

A Comprehensive Report
from the
Support Services Action Team
Housing Action Team
Transportation Action Team
Task Groups
of the
DELTA SENIORS COMMUNITY PLANNING TEAM

Prepared for
Delta Municipal Council

June 2011



Table of Contents

Who We Are	3
Seniors Population ... <i>A Sizable Demographic that's Growing</i>	4
Executive Summary	5 - 7
Support Services Action Team Report	
Background	8 - 10
Work Undertaken	11 - 12
Findings	13 - 16
Next Steps	17
Housing Action Team Report	
Background	18 - 21
Work Undertaken	22 - 23
Findings	24 - 33
Next Steps	34 - 35
Transportation Action Team Report	
Background	36 - 39
Work Undertaken	40 - 44
Findings	45 - 46
Next Steps	47
Conclusion ... <i>Building on Success</i>	48

Who We Are

The Delta Seniors Community Planning Team consists of seniors, service providers and community groups from Delta who meet regularly to become informed about and respond to the changing needs and issues facing seniors in the community.

Funded by United Way of the Lower Mainland and sponsored by Deltassist Family and Community Services, the Planning Team bases its work on the *Aging in Place Seniors Project* report (2009), which found that Delta seniors are mainly long-time residents of Delta who are relatively healthy and plan to continue living in the community. Seniors feel Delta is a safe place to live, and the services they currently need are available to them. However, they are concerned that unless steps are taken to plan for the growing numbers of seniors in the future, the housing options, transportation alternatives and support services that are needed to help them maintain independence and active lives may not be available.

Tasks groups from the Planning Team formed in 2009 to assess some of the key challenges faced by seniors in the areas of: support services, housing and transportation. In keeping with its purpose of educating, informing and mobilizing Delta residents and decision-makers to respond to the needs of seniors, the Planning Team continues to broaden public awareness of population aging and its long-term implications, while involving seniors themselves in the process for meaningful change.

Planning for change *with* seniors, not for them.

Delta Seniors Community Planning Team

*Shaping Delta into a community where seniors
live active, safe and healthy lives.*

Seniors Population

A Sizable Demographic that's Growing

Today's seniors are healthier and living longer than the generations who preceded them. Seniors make up an increasingly larger segment of the population, which will only continue to grow as the Baby Boomer generation begins to retire. It is projected that by 2021, Canadians 65+ will outnumber children under the age of 15. This global trend marks the first time in history that an elder generation will be larger in number than youth. It is also anticipated that by 2041, one in four Canadians will be 65+.

Based on data from the 2006 Census for Delta, seniors (65+) make up 13% of the general population. The Fraser Health Authority's *Seniors' Health Profile* (2010) projects that by 2026 this proportion will increase to more than 26% ... *double* the current size. With stable population growth expected, the Profile forecasts the seniors' demographic will experience the highest population growth in Delta. The increase is expected to occur both among the well-elderly (65 to 74 years) and the frail elderly 75+. The life expectancy of Delta residents at 82.2 years is among the highest in the Fraser Health region. There is a gender difference, however, as the life expectancy of men is three years less than women.

United Way of the Lower Mainland's report entitled *Towards an Age-Friendly community in the Lower Mainland/Sea to Sky Corridor* notes many of the same trends and draws attention to the fact that in Metro Vancouver three in 10 seniors live alone. It also reports that as people age, they are more likely to find themselves socially isolated. One out of every five seniors live under the poverty line, and homelessness among people 55+ in Metro Vancouver has increased. Ninety percent of care for seniors is provided by family and friends, predominantly by women who, most likely, also manage their own work and family obligations. Sixty-five per cent of caregivers are seniors themselves.

Executive Summary

Brainstorming Together for Progressive Change

Delta's seniors are active and relatively healthy individuals who seek to lead independent lives, contributing to family and community life in a variety of ways. Some of those who derive a great deal of fulfillment in helping their community to be as "age friendly" as possible serve on the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team. These members come from all walks of life. Some are retired educators, nurses and ministers. They have raised families and volunteered countless hours of service throughout the years. Many come with a wealth of knowledge and experience from their careers in government, business and academia. Representatives of groups and agencies serving seniors also form a critical part of the Planning Team, as well as those who currently serve in government. They all work together to plan for the vital change needed as Delta's senior population grows. The Planning Team also benefits from the experience of others through connections to a regional network of nine other community planning groups.

Two years ago the Planning Team formed three Action Teams to study three key areas of concern to seniors who wish to "age in place" in Delta: support services, housing and transportation. Each task group developed a project to assess the needs, identify any barriers and gaps, and find possible solutions in meeting these challenges.

Support Services

Systems of support and services geared towards older people give seniors the opportunity to have a more independent life, avoiding social isolation that can lead to poor physical and mental health. The task group surveyed seniors about the kinds of services they need now and in the future, where they find information about services and the easiest way to access this information.

Findings and Recommendations

Homecare support services and transportation rank as the most needed services. Seniors find information about support services mostly at seniors' centres and agencies serving seniors, citing media or community sources as the easiest way for them to access information.

The Support Services Action Team recommends a Seniors Advocate and “trained navigators” be in place in Delta to help seniors with complicated resource systems. Other recommendations include assessing the need for a peer counselling program, translating written materials into languages other than English, and developing services that are mobile and accessible to reach people in “seniors” facilities, malls, libraries and other public places.

Housing

It is important for Delta to have a range of affordable housing options for seniors that are in a good location, designed and built well, and offer security. The task group surveyed residents to learn about their current housing, the needs for the future and if Delta has enough seniors’ housing.

Findings and Recommendations

Most respondents live in single family houses and hope to remain in these homes or move to other accommodation in Delta. The top four choices for their future housing needs were: low-rise apartments, 55+ buildings, single family homes and assisted/supportive living. North Delta respondents were concerned about the lack of seniors’ housing, wanting it be a priority in planning for future developments. Ladner respondents desired a range of senior housing options close to services, shops, transit and recreational amenities, as well as an array of home supports. Tsawwassen respondents spoke about the need for homes with age-friendly design features and more affordable housing options (including rentals); noting the high costs for assisted/supported living and for strata fees with condos and townhouses.

The Housing Action Team recommends a hub or village centre planning approach to meet future housing needs. Both Ladner and Tsawwassen have these mixed-use elements in place, but that is not the case in North Delta. Creating centralized high-density developments within walking or scooter distance to amenities that seniors want and need enable them to be more engaged in community life.

Transportation

Finding out if people can easily get to where they need to go was a key focus for the task group as they mapped out visual illustrations showing the relationship between where seniors live in Delta, the location of services they most often access and the transit system that links them.

Findings and Recommendations

The Transportation Action Team sees a number of opportunities for improving transportation options for seniors by: continuing to liaise with others (like TransLink and United Way of the Lower Mainland) on regional transit issues, studying the concept of “wheelability” for seniors in Delta, embarking on an educational program for seniors in need of transportation alternatives to their private vehicle, and studying alternate transportation options.

Conclusions

The areas of support services, housing and transportation were studied separately to understand the needs of seniors, spot where gaps exist and seek solutions to these needs. But it is imperative to understand how interconnected these elements are in the life of today’s seniors. Older residents want to remain in their homes for as long as possible, and to do so they require home support services and accessible door-to-door transportation options. Making changes in just one of these key areas will have impacts on the other two.

Finally, the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team would like to strengthen Delta’s capability in dealing with seniors’ issues that are in continual growth and change. We recommend that Delta Council form a Seniors Advisory Committee to provide an important communications link for improving the quality of life for seniors in the community. It is the Planning Team’s firm belief that creating a healthy, caring and inclusive community for seniors benefits *all* people.

An age-friendly Delta will be a community that is friendly for residents of *any* age.

Support Services Action Team Report

June 2011

Chair

Henry Jonker

Members

Kay Dennison, Julia Erdmann, Natalie Gauthier,

Flo Mann, Gerry McCall, Cynthia Vallance,

Lyn Walker, Sheila Zerr



BACKGROUND

According to the *Aging in Place Seniors Project* report (2009), seniors are mainly long-time residents who hope to remain in Delta. The seniors are mostly healthy and active, but are aware that without consistent and affordable services in the Delta community, seniors' ability to stay in their homes and maintain independence may not be possible.

The following are some of the needs identified for helpful services:

- minor house repairs
- help with snow removal
- yard maintenance
- assistance with some housekeeping
- help with grocery shopping and delivery
- personal care assistance
- volunteer visitor/regular contact with others
- free legal aid
- help with information and referral
- seniors' resource book
- hot meal delivery
- help with cooking
- food bank assistance

Awareness about support services varied widely. Seniors' recreation centres were the most widely known, probably because the surveys for the *Aging in Place* report were distributed through these centres. Along with free flu clinics, the centres were the only support services with more than 80% awareness by survey respondents. People were also more familiar with Meals on Wheels, income tax preparers and HandyDART. For all other services, awareness was generally less than 50%, which could be the result of people not having to look for services they do not require.

When asked about barriers to accessing services, the following responses came in at 30% each:

- financial
- hours of operation
- lack of information about what is available

Social and economic conditions play an important role in determining how seniors live reasonably healthy and independent lives. Those living with the support of friends, families and supportive communities are more likely to experience better mental health, physical health and social connections. Women are more likely to live alone than men – the likelihood increasing with age – due, in part, to women generally having a longer life expectancy.

