

**University of Alberta**

**Exploring Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of Healthy Aging  
Policy in Suburban Planning and Transportation Departments**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Science**

Centre for Health Promotion Studies

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Spring 2011

Edmonton, Alberta

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## **Abstract**

Purpose: The purpose of this research was examine potential barriers and facilitators to the implementation of healthy public policy related to aging, specifically in municipal planning and transportation departments, in the suburban context.

Research Questions: What are the factors which influence successful implementation of healthy public policy in municipal and, specifically, suburban contexts? How do suburban planning and transportation policies interface with policies aimed at physical environmental changes to shape the built environment in ways that are theorized to affect seniors' health?

Methods and Results: A qualitative case study approach was used to examine Strathcona County's *Older Adults Plan* (2009a). Strathcona County is a municipality bordering Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Data was collected through document reviews and 19 semi-structured interviews with 21 individuals involved in the development of the plan or potentially affected by its implementation. Results were triangulated in a final analysis of policy implementation capacity in Strathcona County.

## **Acknowledgement**

Navigating through the process of writing this thesis has been a challenging but rewarding process, which was made much more pleasant and manageable by the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Candace Nykiforuk. Thank you so much for your patience, brilliance and friendship. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. John Church and Dr. Theresa Garvin, for their valuable feedback and commitment to helping me finish this project.

The support of so many friends helped me to keep my sanity over the last two and a half years. Despite those sleepless nights and endless readings, my new health promotion friends made my time on campus truly enjoyable, while my workout buddies were always there to make me laugh and provide some balance even at the busiest of times. You are all so special to me.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support of my seemingly endless academic career. As always, my parents were there to pick up the slack whenever it was needed. My children, Kelsea and Connor, demonstrated maturity and independence well beyond their years, providing me with the time and energy to focus on my studies. Most of all I would like to thank my husband Darren for always supporting me, financially and emotionally, and for his unconditional love, even on days when I was not particularly loveable!

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	v
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Significance .....	1
Research Questions and Objectives .....	3
Theoretical Frameworks .....	4
Organization of the Thesis .....	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	11
Healthy Aging .....	11
The Built Environment and Health .....	15
Suburban Neighbourhoods and Healthy Aging .....	20
Public Policy and Healthy Public Policy.....	23
Summary .....	32
Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures .....	34
Setting and Description of Case .....	34
Purpose .....	36
Methods.....	36
Procedures .....	38
Strengths and Limitations.....	54
Significance.....	57
Dissemination and Knowledge Transfer .....	58
Chapter Four: Results and Discussion- Document Review <i>OAP</i> .....	59
Process of Development/Community Consultation .....	59
Thematic Analysis.....	71
Problems/Goals/Strategies .....	84
Objective One: Document Review <i>OAP</i> - Summary .....	94
Chapter Five: Results and Discussion- .....	96
Document Review-Relevant Policy Documents.....	96
Municipal documents .....	100

Provincial Documents .....	103
Objective Two: Review of Planning Documents- Summary .....	105
Chapter Six: Results and Discussion: Key Informant Interviews.....	106
Individual-Level Capacity .....	111
Organizational-Level Capacity.....	114
System-Level Capacity .....	123
Discussion of Results .....	134
Recommendations for Strathcona County.....	151
Chapter Seven- Implications and Conclusion.....	154
Implications for Further Research.....	154
Conclusion.....	154
References.....	158
Appendix A:.....	171
Executive Summary of Strathcona County’s Older Adults Plan (2009a).....	171
Appendix B: Coding Guide Objective One .....	180
Appendix C: Summary of Relevant <i>OAP</i> Goals/Strategies .....	182
Appendix D: Information Letter .....	183
Appendix E: Informed Consent Form.....	185
Appendix F: Interview Guide .....	186
Appendix G: Coding Guide Objective Two .....	191
Appendix H: Frameworks Informing Policy Analysis .....	193
Appendix I: Questions Facilitated at Round-Table Discussions .....	195

## List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Overview of Procedures</i> .....	38
Table 2: <i>Timelines for Project</i> .....	39
Table 3: <i>Three Levels of Implementation Capacity in Strathcona County for Socially Sustainable Planning and Transportation Policies</i> .....	53
Table 4: <i>Summary of Community Consultation for Development of the OAP</i> .....	61
Table 5: <i>Individual-Level Strategies in the OAP</i> .....	76
Table 6: <i>Micro Environmental-Level Strategies in the OAP</i> .....	77
Table 7: <i>Macro Environmental-Level Strategies in the OAP</i> .....	78
Table 8: <i>Goals, Strategies and Resources Allocated to Key Issues</i> .....	86
Table 9: <i>Potential Design Related Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of the Planning and Transportation Related Goals of the OAP</i> .....	95
Table 10: <i>Relationship of Planning Documents to OAP</i> .....	98
Table 11: <i>Affiliations of Participants and Refusals</i> .....	107
Table 12: <i>Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of Socially Sustainable Planning and Transportation Policies in Strathcona County</i> ...	108
Table 13: <i>Three Levels of Implementation Capacity in Strathcona County for Socially Sustainable Planning and Transportation Policies</i> .....	111

## **List of Figures**

<i>Figure 1.</i> The Determinants of Active Aging .....	15
<i>Figure 2.</i> Spaces of Well-being .....	42

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Significance**

In Canada, as in all other developed nations with declining fertility and mortality, the senior population is growing at a much faster rate than that of the general population (Moore and Pacey, 2004). In 2006, seniors, i.e. Canadians aged 65 and over, made up 13.7% of Canada's population or 4.3 million persons (Statistics Canada, 2007). By 2031, it is projected that seniors will account for approximately one-quarter of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2005). Estimates in Alberta have the number of seniors in the province growing to 490,000 in 2015 and to 759,000 by 2025 as the Baby Boomer generation reach their senior years (Alberta Health and Wellness, 2009). This demographic shift has potential implications for the healthcare system, but expected growth in the senior population has also been identified as a challenge for urban planners, as they respond to the World Health Organization's call to create "age-friendly cities" (2009). Acknowledging the ecological nature of the determinants of healthy aging or "active aging" (World Health Organization, 2002), some municipalities have begun to create intersectoral plans to prepare for the aging of their populations, many of which include built environment modifications aimed at facilitating active aging in their communities (Strathcona County, 2009a; Boulder County Aging Services Division, 2007).

