

## **Main Street Dartmouth District to be HRM's First Age Friendly Community**

Greg Fong, President of the Village on Main Community Improvement District (CID) Association has announced that the District is working on a comprehensive community-based plan that will facilitate and enhance the daily lives of a population with a growing proportion of elders.

"We're about half way through the planning process" says Fong "and we are addressing a number of planning needs so we can become certified by the World Health Organization as an age friendly community." Age friendly communities recognize that our elders and society in general benefit greatly when people of all ages and abilities can connect on a daily basis.

Graziealla Grbac, Executive Director of the CID, says that the planning process has brought the area's business, non-profit and residential sectors together to address issues and develop community-based solutions.

"It's going to help transform the District into a more compact and convenient suburban downtown," she says. "A great place to be whether you're 8 or 80!"

Grbac says the Village on Main is already considered a major health hub, with upwards of 40 health and wellness facilities that are clustered in close proximity within the District.

"That's a huge asset for us to build upon," says Fong, who notes the District's transformation could include business and services to support a future population base of 8,000 people.

"We are in sync with SHIFT – the Province's Action Plan for an Aging Population" says Fong, "and that includes opportunities to address our seniors unique housing needs along with the continuum of affordable middle income housing need."

The Village on Main is David Harrison's fourth age friendly community planning process he has overseen in Nova Scotia.

“Isolation, transportation, age friendly housing and access to healthcare are the top issues” says the urban planner “and it doesn’t matter whether you’re an urban, suburban or rural community.”

Harrison, who chaired the Canadian Institute of Planners Healthy Communities Program for 5 years, says it is important that urban planners engage health professionals more when making planning decisions.

“In Main Street the plan will highlight community-based solutions being developed by local health groups, churches and other stakeholders” he says.

Harrison says that age friendly community planning does not typically rely on large asks to government.

“But, having said that, success with Main Street’s plan will ultimately depend upon better transit for the area, that’s for sure” he says.

Fong says the District’s age friendly community plan is expected to be ready by the end of June.

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