When respondents were asked how they hear about programs, 70% indicated local newspapers were their source of information, followed by seniors' centres. The isolated seniors in our community do not usually have access to newspapers or seniors' centres. They rarely visit doctors on a regular basis, do not have access to computers, and may have literacy or language issues.

According to the 2006 Census, the number of seniors in Delta who did not graduate from high school was 28.8%. Lower education levels can increase the likelihood of literacy issues, making health maintenance and healthcare access problematic, as reading directions on prescription labels and health-related literature would be difficult. Even healthy and literate seniors may experience normal changes that can affect their capacity to understand written information. All information targeted towards seniors should be presented in a variety of formats.

Statistics Canada reports 22.9% of seniors 65+ live alone in Delta. What does this mean? Older adults value their independence and generally want to live in their own residence for as long as possible. The *Aging in Place Seniors Project* report notes that maintaining a household is often more difficult for older adults living alone. Seniors living on their own are less likely to have someone to provide care in an emergency. In its *Seniors' Health Profile* (2010) Fraser Health Authority researchers argue that seniors living alone were at increased risk of social isolation and were more likely to suffer a fall.

Other findings from the *Seniors' Health Profile* reveal that physiological changes, retirement, the loss of a spouse and/or peers can be life-altering, with profound effects on an older adult's mental health and emotional well-being. The loss of independence and ability, the loss of income and routine, the loss of one's social support network may lead to depression and anxiety. According to the BC Ministry of Health, 29.7% of adults 65+ in Delta suffer from depression and anxiety. The prevalence of depression/anxiety is also increasing for seniors in the Fraser Health region.

Seniors Forum ... *Is Delta an Age-Friendly Community?*

The Seniors Forum ... *Is Delta an Age-Friendly Community* took place on Saturday, October 23, 2010 (Report by Ann Marie Walsh, November 9, 2010). This event was well-attended by 64 individuals and groups from Ladner, Tsawwassen and North Delta. Transportation arrangements were made for those needing assistance. The keynote speaker, Gordon Price, asked attendees to think ahead to the future. He spoke of the challenges and processes of trying to implement “change” in our communities, recognizing it will take time and that preparation is key. The Forum’s purpose was to inform people about the concept of an age-friendly city, and to get a sense of Delta’s strengths and weaknesses with respect to age-friendly qualities in the areas of housing, transportation and non-medical services and supports.

The panel presentation and discussion for support services was *Supporting Seniors’ Independence* and the topic was entitled *Lack of information about resources can result in seniors being isolated. Services help seniors maintain independence and involvement*. Panellists included Susan Larkin of Team Lead, Sue McIntosh of Come Share Adult Day Care and Jane Godfrey from Surrey Community Action for Seniors’ Independence (CASI). Each session was informative and encouraged participation through conversation and a question-and-answer period. A wrap-up session brought participants back to hear the highlights from the three areas of discussion and to share personal concerns. Participants expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to learn new information and to meet other seniors.

Areas of concerns identified:

- affordable services and programs
- services to support changes as people age
- help to identify and reach seniors who are isolated
- funding and accessibility of programs for seniors
- keeping Delta’s Mayor and Council informed about seniors’ issues

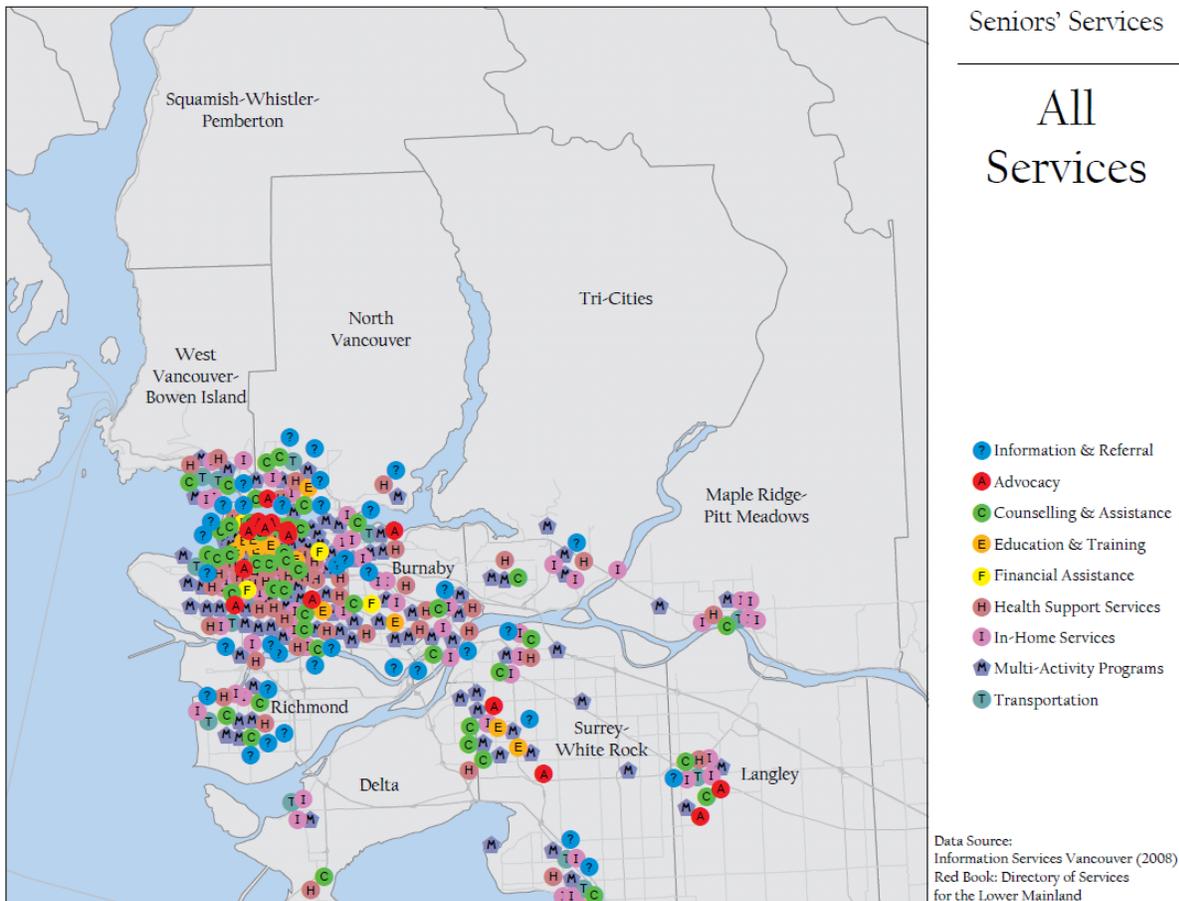
Age-friendly communities have the policies, services, setting and structures in place to enable seniors to age actively. Seniors and their families need a range of resources that will fit their capabilities, when it comes to decisions and lifestyle choices. There is also the challenge to protect those who are the most vulnerable and to include seniors in all aspects of community life.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

Support services help people remain in their homes, maintain their independence and improve their quality of life. Socially isolated seniors are more likely to suffer poor physical and mental health. Social interaction can provide seniors with mental stimulation and companionship. With the predicted increase in the number of cases of all forms of dementia in the future, the need to reach isolated seniors and to keep active and independent seniors healthy is going to be significant.

The need for more supports and services for caregivers is also projected to grow in the coming years.

The following map (developed by the United Way, with data from Information Services Vancouver) shows the variety of services oriented to those 65+ in Delta and other cities/municipalities in the Lower Mainland:



Project Description ... Two Surveys

The Support Services Action Team constructed two (2) four-question surveys to gather information from seniors in Delta on supports and services. The first survey focused on seniors 65+, but also asked questions for those just “North of 50.” The intent for including the just “North of 50” demographic was to ask this group to consider what they would need to age in place in Delta. The second survey targeted senior service providers.

In an effort to identify needs and gaps in services for seniors, the survey for senior individuals asked:

- Where would you go for information about services for seniors?
- What kind of services do you feel are needed now, and in the future?
- What would be the easiest way for seniors to learn about and access information in Delta?
- Would you like more information about the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team? (Contact information requested.)