Additionally, Hodge (2008) notes that more than one third of Canadian seniors are living in the suburbs today. Suburban development is typically characterized by separation of residential and other land uses, with large tracts of single family housing set within curvilinear street patterns necessitating frequent automobile use (Hodge, 2008). Canadian trends are towards aging in place, with 91% of seniors being non-movers, or moving within their communities only, over the last 5 years (Hodge, 2008). Therefore, it is likely that the younger populations currently living in the suburbs plan to age there, and that the suburbs will age with them. It is vital to develop planning and transportation policies, such as land use bylaws which favour mixed development, that support healthy aging in these municipalities that were originally built with young families, not seniors, in mind.

Municipal governments, under the authority of their respective province, provide the arena for land-use planning and transportation decisions (Sancton and Young, 2009). An understanding of the power relationships that converge to form the built environment through these land-use planning and transportation decisions is essential to understand its impacts on health and the subsequent implications for the implementation of healthy public policy. Thus, the purpose of this research was to use a case study approach to examine the potential barriers and facilitators to the implementation of a healthy public policy related to aging, specifically in municipal planning and transportation departments, in the suburban context.

## **Research Questions and Objectives**

**Rationale.** Municipal policy intended to foster healthy aging in the suburbs should be grounded in social ecological and geographical theory in order to maximize its potential to have a population level health impact (i.e., to ensure it does not suffer from design failure). Healthy public policy that includes built environment components must be congruent with the overall vision of the planning and transportation departments of the municipality within which the healthy public policy will be implemented or it will be ineffective (i.e., suffer from implementation failure).

**Foundational research questions.** What are the factors that potentially influence successful implementation of healthy public policy in municipal and, specifically, suburban contexts? How do suburban planning and transportation policies interface with healthy public policy aimed at physical environmental changes to shape the built environment in ways that are theorized to affect seniors' health?

To gain an understanding of the relationship between healthy public policy, municipal planning and transportation policy, specifically with regards to active aging in the suburban context, an analysis of the policy design and the early stages of the implementation of Strathcona County's *Older Adults Plan* (2009a) were performed. These were addressed through the following objectives:

Objective One: To perform an analysis informed by social ecological theory and theories of place to evaluate the strength of the design of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a).

Objective Two: To identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the built environment goals of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a) within the current planning and transportation environment in Strathcona County.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Analysis of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a) (hereafter referred to as the *OAP*) utilized two theoretical lenses. First, social ecological theory offers an array of conceptual and methodological tools for designing and evaluating health promotion interventions (Stokols, 1996). Second, conceptual attention to ‘place’ will allow for a greater depth of understanding of how healthy aging may be facilitated or impeded in Strathcona County.

**Social ecological model for health promotion.** The way that health is viewed has evolved substantially over the last few decades. There has been a shift from an emphasis on the modification of individuals’ health behaviours and lifestyles to one that considers environmental supports for healthy behaviours within the broader community, which are favourable to both personal and collective well-being (Stokols, 1996). Ecological models are based on the principles of ecology, “the branch of biology concerned with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings” (Ecology, 2010). An

ecological model for health promotion presented by McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler and Glanz (1988) proposed that behaviour is determined at multiple levels: intrapersonal (individual attributes); interpersonal (networks, social relationships and support systems); institutional (organizational influences); community (interactions among various networks at the interpersonal and institutional levels); and public policy (municipal, provincial, and national levels). It is generally accepted in health promotion that attempts to change behaviour must address multiple levels of influence. For example, “. . . advising individuals to be more physically active without considering social norms for activity, resources and opportunities for engaging in physical activity, and environmental constraints such as crime, traffic or unpleasant surroundings, is unlikely to produce behaviour change” (McNeill, Kreuter and Subramanian, 2006, p. 1012).

A social ecological model of health promotion posits that efforts to promote “well-being should be based on an understanding of the dynamic interplay among diverse environmental and personal factors, rather than on analyses that focus exclusively on environmental, biological, or behavioural factors” (Stokols, 1992, p.7). As many factors that ultimately affect health lie outside the health sector, such as access to housing, the social ecological perspective is inherently interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral in its approach to health research and interventions (Stokols, 1996). Policy frameworks such as the Strathcona County (2009) *Older Adults Plan* represent an attempt by municipalities to entrench social ecological theory into their local policies to facilitate healthy aging in their communities.

Extending notions of social ecological theory to policy level interventions to influence the health of populations, researchers have examined the challenges inherent in the adoption of healthy public policy. Developing healthy public policy requires decision-makers to consider information about the health related consequences of their decisions, even in policy areas not traditionally considered to be related to health. Lavis, Farrant & Stoddart (2001) explored barriers to the use of information about the health consequences of unemployment and job insecurity on employment-related healthy public policy in Canada. They found barriers to using this information were often idea-related; that is, policy implications of using the information were in conflict with “department philosophies, priorities or strategies” (Lavis et al., 2001, p. 13), or information was of poor quality (weak or conflicting evidence) or unavailable to decision-makers. Other reported barriers were interest-related (i.e. in conflict with the interests of stakeholders, bureaucrats, or public and media opinion) and institutional-related (i.e. related to how decisions were made) (Lavis et al., 2001). Building on ideas regarding the use of health related information in decision-making, Bowen & Zwi (2005) proposed a pathway to using “evidence-informed” (p. e166) policy and practice in the health sector. These authors suggested that capacities to implement evidence-informed policies exist at the individual, organizational and system level, and that the examination of dimensions of each of these levels of capacity can be used as a framework to evaluate implementation capacity. Vogel, Burt & Church (2007) further refined the model to explore the relative significance of each level of capacity in policy making. Their policy

analysis framework is useful to structure the examination of barriers and facilitators to the implementation of healthy public policy at the municipal level because it allows for the identification of which level(s) of capacity are most important for decision-makers to address in their own communities.

