



**CITY OF KELOWNA
SENIORS RECREATION
STRATEGY**

**PREPARED FOR
CITY OF KELOWNA
RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURAL SERVICES**

**BY
YATES, THORN & ASSOCIATES**

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Preface

Yates, Thorn & Associates would like to thank the many people who contributed to this report on Seniors Recreation in Kelowna:

- The staff and volunteers of the three Kelowna Seniors Centres who made us welcome and answered our many questions.
- The staff and volunteers of the various seniors and other organizations who provided their insight about recreation for seniors in Kelowna, and who participated in the visioning workshop.
- The many seniors who kindly agreed to be interviewed as part of our telephone survey.
- The recreation professionals who attended the workshops that we held in Victoria and Coquitlam.
- Reid Oddleifson and Greg Murphy who provided assistance as our project managers and draft report reviewers.
- Jennifer Harvey, a graduate student at the University of Victoria Geography Department and Centre for Aging, who assisted us with much of the background research for the project as well as with key informant interviews.

The principal author of the report was Bob Yates.

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All Appendices are available from the City of Kelowna Recreation, Parks and Culture Department.

Study Recommendations

1. That the City adopt the following statements for seniors services:

OUR VISION:

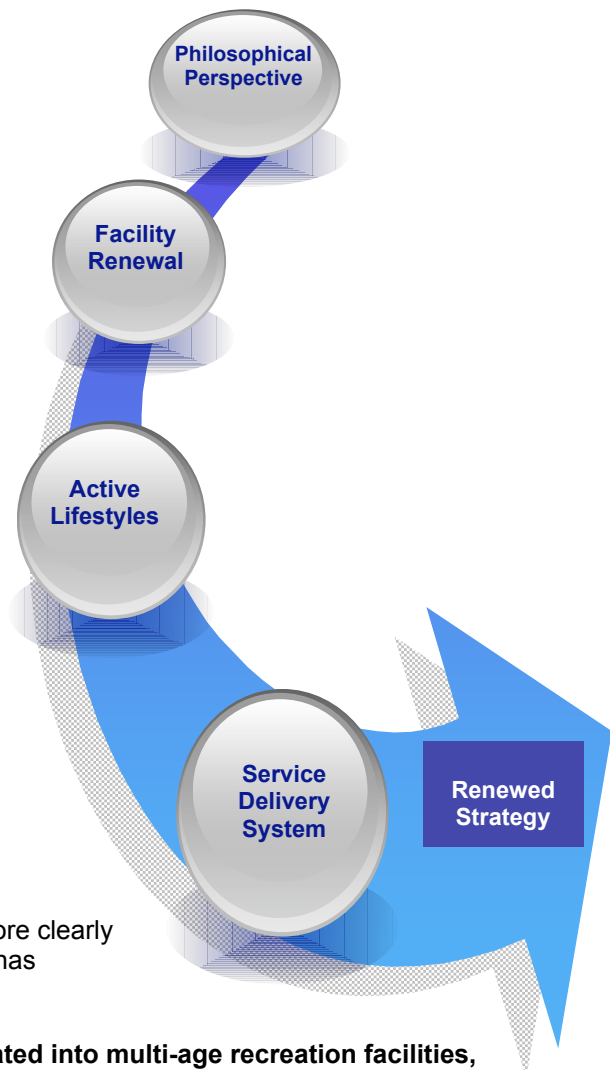
Kelowna is a City that includes healthy, active senior citizens and older adults living lives of dignity, enjoyment, and useful purpose, thereby continuing their involvement with and contribution to community pride and community spirit.

OUR MISSION:

To enhance the quality of life for older adults, through meeting their social, educational, recreational and cultural needs and interests by:

- *enabling and facilitating actions and decisions,*
- *fostering growth and development,*
- *creating partnerships with community based organizations and service providers,*
- *incorporating healthy active living into daily lifestyles.*

- This current purpose statement reflects more clearly the roles and responsibilities that the City has toward seniors recreation needs.



2. That in future, services for seniors be integrated into multi-age recreation facilities, which further continues the involvement of seniors with, and contribution to, the larger community.

- The current model of stand-alone seniors centres is neither attractive to the broad range of seniors, nor an efficient use of city human and facility resources.
- The City must use its major multi-age facilities as locations out of which outreach services and programs are delivered, in partnership with a range of service providers.

3. That in future seniors recreation planning, especially related to facility development, potential partnerships with Interior Health Authority, not-for-profit agencies, and commercial enterprises be fully explored.

- Seniors prefer to access a range of programs in one location, and the City must work in partnership with other service providers to ensure that this seamless service is provided.

4. That the Water Street Senior Centre be re-located by 2010 to a new multi-age recreation facility with dedicated time and space for seniors at the Parkinson Recreation Centre site, or an alternate suitable location.

- The replacement of the Water Street Seniors Centre is part of the City's broader goals for its waterfront and downtown areas.
- The most appropriate location for its replacement is the Parkinson site.

5. That the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre be re-assessed in ten years, and that a multi-age recreation centre, with dedicated time and space for seniors, be planned for the Mission Recreation Park site.

- The Okanagan Mission Activity Centre is functional and structurally sound, and should be re-assessed in ten years. When required, this facility is best replaced at the City's Mission Recreation Park site.

6. That the Rutland Senior Centre be expanded and then converted to a multi-age recreation centre with dedicated time and space for seniors.

- The Rutland Recreation Park site has several elements including the Seniors Centre. Planned expansion must include greater integration of the overall complex.

7. That the City consider funds in the 10 year Capital Plan as a high priority to provide for a multi-age recreation centre expansion with dedicated time and space for seniors at the Parkinson Recreation Centre site or another suitable location.

8. That the City include long term capital finance planning for multi-age recreation facilities at the Rutland Recreation Park site and the Mission Recreation Park site.

9. That increasing participation and fitness levels of the population aged 55+ become a high priority of the City of Kelowna's Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services, through:

- Increasing opportunities and resources for seniors to participate in programs and activities of an active nature at all parks, sport fields and recreation facilities.
- Utilizing partners to expand fitness opportunities for seniors, integrating programs into multi-age recreation facilities in addition to existing senior centres.
- The most significant contribution that the City can make to the long term quality of life of its seniors is to increase their levels of physical activity.

10. That the City develop a strategy for increasing the number of community garden plots.

- Gardening is also a favourite and frequent physical activity for seniors, and the ability of seniors to keep active in this fashion as they move from single family home to apartment can be improved through the provision of community gardens.

11. That the City Parks Department continue to use CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) to improve public safety and security in parks, and where required, the City work with the RCMP to supplement the effectiveness of CPTED.

- Seniors are reluctant to use some parks and trails due to safety concerns, and these need to be addressed.

12. That the City of Kelowna continue its development of paved trails through:

- Including funds in the 10 year Capital Plan to provide for future trail development
 - Developing a trails and walking routes master plan
 - Utilizing the development and approval process of new subdivisions to ensure walk ability
 - Ensuring amenities are provided that meet seniors' needs (benches for resting, washrooms, lighting, clear sight lines).
- Walking is the best physical activity program and the amenities for walking, especially paved trails and sidewalks, need to be improved through a variety of approaches.

13. That the City, along with its cultural services partners, expand and create more opportunities for the senior population to actively participate in creative and cultural programming.

- Seniors make extensive use of the City's cultural amenities and the expansion of opportunities will significantly add to the social activity of seniors.