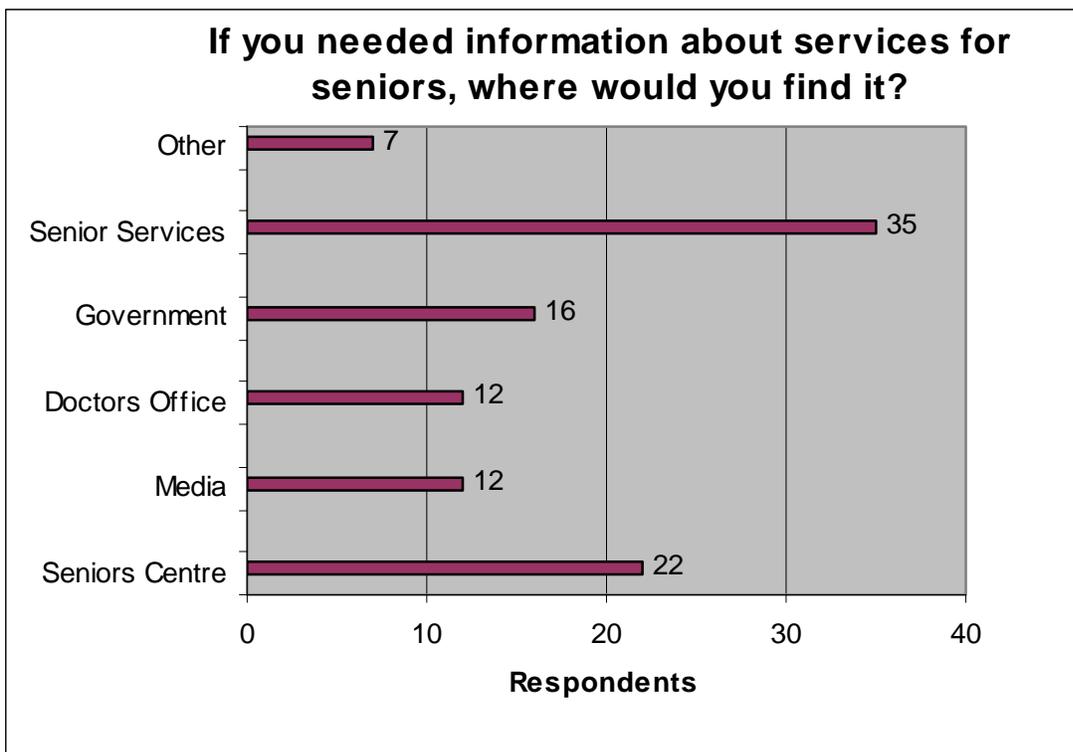
The Support Services Action Team used a “service point” distribution method. Copies of individual surveys were placed in Delta libraries, pharmacies, seniors’ recreation centres, churches, Tsawwassen First Nation offices and community recreation centres. Copies of the surveys to senior service providers were mailed to the agencies directly.

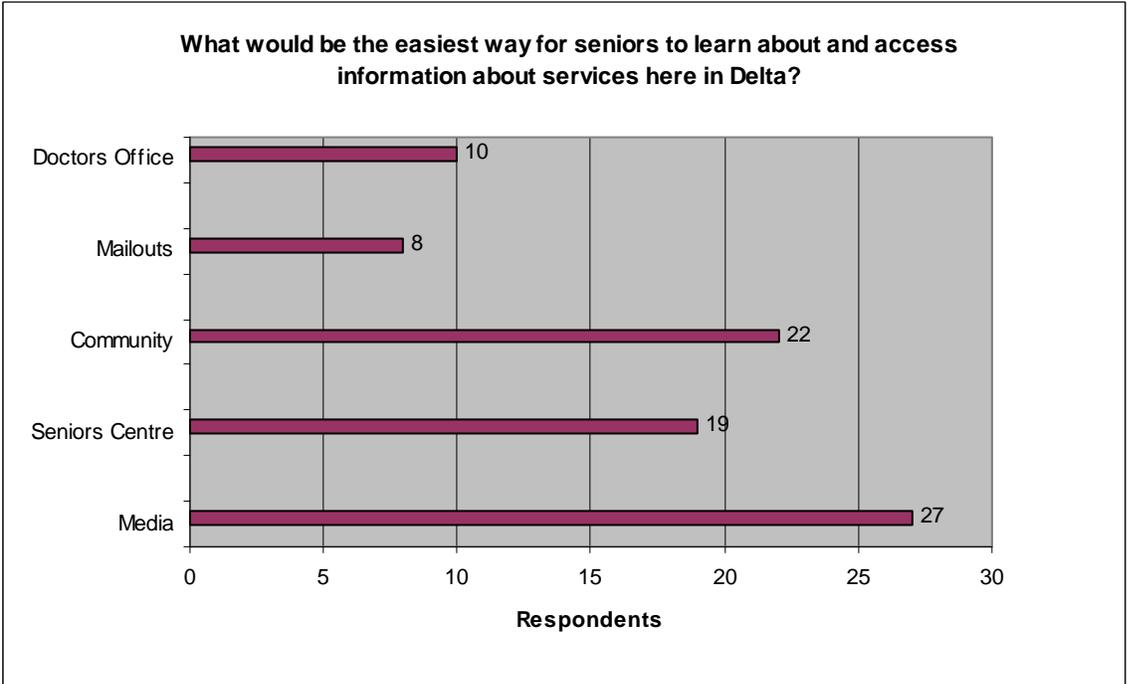
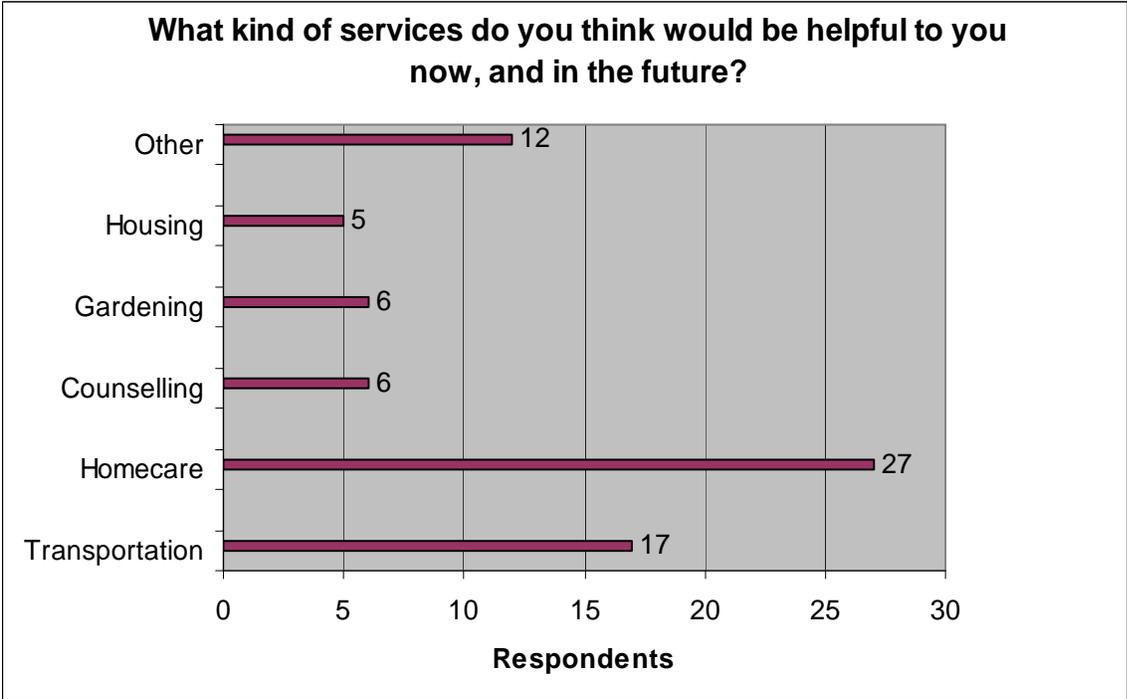
FINDINGS

Results from the Individual Survey

The Action Team’s survey to senior individuals generated 66 responses. Twenty survey respondents gave contact information in response to the fourth question. Information packages on the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team were then mailed or emailed to them.

The following graphs illustrate the survey responses to the first three questions:





Results from the Service Provider Survey

The second survey, directed to agencies serving seniors, generated 10 responses to the four questions asked of the service providers:

- What programs do you provide to seniors?

Responses – home care/support (3), resources/information/referral (2), and recreational/educational/support programs (5).

- What could be improved in serving seniors?

Responses – community & government resources & supports (7), access to information & referral (5), transportation (3), and the health system (5).

- Where do you need help in serving seniors?

Responses – accessing information (4), advocacy & support (4), and volunteering (4).

- What upcoming trends could affect the way you deliver your services to seniors in the future?

Responses – the demand on services (5), financial issues (4), health & health system issues (4), and the internet (1).

Respondents to the second survey included home support agencies, seniors' recreation centres, a community church, and a community recreation centre, Delta Hospice, the Stroke Recovery Group and the Community Police.

Survey changes for the future

One of the recommendations for conducting future surveys would be to ask participants to designate which community they live in (North Delta, Ladner or Tsawwassen), and for Support Services Action Team members to do one-on-one surveys in areas where seniors are located, as well as at “service points” delivery.

A handy resource card developed

In response to the needs identified by the survey, the Support Services Action Team developed a Seniors Community Resource Card. This small colourful card provides resource information for seniors, which can easily be put into a pocket or a purse. To date, 8,000 resource cards have been printed and distributed throughout the community to service providers, doctors' offices, seniors' centres, churches and pharmacies for seniors' access. A business in the community expresses an interest in partnering to fund a third printing of the resource card.

Partnerships sought

The Action Team developed a partnership with libraries in Delta, which have been assisting with poster and brochure development and offering space for public presentations in the future. The Action Team will continue to look at gaps in support services for seniors identified by our surveys. This will help us to educate, inform and support future partnerships, making the future for seniors as healthy and independent as possible.

NEXT STEPS

The Support Services Action Team offers the following recommendations:

- Explore the development of a municipal Social Planner and a Seniors Advisory Committee within the municipality.
- Provide for a Seniors Advocate or “trained navigator” to help seniors with complicated resource systems (health, government, affordable housing, etc.).
- Assess the need for a community-based peer counselling program.
- Develop creative ways to reach vulnerable and isolated seniors.
- Translate booklets and handbooks into languages other than English (Punjabi, Chinese, etc.).
- Continue to develop services that reach seniors where they are – services that are mobile, accessible and beyond those currently in “senior” facilities. Not all seniors see themselves as “senior,” nor do they want to join clubs or centres. Have well-trained individuals available in malls, libraries and other public places to provide information and support.