**Theory of place.** Geographers have studied the spatial dimensions of health and aging for decades. Andrews (2006) noted that the geometrical interpretation of space has been important in many ways including service provision of healthcare, mapping health trends and discovering distributive injustices in healthcare. Since the early 1990s, health geographers have emerged who pay greater conceptual attention to ‘place’ (Andrews, 2006), allowing for a more nuanced evaluation of how and why place matters in health. An understanding of the difference between ‘space’ and ‘place’ is necessary to understand how an individual’s health is dynamically related to place. Wiles (2005) explained:

The concept of ‘space’ refers to more universal and abstract ideas such as geometric distance. Place, however, is more specifically a portion of space, a setting which is experienced and which holds meaning, and which shapes the intimate relations between people as well as the bigger social relations and processes that make up society (p. 101).

Put more simply in the words of humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), “space is transformed to place as it acquires definition and meaning” (p. 136). Places are not static backgrounds to events, but are very much a process, whereby societies shape the spaces in which they live and are themselves shaped by those spaces in a mutually constitutive relationship; thus, places are complex and subject to ongoing negotiation (Wiles, 2005).

Health geography has incorporated ideas from cultural geography, where places can be conceived of as *landscapes*, which are manifestations of culture on the ground (Cutchin, 2007). Landscapes are also seen as symbolic; they are expressions of social behaviour, cultural values and individual actions that are etched upon particular locations over time (Gesler, 1992). Cutchin (2007) explained that health geography unites a concern for the cultural, economic, built environment and political dimensions of health. “Landscapes are not only a reflection of the qualities of life in a particular geographical setting, but they provide evidence of the interplay of values and power . . . in that setting as discourse materialized” (Cutchin, 2007, p. 740).

Gesler (1992) extended notions of cultural geography to the study of health care. His concept of therapeutic landscapes refers to the positive psychological attachments that individuals have with places, and how these attachments, produced by society, tradition and even political and corporate interests, act to sustain health (Gesler, 1992). Although Gesler (1992) was writing about health care, his ideas can be extended to well-being and healthy aging. Therapeutic landscape can be used as a geographical metaphor for aiding in the understanding of how environmental, individual and societal factors come together in the process of aging. Geographical gerontologists specifically study the spatial and environmental contexts of aging (Wiles, 2005). A confluence of population aging, increased life expectancies and larger numbers of independent and relatively healthy seniors mean that society needs to develop new ways to

accommodate seniors in communities in ways that recognize, support and increase their autonomy and independence (Wiles, 2005).

Using both the social ecological and geographical lenses will allow for an examination of the design of the Older Adults Plan (Strathcona County, 2009a) insofar as it relates to the *OAP*'s implementation.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis includes three components of data collection and analysis in order to meet the two objectives. The first component consisted of a document review of the *OAP* and the surveys which informed its development. This review was performed to evaluate the strength of the design of the *OAP* to assess, from an outsider perspective, the potential impact of the design of the plan on its implementation. As such, it includes consideration of the consultation process and the underlying themes on which the *OAP* was based. Internal consistency of the document, alignment of problem definition, goals and instruments (Pal, 2010), is also considered.

The second component of this research involved a document review of other municipal planning and transportation documents relevant to the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP*. This was performed to consider the potential influence of these documents on the implementation of the *OAP*, again from the outsider perspective.

The third component of this research consisted of key-informant interviews with individuals involved with the development of the *OAP* or potentially affected by it. Interviews allowed for the exploration of barriers and/or facilitators to its implementation from an insider perspective.

Tables 1 and 2 in the *Procedures* section provide a summary of all the procedures undertaken in this research and the associated timelines.

Following this introductory chapter, the remaining sections of this thesis provide an overview of: (1) the relevant literature (*Chapter Two: Literature Review*); (2) the methods and procedures used to conduct this research (*Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures*); (3) results and discussion of the document review of the *OAP* (*Chapter Four: Results and Discussion- Document Review OAP*); and (4) results and discussion of the document review of documents relevant to Strathcona County's planning and transportation departments (*Chapter Five: Results and Discussion- Document Review-Relevant Policy Documents*); and (5) results and discussion of the key informant interviews (*Chapter Six: Results and Discussion- Key Informant Interviews*). Finally in *Chapter Seven- Implications and Conclusion*, suggestions for future research as well as final conclusions are included. Study instruments (coding guides, the interview guide, the information letter, and the informed consent form) are provided in the *Appendices*. The Executive Summary of the *OAP* as well as a summary of the planning and transportation related goals of interest are also included in the *Appendices*.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Healthy Aging

The Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) (1948) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p.100). The concept of health is therefore a positive one which emphasizes social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities (WHO, 1986). With respect to healthy aging, the WHO has coined the term *active aging* to capture the many dimensions of health over the life course, defining it as “the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (WHO, 2002, p. 12). Active aging applies to individuals as well as populations. Bryant, Corbett and Kutner (2001) used a grounded theory analysis of interviews with 22 seniors to develop a model of healthy aging, and found that, to their participants, health was simply having something meaningful to do and having the resources, attitude and ability to do it.

