		
<p><b>PRIORITY ACTION 11: TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS</b>  Promote increase of bench dedication program; target specific locations on seniors’ walking routes. Explore the inclusion of alternative wheel-friendly trails which maintain the natural look for trails while providing inclusive trails for all ages and abilities.</p> <p><b>Short-term (0-2 years), ongoing</b>  <b>Medium-term (2-4 years), ongoing</b></p> <p>Survey respondent: <i>“Ability to continue to explore nature with my children and have access to nature.”</i></p>	<p>Increased use of trails and green spaces by seniors, and increased number of benches to provide additional places to rest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACRD</li> </ul>

**PRIORITY ACTION 12: FIRST NATIONS PARTNERSHIP**

Support more cultural inclusion and begin a dialogue with Tseshahst First Nation (TFN) and Hupacasath First Nation (HFN) regarding senior’s initiatives and possible win-win initiatives.

**Short-term (0-2 years), ongoing**

First Nations age-friendly strategy is drafted, with increased participation from First Nation Elders.

- Tseshahst First Nation
- Hupacasath First Nation
- Port Alberni Friendship Center
- ACRD
- City of Port Alberni
- NIC ElderCollege

It is important to note that priority action items are linked to possible community leads and/or partners. While in some cases actions may not meet the specific mandate of the listed lead/partner, the intent of the action item is to provide guidance for future collaboration and discussion.

In summary, this Age-Friendly Plan aims at helping partners and stakeholders advocate for, and address, active living needs of ACRD’s residents and the broader community that they serve. An essential first step is to form an Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee (AFSAC) as a catalyst for the implementation of priority actions, cooperation on funding applications, and advocacy for innovation. Following the formation of the AFSAC, it is recommended that a goal of the AF Plan be achieved by the ACRD by applying for age-friendly designation from the Province of British Columbia, which could further position the ACRD in implementing many of the key ideas presented in the action plan.

It is recommended that the actions outlined in this action plan be reviewed and followed with an implementation plan with a funding strategy that looks for government, corporate and non-profit resources to be developed. The AF Plan must also be a living document that is annually revisited to review completed or ongoing actions, evaluate indicators, assess current conditions and opportunities, and check-in on priority actions. Community partners will play a key role in this important work moving forward, as the role of the ACRD and community stakeholders will be to work collaboratively to enhance the social and economic sustainability of Alberni Valley residents and the community as a whole.

Building on the wealth of existing information and services focused on seniors, combined with valuable input from residents and community partners, this AF Plan strives to represent the collective voice of Alberni Valley residents. This will ensure that the community informs to assist in making the Alberni Valley more age-friendly for all residents. The AF Plan aims to ensure current and future generations can enjoy the best possible quality of life living in the Alberni Valley from early to older years, and provides the groundwork for actions in the short, medium, and long-term.