

Oxford Age Friendly Strategy



AGE FRIENDLY
Oxford County



April 22nd, 2026

Maureen Ross, Community Member

Meagan Lichti, Chair of Oxford Age
Friendly Committee

Steering Committee Members

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| Meagan Lichti | Southwestern Public Health |
| Kelly Gilson Lindsay Wilson | United Way Oxford |
| Kristy Van Kooten-Bossence | Ingersoll Services for Seniors |
| Diana Handsaeme | Tillsonburg and District Multi Service Centre |
| Emily Porchak | Oxford Ontario Health Team |
| Maureen Ross Karen Devolin | Community Members |
| Rebekah Lindsay | Alzheimer Society Southwest Partners |
| Robin Kish | VON |
| Cheryl McDonald | Regional Geriatric Program of Southwestern Ontario |
| Chris Cunningham | Southgate Centre |
| Jamie Walter | Oxford County Paramedic Services – Community Paramedicine |
| Doug Ellis | City of Woodstock |
| Jillian Stephenson | Woodstock Hospital |
| Jeffrey Davis | Ontario Health at Home |
| Katelyn St Pierre | Rural Roads Health Services |

Situation Overview

- The population in **Oxford County is growing and aging:**
 - Adults 65+ in the SWPH region increased from 16.1% to 20.2%(2011–2021).
- The proportion of seniors living with low income increased from 18% in 2016 to 25% in 2021
- Older adult falls remain a significant burden for our region,
 - Our 75+ population experiencing the highest emergency department visit rates in the province due to falls in 2024

Age-Friendly Communities are an evidence-based policy option and are supported by the Ontario Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the World Health Organization

Age Friendly Communities

An Age-Friendly Community (AFC) is a community where policies, services, and physical spaces are designed to enable people of all ages to live in secure and accessible physical and social environments



Needs Assessment Data Collection

Data collected from May-July 2025:

- ***Community surveys*** for anyone 50+ years old
- ***Focus groups*** related to the different age friendly domains
- ***1:1 caregiver interviews***



Oxford Age Friendly Strategy



Needs Assessment Summary



- Transportation is a significant barrier to participation in community life and healthcare access



- Access to healthcare was highlighted as one of the greatest challenges



- Appropriate and affordable housing options are scarce, especially in rural areas



- Aging in place is a priority, but is hindered by limited supports
- Technology, transportation, and cost often limited access to social participation



- Sidewalk and trail maintenance, accessible washrooms, and safe pedestrian crossings were recurring concerns

Transportation

Rural inaccessibility, limited scheduling, and lack of inter-community transit reinforced dependence on personal vehicles or family support.

Recommendations:

1. Explore innovative transportation solutions while prioritizing affordability and accessibility in transportation systems, particularly in rural areas.
2. Increase awareness and education about existing transportation options.
3. Expand and support volunteer driver programs.
4. Strengthen coordination between local transportation providers.



Housing

Older adults face limited affordable and appropriate housing options particularly in rural areas due to a lack of suitable downsized or supportive housing, high retirement home costs, and long LTC waitlists, while intergenerational and home-share models show promise.

Recommendations

1. Increase awareness and education of housing options and aging in place considerations
2. Explore and promote alternative living arrangements
3. Share our local needs assessment to support advocacy



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Participants identified accessibility and safety challenges in outdoor and built environments, highlighting the need for stronger collaboration.

Recommendations:

1. Increase awareness of the benefits of age and dementia friendly design.
2. Increase collaboration with community partners to align recommendations for community design.
3. Identify opportunities to improve maintenance and accessibility of sidewalks and walkways, with particular attention to neighbourhoods with higher proportions of low-income older adults.
4. Explore the possibility of local developer incentive programs to promote age and dementia friendly housing and community design.



Additional Recommendations Include:

- Increasing awareness for community supports and services with a focus on rural areas
- Explore ways to re-instate local memory clinic and cognitive health services
- Create coordinated access for specialized geriatric services
- Sharing our needs assessment to support advocacy
- Reducing Ageism through education, policy and intergenerational opportunities
- Raising awareness of the risks of social isolation and loneliness
- Prioritizing equity, accessibility and inclusion-based approaches to addressing social isolation including thoughtful technology solutions





Provincial Recognition

Oxford County received recognition for becoming an Age Friendly Community at the 2026 ROMA Conference from Minister Cho

Strategic Alignment

Oxford County's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

Pillar 1: Promoting Community Vitality

- Goal 1.1: Our Housing recommendations support initiatives 1 and 4
- Goal 1.3: Our strategy and needs assessment supports initiatives 1-4
- Goal 1.4: Our outdoor spaces recommendations support initiative 4

Pillar 2: Enhancing Environmental Sustainability

- Older adults were identified in SWPH's climate vulnerability assessment and have the most severe impacts from extreme weather events

Oxford County's Safe and Well Plan

- We shared our needs assessment data for the updated plan and look forward to the collaboration opportunities.

Next Steps

The Oxford County Age-Friendly Strategy is intended to be a living document that evolves alongside community needs, emerging evidence, and local opportunities.

The Steering Committee will continue to support implementation by identifying lead partners, strengthening collaboration across sectors, and aligning actions with existing municipal, public health, and community planning processes.



Our Ask:

**We are asking Oxford
County Council to
Endorse the Oxford Age
Friendly Strategy**