Several key determinants of healthy aging have been recognized. The WHO Europe’s (2003) report on risk factors for and prevention of disability in old age identifies diseases, particularly multiple chronic illnesses, as the primary cause of old age disability. The report identifies the most important prevention targets as disabling chronic illness, depression, functional decline and sedentary lifestyles, all of which evidence shows can be improved with long-term physical

activity. Peel, McClure and Bartlett (2005) reviewed the literature on behavioural determinants of healthy aging and found modifiable risk factors to be physical activity level, smoking status, alcohol use, diet and health practices (e.g., including not often being depressed, having five or more personal contacts and often walking for exercise).

Research on physical activity and seniors' health has shown that physical activity reduces depression (Ruuskanan & Parkatti, 1994; Shephard, 1997), anxiety and stress (Shephard, 1997), and is positively associated with increased social support (Ruuskanan & Parkatti, 1994; Shephard, 1997; McAuley et al., 2000) in older adults. Heath and Stuart (2002) found even frail and chronically ill seniors can benefit from exercise, which can improve mobility and functional independence and while reducing the risk of common complications of aging. Older adults who engage in regular moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day are at lower risk for coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, arthritis, stroke, hip fracture, and non-insulin dependent diabetes than are sedentary adults (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

The National Advisory Council on Aging published the report, *Seniors in Canada 2006 Report Card* (2006), based on the 2001 and 2005 Canadian Community Health Surveys and the 2003 General Social Survey, to present an analysis of national data on Canadian seniors (those aged 65 and older). It should be noted that the data were based on people living in households, which represented 93% of all seniors, but only 66% of those aged 85 and over, thus

effectively excluding institutionalized seniors. This limits the discussion on older seniors to a sub-population of seniors – those with better health and with specific characteristics that have enabled them to remain in their homes. While informative to this thesis, this limitation highlights the importance of using age cohorts to examine sub-populations of seniors, as using a 65 years plus designation potentially includes individuals who vary in age by greater than 35 years. Hodge (2008) notes that gerontologists commonly identify these cohorts as follows: the ‘old’ are those aged 65 to 74 years, the ‘old-old’ are those aged 75 to 84 years, and the ‘very old’ are those aged 85 years and over.

According to the report (National Advisory Council on Aging, 2006), most older Canadians (almost 75%) do not consider themselves to be in poor health, rating their health as “good”, “very good” or “excellent”; further- 95% of seniors reported their mental health as “good” or better. However, the report (National Advisory Council on Aging, 2006) also revealed some concerning health trends for Canadian seniors. The number of seniors who reported living with multiple chronic conditions, arthritis, diabetes and obesity has increased alarmingly. In 2005, 91% of seniors reported they had been diagnosed with one or more chronic health conditions by a health professional, compared with 87% in 2000-01. Seniors are also more likely to be socially isolated. Eight percent of seniors reported having no close relatives, 14% having no close friends, and 13% having no “other” friends. Yet, a positive trend was noted in seniors’ sense of belonging in their community, increasing from 65% to 72% between 2001 and

2005. Generally, seniors reported feeling more connected to their communities than do other younger Canadians.

Despite the evidence stressing the importance of physical activity to seniors' health, the report card (National Advisory Council on Aging, 2006) indicated few seniors in Canada are active enough to reap the benefits of an active lifestyle. In 2005, 62% of seniors were considered inactive. Three quarters of women over 75 were considered inactive. The majority of seniors also reported that they did not consume a balanced diet. Based on the report (National Advisory Council on Aging, 2006), two priorities for action on the health of seniors include improving chronic disease management (self-management and community supports to adopt healthier lifestyles) and improving personal health practices (physical activity and healthy eating).

There are also many broad determinants of health beyond individual-level behavioural factors that influence the process of aging (WHO, 2002) (See Figure 1). The WHO (2002) recognizes gender and culture as cross-cutting determinants. Culture dictates the way in which we age because it influences all of the other determinants of active aging. Similarly, the process of aging is different for men and women. Thus, decision-makers must consider the ways in which policy options may differentially affect the well-being of men and women and across different cultures. The aging process is affected by access to integrated, cost-effective health and social services, personal genetics and psychological factors, as well as socioeconomic status (WHO, 2002). Social environments that provide social support, protection from abuse, access to education and employment all

foster healthy aging; physical environments can affect aging by providing safe, accessible, inclusive places or not over the life course (WHO, 2002).



*Figure 1.* The determinants of active aging (WHO, 2002, p.19)

### **The Built Environment and Health**

The term ‘built environment’ as used by health geographers encompasses three urban planning concepts: land-use, urban design and transportation systems (Michael and Yen, 2009). There is an increasing amount of evidence that the built

environment has a significant impact on health (Frumkin, 2002; Brown et al., 2008). However, explaining how the built environment causes ill health, or “gets under the skin” (Aronowitz, 2008), remains an ongoing challenge in health research. The influence of urban form on risk factors for chronic disease, particularly physical activity (for example, see: Frank and Engelke, 2001; Li, Harmer, Cardinal, Bosworth, Acock, Johnson-Shelton et al., 2008) and healthy eating (for example, see: Powell, Slater, Mirtcheva, Bao & Chaloupka, 2007; Hemphill, Raine, Spence and Smoyer-Tomic, 2008) are commonly posited as mediators of the relationship between the built environment and health. Evidence also indicates that the impact of the built environment on psychosocial factors, which in turn limit physical activity, may be the link between the built environment and health (King, 2008; Cunningham and Michael, 2004). Others posit that the built environment may affect health directly through psychosocial factors alone (Cohen, Inagami and Finch, 2008; Wood et al., 2008; Baum and Palmer, 2002). The following section will provide an overview of the literature on the built environment as it relates to healthy eating, physical activity and social capital; important factors for health throughout the lifecourse.

