



# Creating an Age-Friendly Community: Assessing Needs and Priorities

## Executive Summary

Osprey Community Foundation Project

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# Creating an Age-Friendly Community: Assessing Needs and Priorities

## Executive Summary

In order to determine the priorities and needs of the growing senior population, the Osprey Community Foundation conducted a survey of those aged 55 and older living in Nelson, RDCK Area E<sup>1</sup>, and RDCK Area F<sup>2</sup>. The World Health Organization's *Age-Friendly Community Initiative* was applied as a model for this project. An age-friendly community is an inclusive and accessible environment that *"allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need."*<sup>3</sup>

The key features of an age-friendly community that were the focus of the Osprey Community Foundation's survey were:

1. **Housing**...that is affordable, located near services and transportation, well-built, well-designed, safe and secure
2. **Transportation**...that is accessible and affordable
3. **Community support and health services**...that are tailored to seniors' needs
4. **Outdoor spaces and public buildings**...that are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible
5. **Social participation opportunities**...in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures

A better understanding of seniors' priorities and needs in Nelson and area will help the Foundation anticipate needs and be more effective in allocating money it has available for granting each year to seniors' needs.

### Profile of the Survey Respondents

Over 300 people responded to the survey: 120 people completed paper surveys, and 183 completed the survey on-line.

- 70% were female and 30% male
- Half (50%) were under 70 years of age and half were 70 or older
- 51% lived in Nelson, 25% lived in Area E, 19% in Area F, and the rest outside the area
- 25% of respondents had an after-tax household income less than \$22,000 (81% female, 19% male)

### Limitations of the Survey Findings

It can be argued that males and seniors with lower incomes were under-represented in this survey. The population responding to the survey differed from the current population in that the survey sample consisted of a greater proportion of females and a smaller proportion of people with income less than \$22,000. The interpretation of the findings is limited by the design of the survey questions: the questions were design to elicit information on seniors' priorities and needs applicable to their personal situation, not their opinion on the needs of seniors in general.

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<sup>1</sup> RDCK Area E includes Blewett, Balfour, Queens Bay, Longbeach, Harrop/Procter, Sunshine Bay, Bealby/Horlicks, Taghum Beach, Nelson to Cottonwood Lake

<sup>2</sup> RDCK Area F includes Beasley, Taghum, Willow Point, Nasookin, Grohman, Crescent Beach, Sproule Creek, Six Mile, Bonnington

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. [http://www.who.int/ageing/active\\_ageing/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/index.html)

## Respondents' Top Priorities for the Osprey Community Foundation

To best support the health of seniors (aged 55+) living in Nelson and Areas E and F, the top three priorities survey respondents thought the Osprey Community Foundation should focus on were:

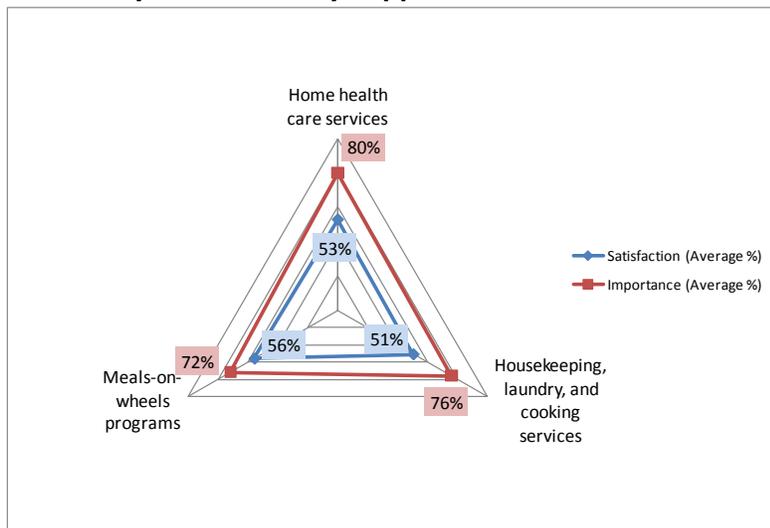
1. **Community Support and Health Services** (190 votes)
2. **Housing Supply and Services** (171 votes)
3. **Transportation** (157 votes)

Social Participation received a total of 82 votes and Outdoor Spaces and Public Facilities a total of 62 votes. Community Support and Health Services also received the most #1 votes (88), followed by Housing Supply and Services (68) and Transportation (52).