Community Action for Seniors’ Independence (CASI)

In 2009, the United Way initiated five (5) three-year pilot projects in Dawson Creek, Osoyoos, Maple Ridge, Newton/Surrey and the Renfrew/Collingwood district of Vancouver. The sites were chosen for the make-up of their population of seniors. These programs help seniors live at home independently for as long as possible – either delaying the move to an assisted living/residential care facility, or eliminating it all together. The systems developed in these communities will be carefully evaluated, and the results will help other communities look at ways to provide non-medical services that are affordable and accessible for seniors.

Support Services Action Team

A task group of the

Delta Seniors Community Planning Team

*Shaping Delta into a community where seniors
live active, safe and healthy lives.*

Housing Action Team Report

June 2011

Chair

ML Burke

Members

**Eve Adams, Jay Bains, Jean Barrett, Barbara Bell,
Lynda Brummitt, Kay Dennison, Virginia Lesosky,
Brian White, George Winkelhorst**



BACKGROUND

The community group Delta Connects prepared a report for the *Aging in Place Seniors Project* (2009), surveying 299 seniors in Delta on several topics, including housing. The following is a summary of the responses related to housing issues for seniors:

- Ninety percent of the respondents have lived in Delta for more than five years, and 67% have resided here for more than 15 years.
- Sixty-six percent of respondents live in single family homes, with the majority planning to remain in their own home.
- Of the 28% of respondents who indicated a plan to move, the top five reasons given were: physical difficulties maintaining the home/yard, home will be too large, decline in a spouse's health, design barriers and financial challenges. Most of the respondents planning to move intend to remain in Delta (58%) or relocate to another Lower Mainland community (22%).
- The report identified 1,139 units/beds in senior housing in Delta – including assisted living, public and private; supportive housing; and residential care, both public and private (one bed/unit for every 11 people 65+). As the seniors' population increases in Delta, it is realistic to expect that demand for senior housing will also increase. Assuming current housing stock meets current demand, there will be a need to plan for additional senior housing resources.

The report noted that respondents, overall, were unfamiliar with housing-related funding sources. Although half were familiar with reverse mortgages and property tax deferments, more than 75% were not familiar with Independent Living BC or the Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence Program, and only 10% of respondents were very familiar with Shelter Assistance for Elder Renters.

Delta Housing Task Force

In 2008, Delta Council formed a housing task force with the mandate to identify gaps in Delta's current housing choices and affordability, and to recommend policy and zoning changes to Council. In April 2010, the Delta Housing Task Force reported its findings from a community-wide housing survey conducted in the fall of 2009. The following is an excerpt from the Task Force's presentation to Council:

Typical respondents were 50+ (67.4%), female (59.8%) and lived in single family residences (84.2%) which they owned (91.1%). The majority of respondents either lived alone or with one other person (54.2%) or, typically, did not have children under the age of 18 living in the home (64.9%).

- Slightly more than half (52.8%) of respondents felt Delta did not have adequate housing options, identifying the greatest need for housing for first-time homeowners, as well as a lack of an adequate range of housing for different income levels.
 - The majority of respondents are happy where they live. Some identified concerns, such as poor bus service, poor conditions of sidewalks and lack of affordability.
 - In response to questions regarding future housing needs, respondents identified housing needs for seniors, families and people with disabilities as the top three priorities, and independent or assisted living as the housing type most needed.
 - When asked about housing plans in the next 10 to 20 years, many respondents expected to downsize to a rancher, renovate for accessibility or downsize to a townhouse or apartment when children leave the home.
- "I recently looked into assisted living for my elderly parents and was very disappointed in the lack of facilities in this area."
North Delta Resident
- When asked about retirement, most respondents planned to retire in Delta.
 - Among the additional comments noted, many echoed the seniors' housing needs identified in other reports: affordability, diversity of housing, accessibility, increasing density along transportation corridors and town centres, renewing housing stock and creating more "walkable" communities.

The Task Force made several recommendations to increase the density of housing under certain conditions. The Council accepted all recommendations and directed staff to start work on the legalization of secondary suites in single family homes as the first action priority.

While the Delta Housing Task Force was not targeted to seniors, 67.4% of respondents were 50+. The Housing Action Team feels the survey results reported by the Task Force reflect the views of Delta residents approaching retirement and those currently retired. The recommendations approved by Council could have benefit to seniors in terms of increasing housing options to meet their diverse and changing needs.

Seniors Forum ... *Is Delta an Age-Friendly Community?*

In October 2010, 64 seniors, individuals and groups from the community attended the Seniors Forum hosted by the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team. The Forum's purpose was to inform people about the concept of an age-friendly city, and to get a sense of Delta's strengths and weaknesses with respect to age-friendly qualities in the areas of housing, transportation and non-medical services and supports. The panel presentation and discussion for housing was *Seniors Housing Options* and the topic was entitled *Many Delta seniors are long-time residents and plan to remain in Delta. Are housing options sufficient to meet the changing needs and growing numbers of seniors?*

Patrick Simpson of SaferHome Standards Society spoke about building homes with universal design features, and Lynda Brind-Dickson of The 411 Seniors Society explained the seniors' housing system.

"A percentage from developers should be allocated to low-income families or seniors housing." *Tsawwassen Senior*

Long-term, sustainable, affordable housing was the key issue for community members. Participants felt strongly that they need "choices" and were concerned about the availability of "housing stock" in the community of Delta. The wrap-up session of the forum identified these housing issues:

- Seniors want to maintain their independence. Housing is a complex issue that is difficult or impossible to separate out from services for seniors and transportation.
- Increase the number of homes being built: supported housing/assisting living; co-op housing options; change building code to meet seniors' needs (universal design for aging in place); housing should be safe, accessible and barrier-free; and explore different types of housing models/styles.
- Develop housing with services to support changes as people age (stairs, security, house size, etc.), high-rise seniors' towers (meals, volunteers, theatre, etc), and faith-based housing supports or options.
- Affordability of housing – identify rental options for seniors.

Overall, Forum participants concluded that when discussing the long-term needs of Delta's growing seniors' population – as well as issues relating to housing, supports & services, and transportation – one is not independent from the others; each issue is interdependent for the well-being of an entire healthy community.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

Due to improved health status and medical improvements, living independently to a great age is becoming easier, even with significant handicaps. Improved nutrition, more exercise, decreased smoking and better treatments for chronic conditions mean older people are healthier than previous generations. They are able to live at home longer and have a shorter time in institutional care.

Sooner or later, there comes a time in the lives of many seniors when staying in their current home is no longer safe or wise. Perhaps stairs become too difficult to negotiate, or household upkeep and maintenance become overwhelming, or declining health takes its toll. Some seniors continue to live in homes which do not meet their physical and/or mental needs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the *Age-Friendly Environments Programme*, an international effort that outlines in detail many of the

“I live in the *South Pointe* community. But now I am planning to move, as I cannot drive my car anymore ... to move into town and not be dependent on other people to drive me shopping, etc. I have lived in Ladner for 55 years and would love to stay here.”

Senior from Ladner

environmental and social factors that contribute to active and healthy aging in societies. One of the key factors that make a community age-friendly is having a range of affordable housing options that are appropriately located, well-built, well-designed and secure.

Study of this age-friendly concept prompted the Action Team to consider a number of questions about seniors who currently live in Delta:

- What are their current housing arrangements? Does it meet their needs?
- If a move due to health reasons is required, what are their choices in Delta?
- What plans are being made to address the changing housing needs of seniors?

Based on these questions, as well as findings from other community reports on seniors' housing in Delta, the Housing Action Team decided to gather additional information to learn more about the current and future housing needs for seniors in North Delta, Ladner and Tsawwassen.

Community Survey

Since housing was identified as an issue of concern in Delta, the Housing Action Team delved into detail about the housing needs for seniors. In preparing its project the Action Team reviewed existing information available in the community, including the *Aging in Place Seniors Project* report, the Seniors Forum report *Are We Living in an Age-Friendly Community* and the Delta Housing Task Force report prepared for Delta Council. Action Team members learned anecdotally from informal discussions with groups, agencies and Planning Team members that seniors who require housing more suited to their needs were leaving Delta, because they could not find what they needed, or there was an affordability issue. The Housing Action Team felt it would be helpful to know more about the current housing of Delta seniors, as well as what they anticipate their future housing needs would be and where they would want to live. Asking the same questions of Delta residents who are approaching retirement (55 years +) would provide additional insights into future housing considerations for Delta's seniors.

To study this in more detail, the Action Team developed a Seniors Housing Survey to distribute among seniors in the community to find out their thinking in regards to their housing needs. The survey included demographic information about the respondents, questions about their current housing, what their future housing needs might be and where they would like to live. There was also space provided for additional comments. The Action Team felt it was important to include an opportunity for respondents to put into their own words what they thought of the seniors' housing situation in Delta.