Researchers have explored the link between the built environment and access to healthy food, particularly considering how the built environment may contribute to obesity. Black and Macinko (2008) found that there was an inconsistent relationship between the availability of unhealthy versus healthy food and obesity in their review of neighbourhood determinants of obesity. More recently, Spence, Cutumisu, Edwards, Raine and Smoyer-Tomic (2009) linked

data from a population health survey with geographic measures of access to food retailers in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. They discovered that lower odds of being obese were found with lower ratios of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores to grocery stores and produce vendors near people's homes. Research has consistently found that there is a lower availability of healthy foods in predominantly black and lower-income neighbourhoods than in predominantly white and higher-income areas and theorize that this may contribute to health disparities in the United States (Franco, Diez Roux, Glass, Caballero & Brancati, 2008). Hemphill et al. (2008) found a similar trend in the Canadian context, with neighbourhoods of lower socioeconomic status having greater access to fast food than those which scored higher on socioeconomic variables.

There has been a substantial literature examining the relationship between built environment features and physical activity behaviours in the general population (Frank & Engelke, 2001) and also specifically relating to older adults (Li et al., 2008; Strath, Isaacs & Greenwald, 2007; Berke, Koepsell, Moudon, Hoskins and Larson, 2007). Although there have been some inconsistent findings (Brown, Khattak, & Rodriguez, 2008), this literature has generally provided increased evidence that mixed land uses, greater connectivity and higher residential densities create more 'walkable' neighbourhoods, which may increase physical activity across generations (Patterson & Chapman, 2004; Li et al., 2008; Nagel, Carlson, Bosworth & Michael, 2008.).

Frank, Saelens, Powell and Chapman (2007), however, question whether causation can be inferred from data on the relationship between urban form and

behavior and health outcomes without considering individual neighbourhood selection and preference. Their research found that the amount of walking was very low for individuals who do not prefer a walkable environment regardless of the walkability of the neighbourhood in which they resided. Similarly, it may not be how walkable a neighbourhood is that determines how much walking is used for transportation, but rather how walkable it is perceived to be by those walking in it. Some studies have found that perceived rather than objective measures of the built environment are better predictors of physical activity in the population in general (McGinn, Evenson, Herring, Huston & Rodriguez, 2007). Thus, some researchers are now using perceived measures of the built environment as proxies for objective measures and finding similar associations with physical activity (Duncan, Mummery, Steele, Caperchione & Schofield, 2009; Shigematsu, Sallis, Conway, Saelens, Frank and Cain, 2009).

Other researchers have taken a broader perspective of health and place and suggest that the pathways through which the built environment affects health may be indirect, i.e. through its influence on the psychosocial factors that moderate levels of physical activity. King (2008) found total physical activity and community-based activity highest where there were higher respondent perceptions of safety and social cohesion; thus for seniors, characteristics of the built environment might be secondary to attributes of the social environment. Brown and colleagues (2008) examined the effects of architectural features of the built environment theorized to facilitate visual and social contact, or ‘eyes on the street’, on Hispanic elders’ physical functioning. They found that these features

may be a protective factor for physical functioning in this group. Similarly, Cunningham and Michael's (2004) literature review of built environment elements and their impact on seniors' physical activity concluded that aesthetics and safety were consistently reported as important facilitators of activity, while microscale design features (such as sidewalks) and proximity to facilities had mixed results in this population.

Other research suggests that the pathway through which the built environment affects health operates through its influence on psychosocial factors alone. Cohen et al. (2008) found that collective efficacy, defined as "the perception of mutual trust and willingness to help each other" (p.198), was positively associated with the presence of parks and negatively associated with the presence of alcohol outlets in the area. The authors note that collective efficacy could be used as a measure of social capital, "the ability to secure resources by virtue of membership in social networks" (Cohen et al., 2008, p. 199), which has been associated with positive health outcomes. Similarly, Wood et al. (2008) discovered that a high level of neighbourhood upkeep was associated with both higher social capital and feelings of safety in suburban Australia. Further, Walker and Hiller (2007) used a grounded theory approach to explore how older women living alone perceived the physical and social dimensions of their neighbourhoods in Australia; they found trusting and reciprocal relationships with neighbours were integral to maintaining the health of the older women living in the community. Another qualitative study with suburban residents also found the

design of a community and its layout can influence social interaction (Baum and Palmer, 2002).

### **Suburban Neighbourhoods and Healthy Aging**

Suburban development creates a very different environment than traditional urban design, which then potentially changes the experience of aging in these communities. Rather than utilizing the grid system of traditional urban design, suburban development, which dominated the growth of Canadian cities following World War II, was designed with young families in mind. It is typically characterized by separation of residential and other land uses, with large tracts of single family housing set within curvilinear street patterns necessitating frequent automobile use (Hodge, 2008). Furthermore, “these houses typically lack accessibility features, often have onerous maintenance requirements, and are sometimes located far from needed services” (Humphreys, 2007, p.4). These features of suburban neighbourhoods, specifically low density and separated land uses, curvilinear street patterns and automobile dependency, all have potential implications for healthy aging, both directly and indirectly through their influence on psychosocial factors.

A clear and direct implication of suburban design features on healthy aging is to contribute to a potential decrease in physical activity among seniors. As previously stated, there is a fairly substantial literature that correlates mixed land uses, greater connectivity and higher residential densities with increased rates of walking (for example, see: Patterson & Chapman, 2004; Li et al., 2008; Nagel,

Carlson, Bosworth & Michael, 2008). Suburbs typically lack these facilitators of walking.