## Community Support and Health Services

The survey identified gaps of 15% to 27% between respondents' *satisfaction* with the availability of **community support and health services** and the *importance* of these services.

**Figure 1. Satisfaction with, and importance of, the availability of Community Support and Health Services**



For example, the average satisfaction ranking for **home health care services** was 53%. In comparison, the average importance rating was 80%. There was also a 25% gap between respondents' satisfaction with, and the importance of, the availability of **housekeeping, laundry and cooking services**. (See Figure 1)

Examining importance rankings individually, 60% ranked **shopping**

**assistance** (e.g. help getting groceries or medications) as extremely or somewhat important. And over 50% ranked **personal assistance with forms and information, meals-on-wheels, and regular telephone check-ins**, as extremely or somewhat important.

## Cost of Community Support and Health Services

Although the majority of respondents (58% or 160/274) reported that the cost of community support and health services was not applicable to them, if only the "yes" (58) and "no" (56) responses are considered, cost was a barrier to just over half (58/114).

## Health Services Needed and Not Available in Nelson

There were 94 comments made regarding health services respondents regularly needed, but could not access in Nelson, including:

- tests (e.g. MRIs, CAT Scans)

- services (e.g. pre-op appointments, macular degeneration shots)
- specialists' consultations (e.g. dermatologists, ENT specialists, rheumatologists, endocrinologists)

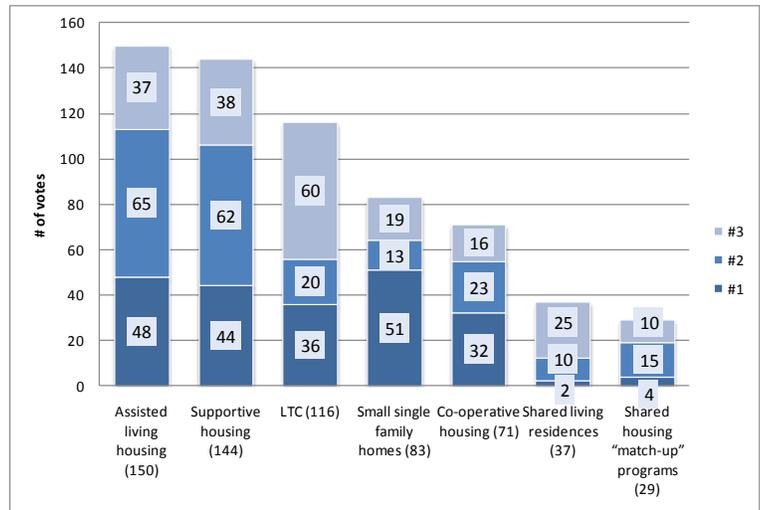
## Housing Supply

Overall, respondents (n=222) thought the following types of affordable seniors' housing were most needed in Nelson and Areas E and F: **Assisted Living Housing, Supportive Living Housing, and Long Term Care (LTC)** (see Figure 2).

However, affordable and accessible **small single family homes** received the most #1 votes (n=52), even more than those for **assisted living** (n=48). Respondents clarified that single family homes should be built on one level (e.g. no stairs), with a small patch of lawn and a covered parking spot for one car.

One respondent explained that seniors housing should be *"within walking distance of shopping, parks, and fitness. This would keep us 'young' for a longer period of time ...maintaining independence and ability to be part of the community."*

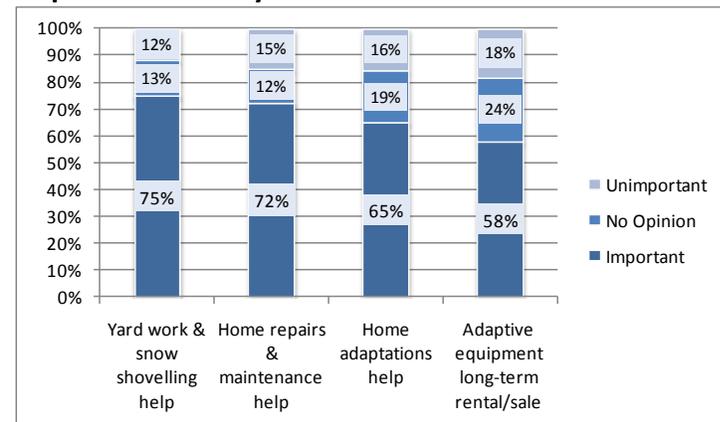
**Figure 2. Type of housing most needed by seniors**