14. That large scale special events for the senior population be planned, promoted, and implemented on an annual basis, such as a Kelowna Seniors Festival and Games, in collaboration with the Festivals Kelowna Society.

- Large scale events raise profile and provide opportunities, information and incentives for seniors to participate in active living.

15. That the City of Kelowna continue to work in conjunction with the BC Seniors Games Society in order to:

- Facilitate annual zone playdowns and tournaments
 - Plan for future hosting of the BC Seniors Games
- Sport for seniors blends physical and social recreation, with the BC Seniors Games being a prime tool in this regard.

16. That the City plan for a transition to a new service delivery model, along with a new staffing plan, whereby programs and services for seniors will take place and emanate from multi-age facilities.

- The current staffing in the area of seniors recreation is barely adequate now, and will not be adequate as the number of seniors and the range of programming increases. Additional staff resources must be budgeted for.

17. That the City develop a strategy to build closer working relationships with Interior Health Authority.

- Older seniors have significant health needs, while recreation programs will keep seniors fitter and healthier for longer.

18. That the City investigates potential mechanisms that would accommodate and assist low income seniors, such that fees for services do not prohibit their participation in activities and programs.

- Low income is often a reason why seniors do not participate and the City needs to find appropriate mechanisms to help seniors overcome this and other barriers to increased participation.

19. That the City develop a mechanism to bring together on a regular basis, representatives from seniors organizations and the many public and not-for-profit agencies that have seniors as part of their mandates.

- Services for seniors are provided by many different agencies, public, private and not-for-profit. Seniors want to access the services they need in a seamless fashion: they do not have the energy to chase after services. They prefer to access these services in multi-age centres.
- The City is the appropriate agency to provide leadership among these agencies.

20. That the City work in conjunction with BC Transit to bring bus service into parking areas at public recreation facilities including:

- **Parkinson Recreation Centre**
- **Rutland Recreation Park site**
- **Mission Recreation Park site.**
- Few seniors currently take public transit when visiting recreation facilities, and there is evidence to suggest that a major reason is that transit buses drop them too far from these facilities.

Summary:

The outcomes from this project will be incorporated into, and form an integral part of, the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Master Plan that is currently being developed.

The City of Kelowna's ten year Capital Plan will also be updated in 2006 to reflect future facility development.

With the knowledge and learning gained from this study, the City of Kelowna is now in a better position to respond to the increasing demands for programs and services to meet the needs of the community's senior population, the most rapidly increasing segment of our society.

Introduction

The City of Kelowna is the largest community in BC's Okanagan Valley, combining excellent weather with scenic beauty and a vibrant community with good health services. As such, it is an excellent community for retirement.

Over the past 25 years, the City has provided a variety of recreational programs and services, in both City owned and other facilities. In 1990, the City commissioned a Seniors Recreation Strategy which has guided the development of services since then.

By 2005 however, the pace of change in the city was increasing and the City was facing some significant decisions related to the future approach to seniors recreation, especially related to seniors recreation facilities. In addition, the seniors population was increasing rapidly, with the likelihood that, with the retirement of the 'baby boom' generation looming, the number of seniors could double by 2015. Consequently it was decided that a new look at the recreation needs of seniors was necessary.

The firm of Yates, Thorn & Associates was hired to undertake the preparation of this Position Paper.

The process of data gathering included the following:

- A review was conducted of City documents, such as the 1990 Seniors Recreation Strategy.
- A set of key individuals were interviewed.
- A literature search was undertaken.
- Two workshops for seniors recreation coordinators in other municipalities were held, one in Victoria and one in the Lower Mainland.
- A full day workshop was held for about 40 invited representatives of seniors organizations, public agencies, and City staff.
- A telephone survey was undertaken, interviewing 400 Kelowna residents aged 50 years and older.

The results from these activities were prepared and discussed with a group of City staff, who provided input for the draft report. This was presented to the City in November 2005, and finalized following discussion with Council, in February 2006.

The report is presented in three parts.

- Part A discusses the learning from the research that was carried out. Further detail is provided in the appendices.
- Part B synthesizes this information into a series of recommendations under four strategic directions.
- Part C presents actions within each of these strategic directions, together with information on who should be the lead agency, what priority should be placed on the action, and some idea of the resources required to implement it.

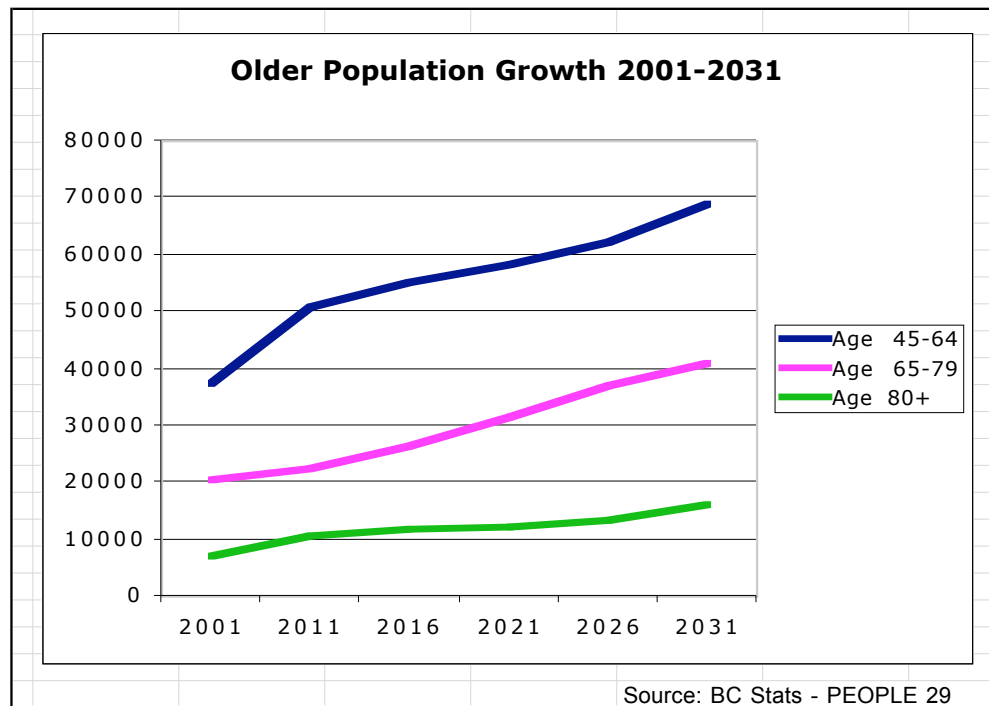
In this manner, the report moves from the 'big picture' to detailed actions, with a clear linkage between them.