Seniors who are no longer able to drive due to health or financial constraints are disadvantaged in these (suburban) communities and may suffer psychosocial consequences related to constrained access to services and lack of mobility. Access to transportation gives seniors better access to services, improved opportunities for social interaction and greater independence. In Canada in 2003, only 67% of those over 65 years had their driver's license (86% of men and 52% of women) (National Advisory Council on Aging, 2006). Thus, women are more likely to suffer from isolation due to lack of transportation. As Rosenberg and Everitt (2001) noted, "remaining in one's home is about integration within the community and equity . . . the keys to remaining in one's home are the ability to access health and social services and transportation" (p. 142). Further, Litman (2003) noted that per capita transit ridership of a community can be used as an indicator of overall quality of travel options for non-drivers; "although increased wealth and vehicle ownership tends to reduce social exclusion for *individuals*, such trends tend to increase automobile dependency and therefore social exclusion at the *community* level by making some groups relatively disadvantaged" (p. 8). With demographic shifts seeing more individuals aging in the suburbs (Hodge, 2008), the challenge for planners will be how to provide necessary transit services in those areas which are the least amenable to the operation of public transportation (Rosenberg & Everitt, 2001).

A recent literature review on the determinants of institutionalization in the elderly gives further impetus to the need to study aging in the suburban context (Institute for Life Course and Aging, 2007). Institutionalization refers to permanent admission to a more restrictive residential situation, such as a long-term care hospital, where there are professional and personal care services available to the individual (Institute for Life Course and Aging, 2007). Consistent predictors of institutionalization included age, ethnicity (i.e., being Caucasian), living alone, having low levels of community engagement, and depression; more modest predictors included lower household wealth and income (in terms of perceived adequacy rather than dollar value), living in areas with few affordable small unit rentals, lower levels of informal supports independent of caregiver status, and the experience of severe loneliness (Institute for Life Course and Aging, 2007). Canadian suburbs are demographically dominated by Caucasian, affluent, young families, particularly in the Prairie Provinces (Statistics Canada, 2008). In addition, single family homes dominate the development of suburbs, leaving few lower cost options for seniors who may be on a fixed income (Statistics Canada, 2008). Thus, many of these risk factors for institutionalization may converge in the suburbs. Understanding the barriers to healthy aging in suburban contexts is crucial to the development of policy that will support seniors to remain in their home and communities for as long as possible.

Ultimately, the physical realities of the places we live are created through urban planning and land-use policy. King, Rejeski and Buchner (1998) reviewed physical activity interventions targeting older adults. They concluded that more

research is needed in environmental and policy-level approaches to the promotion of activity to seniors as “it has become increasingly apparent that increases in routine and lifestyle forms of physical activity that can be incorporated naturally throughout a person’s day may provide the most effective means for increasing physical activity in the population at large” (p.330). Similarly, Cunningham and Michael (2004) concluded in their review of concepts guiding the study of the built environment on physical activity for older adults that the evidence “suggests that ecological interventions may increase physical activity among seniors” (p.442). Designing the places we live to encourage active transportation, for example, may be more successful than building recreational facilities, which require a specific time as well as financial commitment from individuals to affect health. Additionally, individual-level approaches to promote physical activity work for a relatively small group of people, and their effects tend to dissipate over time (Sugiyama and Thompson, 2007), whereas environmental changes are more permanent and their benefits can extend to whole neighbourhoods, or even larger areas when policy changes are implemented.

### **Public Policy and Healthy Public Policy**

The phrase ‘healthy public policy’ was created to distinguish policy supportive of health from policy that directly relates to the medical care system (O’Neill & Pederson, 1992). The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion’s (WHO, 1986) strategic framework focuses on promoting healthy public policy in conjunction with the strategies of creating supportive environments, strengthening

community participation, improving personal skills, and reorienting health services. The Adelaide Declaration (Second International Conference on Health Promotion, 1988) reinforced the Ottawa Charter and expanded on the concepts of healthy public policy, accountability for health and action areas (including creating supportive environments), developing new health alliances and commitment to global public health. The Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986) and the Adelaide Declaration (Second International Conference on Health Promotion, 1988) have formed the foundation for strategic policy objectives that have framed public health and health promotion actions worldwide.

Consideration of potential health implications for seniors in the creation of public policies is essential to meet the impact of changing demographics. Public policy can be defined as “a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems” (Pal, 2010, p.2) that provides a consistent decision-making framework for intelligent and accountable governance (Pal, 2010). “Public policies shape the everyday environment in which people live and businesses operate, thus forming the foundation for health” (O’Neill & Pederson, 1992, p.S26). Policy analysis can be simply defined as “the disciplined application of intellect to public problems” (Pal, 2010, p.15), and can be used to assess the degree to which a policy takes issues such as healthy aging into account. Stakeholders are organized groups (including political parties, the media, bureaucracies, commercial and voluntary organizations, and public interest groups) whose interests are affected by existing or prospective policies, and as such are always potential active participants in the

policy-making process (Milio, 2001). Policy-making takes place in a policy environment that “includes the demographic and epidemiological characteristics of the population, the socio-economic and ethnic makeup of communities, the economy and technology, distribution of resources, political parties’ agendas, organizational hierarchies and sudden disasters” (Milio, 2001, p.369).

Consideration of potential stakeholder interests and the policy environment is essential in the analysis of public policy.

Policy instruments, such as economic incentives or education, are the means by which a policy’s goals are achieved (Milio, 2001).

Goals as measurable objectives and the strength (or absence) of means significantly affect a policy’s potential to benefit health. Without measurable objectives, progress towards health goals becomes contentious; without sound means and resources, little programme action is likely to occur, even though a weak policy is often more readily adopted (Milio, 2001, p.373).

Thus, policy implementation, the execution of a policy, is closely tied to the design (i.e. good problem definition and instrument choice) of a policy (Pal, 2010). A well-designed policy that is well implemented is a successful policy.

Design failure of a policy occurs when a policy is poorly designed. For example, the policy may have been based on an incorrect causal theory of a problem, or it may not provide clear goals and strategies to structure implementation.

Conversely, implementation failure occurs when a well-designed policy is poorly executed (Pal, 2010). An understanding of the policy-making process and the barriers and facilitators to successful policy implementation is essential for those looking to use policy level interventions to affect public health.

