

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	March 26, 2026
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-11-26
Title:	Progress Report – Age-Friendly Action Plan
Prepared by:	Cassandra Dillman, Intermediate Planner
Reviewed by:	Scott Taylor, Director of Planning
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All member municipalities in Grey County

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-11-26 regarding the County’s Age-Friendly Action Plan progress be received for information; and
2. That staff be authorized to make minor amendments to the County’s Age-Friendly Action Plan, without impacting the intent of the Plan, to enable plan implementation; and
3. That staff be directed to share the Progress Report with all member municipalities for information.

Executive Summary

Grey County is advancing its Age-Friendly Community vision to ensure residents of all ages can live, work, and participate fully in safe and accessible environments. With the County population aging rapidly, projected to have more than one-third of residents over 65 by 2035, it is important to prioritize planning for inclusive and Age-Friendly housing, transportation, and community services.

Supported by a 2021 provincial grant, Grey County developed its Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan, endorsed in 2022. The Plan outlines over 100 recommended actions based on the World Health Organization’s eight Age-Friendly community dimensions and relies on collaboration across County departments, municipalities, and over 20 community partners.

The progress report, linked in the attachment section below, identifies that half of the action items have been completed, are underway, or are embedded in ongoing County

operations, and items from all eight dimensions have been initiated. A four-page Progress Snapshot is also linked below to provide a high-level overview.

Staff are recommending minor updates to some action items to streamline actions, update leads, and better align responsibilities, strengthening the County's ability to support residents of all ages and maintain momentum toward building an Age-Friendly Grey County.

Background and Discussion

An Age-Friendly Community is designed so everyone, including children, youth, adults, and older residents, can live, work, and play in safe, accessible, and welcoming spaces. Creating an Age-Friendly community begins by examining all parts of community life, including land development, transportation, parks, social services through an Age-Friendly lens. Committing to seeing and addressing projects, issues, and policies through this Age-Friendly lens is how we create Age-Friendly communities.

As Grey County grows and ages, the case for Age-Friendly planning only strengthens. By 2035, more than 1 in 3 Grey residents will be over 65. By planning for Age-Friendly housing, transportation, and community services, the County can support older adults to maintain independence and thrive in their communities, as well as their caregivers and their families. By focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable, from seniors to young children, our communities become places where everyone can thrive no matter their age, ability, or background.

Developing the County's Age-Friendly Initiative

In 2021, Grey County successfully obtained a \$60,000 Inclusive Community Grant, from the Government of Ontario, to develop an Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan. The project was highly collaborative with contributions from a stakeholder committee, community organizations, member municipalities, County staff and over 700 residents. The completed Action Plan was endorsed by County Council in March 2022 and shared with all member municipalities.

Through this process, two important items emerged: a community vision focused on all ages and an understanding of the Age-Friendly community building that is already occurring throughout the County. As a result, the Action Plan emphasizes collaboration, outlining over 100 recommended actions to address and advance key Age-Friendly priorities regardless of age.

Action Plan Implementation

Grey County's Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan are built around the World Health Organization's (WHO) eight community dimensions, ranging from physical infrastructure (outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing) to soft infrastructure (respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, community and information, community support and health services, and social participation).

Since 2022, County staff have been working on plan implementation. While accountability for the Plan lies with Grey County's Planning department, successful implementation requires efforts from all County departments and a wide range of community partners. The Grey County Age-Friendly Communities Committee supports this work and serves as a cross-sector network sharing resources and fostering collaboration among those involved in Age-Friendly initiatives across the County.

The Action Plan also recommends regular progress reviews to help identify successes, address gaps, and guide resources effectively. As Grey County is a two-tier government, the Action Plan naturally connects and interacts with many existing municipal services and community initiatives. The Plan provides a framework for Age-Friendly community planning. Building an Age-Friendly community is an iterative planning process: revisions signal growth and strengthen the community's Age-Friendly vision. The detailed Progress Report and Progress Snapshot are linked in the attachments section below.

