



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

3008 Fifth Avenue, Port Alberni BC, CANADA V9Y 2E3

Telephone (250) 720-2700 Fax (250) 723-1327

REQUEST FOR DECISION

TO: ACRD Board of Directors

FROM: Amy Anaka, MCIP, RPP, Planner

MEETING DATE: June 24, 2020

RE: Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Plan

Recommendations:

THAT the Board of Directors endorse the Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Plan and Appendices as presented, highlighting the vision statement to ensure seniors in the Alberni Valley are included, respected, and supported to age well, and contribute through active participation in their community.

THAT the ACRD actively participates, supports, promotes and works toward becoming an age-friendly community through the implementation of the Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Plan, and that Plan implementation be referred to the Board's strategic planning process.

THAT the Board of Directors direct staff to explore options to establish a new Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee, or partner with an existing established committee.

THAT the Board of Directors direct staff to apply for Age-Friendly BC Community recognition from the Province of BC and BC Healthy Communities.

Desired Outcome:

To endorse the Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Plan (AF Plan) and Appendices (Appendix A), explore options to move forward with the actions identified, and apply for Age-Friendly BC Community recognition.

Background:

In 2019, the ACRD received a Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Age-Friendly Communities grant to develop a local AF Plan for the four Alberni Valley Electoral Areas (EAs) (Area 'B' Beaufort, Area 'D' Sproat Lake, Area 'E' Beaver Creek, and Area 'F' Cherry Creek). The AF Plan was developed between October 2019 and May 2020 by a project team of ACRD staff and Dr. Cherie Enns (Cherie Enns Consulting Inc.), and with overall guidance from the Age-Friendly Working Group. Based on the requirements of the UBCM grant, the attached AF Plan includes background research; a framework to emphasize the importance of building age-friendly communities and promoting active aging; an age-friendly assessment; a summary of community engagement; and an age-friendly action plan, including 12 priority actions for immediate consideration for the ACRD, stakeholders, and community members.

Project Overview:

Project Background

The ACRD is growing, aging, and changing. It is also rural and diverse, which results in unique social and environmental challenges for its communities, which are different from those facing urban populations. The 2016 Census notes that 21.8% of the total population in the ACRD is 65 years or older, which is higher than the provincial average of 18.3%. Additionally, the population of residents 55 years and older in the Alberni Valley EAs

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makes up over 45% of the total population. With this aging population, the ACRD recognizes the need to consider planning initiatives that support the ability to age in place and to be an age-friendly community through accessibility, transportation, housing, health care, food security, lifelong learning, and recreation.

Plan Development

The overarching project goal of the AF Plan is to inform ACRD policy, specifically in the Zoning Bylaw and Alberni Valley Official Community Plans (OCPs), further mobilize community action, and for the ACRD to be recognized as an age-friendly community through the Province of BC and BC Healthy Communities.

The AF Plan is the outcome of a robust community engagement process that obtained the views of community members and gained a deeper depth of participation that only residents and stakeholders could contribute. Based on the community input received, it is clear that the Alberni Valley has many things to celebrate. However, it is also facing many challenges in terms of being an age-friendly community. Despite such challenges, community members are passionate, and generally optimistic, about the future for all ages living in the Alberni Valley.

Eight key themes of an age-friendly community, which were developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), were also used in the AF Plan development to evaluate the ACRD's age-friendliness through an age-friendly lens. The AF Plan outlines a framework to emphasize the importance of building age-friendly communities and promoting active aging. The action plan expands on this framework by setting and prioritizing actions to make a community more accessible and inclusive, and to create opportunities for community members to become leaders and champions for the initiative. Lastly, 12 priority actions were highlighted for immediate consideration for stakeholders and community members as they work collaboratively to ensure seniors in the Alberni Valley are included, respected, and supported to age well, and contribute through active participation in their community.

Plan Activities

It is important to note that engagement and all activities had to transition to a virtual platform as of March 13, 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and were not undertaken in the method as originally planned.

Although the AF Plan is focused on the four AV EAs, the project team involved and engaged with other agencies and organizations who also represent other areas such as First Nations, the City of Port Alberni, the Alberni Clayoquot Health Network (ACHN), Island Health, and other established committees and groups. Additionally, an Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Working Group (WG) was established early on, that guided the Plan development. It was led by the project team and comprised of a diverse group of ACRD residents, service providers, organizations, agencies, and government representatives (many of whom were seniors). Sproat Lake Director Penny Cote was appointed by the Board as the Chair of the Working Group. Many WG members are also members of the ACHN, which provided important community networking and resources.

Many residents and community members participated throughout the Plan development through various engagement methods, with over 600 interactions (in-person and virtual) and over 5,000 promotions (social media, mail outs, flyer, etc.). Most notably was the age-friendly survey that was completed online and hardcopy by 376 ACRD and City residents, and senior care workers who shared their own experiences, needs, challenges, and priorities. Community engagement also included a community workshop, many meetings, presentations, and interactions through phone calls, emails, and other virtual and in-person conversations, where the project team received valuable feedback from stakeholders across the ACRD.

Time Requirements – Staff & Elected Officials:

Staff time will be required to explore implementation of the recommended action items, including applying for Age-Friendly BC Community recognition.