Distribution of the survey occurred in many ways. Members of the Planning Team were asked to circulate surveys within North Delta, Ladner and Tsawwassen to friends, neighbours and various groups in which they participate. Copies of the survey also went to:

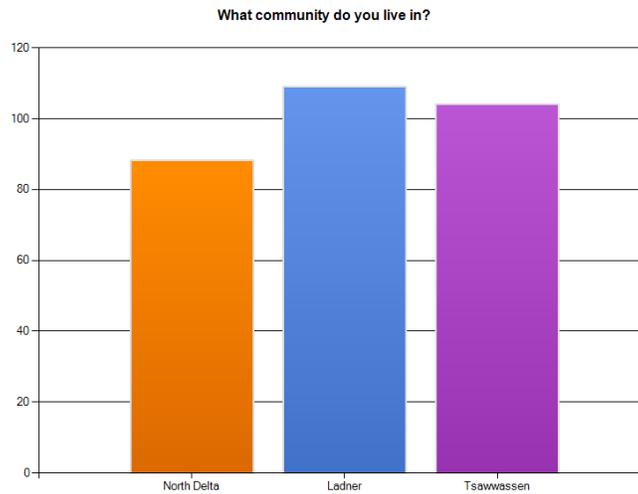
- Social service agencies and their clients.
- Faith groups and their members.
- Isolated seniors through grocery shopping programs.
- Library branches in each of the three communities.
- Seniors' recreation centres, where Action Team members attended events, spoke face-to-face with seniors, and assisted in filling out the surveys.

Through this effort the Action Team received 301 surveys.

FINDINGS

A) Profile of Respondents

What community do you live in?



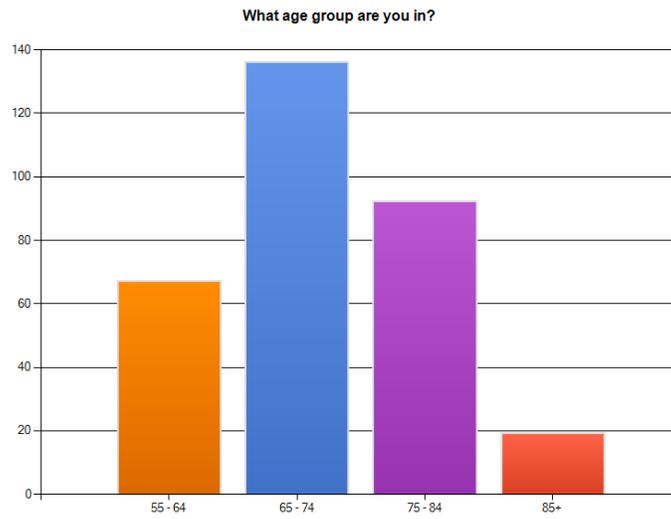
North Delta – 88

Ladner – 109

Tsawwassen – 104

Comments: The 2006 Census reported 25,515 of Delta residents are 55+, of which 11,265 live in North Delta, 5,735 live in Ladner and 7,245 live in Tsawwassen.

What age group are you in?

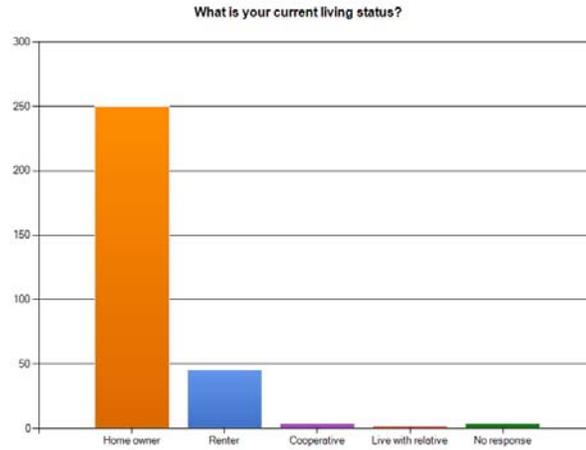


43.3% are between 65 and 74 years of age

Comments: 43.3% of respondents are between 65 and 74 years of age, and 6% are 85+ (a percentage that will increase as life expectancy increases). United Way of the Lower Mainland's report *Towards an Age-Friendly Community in the Lower Mainland/Sea to Sky Corridor* notes that 84% of those aged 85+ are deemed to have disabilities ... "As life expectancy increases, the chances of developing disabilities that interfere with functioning increase."

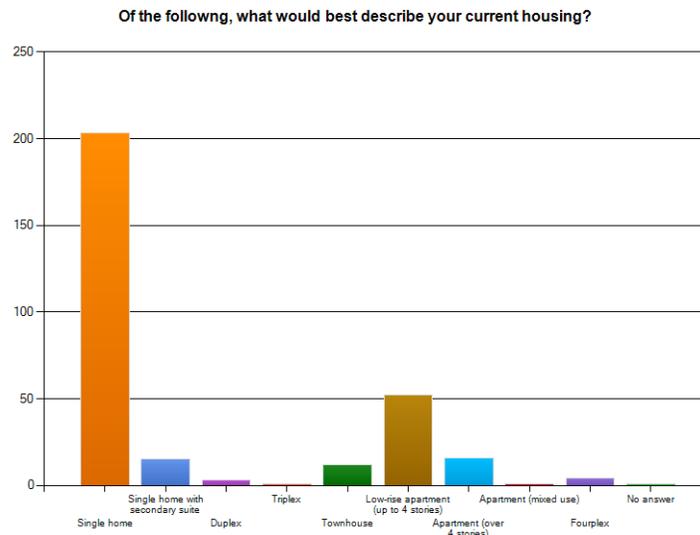
B) Responses to Survey Questions

What is your current living status?



82% of respondents own their home

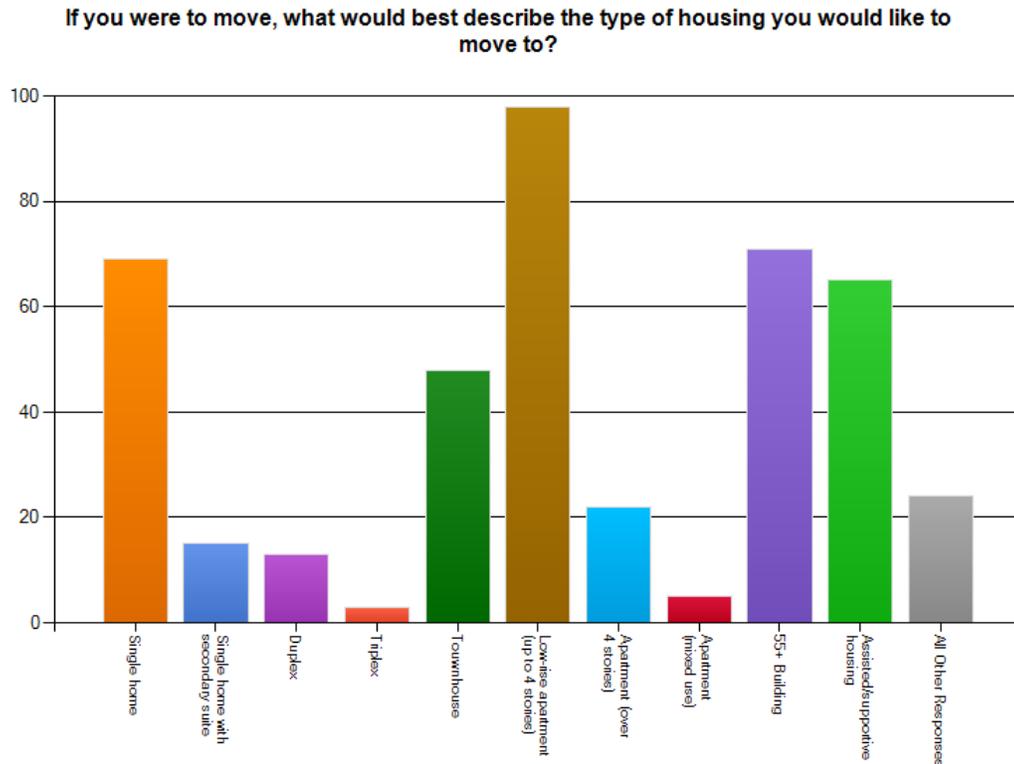
What best describes your current housing?



66% live in a single family home

Comments: 66% of respondents live in single family homes – a similar result to the general Delta population of 64.1% who live in single family homes (2006 Census).

If you were to move, what type of future housing would you like?



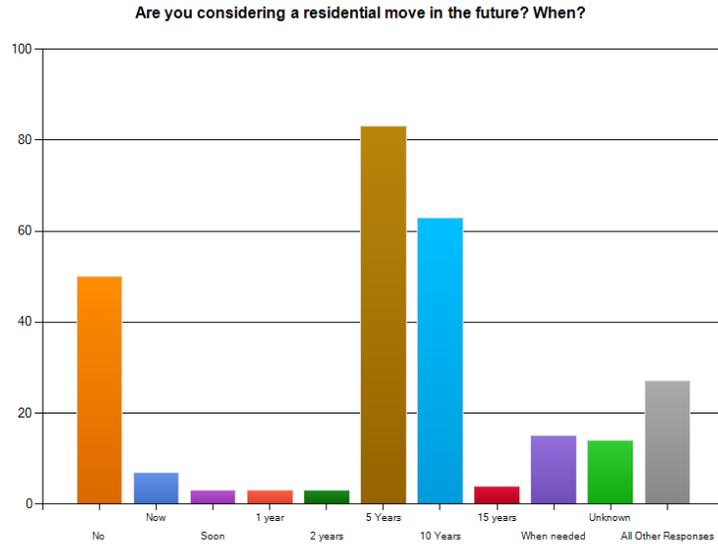
Top Four Choices for Future Housing

- Low-rise apartment – 98 respondents
- 55+ restricted building – 71 respondents
- Single family home – 69 respondents
- Assisted/supportive housing – 65 respondents

Comments: Respondents intending to move chose three options that represent downsizing and/or higher density, but some still prefer to own their own single family home. The options for seniors need to be diverse, to reflect the diversity in our communities.

