



Councillor Josh Matlow

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Chair and Members
Planning and Growth Management Committee
100 Queen Street West
Toronto M5H 2N2

Planning an Age-Friendly Toronto

Dear Chair and Members,

I am writing in my capacity as Seniors Advocate and Co-Chair of the Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table to indicate my intention to put a motion before Council that will reinforce Council's commitment to the WHO's Global age-friendly principles.

As highlighted in the 2016 Census on Age and Sex and Type of Dwelling released by Statistics Canada on May 3, 2017, Canada is aging quickly. The number of seniors in Toronto, which is already the largest in any municipality in Ontario, continues to grow.

Building upon the success of the original Toronto Seniors Strategy unanimously adopted by Council in 2013 and the recent designation of Toronto as a global age-friendly city, we are currently engaged in a Council-directed collaborative process with City Divisions, Agencies and community partners to prepare the next version of the City's seniors strategy – 2.0.

An important goal for version 2.0 of the Toronto Seniors Strategy is to start reframing how seniors are referred to in City policies and practices. The direction of the draft strategy is to reposition seniors as a significant element of Toronto's population that has much to offer. Recent Statistics Canada data that highlight the increasingly significant role of older adults as productive contributors to the labour force are just one indicator. This means breaking from the traditional approach which positions seniors, people with disabilities and persons with special needs as a single homogeneous group. The rationale for this shift in approach is to recognize that today's senior is active, engaged and making great contributions to their life of their community, while at the same time helping to focus the City's policies more directly for populations with specific needs.

City Planning has or is developing age-friendly policies as outcomes of planning studies and emerging policy directions from ongoing studies such as: Don Mills Crossing, TOCore, and Mimico-Judson Secondary Plan. These positive initiatives, together with any improvements to integrate age-friendly considerations into the City's land use planning application review process, send a clear message to members of the public and to the development industry that the City is continuing to take a proactive approach in designing for and accommodating the City's aging population.

In bringing forward a motion to Council that would seek to make an explicit link between Council's commitment to being an age-friendly city and the City's Official Plan, it is my intention to reinforce and build on the many excellent policies in the current plan that are consistent with creating an age-friendly built environment. The resolution would commit Council to acknowledge its commitment to become an age-friendly city in the new plan when the review process begins

These steps will also help bolster the City's submission to the World Health Organization when the time comes to apply to have our international status as an age-friendly city renewed in two years' time.

Finally, it is worth noting that a recently published report by Canada's Institute for Research and Public Policy ("*No Place to Grow Old: How Canadian Suburbs Can Become More Age Friendly*") called on the province to provide direction to municipalities in support of age-friendly design and development. The province has responded to this proposal by including age-friendly policies in the 2017 Growth Plan released earlier this month.

The report also noted that although Ontario's 25 largest cities have passed resolutions that commit them to becoming age-friendly, this commitment has not yet been integrated into their official plans. Taking a leadership position on this issue not only supports the Growth Plan but will enhance the work we accomplish as a City.

Recommendation:

1. City Council request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division include an item directly related to the Seniors Strategy in the Division's work program that will be reported to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in September 2017, focussing on ways for the City's Official Plan to reflect policies that support and complement our commitment to age-friendly principles consistent with Toronto's international recognition as a World Health Organization global age-friendly city when the next Official Plan process to review and renew begins.

Sincerely,

Josh Matlow
City Councillor
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