

Executive Summary

Canada is experiencing a demographic trend of population aging (Plouffe & Kalache, 2010). Hamilton, Ontario is in line with this trend, with seniors being the fastest growing segment of Hamilton's population (HCoA & City of Hamilton, 2014). To address challenges associated with an aging population, there is an international movement advocating for the creation of age-friendly communities, which provide environments to support the well-being of older residents (WHO, 2007). The well-being of seniors is affected by their ability to retain independence in conducting instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) within their neighbourhoods, such as walking to the store, using public transit, and getting to the doctor (Hodge, 2008). This study evaluated the senior-friendliness of the Macassa and Glenview West neighbourhoods in Hamilton to identify which neighbourhood features are supportive of, and which features pose barriers to, instrumental activities of daily living among seniors.

Research Method

Each neighbourhood was evaluated through observational analyses using a senior-friendly evaluation tool informed by Bendle's (2012) study on senior-friendly neighbourhoods in Victoria, British Columbia. The tool was adapted to focus on factors impacting IADL, as described in the existing literature, and factors specific to the Hamilton context, as described in summaries of focus groups with seniors and service providers conducted by the Hamilton Council on Aging. The evaluation criteria were organized into three categories: *Mix of Land Uses*, the *Pedestrian Environment*, and *Public Transportation*. In addition to the neighbourhood evaluations, *Hamilton's Plan for an Age Friendly City* was reviewed based on these categories. The neighbourhood evaluation findings and review of *Hamilton's Plan for an Age Friendly City* highlight potential improvements to infrastructure, community programs, and City policies to facilitate IADL and ultimately provide more age-friendly neighbourhoods for seniors in Hamilton.

Results

The neighbourhood evaluations indicate that Macassa features more attributes that are associated with senior-friendliness than Glenview West. Macassa performed better in the *Mix of Land Uses* and *Pedestrian Environment* categories, while both neighbourhoods had the same score for the *Public Transportation* category. Overall, Macassa received a score of 46 out of 64, whereas Glenview West received a score of 39 out of 64.

The review of *Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly City* showed that Hamilton has identified a variety of objectives and associated actions that seek to improve the senior-friendliness of existing and current neighbourhoods in Hamilton. Some of these directives will be useful in removing barriers and/or providing features that support seniors' independence in IADL in Macassa and Glenview West, although not all of the shortcomings of the neighbourhoods are adequately addressed in the Plan.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, the following recommendations are proposed for Hamilton and for the selected neighbourhoods:

Hamilton

- Develop a strategy to improve winter maintenance of sidewalks;
- Develop a strategy to achieve a diversity of land uses within existing neighbourhoods;
- Formalize the Hamilton Council on Aging within the Corporation of the City of Hamilton.

Macassa

- Create a community space for seniors through a partnership between the City and Blessed Sacrament Catholic Elementary School and/or the Macassa Lodge;
- Install a traffic buffer (planting strip) along the west side of Upper Gage Avenue;
- Install visual countdowns and auditory signals at major intersections;
- Provide defined pedestrian access in big box plazas;
- Provide resting places;
- Improve bus stop accessibility.

Glenview West

- Create a community space for seniors through a partnership with the Viscount Montgomery Public School and/or St. Eugene Catholic Elementary School;
- Extend Bookmobile service to the neighbourhood;
- Install visual countdowns and auditory signals at major intersections;
- Provide non-slip strips at major intersections;
- Place seniors crossing signs at important pedestrian crossings;
- Install a sidewalk along the south side of Lawrence Avenue;
- Provide defined pedestrian access to retail amenities;
- Provide resting places;
- Improve bus stop accessibility.