## Housing Services

All of the housing services that might be able to help respondents to continue living in their own home were rated as important by a majority. Approximately three-quarters thought that help with **yard work** (72%) and **home repairs** (75%) was somewhat or extremely important. Help with **installing home adaptations** (e.g. grab bars) and **long term rental or sales of home adaptive equipment** were rated somewhat or extremely important by 65% and 58% respectively (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Rating the importance of services that may help seniors to stay in their own home**



However, there was a 20% gap between satisfaction with and importance of: help with **yard work and snow shovelling**; help with **home repairs and maintenance**; and help **installing home adaptations**.

### Cost of Housing Services

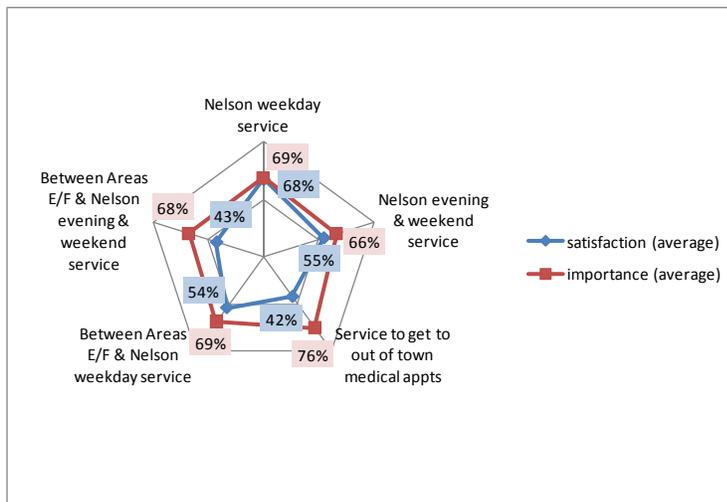
119 respondents said that the cost of housing services did not apply to them. Examining only the “yes” (61) and “no” (73) responses, cost was a barrier for 46% (61/134).

### Transportation Services

The vast majority of respondents (81% or 219/269) used their own car for transportation. Only one-quarter (71/269) of the respondents said that they used the public bus service, and just 7% (19/269) reported that they used handyDART. Taxis were used by 20% (54/269) and 27% (72/269) relied upon family or friends for a ride. (Note: the percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were asked to list all types of transportation used.)

While all the transportation services were ranked important overall, the most important service to respondents was that **to out-of-town medical appointments** (e.g. in Trail) (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Comparing satisfaction with, and importance of, transportation services**



However, there was a large gap of 34% between respondents’ *satisfaction* with the availability of transportation services **to get to out-of-town medical appointments** (average satisfaction was 42%) and the *importance* of this service (average importance was 76%). There was a gap of 25% between respondents’ *satisfaction* with **evening and weekend transportation service between Nelson and Areas E and F** (43% satisfaction) and the *importance* of this service (68% importance).

Respondents were most satisfied with the **weekday transportation service within Nelson** (average 68%).

The 44 comments about transportation services included requests for more service to Balfour – particularly in the evening and on weekends and holidays; and a connecting bus or van for Procter and Harrop residents. Respondents also wanted more transportation for seniors’ events and trips, more bus stops within Nelson (e.g. NDCC front door; and between Baker St. and Mall), and better connecting transportation services to Trail and to Kelowna (for health care).

### Transportation Needs Identified in Other Studies

In a recent study by the City of Nelson, transportation services were identified as being very important to the respondents<sup>4</sup>, and the study similarly identified a definite gap between importance and

<sup>4</sup> 500 people responded to Nelson’s 2009 Citizen Survey and over half of the respondents were aged 55 or older (City of Nelson, 2010).

satisfaction ratings with transportation between Nelson and rural areas<sup>5</sup>. This report noted the following active transportation challenges specific to Nelson: “aging population; steep grades; infrequent transit service; and sidewalks are not treated as high priority for plowing” (p. 18).