Part A - The Learning

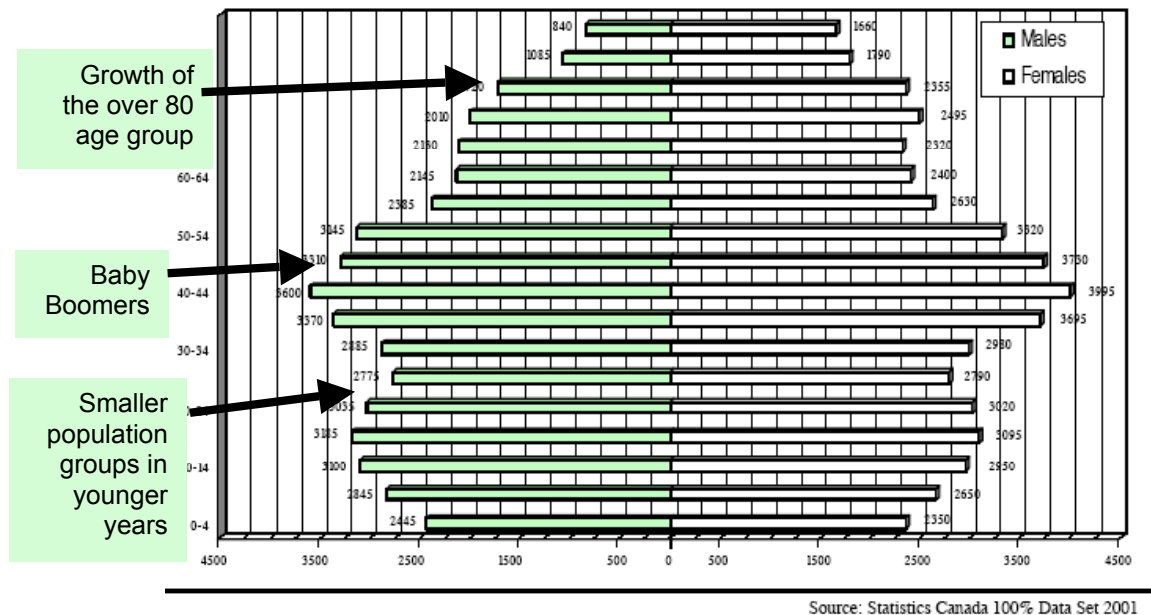
The Seniors of the Future

A review of demographic and research data allows us to develop a picture of the seniors of Kelowna, both now and as they will change over the next 20 years:

- Currently (2001) 27,000 people, 18% of Kelowna's population is over 65 years of age. Of these, about 7,000 are aged over 80 years (4.5%).
- There will be double the number of seniors by 2031. In part, this is due to the continued growth of Kelowna, and in part to the passage of the 'baby boomers' into these age groups. By 2031, those over 65 years of age will make up 23% of the population.



- The first major growth will be of those over 80 years of age. This demographic group will increase from 7,000 to over 10,600 by 2011, posing significant strains on the health care system since this group are heavy consumers of health services.
- The largest demographic group are the boomers, those born between 1947 and 1962. They are currently aged 43 to 58, and they will swell the ranks of the seniors population from 2011 to 2031.



- Two thirds of seniors aged over 65 years live with family, normally a spouse, while the other third live alone. This is unlikely to change over the coming decades, although the number of seniors living alone and their recreation and health needs will significantly increase.
- Kelowna seniors have more income than seniors in other parts of the province. About 15% of Kelowna's seniors have an income that Statistics Canada describes as 'low income'. It is unlikely that seniors income issues will be any more acute in the future than they are at the present time. Generally speaking seniors experience the same levels of low income as other groups such as families with young children.
- Kelowna seniors cluster around the Harvey Avenue corridor as they increase in age. The population aged 45 to 64 years is evenly distributed across the city. The populations aged 65 to 79 years and over 80 years are more concentrated through the downtown and areas just south of the Harvey Avenue corridor.
- Data on the health status of Kelowna seniors is not available, only data for BC as a whole. This data likely would hold true for Kelowna seniors. It indicates that most seniors think that their health is quite good, but that they are not active enough for their own good, regardless of age.
- Over 50% of those aged 45 to 64 years are physically inactive. This does not bode well for their health status post-age 65 years.
- Physical activity is critical to health at any age. The number of seniors who are physically active generally declines with age, although in the initial years past age 65 years, the declines are slight.

Only one senior in three is sufficiently active to achieve optimal health benefits. Another one in three thinks they are; and the final third know that they are not physically active enough

- The key is getting those aged 45 to 64 years to realize the health value of physical activity, so that they can sustain it through their old age.
- Physical and social activity are key variables in staving off the inevitable declines that come with age. Increasing research is indicating that 'it is never too late to start' although the impacts are greater the younger age at which you start. For instance recent research indicates that even moderate physical activity will postpone the onset of Alzheimer's by up to five or even ten years.
- The research also emphasizes the linkages between social activity and physical activity, and the converse of low physical activity levels and social isolation. One particularly interesting finding relates marital status to activity levels, noting that, within the over 65 year age group, currently married people are less likely to be active than their single, widowed or divorced counterparts: this tends to suggest that activity outside the home, such as through recreation programs, leads to increased activity levels.

It is in the next ten years that the majority of baby boomers will pass through this key 45/64 age. The key to high quality of life in their post-65 year lifespan will be determined in the next ten years. Therefore the role of the recreation system in increasing physical activity levels is critical now.

Is this generation significantly more active than previous generations? There are two differing views on this question. One view is that the baby boomers will redefine 'retirement' in the same way that they have redefined everything else. Polling research¹ of the 45/64 year age group indicates that their aspirations are different: they hope to keep working, travel more, enjoy their 'leisure years'. But aspirations are not reality; the health status data and related reports tend to indicate that these aspirations may not pan out in practice without a radical change in activity patterns:

- A high percentage of 45 to 64 year olds are physically inactive. Even those who think that they are physically active, are not active enough to reap its preventive health effects.
- In previous decades, there was significantly more physical activity in the daily lives of people than there is today. Most people drive more, use more 'labour saving' devices, and generally expend fewer calories on the daily tasks of life, than their parents and certainly their grandparents. As a society some people have compensated by going to the gym more often, but overall activity levels are indeed too low for our own good.

The recreation system is the most powerful tool in assisting in the conversion of aspirations into reality.

¹ For an example, see <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news>

Survey Results

A number of groups contributed their ideas through surveys, interviews or workshops:

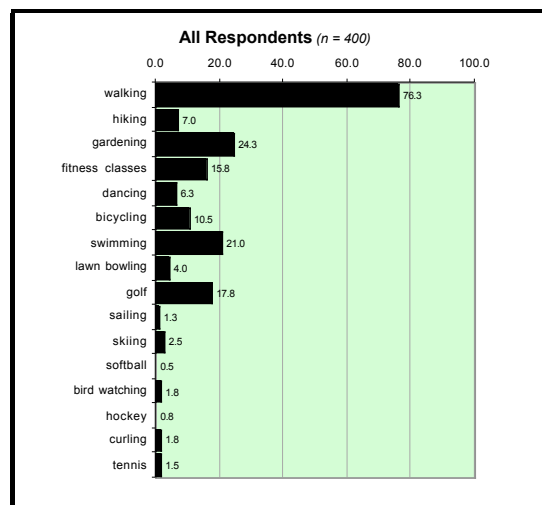
- 400 Kelowna residents over the age of 50 years were contacted by telephone and answered a series of questions.
- About 20 professionals and volunteers involved in different ways with seniors were individually interviewed. Many of these individuals also attended a full day workshop.
- Two workshops were held for recreation professionals who work directly with seniors, with over 20 municipalities being represented.

The results of these investigations are presented in this section.