If considering a move, when?

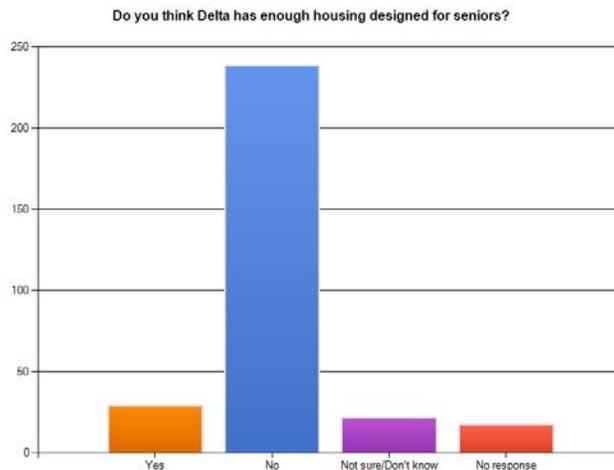
(No percentage, as some respondents chose more than one answer)



Top Most Frequent Choices

- 152 are considering a move within 10 years (50% of responses)
- 219 would like to stay in Delta
- 7 would like to stay in Ladner (specifically)
- 5 would like to stay in South Delta

Do you think there is enough housing designed for seniors in Delta?



78% of respondents – No

C) Overview of Written Comments from Survey

Comments from the three communities centred on the following themes:

- Facilities and Accommodation – 63 comments
- Affordability – 28 comments
- Housing near Services/Amenities – 27 comments
- Location (Delta vs. elsewhere) – 23 comments

78% of respondents stated they did not think Delta has enough housing designed for seniors.

It is not surprising to find the most frequent comments from all three communities were about “Facilities and Accommodation.” However, it is interesting to note the respondents from each community identified different issues relating to this theme. The following is a summary of the top two topic areas in North Delta, Ladner and Tsawwassen. These topics had the greatest number of comments within that community – by far – compared to other themes.

NORTH DELTA

1. Facilities and Accommodation – 10 comments

- 6 respondents mentioned the need for more one-level/rancher homes
- Single responses for 10-storey or below apartments
- Need for nice seniors’ complexes
- Not enough small homes
- Not enough housing below three storeys (wheelchair issues, in case of fire)
- 15 commented generally about the lack of seniors’ housing in North Delta

2. Location – 7 comments

- 3 expressed a wish to stay in Delta
- 2 individual comments spoke of being happy with the amenities, with kudos to Kennedy & McKee Seniors Centres
- 1 identified a piece of land suitable for seniors housing
- 1 commented that choice locations are either taken by developers or are priced too high

LADNER

1) Facilities and Accommodation – 30 comments

- 7 commented on the need for more seniors housing – giving examples
- 9 commented on home types and universal design (not necessarily seniors' housing)
- 4 commented on services needed to stay in the home – need for low maintenance, yard/garden area, living with family and help with housecleaning

2) Proximity to Services – 18 comments

- 6 commented on shopping
- 3 commented on doctors/dentist/medical facilities
- 3 commented on recreational facilities
- 2 commented on seniors centres/activities
- 1 commented on bank services
- 1 commented on restaurant services

TSAWWASSEN

1) Facilities and Accommodation – 31 comments

- 6 commented on the need for more seniors' housing
- 20 commented on home types and universal design (not necessarily seniors' housing)
- 1 commented on having services to help stay in the home
- 2 commented on the funding/affordability of seniors' housing

2) Affordability – 16 comments

- 11 commented generally on the need for affordable housing. One noted that since seniors are on fixed incomes, townhouses are not an appropriate option because of possible strata fee increases
- 3 commented on the expense of assisted/supportive living and the need for more affordable options, for those needing this kind of housing
- 2 commented on the need for affordable rental options for seniors

Overview of Survey

In its survey the Action Team set out to learn more about housing for seniors in Delta. Specifically, what their current housing situation is, and what their plans are for housing in the future. The majority of respondents do not believe Delta has sufficient housing to meet their changing needs. “Facilities and Accommodation” was the only topic raised by *all three* communities.

- **NORTH DELTA** – concerned about the lack of seniors housing generally, as well as the importance of planning for seniors’ housing and including it in future developments.
- **LADNER** – focus should be on the need for a range of senior housing options, including supports to continue living in one’s own home. It is important that housing be close to services, shops, transit and recreational amenities.
- **TSAWWASSEN** – it is important to incorporate universal design features in homes to make independent living easier. There is a lack of affordable housing, high costs in assisted/supported living, and strata fees can be a barrier to living in condos or townhouses. Affordable rental options are another need.

Our survey results reinforce findings from earlier surveys that seniors do have the general desire to remain in Delta where they have family, friends, strong community connections and support at a time in their lives when they are more likely to need it. At the same time, they are aware housing options for seniors in Delta may be limited, should they wish to downsize or need specialized housing.

The World Health Organization’s *Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly Cities* identifies the importance of having sufficient affordable housing available in areas that are safe, close to services and the rest of community life. Sufficient, affordable maintenance and support services are also key, as well as housing modification services from providers who understand the needs of older people.

Other Areas of Review

The Housing Action Team also looked at community considerations, challenges facing seniors in the area of housing, and land use concerns before considering what to offer as possible solutions in the area of seniors' housing within Delta.

Community Considerations

- The life expectancy of women is greater than that of men, and women are more likely to be over-represented in the lower income ranges for seniors. Housing options for women need to consider safety, security and affordability.
- Tsawwassen has many seniors. However, the community seems to be currently opposed to growth and increasing density, which is counter to attracting young families, new businesses or developing housing options for seniors.
- Delta generally is “built out.” Developers head east to Langley and Abbotsford, further reducing Delta’s ability to attract businesses and families.

Challenges Facing Seniors and Housing

- Our survey results show the majority of respondents share the “dream” of wanting to remain in Delta, which is their familiar community where they have friends and supports, but a shortage of seniors’ housing may prevent it.
- For many seniors, until a health issue or loss affects them, they do not know what their housing needs will be and are not prepared for such a crisis.
- Financial concerns were clearly expressed in the survey comments. Respondents worry about affordability, downsizing their homes and wait lists for funded-care homes. Seniors who are in need of more care sometimes must take the first place offered, regardless of location, or they will go to the bottom of the waiting list.

Land Use Concerns in Delta

- Delta has limited land available for new housing.
- To create higher density, it may require changing the character of some single family residential neighbourhoods.
- Developers favour building high-end housing, which can move Delta's housing out of the affordability range.
- Delta does not have an affordable housing strategy.

Possible Solutions

- Create higher-density housing options for development by subdividing larger lots in hub areas (centres with services and shopping).
- Encourage developers to build houses above the minimum building standards, so they can easily be adapted to aging in place using a universal design like the SaferHome Standards.¹
- Prepare for the future ... As seniors age, the fastest growing group is 85+. Within this group, about 30% are likely to suffer from some form of dementia, which requires both specialized (secure) housing and respite care for family or spouses.
- Reach out to all ... In our increasingly diverse culture some new immigrant seniors are isolated (due to language barriers) and may be sharing accommodation with other family members. Housing may be needed that provides supports to facilitate integration into the community, while also maintaining family connections.
- Strategize how to attract younger families and seniors who are downsizing through encouraging developers to build more affordable housing.

¹ Safer Home Standards <http://www.saferhomesociety.com/>

NEXT STEPS

Seniors in Delta are a diverse group. There is no one housing option that will meet the needs of all. The desire to stay in the community is important for seniors. They know their neighbours, they helped build up the community over the years, and they are comfortable with local shopping and recreation areas, making it easier to get around. They have a doctor and are familiar with other community supports they may need one day. To help Delta adapt to the needs of seniors in the future, here are ideas from the survey responses:

- Support seniors to stay in their own homes, while, at the same time, promoting the building of more housing. For example, encourage people to subdivide their large lots and build housing suitable for seniors and others – like young families, people with disabilities and people with lower incomes.
- One United Way project (*Community Action for Seniors' Independence, or CASI*) helps communities in the Lower Mainland develop affordable options for support services, so seniors can remain in their homes longer. These services include home maintenance, yard work, driving to appointments, shopping assistance, personal care and light housekeeping.
- Delta housing is mainly made up of large single family homes, with up to five bedrooms. Could some of these be converted to life-lease/mini care facilities?
- Secondary suites – recently legalized. Seniors could finish the basement of their home using SaferHome Standards to create a suite that would be age-friendly through forgivable loan programs such as the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (*RRAP*) and the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (*HASI*). Seniors could rent out the upstairs to create income and have a connection with family members or a tenant who could look out for them, if they needed help.
- Ladner is an example of a perfect location for seniors. It is flat, easy to get around in and has an appealing village-oriented centre. But Ladner does not have the business, job or post-secondary school base for attracting young families and others. As the seniors' population grows in Ladner, what changes can be made to build on the strengths of this community to create housing options that support a broader age-range of residents?