Financial:

This project was funded by UBCM in the amount of \$24,750, with additional in-kind ACRD costs for overall project management, meeting preparation, administration, printing and office supplies. The shift to virtual engagement

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and activities resulted in a higher increased project cost from in-kind ACRD staff support, as many activities and conversations shifted to one-on-one.

More detailed financial information will be presented with implementation plans that will be prepared in the future.

Summary & Next Steps:

This AF Plan:

- Will allow the ACRD to respond to the needs of a growing segment of the population and promote the best possible quality of life in the rural areas of the Alberni Valley. As residents age, their needs evolve and the ACRD can use this Plan to provide the groundwork for actions in the short, medium, and long-term in order to help facilitate our resident's ability to age in place and continue to live in the community.
- Includes actions to guide the development of local age-friendly policies and initiatives, which will enable the ACRD to apply for future funding opportunities. One of these opportunities includes additional UBCM age-friendly funding, which focuses on the development of local projects once an action plan is in place.

The recommendations of the AF Plan are action-oriented, achievable, and many can be implemented through updating current planning documents. The action plan includes 12 priority actions that are for immediate consideration by the ACRD and other partnering agencies.

Recommended Age-Friendly Priority Actions

1. Integrate the AF Action Plan into staff work plans and annual reporting.
2. Form an Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee.
3. Develop an implementation and funding strategy related to the AF Plan.
4. Advocate and promote alternative transportation options focused on seniors in the Alberni Valley.
5. Develop an AF Design Policy and Checklist to audit existing and plan for new ACRD-owned parks and infrastructure.
6. Apply for funding to expand integrated programming and intergenerational community hubs to reduce social isolation of seniors and their caregivers.
7. Launch a virtual volunteer bank, matching people's skills and interest to the community's needs.
8. Update and implement strategies to involve more seniors and people with disabilities in intergenerational neighbourhood emergency preparation, information dissemination, and safety programs.
9. Develop a Community Resource Directory with age-friendly branding, and create an awareness campaign related to the AF Plan and related actions.
10. Undertake a Housing Needs Assessment and Report.
11. Promote increase of bench dedication program and explore the inclusion of alternative wheel-friendly trails, providing inclusive trails for all ages and abilities.
12. Support more cultural inclusion and begin a dialogue with Tseshaht First Nation (TFN) and Hupacasath First Nation (HFN) regarding senior's initiatives and possible win-win initiatives.

Community Collaboration

The AF Plan seeks to create opportunities for community members to become leaders and champions, with many community partners already committing to collaborate for improvement: "to collaborate to move all the actions forward would truly make our community a leader for many others." One of the most important outcomes of the Plan development is how it has either started or reinitiated the conversation around the needs of seniors in the Alberni Valley. This increased awareness will benefit all residents of the Alberni Valley, as an age-friendly community is not only friendly for seniors, but people of all ages and abilities.

Plan Implementation

The AF Plan aims to help partners and stakeholders advocate for, and address, active living needs of the 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 BC, which could further position the ACRD in implementing many of the key ideas presented in the action plan.

Steps to become a recognized Age-Friendly BC Community include:	ACRD progress to date & next steps
1. Establish an age-friendly advisory or steering committee that includes the active participation of older adults. (An existing committee with a mandate that aligns with the age-friendly initiative can also serve in this role).	Exploration of options to establish a new Age-Friendly Stakeholder Advisory Committee, or partner with an existing established committee, requested as part of June 24, 2020 report to Board.
2. Pass a Board resolution that actively supports, promotes and works towards becoming age-friendly.	Requested as part of June 24, 2020 report to Board.
3. Conduct an age-friendly community assessment.	✓ Completed as part of the Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Plan.
4. Develop and publicize an action plan in consultation with older adults.	✓ Completed as part of the Alberni Valley Age-Friendly Plan. Needs to be publicized.

Once the AF Plan is endorsed by the Board of Directors, it will be publicized and presented to various community partners, groups, committees, and other organizations and agencies across the ACRD (ACHN, Alberni Valley Learning Council, North Island College - ElderCollege, Island Health, etc.). This will build further collaboration within the community to ensure the priority actions in the Plan are implemented. ACRD staff will also continue to collaborate with the City of Port Alberni by sharing survey results, as 44% of respondents were from the City, and to ensure future age-friendly planning efforts are aligned across the Alberni Valley.

It is recommended that the actions outlined in the action plan be reviewed and followed with an implementation plan, and a funding strategy that looks to government, corporate and non-profit resources for support. A potential funding opportunity includes applying for additional UBCM age-friendly funding, which focuses on the development of local projects that enable seniors to age in place, once an action plan is in place.

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. Very importantly, many Alberni Valley seniors have already expressed gratitude for the Plan, and willingness to collaborate in various ways to help implement the Plan actions.

Prepared by: 
 Amy Anaka, MCIP, RPP
 Planner

Reviewed by: 
 Mike Irg, MCIP, RPP
 General Manager of Planning and Development

Approved by: 
 Douglas Holmes, BBA, CPA, CA
 Chief Administrative Officer