Seniors Survey

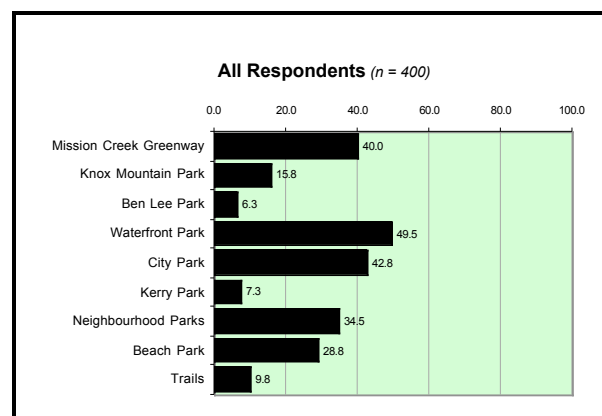
The views of 400 seniors were researched through a telephone survey. The results are significant +/- 5%, 19 times out of 20. The survey revealed the following about seniors' lives and views:

- Seniors lead active lives, including many recreational activities. The City facilities only meet the needs of a small percentage. Indeed, most seniors rely on their own personal resources more than public resources for recreation: friends, neighbours, church and, for quite a few, the programs within their seniors complex.
- Walking is the major physical activity for over three quarters of seniors. However no other physical activity rated above 25%. This tends to reinforce the research data that over two thirds of seniors have inadequate physical activity levels.

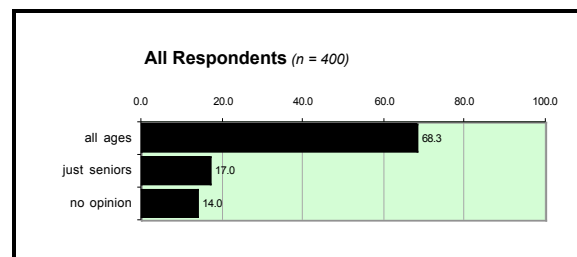
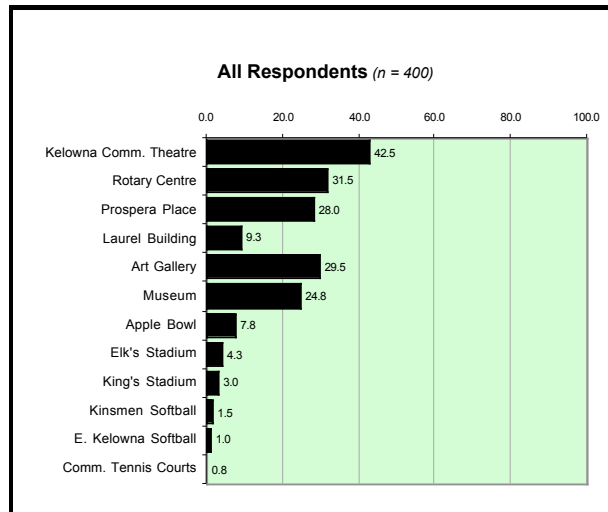


- Of the three City managed seniors centres, Water Street is the most used. These seniors are still mobile, coming almost exclusively by car. Rutland serves a much smaller percentage, and Mission Activity Centre hardly any. The two BCSCA facilities have an even more limited clientele.

- Whereas 2 out of 10 respondents used Water Street, over 3 out of 10 use Parkinson Recreation Centre. The new Mission Capital News Centre also receives good patronage (although the consistency of this attendance is hard to judge yet). Clearly more seniors use the City's multi-age centres than the seniors only centres.



- Seniors attitudes to public transit seemed a little schizophrenic. Hardly any used transit to get to the seniors centres, but many felt that the location of a new centre should be determined by its accessibility to transit services. This could be for two reasons: respondents were looking ahead to the days when they would no longer be able to drive; or this view could reflect the current difficulties of getting to the centres by public transit.
- Parks were generally well visited. Seniors liked going to the downtown parks, but were concerned regarding safety in these parks (and in the downtown generally). The Mission Creek Greenway was well used, as were neighbourhood and beach parks. Age and health concerns were the main barriers to more frequent use. A small percentage of seniors would be interested in programmed activities in the parks.
- Cultural facilities were important for seniors, far more so than sports facilities. The Community Theatre, Rotary Centre, Art Gallery and Museum were all well attended.
- Views regarding any new recreation facility for seniors were unambiguous. It should be part of a multi-age centre, but should include space for health and seniors not-for-profit services, could have affordable seniors housing above, and should be in the Capri/Parkinson area.
- In commenting why they felt that a multi-age centre was preferred, a range of ideas were presented:
 - o *A variety of ages is good for everyone.*
 - o *All age groups need to feel welcome.*
 - o *Don't want to be segregated from young people.*
 - o *Families need to be included.*
 - o *Good for families to be together.*
 - o *I want to be able to take my grandchildren.*
 - o *If everyone is helping to pay for it, everyone should be able to use it.*
 - o *It could be shared usage.*
 - o *It depends upon where it is located.*
 - o *It gets more use if it is open to all ages.*
 - o *It is good for seniors to stay in touch with younger age groups.*
 - o *It provides better use of the building.*
 - o *There is good energy from families.*
 - o *There is more need for a facility which serves families.*
- The reasoning of those who supported the idea of a seniors-only centre included:
 - o *Just seniors --- otherwise you will get run over!*
 - o *Since Kelowna is now a seniors' city.*
 - o *We need a place just for us.*
 - o *We need our own space sometimes*



- Other needed facilities to help improve activity levels of seniors should focus on improving walking conditions (trails, parks and sidewalks), and more community gardens.
- And what would make Kelowna an even better place for seniors (noting that many thought it was already a great place!), would be improving the traffic situation, more affordable housing, cleaning up the downtown, more sidewalks and parking for motorized scooters.

Key Informant Interviews

At the start of the project, interviews were held with about 15 key informants: staff of City departments and the Health and Transit authorities, and some of the many not-for-profit groups that serve seniors. Some of the consistent themes made during these interviews included:

- The three existing seniors centres are important, but should serve a broader range of people than they do now. They are seen as too much 'private clubs'...they need to create a more inclusive image.
 - o If they are to continue as seniors centres they must become more full service, doing more to serve all seniors, especially those with less mobility, no car, etc.
 - o Volunteers are important, but the 'volunteer run' model tends to actually reinforce the 'private club' image.
 - o There should be space for the many not-for-profit groups that provide services to seniors to work in or out of the centres.
- The City needs to create a more walkable connectedness, especially at the local neighbourhood scale. This will involve sidewalks, trails, parks, benches, etc. The walking route around Knowles Park close to the Alzheimer's Society house was noted as a good example.
- The transportation system needs to become more flexible and integrated. This must be a discussion issue with BC Transit, whose services are evolving and need to be accelerated and better publicized.
- The relationship with Interior Health is a difficult one. It requires high-level discussion of roles and of opportunities for collaboration. The reality is that the health authorities are going to have their hands full with the 'frail elderly' for many years to come. This leaves the City to 'service' everyone else regarding 'preventive' services such as those associated with active living and lifestyles. Seniors recreation can play this role, but it will need significant expansion if it is to be successful in addressing the magnitude of the problem.
- There is potential to expand seniors' sports, where seniors means over 55/65, not over 35 years (a popular definitional age for 'masters' sport).
- For many people, their recreation is through their retirement community. This is good, but there is potential for closer working with these communities. On the other hand, these residents are well served and quite happy.
- The City should focus its seniors recreation services around the Harvey Avenue corridor. It was noted that there is potential in this area, such as the Kelowna Secondary School (KSS) site, for a seniors centre, perhaps jointly developed with Interior Health, and perhaps with housing attached or on the site.
- If there is no interest from Interior Health, and/or the Kelowna Secondary School site is not available, then adding to the Parkinson site would also be welcomed.

