AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES: DEFINING LOCAL PRINCIPLES
WEBINAR 2
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Date: Thursday October 22nd, 2015
Presenters: Dominic Ventresca (Niagara) & Angela Andrews (Haliburton)
Host: Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Planning Outreach Initiative

TOPICS COVERED

General Questions

1. Developing a steering committee
2. Engaging the business community

Questions for Dominic About Niagara's Experience

1. Older adult representation
2. Collaborative committee meetings
3. Sustaining a coordinator between funding
4. Defining 'seniors'
5. Supporting infrastructure
6. Resource repository
7. Community consultations
8. Seniors' housing needs

Questions for Angela About Haliburton's Experience

1. Survey target audience
2. Thai Chi
3. Survey original author
4. Suggestions to the County of Haliburton Official Plan Review
5. Evaluating action against effectiveness
6. Balancing person and environment
7. Core services for seniors

GENERAL QUESTIONS

01. Was the invitation to develop the Steering Committee broad or targeted? If targeted, what process did you use for the strategic invites for membership on the Steering Committee?

Haliburton: We are a small community so it was mostly word of mouth to determine who would be appropriate to be on the committee. One of us would then call to have that conversation and seek out if someone was interested. Word spread from there.

Niagara: We had the initial group that came together to decide to apply for the grant and then saw the need to expand to give us more community credibility. We had formed a network in our early stages which people self-selected to participate in. We did put out an expression of interest letting people know we were interested in expanding the leadership council for this initiative and there was some solicitation through that.

02. How difficult/easy was it to engage the business community?

Niagara – more of a challenge than engaging government and non-profits who are often mandated to address the needs of older adults directly. So we had to find a reason or value for businesses to participate. We framed it that we had this population of almost 19% in our community.

If it affected their bottom line or degree of attracting customers, then there was a common goal there. For example, one retail outlet was going to implement a policy not allowing shopping carts to leave their stores. One action group went to them to help understand that this would prevent those who needs assistance getting to their car or to the bus, and so they changed that policy.

Haliburton: We approached business community through Business Improvement Association. We also connected 1-1 with business owners to see if they were interested in having a ramp available. We also reached out to the Chamber of Commerce so they agreed to put information in their newsletters.

QUESTIONS FOR DOMINIC ABOUT NIAGARA'S EXPERIENCE

01. Were there older adults on your steering committee?

- Yes- the initial group that came together was representative of the Welland Seniors Advisory Committee. We had at least 3 older adults on the committee that oversaw the first grant.
- This is most definitely a key to success- having older adults involved at every step along the way, including implementation

02. How often does the Collaborative Committee meet? in person? conference call?

- We met since the inception monthly – an afternoon booked

03. For each round of OTF when you were able to hire a coordinator in the first round, were you able to keep that coordinator employed throughout the project and after OTF funds were spent?

- We had a 3-year window of funding for full time coordinator.
- After that grant ran out we had no money to pay anyone and so formed our Niagara Age-Friendly Community Network who were volunteers and continued the momentum and sustain the process leading to the second grant where we were able to hire a consultant.
- Now we are applying to Trillium for a continued position and exploring the appetite in the community for a Council on Aging.

04. How did Niagara define "seniors"? Was it adults 65+ (Stats Can definition) or some other age threshold?

- We did not have a prescriptive age-specific definition and did not find having such a definition relevant to our community engagement work. For example, "older adults" were targeted to participate in the focus groups and folks came who perceived themselves to be older adults or as having an interest in "older adult" issues. Even when input was received from the over 500 participants in the project and when the report was written with its long list of potential actions, the issue of a definition did not get raised.

05. Can you describe the "supporting infrastructure" in more detail?

- Within each of the 5 priorities or major transformational goals there are, in the case of goal 5, four objectives:
    - Transportation
    - Affordable and accessible housing
    - Expanding long-term care accommodation options
    - Ensuring neighbourhoods meet World Health Organization criteria for active transportation infrastructure

06. Is there a repository of previous reports? Where is it located?

- The reports on which we drew were mostly local studies, such as the Niagara Region's Aging Well in Niagara Report, prepared by Lura Consulting on the needs of seniors in Niagara. Also, our first awareness raising project produced some documents from the focus groups which we referenced for the consultant at the start of our second community consultation project to ensure he started with that baseline knowledge. You will find an excellent repository for age-friendly related documents relevant to Niagara on the Niagara Knowledge Exchange. This blog about the launch of the Niagara Aging Strategy Action Plan also provides a great summary.