The Seniors’ Support Research (Murphy, 2006) reported several transportation challenges among 72 frail elderly community members. Half of the seniors had difficulties (financial and/or physical) getting to medical appointments. Most of the seniors found taxis too expensive, and handyDart was not used because the timing was inconvenient or the seniors had difficulties or were unable to make arrangements with handyDART because of physical (e.g. hearing) or cognitive challenges.

### ***Driver Assessment and Training***

The availability of **DriveABLE assessment** and **senior-specific driver training or refresher courses** in Nelson was rated as extremely or somewhat important by 83% of the respondents (241/289 and 234/281 respectively).

## **Social Participation Opportunities**

There was a high level of agreement that the availability of both **general** and **specialized** (e.g. adapted for seniors’ physical or cognitive health challenges) **seniors’ fitness programs** was important, with 85% and 80% rating these programs (respectively) as somewhat or extremely important. Just over two-thirds (179/262) ranked **technology courses** (e.g. computer) as somewhat or extremely important, and 64% (169/263) ranked **art and music therapy** programs as important. However, satisfaction with the availability of the same programs was much less (ranging from 14% satisfaction with the availability of art and music therapy to 33% satisfaction with the availability of fitness programs).

Respondents made suggestions regarding social participation opportunities they would like, including:

- more senior-specific programs at the Nelson and District Recreation Centre and at Broader Horizons a new larger seniors’ centre
- easier access to parks
- more programs that bring seniors and children together
- more Fitness programs that encourage and challenge
- more swimming pool programs
- a community outreach program to help seniors access events, activities, exercise

Examining only the “yes” (71) and “no” (116) responses, the cost of social participation opportunities was a barrier for 38% (69/187) (71 reported cost was “not applicable”).

## **Outdoor Spaces and Public Facilities**

All of the public services were considered very important, but accessible, convenient **public washrooms** were the most important to respondents: 95% (250/263) ranked them as extremely or somewhat

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<sup>5</sup> The City of Nelson Transit Strategy (2008) reported that only 8 per cent of the total ridership was seniors (Opus, 2010, p. 14).

important. However, only 19% (50/267) of respondents were somewhat or completely satisfied with the availability of public washrooms. **Benches** were rated extremely or somewhat important by 91% (240/263), but only 49% (130/267) were similarly satisfied with the accessibility and convenience of existing benches. **Local parks and trails** were highly important to 91% (238/262) of respondents and 72% (191/266) were somewhat or completely satisfied with local parks and trails.

## Community Meetings

The findings of the survey were shared with service providers, seniors and interested community members during three community meetings. At these meetings, over 70 community members were engaged in testing and discussing the findings and in providing input on priorities and strategies to address them (see Appendix 13).

Focusing on the top three priorities identified by the survey (Community Support and Health Services, Housing, and Transportation), meeting participants met in small groups to discuss:

1. *What approaches might be used to address this issue?*
2. *What partnerships might be created or built upon to address this issue?*
3. *What would be good steps to take in the next 3-6 months?*

The survey responses revealed that many seniors were not satisfied with the *availability of affordable services* in all areas. Interestingly, the community meetings uncovered that some of the services were available, but that seniors were not aware of services, or had difficulties accessing them.

## Key Strategies to Address Priority Needs

While many approaches were suggested for addressing specific needs and issues, there were three strategies participants identified that applied to all of the top priorities identified by the survey (Community Support and Health Services, Housing and Transportation). These were to provide or increase:

1. Education and communication of information about existing services and new options
2. Coordination of services, including a central contact and advocate to help seniors access services
3. Facilitating private and non-profit groups and organizations efforts to meet identified service needs

## Next Steps

The Osprey Community Foundation's Board commissioned this study to have a better understanding of seniors' priorities in Nelson and Areas E and F to help the Foundation anticipate needs and be more effective in allocating the money it has available for granting each year to seniors' needs. The Board's challenge now will be twofold: to determine its own funding priorities and strategies; and to share these findings with other key stakeholders who are also working to address these needs in the community.