Learning from Other Municipal Approaches

The two workshops held in Victoria and Coquitlam provided information on over 20 departmental approaches to seniors recreation. The learning from these workshops included:

- There are three models of municipal facilities providing programming for seniors:
 - o Stand alone centres
 - o Centres serving primarily or only seniors, but integrated as parts of multi-age community centres
 - o Multi-age centres which deliver seniors programming.
- Within each group there are experiences that are positive ('best practices'), and municipalities which are struggling with various issues. All multi-age centres offer seniors programming, even when the municipality has one or more stand-alone centres.
- While stand-alone seniors centres are still being built, for example in Coquitlam, many municipalities are moving away from this model. The sense was that these centres are often not well used in the evenings, and cannot provide the range of services that seniors require; this is particularly true of physical recreation activities and many stand-alone centres, such as those in Kelowna, provide primarily social recreation. This generally means that they are not a good use of space or scarce construction dollars. One response to this has been that some seniors only centres are moving to 'all adult' programming outside core hours. In making this change, it would appear that the strength of the Seniors Centre Society plays a key role in determining the degree to which the centre maintains 'seniors only' programming.

- The range of ages that seniors programming and seniors facilities were aimed at is really quite daunting. Most centres had a minimum age to 50 or 55, thus the age range of many centres was almost 50 years. Younger seniors were seeking very different programs and experiences than those 30 years older. The values of the society that a 55 year old and a 85 year old grew up with also provides different expectations, such as for service quality; many younger seniors would also prefer to pay for a service than do it themselves (eg buy a sandwich, rather than volunteer in the kitchen). In many centres, the volunteers are from the older age groups while younger seniors come for programs and then leave. In many centres which were established in the last 30 years, many of the founding members still run or are influential in centre management; these seniors had often fundraised and in some cases physically built the centre or purchased the equipment; there is a healthy skepticism about change.

Seniors Centres - Annual Fees and Minimum Ages		
Municipality	Min.Age	Ann. Fee
Kelowna		
Water St.	50	\$10
Rutland	50	\$5
Mission AC	50	\$5
Victoria		
James Bay		\$30
Fairfield	55	\$30
Silver Threads	50	\$40
Esquimalt	50	\$30
Oak Bay	50	\$34
Courtenay	55	\$16
Port Alberni	50	\$32

- Attracting younger seniors is a challenge noted by many centres. This demographic is 50 to 65 years of age, does not think of itself as 'a senior', wants high quality services and is prepared and able to pay for them, and does not want to deal with the 'older senior' to whom they see the centres primarily catering. Changing the image of the centre to be positive to these seniors, both now and as they age closer to the 60 to 75 demographic, is critical to the future of all these centres.

- Attracting seniors as volunteers is also noted as an issue by many municipalities, with various strategies being used to address it:
 - o Working with other agencies (in particular Volunteer Kelowna and its counterparts) to develop broader city wide strategies.
 - o Redefining volunteer positions and roles to be more short term and skill specific (ie not serving in the kitchen or answering phones at the front desk).
 - o Encouraging volunteer development as part of new activity development (ie if you want a kayak club, you organize it!).
- Most stand alone centres had some form of centre society that seniors were members of and which played some role in centre management. Some of these were multi-centre organizations such as New Horizons or Silver Threads, which contracted services with the municipality and provided all the centre staffing. Others were single centre societies, where the municipality provided staffing and other services, and the society served in a part management, part advisory function. The fees paid by seniors was generally around \$30 per year; sometimes this gave seniors discounted rates for programs. Kelowna's fees were by far the lowest of any of the municipalities sampled.
- Staffing levels depend on the role of the centre, the existence and strength of the centre's society, and the community's expectations. Essentially, seniors get the services that they pay for, with severe limitations to the volunteer driven/few staff model. Some municipalities work on what might be termed a 'full service' model: a full range of programs and services including meals, with staff providing most services, but supplemented by volunteers. Other municipalities, such as Kelowna, leave most of the running of the centre to volunteers. In the full service model, expenditures are high, but are matched by significant revenues. In the volunteer model, both expenditures and revenues are much lower. Interestingly, the net expenditures were not necessarily higher in the full service model: good services, large membership and many users means high revenues and low net operating costs.
- The delivery of services is very much on a partnership model, generally more so than is the case with other demographic groups. This is a function of the broad range of programs that are provided and the range of not-for-profit and private sector groups that are operating in these related service areas. Partnerships with not-for-profit groups cover such health or disease specific topics as are the mandate of the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Alzheimer's Society. Programming also works with cultural organizations, sport groups and many others. Most centres have developed many private sector partnerships, from golf courses to Island Farms Dairies. Kelowna has developed as many, and with as wide a range, as any municipality.
- The two areas where all municipalities are both interested and currently have relatively few partnerships is with the health authorities and on the capital side.
- Health partnerships seem to be most extensive on the North Shore, with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. Many other communities have some activities happening, but mostly with one-off activities (a flu shot clinic this year but maybe not next). Most communities described the partnerships as minimal. It seems to depend on the openness of the health authority to municipal partnering, and, probably to a lesser extent, vice versa. In commenting on how these partnerships need to be built, the feeling was that openness must be built simultaneously at the top of the system (CEO to CEO, Board to Council), and at the grass roots (such as between public health workers and seniors centre staff).
- On the capital side, there are only a very few completed projects. Maple Ridge has built a seniors centre through a public-private partnership with a tower of seniors housing above. Sidney's Silver Threads Centre has also followed a similar model.

A Vision for Seniors Recreation in Kelowna

At a workshop with seniors, City and organization staff and representatives of service providers brainstormed a vision for seniors in Kelowna. It is presented (in italics) on the following pages, and provides a guide for the City in developing its strategies, policies and actions regarding seniors recreation.

A Vision for Seniors Recreation in Kelowna

Goal

- *A seniors population where 80% are active in a diverse range of recreation activities*
- *A city where age is respected and celebrated, rather than hidden and denied.*
- *A city with adequate facilities to meet seniors recreational needs*

Sidewalks and trails

- *Sidewalks on both sides of all streets*
- *Pedestrian friendly*
- *Safe streets with audible signal lights and strategically located emergency telephones*
- *50 kms more walking trails and linear parks by 2020*
- *...with supervised public services at strategic locations*
- *Trail system for walking and biking that joins neighbourhoods*
- *...usable by motor-scooters*
- *So that walkers use the new track at the Capital News Centre rather than the malls (which are hard on the feet)*

Seniors housing

- *A range of affordable housing options for seniors, clustered around neighbourhood hubs where amenities are provided.*

The Kelowna Secondary School (KSS) site

- *...as a location for an integrated seniors centre, partnered with private sector developed housing*
- *...with walking trail around perimeter*
- *...and programmed activities on adjacent playfield*

A clean environment

- *The city in 2020 will be less polluted than today in terms of air, water, visual and noise pollution*
- *...where seniors and all citizens can hear the birds sing*

Parks

- *More parks and green spaces in the centre of the city*
- *Community gardens as part of the planning of neighbourhood hubs*
- *High usage of the parks and playfields for seniors sport activities*

Recreation services integrated with other demographic groups

- *All age groups using the same facilities, with programming for all age groups to understand one another*

'One stop shopping'