07. What was the age group of people engaged with the community consultations? What was the target number of people engaged in these sessions.

- Community consultations took various forms. For example, our consultant facilitated 15 focus groups across Niagara that were targeted primarily at older adults, as self-defined and self-selected. Over 200 individuals attended with numbers varying from session to session.
- The community forums were targeted to the broader community and most stakeholder organizations were represented by staff, board members and/or clients as applicable, and many older adults attended as individuals interested in learning or contributing to the Aging Strategy. The community forum associated with the Aging Strategy project, for example, attracted approx. 100 people for a full-day facilitated session.

08. What strategies and actions are being planned to support senior housing needs in the future?

- Housing was identified as one of the priority needs by participants, both service providers and older adults. One of the main objectives under the Aging Strategy's fifth goal of "improving and maintaining a supportive infrastructure" is to "provide affordable, accessible and appropriate housing with necessary supports". The Aging Strategy and Action Plan Implementation Template contains the five goals, and for the housing related objective, five more specific strategies and their related actions and deliverables that would address issues of housing affordability, supports and home renovations, for example.

QUESTIONS FOR ANGELA ABOUT HALIBURTON'S EXPERIENCE

01. Were surveys geared to older adults, or to all ages? It is important to gather input from families/caregivers as well?

- Surveys were geared towards older adults aged 50+. We felt that people in this age range could think about aging from their own perspective, but also about aging from the perspective of potentially having an aging parent. We wanted to open the scope of it to see what the results would give us.
- Having input from families and caregivers were also important, which is why we wanted to have a lower age classification. Attached is the survey that we used.

02. Have you worked with the Taoist Tai Chi Society in Haliburton County? Tai Chi can improve balance and could be very useful for the "Fall Prevention" initiative

- Yes, we are familiar with the Taoist Tai Chi Society, and realize the importance and benefit it has in preventing falls, particularly through strength and balance. We haven't reached out in terms of involving the society directly in our planning, but we are aware and familiar with a wide range of fall-related programs for seniors in our community.

03. Was the community in BC in which you utilized their survey - Surrey BC?

- The survey that we used was from Chilliwack, BC. It was the Chilliwack Social Research and Planning Council and The City of Chilliwack for the Aging and Quality of Life Survey. We also used the Friendly to Seniors Program, City of Greater Sudbury as a reference as well, when designing our survey.

04. Can you provide examples of the suggestions made to the County of Haliburton Official Plan Review?

- This was an interesting process for me. I did some research and found a great resource from the Region of Peel that helped me get started on what needed to be included. I looked at the current official plan of the county and then thought about how we could improve the wording significantly.
- After looking through the draft that has been presented by the County of Haliburton, I was quite pleased to see much of the wording I had suggested was included. I'm always happy to discuss further if anyone has questions about the process of this.

05. How are actions that are implemented being evaluated in terms of their effectiveness against goals/objectives?

- This is a GREAT question. Admittedly we could be doing better in terms of evaluating effectiveness and we have with a few things, by looking back at our planning and seeing if we've met the need that was initially identified. With that being said, the development of the Age-Friendly Master Plan will formally allow us to go back and look at what was originally identified and see if in fact it is still a concern, OR if we have addressed some of those concerns (i.e. winter snow removal being one). Evaluation and sustainability are major components of this next phase we are moving into.

06. It appears that many of the objectives are structural, environmental changes. Are there objectives and resources to support services/programs to support healthy active aging (& falls prevention) e.g. physical activity for older adults?

- Based on the research that was identified in the needs assessment the priorities were definitely more structural. When we go back and do this needs assessment again it will be an opportunity for us to look at services and supports offered with community organizations, have conversations with them and aligning in that way. I think we will see more of a balance in this next phase.

07. In your opinion what are the main services you have identified as the core services for seniors?

- I'm not sure if this question is easy to answer. The community has changed and shifted so much since the first needs assessment was done, with more community supports being in place, such as the community paramedicine program, a new GAIN (Geriatric Assessment and Intervention Network) Clinic, and our seniors community support services through community care being rolled under the umbrella of the hospital system, among others.
- With this second phase we are moving into, part of the research will be to identify some of the core services that are currently out there, meet with them, discuss the direction we are heading, have input and look at their own strategic plans to see if we what we are trying to achieve will fit or if there is something that can be adapted so that we are moving in the same direction.
- This is a really exciting process and will hopefully allow more collaboration and greater movement towards and age-friendly environment.
- Get in touch with me and I will be happy to share information from this next phase, once we're at that point. I believe in sharing resources, and learning from one another!