Specifically with regards to healthy aging, the World Health Organization (2002) developed *Active Aging: A Policy Framework* as a contribution to the Second United Nations World Assembly on Aging. This policy framework was intended to inform dialogue and the formulation of action plans that promote healthy and active aging and was based on the three pillars of health, participation and security. Nationally, Canada has its own *National Framework on Aging: A Policy Guide* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998), which was designed to act as a resource to government policy planners, decision makers and other stakeholders in designing and reviewing policies and programs for Canadian seniors. At the provincial level, *The Findings Report of the Demographic Planning Commission* (Government of Alberta, 2008a) was released in 2008. The report was based on consultations and surveys across the province and was intended to inform the development of a provincial policy framework on aging. Other provinces, including Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Provincial Advisory Committee of Older Persons, 2003) and Newfoundland and Labrador (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007) have already developed provincial plans. Some municipalities are following the lead of provinces and are developing healthy aging plans specific to their populations. Any policy framework developed at the municipal level to facilitate healthy aging should be consistent with the goals of the higher levels of governance.

As noted, some municipalities have developed their own policy frameworks to facilitate healthy aging in their communities (Strathcona County, 2009a; Boulder County Aging Services Division, 2007). By nature these plans are

intersectoral, with built environment goals often included among goals in other sectors such as healthcare services and recreational opportunities. In the last decade, fuelled by a renewed interest in how the built environment can affect health, there has been an increased call for the reintegration of public health and urban planning (Litman, 2003; Corburn, 2004; Bassett and Glandon, 2008). A number of factors make integration of health and planning challenging, including formal legal or regulatory responsibilities, administrative arrangements and professional silos (Bassett & Glandon, 2008). Corburn (2004) noted that while reconnecting public health and urban planning will require closer attention to the health effects of planning decisions, planning must also “recognize its role in the politics of *place-making*” (p.543). Realizing that planning is a profession that manages conflicts over political power and values that arise in decision-making (Corburn, 2004), for example, between the interests of developers and those of local communities, is essential.

There has been a wealth of literature examining the determinants of policy and the policy-making process, both in public policy generally (Birkland, 2005; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Sabatier, 1999) and healthy public policy specifically (Lavis, Farrant and Stoddart, 2001; Oliver, 2006; Milio, 2001). As Mendes (2008) stated, this kind of research “offers comparatively little by way of analysis of what happens next” (p.943). Rütten (2001) also noted the importance of implementation of healthy public policy in order to achieve real policy impact.

Classical implementation theory draws on Hogwood and Gunn’s (1984) list of preconditions that must be satisfied for perfect implementation, including

considerations of external implementing agencies, time, resources, valid policy theory, and dependency relationships. The authors acknowledge that, given the unlikely nature of these preconditions to be achieved in practice, “some degree of [implementation] failure is almost inevitable” (p. 198). Mazmanian and Sabatier’s (1981) framework of analysis for effective policy implementation includes similar variables, but also considers the tractability of the problem and context specific variables such as media attention and public support. Principal-agent theory was developed to explain the gaps between political intent and administrative practice, which are seen as “the inevitable results ... [when] decision makers must delegate responsibility for implementation to officials they only indirectly control” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p.191). Later policy implementation studies tended to concentrate on the rationales for the choice of policy instrument, and more recently on “implementation styles” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p.186).

Similarly, Pal (2010) observed that “the subject of implementation brings public administration and public policy analysis about as close as they ever come” (p.205). The practice of policy implementation has changed considerably over the last 20 years, with new management practices in governments, such as partnerships, decentralization and accountability (Pal, 2010). Analysis of policy implementation has likewise evolved, viewing “government as a site of organizational learning and capacity building” (Mendes, 2008, p. 944), where improved governance capacity can be used as an indicator of early policy impact.

Implementation of healthy public policy comes with many challenges, as “intersectoral policies are notorious for failing to be implemented” (Curtice, Springett and Kennedy, 2001, p.323). Oliver (2006) noted several difficulties in the implementation of public health policy. Ambiguity in policy design, the dependence on private actors and other public agents, lack of agency resources, a hostile political environment, and lack of interagency coordination are all cited as barriers to effective implementation. Further, McLeroy et al., (1988) reminds us that health promotion issues may have economic and political ramifications which in turn will have potential consequences for powerful sectors of the community. Interventions can fail when “important community power structures actively or passively block effective program implementation due to real or potential threats to their political or economic interests”(p. 363). Brownson, Haire-Joshu and Luke, (2006) also stressed the importance of understanding local context in judging the feasibility of an intervention (read *policy*), since intervention effectiveness does not necessarily equate with intervention feasibility. While ‘context’ can be hard to define, Poland, Frohlich and Cargo (2008) offer a useful definition:

the local mix of conditions and events, social agents, objects and interactions which characterize open systems, and whose unique confluence in time and space selectively activates, triggers, blocks or modifies causal powers and mechanisms in a chain of reactions that may result in very different outcomes depending on the dynamic interplay of conditions and mechanisms over time and space (p. 309).

Although the specific contexts of the municipalities implementing policies to facilitate healthy aging are unique, some aspects of governance at the municipal level are common across Canada and across Alberta. Lightbody (2006) reminds us that local governments exist only as bodies incorporated under the statutes of

their respective provinces. As such, there is no real means for councillors or city residents to challenge changes to municipal institutions should the provincial government demand it. In fact, as several municipalities surrounding Toronto and Winnipeg recently experienced, for local government, “there is no statute guarantee of perpetual existence” (Lightbody, 2006, p.40). Having said this, reforms to the Alberta Municipal Government Act (1995) (MGA) have extended municipal powers and decreased direct provincial control over municipalities (Garcea and LeSage, 2005). However, many Alberta municipalities have seen changes to the MGA less as reform and more as provincial offloading of services and responsibilities for which they have received little resource compensation (Garcea & LeSage, 2005). These limitations on municipal powers and lack of resources have potential consequences for the implementation of municipal healthy aging policies.