- *A facility that allows seniors to access a range of health, education and recreational services in one building or location*
- *...should provide both information and resources and programs*
- *These centres should be duplicated across the city*
- *...should serve social as well as physical recreation*
- *...should provide space for the programs of the many not-for-profits serving seniors, such as Learning in Retirement*
- *...should include food service*
- *...with housing above*
- *...with other age groups integrated into the facility, such as a child care centre*
- *and staffed by City and provincial employees*

Parking and transportation

- *A transit system that goes right to the door of all recreation facilities, and serves all neighbourhood hubs with a regular service*
- *A comprehensive system providing for accessibility and mobility of seniors, including a mini-bus system, and a system for taxi 'chits' or reduced rates for seniors*
- *A transit system that is flexible enough to pick people up from their own houses in the denser parts of the city*
- *A corps of volunteer 'community drivers' helping other seniors to travel to meet their daily needs*

Affordability

- *Low or no cost recreation programs for seniors*
- *A system for assessing 'need' and providing for the recreation needs of those with limited income*

Handicapped parking

- *Easier access to handicapped parking permits*

A well designed recreation centre

- *...including covered parking for scooters and motorized chairs*
- *Partnering between the two BCSCA centres and the public seniors centres*

A safe city for seniors

- *...where seniors and all citizens can walk safely, especially in the downtown*
- *...with well lit streets and trails, and volunteers involved in community policing*

Developing the concept of seniors tourism

- *Providing activities for Kelowna seniors will also make the city more attractive to seniors coming on vacation*
- *Also activities that are attractive to tourists can be specifically adapted for seniors*
- *Kelowna residents will be leaders in establishing and expanding seniors activities, such as getting dragon boat racing included as a BC Seniors Games sport.*

Supporting caregivers

- *Programming that recognizes the key role played by caregivers*

Programming

- *Programs which promote life balance and intergenerational cooperation (such as 'adopt a grandparent')*
- *A range of low impact strength building exercises for seniors*

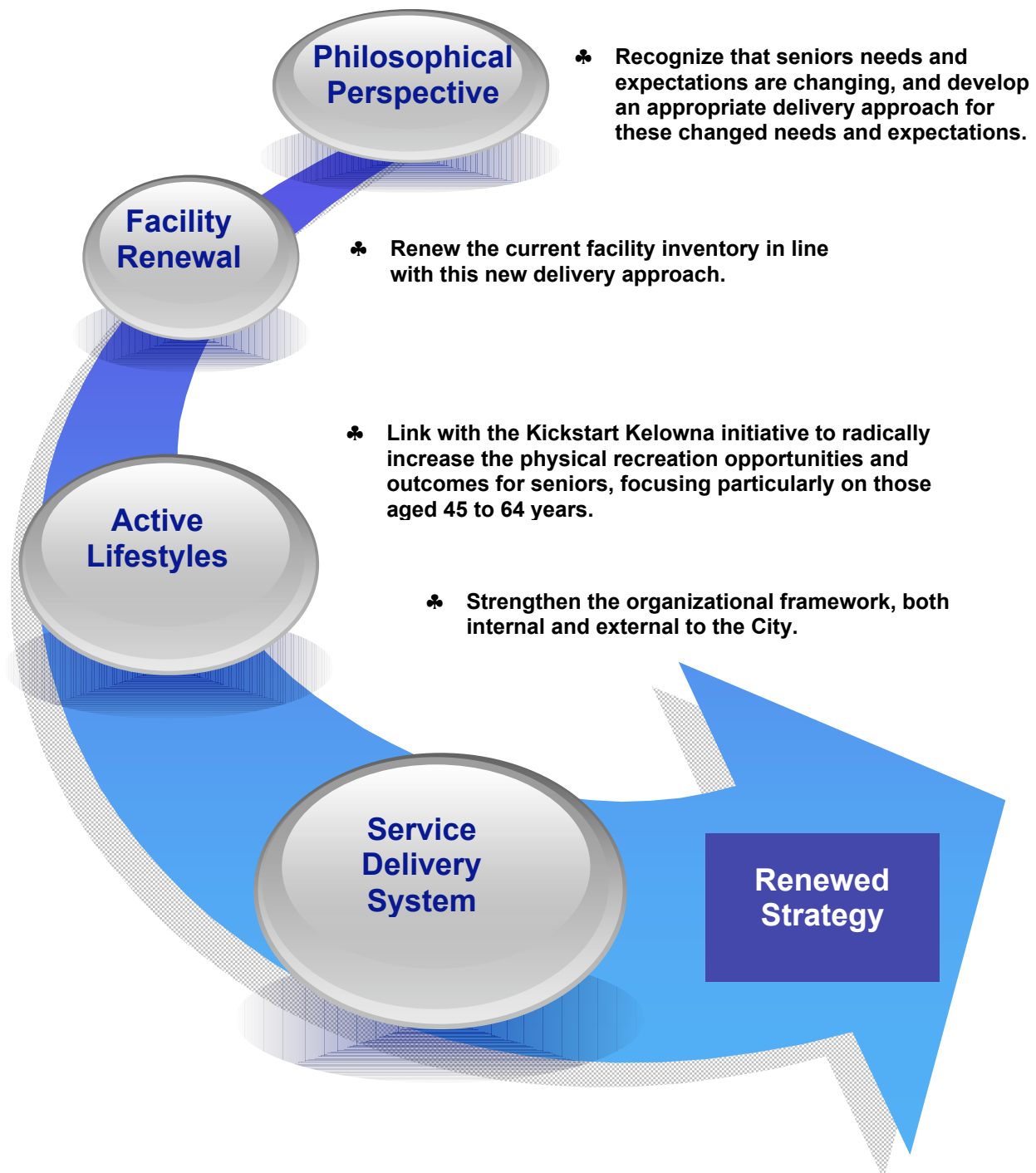
Promotion and communication

- *An easily accessible organization database and community program directory*

Supporting the transition from active living to frail elderly.

Part B - The Strategic Framework

In order to address both the short and long term recreational needs of seniors in Kelowna, the City must focus on four strategic priorities:



Philosophical Perspective

The total number of seniors will double over the next 30 years. The most significant growth in the next five/ten years will be in the 45/64 age group, and the 80+ age group. The 45/64 age is effectively the last 'age' when key physical activity patterns are established, and as such the next decade will be critical for this age group. The focus of programming for this age group should be increasing physical activity levels.

The 80+ age group's growth in the next ten years will greatly strain the services of the provincial and local health services. It would seem likely that the health authority will have its hands full with coping with this part of the seniors population.

The rapid growth in the 65/80 age group does not come until after 2011, but then will have a very significant impact on all aspects of the City's functioning until after 2030. The programming for this group will need to be a mix of physical and social activities.

The City's philosophy regarding seniors, as laid out in the standards and guidelines, is unexceptionable but does not assist in clarifying the scope or direction of seniors recreation services.

The City's community development philosophy, which empowers user groups to take charge of their own facilities and develop their own programming, needs to be examined in relation to the range of services that the emerging seniors population wants.

The range of services that seniors, especially younger seniors, are requesting, cannot be met adequately within the current volunteer oriented service delivery model. This issue will become more acute with the increasing numbers of seniors and their generally increasing service expectations.

The delivery of recreation programs in a variety of facilities using an outreach model should be included in the City's approach to seniors recreation delivery.

