

## King establishing action plan to remain age-friendly?

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King is actively advancing its Age Friendly Community Action Plan. The Township was recently honoured with Aging-Friendly Community Award at the recent Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference. This designation highlights the Township's commitment to creating accessible, inclusive spaces and programming that supports independent, active living for older adults. It marks an important milestone in the 2023-2026 Corporate Strategic Plan and King's commitment to developing the Age-Friendly Action Plan, ensuring residents can continue to age in place (grow older at home) with dignity. The plan, staff noted, is backed by extensive community engagement, including 452 survey responses from residents aged 55+. The action plan responds to a significant demographic shift and identifies key needs in housing, mobility, communication, program access, and community support for aging in place. Staff identified eight priority areas with a phased implementation approach (2026-2035) aligned with the Township's Corporate Strategic Plan and Official Plan. Most initiatives can be supported through existing staff resources, with additional funding to be considered in future budget discussions and through external grant opportunities. The Township of King is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with adults aged 55+ representing the fastest-growing population segment. As this group grows, the Township is dedicated to planning for their evolving needs. To better understand how to support residents as they age in place, the Township conducted a comprehensive community survey between February and July 2025, gathering 452 responses, a high level of engagement that reflects strong community interest. The survey results highlighted key themes related to health, housing, mobility, program access, community belonging, and communications. The action plan provides a comprehensive, evidence-based framework to support King's growing older adult population and strengthen the Township's commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community well-being. Through extensive research, inter-departmental collaboration, and meaningful engagement with residents and stakeholders, the action plan outlines clear priorities and a phased pathway for implementation. An internal working group was established to assess community needs and ensure alignment with existing municipal strategies. The group included representation from Community Services, Public Works, Growth Management Services, the Office of the CAO, and Corporate Services. Staff collaborated to review the action plan and provide recommendations to strengthen the final document. The survey results identify several key trends and service gaps related to housing, mobility, communication, program distribution, and access to health supports. It was indicated that 17% of older adult households plan to move within 3-5 years, with 36% expecting to leave King. Another 12% reported a weak sense of belonging, and 43% felt their opinions are not valued. And 32% expressed a desire for more programs and opportunities for participation. These stats reinforce the need for a coordinated and age-friendly approach to planning and service delivery. The action plan envisions King as a safe, welcoming, and inclusive community that celebrates the diverse needs of all residents, regardless of age. These findings helped inform the development of the action plan, which is grounded in the World Health Organization's Eight Age-Friendly Domains emphasizing accessibility, inclusion, mobility, safety, and community support. To advance this vision, the action plan identifies strategic priority areas that collectively shape the framework for becoming a more age-friendly municipality. Each priority area is supported by specific actions, associated timelines, responsible divisions, and measurable performance indicators to guide implementation and monitor progress. The eight priority areas include: Housing - Increase accessible and age-friendly housing options, promote accessory units, and support aging-in-place. Mobility & Transportation - Expand accessible mobility options, enhance pedestrian and cycling safety, and improve regional transit connections. Communication & Information - Strengthen communication channels, improve accessibility of information, support digital literacy, and advance connectivity initiatives. Community Support & Health Services - Build strong partnerships with health providers and community organizations to enhance access to supports and services. Respect & Inclusion - Foster an inclusive community through recognition programs, intergenerational initiatives, and equitable service protocols. Social Participation - Expand program offerings across King, support the Seniors Centre, and improve access to recreation and community activities. Safety & Accessibility - Enhance built-environment accessibility, including sidewalks, trails, lighting, and building access, and supporting seasonal accessibility needs. Civic Engagement & Employment - Increase opportunities for volunteerism, civic participation, and employment for older adults. Implementation of the action plan would occur in phases, with initiatives prioritized according to immediate, short-term, and medium/long-term needs. In the near future, the focus will be on establishing foundational supports for age-friendly initiatives. Short term (2028-2029) goals include advancing programs, partnerships, and initiatives that

build on the foundational work. Annual progress reports will be provided to Council to track achievements, monitor performance measures, and support ongoing decision-making. Councillors were concerned about the projected exodus of seniors in the coming years, but staff noted these figures are typical, and comparable to nearby communities like Caledon. Mayor Steve Pellegrini once again pointed to the lack of affordable and attainable housing stock in King.