Create Hubs for North and South Delta

Hub or village centre planning in a community is a new way to think about how the design of our neighbourhoods can impact our health and quality of life. There is much more to learn about the evidence linking land use, urban design, transportation and cooperation to develop healthy communities for all.²

In looking at the three communities in Delta:

- North Delta is especially in need of a hub location for seniors.
- Ladner has the village, two shopping malls, health services and recreation centres all within walking distance in addition to a range of housing options.
- Tsawwassen has the Town Centre mall and surrounding malls at 56th & 12th. There is also KinVillage, a large seniors' Campus of Care, which includes a range of housing for seniors – from independent/supportive living, to complex care.

For seniors to have greater access to and more engagement in the life of the community, it would be important to create centralized higher-density, affordable housing within walking or scooter distance to health and community services, shopping, transportation and recreation centres.

Housing Action Team

A task group of the

Delta Seniors Community Planning Team

*Shaping Delta into a community where seniors
live active, safe and healthy lives.*

² Resources: Dr. Lawrence Frank, Bombardier Chair, Sustainable Transportation, University of British Columbia; and Dr. Ellen Dunham-Jones, Professor of Architecture, Simon Fraser University (Visiting Fellow).

Transportation Action Team Report

June 2011

Chair

Gerry Bouman

Members

Lynda Brummitt, Kay Dennison, Avril Gauthier,

Margaret Nielsen, Sepia Sharma,

Joanne Van Snellenberg, Jeanne Wilson



BACKGROUND

The community group Delta Connects prepared a report for the *Aging in Place Seniors Project* (2009), surveying 299 seniors in Delta on several topics, including transportation. The following is a summary of the responses related to transportation issues for seniors:

- Other methods of transportation besides a personal vehicle: Walking, 49%; driven by a friend/family member, 25%; taking public transit, 24%; driven by spouse or partner, 21%; using a taxi, 7%; using HandyDART, 6%.
- Difficulties getting around: 52% of female respondents had difficulties getting where they need to go, while 77% of the male respondents reported difficulties.
- Reasons for difficulties include: 50% have to take too many buses, 45% do not like to ask for a ride, 25% say the bus stop is too far away, 25% cannot afford to run their vehicle, 21% do not feel safe on public transportation, 13% do not know who to ask for a ride and 10% say a regular ride is not available.
- When it comes to participating in the community, respondents identified several barriers that relate to transportation: 30% say it is due to a lack of public transportation, and 26% say it is due to a lack of personal transportation.
- Transportation is identified as a barrier to accessing support services by 21% of respondents.
- Focus group discussions conducted with caregivers and seniors' service providers also identified transportation as an important concern. These concerns included lack of awareness of programs that can help (for example, gas and insurance rebates available for drivers transporting people who cannot access public transportation) and changes to the HandyDART system. There was consensus that, with recent changes, HandyDART is not as responsive and flexible as it used to be.

In April 2010, United Way of the Lower Mainland prepared a report ³ that noted its seven (7) Seniors' Community Planning Tables (Delta included) identified transportation as a concern. Difficulties with getting around in these other communities are similar to those identified by Delta's seniors. Conclusions drawn about these difficulties include:

- Accessible transit, though much improved over conventional transit, is not an option for everyone – due to frailty, activity limitations or chronic health conditions.
- HandyDART is over-burdened, difficult to schedule and restricted to medical appointments and school/work-related travel.
- Seniors have a different set of wants and needs compared to users of HandyDART and Taxi Savers.
- Seniors' trips to get groceries, do other kinds of shopping, or for banking, social and recreational purposes often do not correspond with current transit priorities.
- Seniors' inter-city travel is not often fully convenient, such as where there is a shortage of or difficulty in accessing public washrooms, etc.

³ *Getting Around/Meeting the Challenge: The Role of Seniors Planning Tables in the Lower Mainland.*

Seniors Forum ... Is Delta an Age-Friendly Community?

In October 2010, 64 seniors, individuals and groups from the community attended the Seniors Forum hosted by the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team. The Forum's purpose was to inform people about the concept of an age-friendly city, and to get a sense of Delta's strengths and weaknesses with respect to age-friendly qualities in the areas of housing, transportation and non-medical services and supports. The panel presentation and discussion for transportation was *Getting Around in Delta* and the topic was entitled *Life expectancy is longer than drivers' licence expectancy. What are the alternatives when driving is no longer an option?* Annwen Loverin from the North Shore Seniors Go Bus Program spoke about her group's experience with an alternative transportation service. Peter Hill from TransLink's Access Transit Secretariat spoke about regular transit service and HandyDART, as well as TransLink's response to accessibility concerns.

Driving is a privilege, mobility is a right. Transportation enables community members to stay connected in their community. There are challenges in operating a system to meet everyone's needs. As options were presented, participants were vocal in expressing their transportation concerns:

- Transportation is important for independence.
- Seniors need freedom of choice and options that are reliable, flexible, affordable and safe.
- Seniors need better communication and education about how to use and access transportation systems.
- When seniors are able to access transportation and 'get around' in the community, they are not isolated.
- Seniors using scooters need training and education on how to use them.
- Improve communication with the municipality to make improvements to sidewalks, transit and accessibility.
- Move telephone poles from the middle of the sidewalk, since it can be a challenge to move around them.
- Establish a Seniors Advisory Committee to work with the municipality.
- Delta's bus system is commuter-oriented; not many access the system outside of commuting hours during the day.
- Bring back the Express bus – the current service limits choice.
- Pockets of the community do not have transit service.
- A few years ago, one community area turned down a community shuttle.

- Planning and design of transit systems need to take into account community density.
- Participate in upcoming North Delta and Tsawwassen Area Plan sessions to talk about ‘age-friendly’ community issues.
- Plan and think ahead about giving up a driver’s licence. Consider the options.
- Explore carpools.
- Create a system of support to help others (aid in grocery shopping, clearing snow, etc.) and build relationships in the community.
- Be a Good Neighbour – keep an eye out for individuals who are isolated and offer them help.
- Sidewalks that are in need of repair are accidents just waiting to happen.
- Paint lines (in neon colours) on sidewalks that need repair, so people can see dips, cracks, etc.
- Conduct a public education forum to talk about transportation issues in Delta.

Overall, the key issues people spoke about centred on the *safety*, *security* and *accessibility* of transportation to get seniors where they need to go.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

In our society the ability to drive is equated with independence, meeting basic needs and enjoying one's quality of life. In Delta, owning a car or having access to one is considered a necessity, given the geographical size of the municipality and the distance between its three community centres. However, as some seniors are discovering, life expectancy will often exceed "driving expectancy," and access to public transit or the availability of alternative transportation is often limited when one is no longer able to get behind the wheel.

Access to transportation and the ability to move around our community easily is something most people take for granted, but doing so without access to a private vehicle has its challenges. In addition to driving restrictions due to health problems, the increasing costs associated with car ownership (car purchase price, maintenance and increasing fuel costs) may become more onerous for seniors on fixed incomes. In either case, without access to alternate transportation options, seniors are at risk of losing their independence, which can lead to social isolation.

In Delta, as well as other communities, groups are exploring other transportation options like volunteer drivers, taxi savers, carpools and alternative bus services, such as North Vancouver's Go Bus (an alternative to HandyDART). Improved access to public transportation, as well as alternative transportation resources, not only benefit seniors facing activity limitations but anyone with disabilities, young families, youth and others who may not have access to a car.

Mapping Project

Mapping presents information in a visual form to illustrate relationships of an array of information. The purpose of the Transportation Action Team's mapping project is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between where seniors live in Delta, the location of the services and amenities they most often access, and the transit service that links them. Access to transportation – both public and alternative systems – is important for seniors to stay active and involved in their community, enabling them to maintain independence and "age in place." The Action Team thanks the Corporation of Delta, Engineering Department, for the

community maps of North Delta, Ladner and Tsawwassen. We were also able to access TransLink bus route information and maps, and appreciate the assistance of Deltassist staff for helping us secure this information.

Where seniors live

The 2006 Census reports 13.1% of the Delta population, or 12,085 people, are 65+. The Action Team wanted to find out if there were neighbourhoods in Delta where seniors live in numbers that would exceed 13%. If so, what were the common characteristics of those areas that supported seniors in maintaining their independence?

We mapped 10 census tracts in the three Delta communities with the highest proportions of seniors' population. In three census tract areas in Tsawwassen, the seniors' share of the population ranged from 19.6% to 22.5%. In four census tract areas – one in Tsawwassen and three in Ladner – the seniors' share of the population ranged from 13.3% to 15.4%. In three census tract areas – two in North Delta and one in Ladner – the seniors' share of the population ranged from 11.2% to 11.7%. In the census tracts with higher proportions of seniors, accommodation tends to include a mixture of housing options (single detached, semi-detached, row house, apartments, and duplexes), as well as mixed residential/commercial.

Services seniors use most often

To determine the services to map, the Action Team used information from seniors' resource directories.⁴ We collected seniors' housing information from the housing directory of Seniors Services Society. We reviewed many services and amenities, community facilities, community services, medical services and seniors' housing in Delta. To decide what to map, we selected those that seniors typically use on a regular basis.

The Action Team mapped malls and shopping centres, because many of the regular services that seniors access are located there, like banks, post offices, grocery stores, pharmacies and even medical clinics. Community facilities include

⁴ *Seniors' Services Handbook* prepared by Deltassist Family and Community Services, and *Towards an Age-Friendly Community in the Lower Mainland/Sea to Sky Corridor* prepared by United Way of Lower Mainland.

recreation facilities, community centres and libraries. Community services were mapped – except for services such as Meals on Wheels and home support services, which are provided in seniors’ homes and do not require seniors to travel to access the service. Medical services – including the hospital, medical laboratories and medical buildings – were also mapped. We mapped seniors’ housing in two categories – independent living and residential care.