Vision and mission statements might be somewhat as follows:

OUR VISION:

Kelowna is a City that includes healthy, active senior citizens and older adults living lives of dignity, enjoyment, and useful purpose, thereby continuing their involvement with and contribution to community pride and community spirit.

OUR MISSION:

To enhance the quality of life for older adults, through meeting their social, educational, recreational and cultural needs and interests by:

- enabling and facilitating actions and decisions,*
- fostering growth and development,*
- creating partnerships with community based organizations and service providers,*
- incorporating healthy active living into daily lifestyles.*

Recommendations

1. That the City adopt the following statements for seniors services:

OUR VISION:

Kelowna is a City that includes healthy, active senior citizens and older adults living lives of dignity, enjoyment, and useful purpose, thereby continuing their involvement with and contribution to community pride and community spirit.

OUR MISSION:

To enhance the quality of life for older adults, through meeting their social, educational, recreational and cultural needs and interests by:

- enabling and facilitating actions and decisions,*
- fostering growth and development,*
- creating partnerships with community based organizations and service providers,*
- incorporating healthy active living into daily lifestyles.*

2. That in future, services for seniors be integrated into multi-age recreation facilities, which further continues the involvement of seniors with, and contribution to, the larger community.

3. That in future seniors recreation planning, especially related to facility development, potential partnerships with Interior Health Authority, not-for-profit agencies, community groups, and commercial enterprises be fully explored.

Facility Renewal

While the usage levels of the three stand alone centres are adequate, they only serve a small proportion of the seniors population. This is in part due to the nature of the facilities, in part to their specific locations, in part to the programming provided, and in part to the organizational arrangements.

According to the survey of seniors, more seniors use Parkinson than any of the seniors centres. Usage levels for Mission's Capital News Centre, given its newness, were also high.

Also according to the survey of seniors, an overwhelming proportion of seniors think that any new centres should be multi-age, not for seniors recreation alone. They also support the idea of linking seniors recreation facilities with health centre planning.

The current site of the Water Street Centre is required for other uses.

The Mission Activity Centre building will be at the end of its useful life in the next ten years.

The programming capacity provided by Water Street and Mission centres needs to be either replaced or preferably expanded to address the growth issues noted above.

The need for increasing physical activity levels in the 45/64 age group requires spaces that are more suited to active recreation than passive recreation.

The two BCSCA centres (#17 and #55) are little used by the public.

Recommendations

4. That the Water Street Senior Centre Society be re-located by 2010 to a new multi-age recreation facility with dedicated time and space for seniors at the Parkinson Recreation Centre site, or an alternate suitable location.

5. That the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre be re-assessed in ten years, and that a multi-age recreation centre, with dedicated time and space for seniors, be planned for the Mission Recreation Park site.

6. That the Rutland Senior Centre be expanded, and then converted to a multi-age recreation centre with dedicated time and space for seniors.

7. That the City consider funds in the 10 year Capital Plan as a high priority to provide for a multi-age recreation centre expansion with dedicated time and space for seniors at the Parkinson Recreation Centre site or another suitable location.

8. That the City include long term capital finance planning for multi-age recreation facilities at the Rutland Recreation Park site and the Mission Recreation Park site.

Active Lifestyles

In October 2005, City Council approved the Active Communities Kelowna initiative. It proposed several strategies to increase the activity levels of Kelowna residents that will provide a broader strategy for increasing activity levels of seniors. In particular, the KickStart Kelowna program can include those aged 45/64 as a target group.

The Active Communities Kelowna initiative focuses on a series of strategies and action steps for the City, to be led by the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Department.

The Initiative proposes a strong marketing focus, building brand awareness: *“A community mobilization effort for both an awareness campaign and the collaboration of a broad variety of organizations from both the public and private sectors.”* This is clearly a vehicle that can be used to promote physical activity for seniors.

The Active Communities Kelowna initiative also proposes ‘outreach into neighbourhoods’ in terms of making *“it much easier to sustain the desired physical activity level by significantly increasing the number and variety of activity opportunities available locally in residential neighbourhoods”*.

Other City initiatives have identified the need to make the community more connected and more walkable. The need for walkways and pathways to promote the sustainability of urban centres was included in the City’s OCP (para 6.1.14, June 2004): *“Create, within Urban Centres, pathways (using, for example, linear parks, parks, plazas or sidewalks) which form an easily walkable continuous loop. The purpose of such pathways would be to provide a venue for casual strolling and social interaction, as well as connections between centres”*.

Many other communities have been successful in establishing walking groups, and many communities are designed such that walking is the major way in which residents get from and to key locations such as schools and shopping. Safety in the use of parks has been noted by seniors as an issue especially related to trails and to the downtown parks.

There is considerable research that indicates that walking is one of the best forms of active recreation, and pathways, greenways and sidewalks are key infrastructure for achieving the goals of the Active Kelowna program.

The circular walking route that includes Knowles Park, recently developed by the Parks Division, is an example of how this strategy can work.

Seniors identified a preference for paved trails and pathways, and noted that amenities should be provided along these routes to address seniors’ (and other groups’) needs for resting (benches), washrooms, lighting, as well as for clear sight lines.

The survey of seniors also noted considerable interest in expanding the number of community gardens that now exist. Currently there are only 46 plots in two gardens, with two more coming ‘on-line’ next year. There is already a wait list for these two new gardens.

Seniors make extensive use of the City’s cultural amenities and the expansion of opportunities will significantly add to the social activity of seniors.

Special events also offer opportunities to promote and profile seniors recreation and its benefits, and should be systematically pursued. The BC Games is one such example.

Recommendations

9. That increasing participation and fitness levels of the population aged 55+ become a high priority of the City of Kelowna's Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services, through:

- Increasing opportunities and resources for seniors to participate in programs and activities of an active nature at all parks, sport fields and recreation facilities,
- Utilizing partners to expand fitness opportunities for seniors, integrating programs into multi-age recreation facilities in addition to existing senior centres.

10. That the City develop a strategy for increasing the number of community garden plots.

11. That the City Parks Department continue to use CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) to improve public safety and security in parks, and where required, the City work with the RCMP to supplement the effectiveness of CPTED.

12. That the City continue its development of paved trails through:

- Including funds in the 10 year Capital Plan to provide for future trail development
- Developing a trails and walking routes master plan
- Utilizing the development and approval process of new subdivisions to ensure walk ability
- Ensuring amenities are provided that meet seniors' needs (benches for resting, washrooms, lighting, clear sight lines).

13. That the City, along with its cultural services partners, expand and create more opportunities for the senior population to actively participate in creative and cultural programming.

14. That large scale special events for the senior population be planned, promoted, and implemented on an annual basis, such as a Kelowna Seniors Festival and Games, in collaboration with the Festivals Kelowna Society.

15. That the City continue to work in conjunction with the BC Seniors Games Society in order to:

- Facilitate annual zone play downs and tournaments
- Plan for future hosting of the BC Seniors Games

Service Delivery System

In order to deliver on these strategic directions, the City must develop an organizational framework that will be adequate to the task. This will require some additional resourcing within the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Department, but will also require working with and providing leadership to the many other agencies that provide services to seniors.

The current staffing levels have been largely unchanged for almost 25 years, during which the seniors population of Kelowna has increased by 35%.

Since 1980, the programming for seniors recreation has increased by a factor of five (ie 500%).

There are over 20 organizations that provide recreation and community services to seniors, and which look to the City for leadership.