What We've Learned

The following insights have emerged during the implementation and review of the Age-Friendly Action Plan:

Theme	Summary
Organizational Age-Friendly lens	Many County staff and departments apply an Age-Friendly lens in their daily work, making it part of our organizational culture.
Broad range of Age-Friendly initiatives underway	There are many projects and day-to-day activities across County departments that aid Age-Friendly community planning goals, some of which are above and beyond those identified in the Action Plan.
Growing community engagement and participation	Community interest in Age-Friendly initiatives continues to grow.

Local Age-Friendly leadership	Age-Friendly fairs were hosted by both Grey Highlands and Blue Mountains this past year. Grey County was recognized by the province as an Age-Friendly Community in 2026, alongside the Town of Hanover who has been a provincial leader in Age-Friendly planning since 2017.
The importance of partnerships	Partnerships are essential for addressing complex societal issues, such as mental health, addictions, health care and homelessness. These issues are beyond the capacity of one organization alone.
The COVID-19 pandemic	The pandemic changed how residents participate, communicate, and engage with their communities, while exposing the digital divide, disrupted volunteer networks, and increased risk of social isolation among older adults.
Staffing Resources	The absence of a dedicated Age-Friendly Community Coordinator has added some complexity to managing the plan and coordinating partners.
Evaluation	Although each action item included performance indicators and a project lead, much of the data was not easily available, the indicators did not always reflect meaningful outcomes, and some identified leads are no longer suitable.

These insights highlight that Grey County cannot achieve this vision alone. Partnerships with municipalities, volunteer groups, and not-for-profits are essential to advancing Age-Friendly community planning goals. Grey County’s continued leadership, collaboration, and commitment to learning will ensure a strong foundation for ongoing progress.

Next Steps

Grey County has made meaningful steps forward in implementing the Age-Friendly Action Plan and important work remains ahead. The review identified opportunities to strengthen community partnerships, improve outcome tracking, and identified initiatives that require additional resources or collaboration.

Moving forward, staff will continue to implement and advance the Action Plan and support the Age-Friendly Communities Committee. The progress review has also identified some action items that would benefit from reassessment. Several action items were identified for consolidation, division, retirement or shifted to a more appropriate lead. Through this report staff are seeking Council’s support for making minor tweaks to the Action Plan, without changing the intent of the Plan. The changes would aid in the

implementation of the Plan to streamline actions, update leads, and to better align responsibilities. For example:

- Action Item 4.5 - regarding the creation of a Grey County Accessibility Group - is no longer necessary due to continued success of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The review also identified four duplicate items in the original Plan.
- In addition, staff separated nine action items within the report card into smaller, more specific components to improve clarity and tracking.
- The Action Plan assigns a lead and partner organization for each action; however, many of these leads are no longer suitable because the corresponding organizations or positions no longer exist.

After four years of working with the Plan, staff have identified these adjustments as minor but valuable improvements. They will help strengthen implementation, enhance tracking and maintain momentum toward building an Age-Friendly Grey County.

Financial and Resource Implications

None.

Relevant Consultation

Internal: All County departments were consulted, including Long Term Care, Transportation Services, Human Resources, Clerks and Legislative Services, Paramedic Services, Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, Climate Change Initiatives, Provincial Offences, and Communications

External: Municipal staff and community organizations, including Grey Bruce Health Unit, Beaver Valley Outreach, Alzheimer Society Grey-Bruce, Grey Bruce Legal Clinic, Grey Bruce Elder Prevention Network, Osteoporosis Canada, Breaking Down Barriers, and Regional Geriatric Program of Southwestern Ontario

Appendices and Attachments

[Age-Friendly Action Plan Progress Report 2026.pdf](#)

[Age-Friendly Progress Snapshot 2026.pdf](#)



Age-Friendly Grey County

Progress Snapshot 2026

A Community for Every Age and Stage of Life

Grey County’s Age-Friendly Community Action Plan is a shared vision for communities where people of all ages can live, work, and thrive with dignity, independence, and belonging. Launched in 2022, the plan outlines actions across eight community dimensions, from housing and transportation to social inclusion and health services. This snapshot highlights progress made so far, by Grey County, member municipalities, and over 20 community partners.