The maps show that both Tsawwassen and Ladner have neighbourhoods or village centres where more seniors live, with mixed housing located near commercial areas and municipal facilities that have many amenities and services within walking distance. On the other hand, North Delta’s majority of housing is single detached houses. There are many areas in North Delta where services and amenities are not within walking distance. Along Scott Road there are many services and amenities, but the road is a major thoroughfare with five lanes of traffic to cross. For many seniors it is very difficult to cross the intersection in the time allotted.

Transit – linking where seniors live, to where they need to go

The public transportation service in Delta is mainly a commuter service. Given the geographical size and the smaller population base, travelling *within* Delta sometimes is more difficult than travelling *outside* Delta. Service is the most frequent during the morning and afternoon rush, with reduced service during the interval and on weekends. Both Ladner and Tsawwassen have a community shuttle service that connects residents from the outlying areas to the commercial/village centres in each community. It is acknowledged that community shuttle buses are not accessible to all seniors, because they do not have the low-floor access feature. This will be changed over time, as the new equipment is brought into service. The phased-in approach is due to cost factors. Years ago, commuter shuttle service was turned down in North Delta by some residents. As a result, there is limited intra-community travel in North Delta, except along major transportation corridors like Scott Road.

Where transit service is available in Delta, annual improvements are made to increase accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities. Each year, existing bus stops in Delta are upgraded to include a concrete landing pad for bus platforms, which makes buses more accessible for people using wheelchairs and other mobility aids. As of 2010, 40% of Delta’s bus stops have been upgraded.

The HandyDART bus service is a shared-ride, door-to-door service for passengers with disabilities who are unable to travel independently on transit. To use this service, riders must book their trips in advance. Priority is based on rides needed for medical services, work and post secondary education. Despite improvements in the accessibility of the regular bus and SkyTrain system, demand for pre-booked HandyDART service continues to exceed supply. There are plans for HandyDART to be increased, with longer hours of operation and more weekend service.

Using Public Transit to get around Delta

The final step of the Action Team's mapping project was the link between where seniors live, where services and amenities are located, and how these are linked to getting around Delta. We prepared an overlay of the Delta bus routes over the maps with the population and services information. Both Tsawwassen and Ladner have village centres that make many services and amenities accessible by walking or with the use of a mobility aid. Access to community shuttle services allows seniors living further away from the village centre to have a transportation option. However, in North Delta, which does not have a community shuttle service, residents are reliant on bus routes that are mainly designed to move commuters, which means the routes and frequency of service may not serve those using the transit service at other times or for other purposes.

The viability of public transportation options in Delta depends on where you live and service frequency. Based on input from the experience of Planning Team members, as well as the trip planner service available on the TransLink website, we took a closer look at some of the routes.

Community shuttle service challenges

Community shuttle routes in Ladner and Tsawwassen provide service to many of the places seniors need or want to go. We looked at service from Boundary Bay to the Tsawwassen Town Centre, in addition to service from locations in Ladner to McKee Seniors Recreation Centre. Once a passenger boarded the shuttle, the service was quick. However, the convenience depended on the length of walk from a senior's home to the bus stop, how close the bus stop in the Town Centre was in relation to where the senior needed to go, and the timing of the appointment or activity with the service. As an example, one senior noted that, depending on the time and length of an appointment, it could easily take two to three hours of total

travel time for a half-hour appointment. The Boundary Bay community shuttle is a 10-minute (or so) service into Tsawwassen that runs hourly.

For people using the Ladner Exchange to get to Vancouver, the community shuttle service is not always coordinated with the buses leaving the Exchange. If a connection is missed, it is a 30-minute wait for the next bus. The Exchange is not located near anything like a coffee shop. There is also no shelter from the weather for a passenger on a return trip from Vancouver who is waiting for a connection from the Canada Line.

Another senior noted some community shuttle services have a drop-off at the local malls. In Tsawwassen, the shuttle stop is across the street from the Town Centre Mall, and the distance makes the walk difficult for some seniors who are carrying grocery bags after shopping.

For seniors who live in North Delta, some services, particularly health-related ones, are located in Surrey. A number of the routes we checked from Nordel and Scott Road involved transfers to get to Surrey Memorial Hospital. For seniors travelling from Scott Road to Delta Hospital, the trip on this non-direct route also involves a transfer. On top of that, it is a significant walk from the Ladner Exchange to the hospital.

FINDINGS

In age-friendly communities, municipal policies work cohesively together with services and structures related to the physical and social environment to support and enable older people to live in a secure environment, enjoy good health, and continue to participate fully in society (WHO's *Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly Cities*, 2007). An age-friendly community is a community for *all* ages, as the benefits from these qualities result in an urban environment that is sustainable to the health and well-being of all residents.

Looking at Delta as a whole, the geographical size and features create challenges not only for transportation networks, but for residents to connect socially, be involved in the community and receive support services. On a community basis, however, the Action Team found positive developments that are age-friendly, such as village centres or hubs with services, amenities and activities for seniors within walking distance, as well as a community shuttle service for getting to places within the community.

The quality of transit service in Delta is dependent on where passengers live and where they need to go. If a senior has been a driver for a long time and is used to the convenience of a personal vehicle, the transition to using public transit may be a difficult challenge to manage. New riders need to learn many things about the transit system: routes, scheduling, and the purchase of fares (exact change required when boarding a bus, day passes not available from a bus driver), to name just a few. In addition, public transit service outside of commuting times is poor, and access to alternative transit is limited.

In the *Aging in Place Seniors Project* survey, only 25% of respondents used public transit. For those who do not use transit, the reasons given include: bus stops are too far away, or there are too many transfers on the route they would use.

Seniors Forum participants identified many transit improvements that would increase safety, service and access. Forty-nine percent of survey respondents said they walked to places in the community. Forum participants also pointed out the importance of “walkable” communities as an alternative to transit, provided there are improved sidewalks and intersection crossings.

The mapping project illustrates that reliance on the car or public transportation is not sufficient for meeting the diverse needs of seniors in Delta. The *Getting Around/Meeting the Challenge* report by the United Way's Seniors Planning Tables highlights the difficulties faced by seniors in seven Lower Mainland communities. Forum participants mentioned several ideas for addressing alternative transportation, including how important it is for seniors to think ahead and plan for the time when they may not have a driver's licence. There were also many suggestions for how people can help each other by creating a system of support (help with groceries, carpooling, keeping an eye out for each other, etc.). Education about transportation options, generally, as well as specific information about the safe handling of mobility aids, like a scooter, would prove helpful, too.

The mapping project shows there is a relationship between transportation, housing and support services that can have a direct bearing on the health and well-being of seniors. The maps illustrate how housing options (with a range of density) located near services and amenities, and in combination with transportation choices (car, transit, walking, unobstructed pathways for walking with mobility aids and biking, etc.), give seniors (and all other Delta residents) alternatives that can support their health, well-being and ability to maintain independence.

NEXT STEPS

The Transportation Action Team sees a number of opportunities for improving the transportation options for seniors and all residents of Delta:

- More links ... As far as transit system concerns, the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team will continue to provide input through the United Way on regional transit issues, with Kay Dennison (Planning Team Coordinator), a member of the Access Transit Users' Advisory Committee.
- More study ... Subject to funding approval, the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team will participate in a research study regarding the concept of "wheelability" for seniors in Delta, conducted by the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University.
- More education ... Our consultation process and the preparation of this report helped identify the critical need for individual awareness and ongoing education for seniors in preparing for the time when they will need alternatives to their private vehicle for transportation. Informational sessions could include an orientation to the public transit system, how to safely use a scooter and other helpful tips for getting around safely and securely.
- More options ... A future project for the Transportation Action Team will be to learn more about alternative transportation options, including those for walking and biking, and identifying which ones would be suitable for Delta's seniors.

Transportation Action Team

A task group of the

Delta Seniors Community Planning Team

*Shaping Delta into a community where seniors
live active, safe and healthy lives.*

Conclusion

Population aging is, first and foremost, a success story for public health policies, as well as social and economic development.

(World Health Organization, 2002)

Building on Success

In its short history, the Delta Seniors Community Planning Team has conducted important work on behalf of Delta's seniors. This group is a remarkable example of grassroots community development at work, with its members animatedly engaged in improving the quality of life for seniors through identifying the services, community facilities and amenities that will help them to live safe, independent and fulfilling lives. It is also an adaptable, "learning" organization that will rise to the challenges ahead.

The Planning Team enjoys the support of many organizations that share their knowledge and expertise, including: the Corporation of Delta, seniors' recreation centres and seniors' agencies of Delta and other Lower Mainland communities. United Way of the Lower Mainland is another valued partner, linking the members of the Planning Team with many other community planning committees dealing with seniors' issues. In particular, the dedication of our sponsor agency, *Deltassist* Family and Community Services, and its staff, must be acknowledged for sharing their wisdom and resources so generously.

Together, we are all committed to planning for change *with* seniors, not for them.

Delta Seniors Community Planning Team

Shaping Delta into a community where seniors live active, safe and healthy lives.