The recent reorganization of provincial health services to a regional model has brought them 'closer to home', with tremendous opportunities for integrated services to serve the public better.

These recommendations also recognize that change itself requires additional resources.

Recommendations

16. That the City plan for a transition to a new service delivery model, along with a new staffing plan, whereby programs and services for seniors will take place and emanate from multi-age facilities.

17. That the City develop a strategy to build closer working relationships with Interior Health Authority.

18. That the City investigates potential mechanisms that would accommodate and assist low income seniors, such that fees for services do not prohibit their participation in activities and programs.

19. That the City develop a mechanism to bring together on a regular basis, representatives from seniors organizations and the many public and not-for-profit agencies that have seniors as part of their mandates.

20. That the City work in conjunction with BC Transit to bring bus service into parking areas at public recreation facilities including:

- **Parkinson Recreation Centre**
- **Rutland Recreation Park site**
- **Mission Recreation Park site.**

Part C - Implementation Plan

Recommendations	First Steps	Lead Agency	Resources
1. That the City adopt new vision and mission statements for seniors services.	Council approval of these statements.	RPC Services	None
2. That in future, services for seniors be integrated into multi-age recreation facilities, which further continues the involvement of seniors with, and contribution to, the larger community.	Council approval of this approach.	RPC Services	None
3. That in future seniors recreation planning, especially related to facility development, potential partnerships with Interior Health Authority, not-for-profit agencies, community groups, and commercial enterprises be fully explored.	Council approval of this approach.	RPC Services	None
4. That the Water Street Senior Centre Society be re-located by 2010 to a new multi-age recreation facility with dedicated time and space for seniors at the Parkinson Recreation Centre site, or an alternate suitable location.	<p>Develop concept drawings for additions to the Parkinson Centre; cost these and include them in the City's future capital planning process.</p> <p>Review with other partners, especially Interior Health, to determine interest.</p>	RPC Services	To be determined in the Capital Plan

Recommendations	First Steps	Lead Agency	Resources
<p>5. That the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre be re-assessed in ten years, and that a multi-age recreation centre, with dedicated time and space for seniors, be planned for the Mission Recreation Park site.</p>	<p>Develop concept drawings for additions to the Mission Capital News Centre; cost these and include them in the City's future capital planning process.</p> <p>Review with other partners, especially Interior Health, to determine interest.</p>	RPC Services	To be determined in the Capital Plan
<p>6. That the Rutland Senior Centre be expanded, and then converted to a multi-age recreation centre with dedicated time and space for seniors.</p>	<p>Determine the scale of upgrading that would be required on the Rutland site.</p> <p>Review with other partners, especially Interior Health, to determine interest.</p>	RPC Services	To be determined in the Capital Plan
<p>7. That the City consider funds in the 10 year Capital Plan as a high priority to provide for a multi-age recreation centre expansion with dedicated time and space for seniors at the Parkinson Recreation Centre site or another suitable location.</p> <p>8. That the City include long term capital finance planning for multi-age recreation facilities at the Rutland Recreation Park site and the Mission Recreation Park site.</p>	<p>Capital cost estimates need to be developed for all projects.</p>	RPC Services	To be determined in the Capital Plan

Recommendations	First Steps	Lead Agency	Resources
<p>9. That increasing participation and fitness levels of the population aged 55+ become a high priority of the City of Kelowna's Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing opportunities and resources for seniors to participate in programs and activities of an active nature at all parks, sport fields and recreation facilities, ○ Utilizing partners to expand fitness opportunities for seniors, integrating programs into multi-age recreation facilities in addition to existing senior centres. 	<p>Work with the Kickstart Kelowna team to develop a range of new physical activities for those aged 45+ years.</p> <p>Enter into discussions with the operators of the Mission Capital News Centre to increase seniors programming.</p>	RPC Services	<p>Partnership agreement would be in the range of \$50,000.</p> <p>Program expenses are included in the Kickstart Kelowna initiative but likely need to be augmented – allow \$20,000.</p>
<p>10. That the City Parks Department continue to use CPTED to improve public safety and security in parks, and where required, the City work with the RCMP to supplement the effectiveness of CPTED.</p>	Communicate to the Parks Department	RPC Services (Parks)	None
<p>11. That the City continue its development of paved trails through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Including funds in the 10 year Capital Plan to provide for future trail development, ○ Developing a trails and walking routes master plan, ○ Utilizing the development and approval process of new subdivisions to ensure walk ability, ○ Ensuring amenities are provided that meet seniors' needs. 	<p>Draft RFP for Trails and Walking Routes Master Plan</p> <p>Include strengthened wording in the next revision of the OCP.</p>	RPC Services (Parks) with City Planning Dept.	<p>\$40,000 for planning.</p> <p>Annual allocation for amenities: allow \$100,000.</p> <p>Further budgetary planning as part of the Trails Master Plan</p>

Recommendations	First Steps	Lead Agency	Resources
12. That the City, along with its cultural services partners, expand and create more opportunities for the senior population to actively participate in creative and cultural programming.	Communicate to the Cultural Department	RPC Services (Culture)	None
13. That the City develop a strategy for increasing the number of community gardens.	Communicate to the Parks Department. Most work on Kelowna Community Gardens is carried out by the Central Okanagan Community Gardens Society.	RPC Services (Parks)	Few costs if land is City owned.
14. That large scale special events for the senior population be planned, promoted, and implemented on an annual basis, such as a Kelowna Seniors Festival and Games, in collaboration with the Festivals Kelowna Society.	Develop a Seniors Events Strategy	RPC Services with Festivals Kelowna Society	\$25,000 to develop the strategy - include implementation costs in the strategy development process.
15. That the City of Kelowna continue to work in conjunction with the BC Seniors Games Society in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Facilitate annual zone playdowns and tournaments o Plan for future hosting of the BC Seniors Games 	Manage the annual playdowns. Plan the application for the next BC Seniors Games.	RPC Services with Tourism Kelowna	None initially, but funds will be required if bids for games are successful – approximately \$80,000
16. That the City develop a mechanism to bring together on a regular basis, representatives from seniors organizations and the many public and not-for-profit agencies that have seniors as part of their mandates.	Plan for bi-annual Seniors Community Forums	RPC Services although potential to transfer leadership to another agency.	\$10,000 annually

Recommendations	First Steps	Lead Agency	Resources
17. That the City plan for a transition to a new service delivery model, along with a new staffing plan, whereby programs and services for seniors will take place and emanate from multi-age facilities.	Develop new service delivery model Develop new staffing plan	RPC Services	To be determined by Capital Plan
18. That the City develop a strategy to build closer working relationships with the Interior Health Authority.	Coordinate a meeting of the Board of Interior Health and City Council to explore the potential for increased collaboration.	Senior City Management staff	None
19. That the City investigates potential mechanisms that would accommodate and assist low income seniors, such that fees for services do not prohibit their participation in activities and programs.	Review the current City practices for assisting all low income people, and look how seniors might be overly impacted by these practices. Consider a broader policy and practice review as part of the City's Kickstart Kelowna initiative.	RPC Dept	Estimated \$30,000 annual cost
20. That the City work in conjunction with BC Transit to bring bus service into parking areas at public recreation facilities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parkinson Recreation Centre ○ Rutland Recreation Park site ○ Mission Recreation Park site. 	Initiate discussions with BC Transit	RPC Dept	To be determined by Transportation/ Transit Plan