For the full report, visit grey.ca/agefriendlycommunities



AT A GLANCE

- **700+ residents** who shaped the plan
- **119 action items** across 8 dimensions
- **Half completed, underway, or embedded** in ongoing County operations
- **20+ community partners**
- **Provincially recognized** as an Age-Friendly Community in 2026





Progress Across the Community

Action items from all eight dimensions have been initiated.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- The CP Rail Trail was resurfaced to increase accessibility.
- **8 of 9 municipalities** have adopted a Community Improvement Plan.
- **232 AEDs** deployed across community locations.

Transportation

- **\$9.5M secured** to build a unified regional transit network across four counties.
- **320 new cycling signs** installed and 140 km of paved shoulders added for cyclists.

Housing

- **\$5.8M invested** through the County Housing Fund since 2021.
- Emergency housing in Owen Sound has sheltered 480 individuals, including 50+ children.

Social Participation

- An Age-Friendly logo created for Grey County and all 9 member municipalities.
- Grey County launched a monthly public newsletter in October 2025 with over

10,000 subscribers

Respect & Social Inclusion

- 340+ individuals from 50+ organizations received EDI training through the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership.
- Age-Friendly fairs held in Grey Highlands and The Blue Mountains.

Communication & Information

- The Aging Well in Grey Bruce Calendar launched August 2025 with
~ **4,000 copies** distributed.
- A Virtual Courtroom was created to improve access for all ages.

Civic Participation & Employment

- Grey County received the AdvantAge Ontario Innovation and Excellence Workplace Quality Award.
- Paid PSW training and placements continue in local LTC homes.

Community Support & Health Services

- **370+ clinical student** placements supported at Grey County LTC Homes since 2023.
- The Community Paramedicine Home Visitation Program continues to expand.



Age-Friendly Across Grey County

Town of Hanover \$35,000+ in provincial grants for a Seniors Active Living Centre and Active Aging Expo. Age-Friendly Business Initiative recognized 5 local businesses. A provincial Age-Friendly leader since 2017.

Municipality of Grey Highlands Hosted the inaugural Age-Friendly Seniors Health Fair in June 2025.

Town of The Blue Mountains Hosted an Age-Friendly Fair in September 2025, connecting residents with local services.

City of Owen Sound Home to Grey County's emergency housing, sheltering 480+ individuals since 2024, and the new Virtual Courtroom improving access to justice.

Grey Bruce Public Health Unit Delivered Falls Prevention programming and developed the Healthy Development checklist.

Grey Bruce Ontario Health Team co-created the Aging Well in Grey Bruce Calendar with local older adults and service providers.

Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Trained 340+ individuals from 50+ organizations in equity, diversity, and inclusion in 2024.

Grey Bruce Elder Abuse Prevention Network Launched an elder abuse response system integrated with 211 across Grey and Bruce Counties.

YMCA of Owen Sound Grey-Bruce Received a \$25,000 provincial grant to launch the Thrive Together Social and Fitness program in 2025.

Georgian College Supports 250+ clinical student placements annually at Grey County LTC Homes.

Building on Our Momentum

Grey County has made real progress, and there is more work ahead. The review identified opportunities to deepen community partnerships, improve how we track outcomes, and advance initiatives that need additional resources or collaboration.

As Grey County grows and ages, the case for Age-Friendly planning only strengthens. By 2035, more than 1 in 3 residents will be over 65. The work we are doing today, in housing, transportation, services, and public spaces, is building the community that the future will need.

- 1 in 4 Grey County residents are currently over 65 - well above the national average
- 1 in 3 will be 65 or older by 2035
- 115,215 residents as of 2025 - up 23% since 2016

Grey County's Age-Friendly Action Plan is brought to life through collaboration across County departments, member municipalities, community organizations, and residents. Thank you to all the partners helping build a Grey County that works for every age.

grey.ca/agefriendlycommunities