Mendes (2008) observed that recent years have seen social and environmental issues atypical of municipal concerns appearing on urban agendas. As far as health goes, the MGA stipulates that one purpose of a municipality is to provide for the health of its citizens; however, what this entails is unclear given that health is a provincial jurisdiction (Sancton and Young, 2009). Municipalities are also responsible for the provision of transport and transportation systems as well as land-use planning, zoning and development controls, subdivision, and land development. These responsibilities however lie within provincial restrictions, as illustrated by the 2008 creation of the provincially mandated Capital Region Board, a board created to require inter-municipal collaboration in developing an

integrated land-use plan for the Edmonton area (Sancton & Young, 2009). Thus, while municipalities may be interested in supporting issues, such as food insecurity or environmental sustainability, implementation of policies may be limited by a lack of regulatory tools and resources (Mendes, 2008) as well as by a lack of authority to affect change.

Internal features of municipal governments may also affect the implementation of healthy public policy. Tindal (2000) noted that one of the most distinctive features of a municipal council as a governing body is that it combines both legislative and executive responsibilities. This can result in blurring the line between making and administering policy. As well, many agencies, boards, commissions and committees are found in Alberta's municipal system; these may be provincially mandated or municipally commissioned (Sancton & Young, 2009). Lightbody (2006) noted that these "... local 'arms length authorities' persistently fracture the potential for focused accountability and policy coordination in cities and across city-regions" (p. 400). Lightbody (1999) also observed that accountability in municipal governments is limited by their non-partisan nature: "there is no ministry to blame for policies gone wrong or congratulated on the quality of a service" (p.177).

Individuals also have a large influence in local politics, and "whether or not that desirable activity takes place seems to be much more a function of how progressive councillors (and senior staff) are" (Tindal, 2000, p.259) than of structural features of municipal government. Decision-making and implementation of policy is therefore highly dependent on the quality of elected

and administrative individuals in a municipality. Lightbody (1999) noted that without a party to back a candidate, personal notoriety often provides candidates with the name recognition needed for election, and single-issue candidates can commandeer a council agenda. Furthermore, in a non-partisan situation, “the mayor normally confronts a council comprised of flexible votes who may be swayed by personalities, clientelist payoffs, or low level ideological differences” (Lightbody, 2006, p.316).

In addition, Canadian municipal councils and land-use advisory boards have historically had strong ties to business, particularly development communities (Lightbody, 1999; Lightbody, 2006; Tindal, 2000). Lightbody (1999) pointed out the “veiled conservative” (p.172) nature of municipal politics: “Canadian city councils have historically been boosters, supportive of unconstrained business development...attention has been focussed on the business of real estate, almost to the exclusion of other issues” (p. 177). In this context, implementation of healthy public policy, such as a healthy aging plan, may be thwarted if it has negative consequences for the business community.

## **Summary**

Review of the literature makes it clear that healthy aging is the product of many determinants, and that many Canadian seniors and soon-to-be seniors are at risk for chronic disease and institutionalization without due attention to these determinants. Built environments can affect aging by providing safe, accessible, inclusive places that promote the social cohesion and physical activity necessary

for healthy aging. Further, there is an increased understanding of the importance of healthy public policy to affect the determinants of healthy aging. Planning and transportation policies can shape the built environment in ways that encourage health for residents of all ages. Although several local governments have begun to explore and adopt healthy public policies, implementation of the built environment components of these policies is likely to experience challenges in municipalities. This may be particularly true in suburban areas that have developed in very specific ways, often with little attention to sustainability, inclusion, or health.

This research seeks to address the question of ‘what happens next?’ (Mendes, 2008) in a suburban planning and transportation department after a healthy aging policy framework has been adopted. Through a case study exploration of potential barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the policy, this research will inform both the case (Strathcona County) and similar municipalities about how to improve the chances for success of healthy public policy with regards to planning and transportation for an aging population.

## Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

### Setting and Description of Case

A qualitative case study approach was used to address the research questions: (1) *What are the factors that potentially influence the successful implementation of healthy public policy in municipal and, specifically, suburban contexts?*; and (2) *How do suburban planning and transportation policies interface with healthy public policy aimed at physical environmental changes to shape the built environment in ways that are theorized to affect seniors' health?*

The case of interest in this study was Strathcona County, a specialized municipality adjacent to the eastern boundary of the City of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Edmonton is a large urban municipality, and it is the provincial capital. As a specialized municipality, Strathcona County consists of the urban area of Sherwood Park and an extensive rural area which includes eight rural hamlets (<http://www.strathcona.ab.ca>). According to the 2008 municipal census, the population of Strathcona County is 85 521, with approximately 60 000 County residents residing in Sherwood Park. The design of Sherwood Park is typical suburban development with residential areas separated from commercial and other uses, necessitating the use of an automobile for most travel (Hodge, 2008). This is similar to many other suburbs in Alberta and the rest of Canada.

Although the population of seniors is increasing in Strathcona County, it remains younger than the Canadian average of 39.5 years (Statistics Canada, 2009) with the average age of residents being 36.2 years. Recently, decision-

makers in Strathcona County identified the need to prepare for the changing demographics of the municipality over the next 20 years as the Baby Boomer generation, those born from 1947 to 1964 (Baby Boomer, 2010), reaches their senior years. In 2007, Strathcona County residents aged 65 and older comprised 13 percent of the population; by 2031, the number is expected to increase to 25 percent of the population (Strathcona County, 2009a).

In response to the projected aging of the population, Strathcona County (2009a) developed the *Older Adults Plan* (see Appendix A for Executive Summary), to recommend goals and strategies to support the healthy aging of the population. “It will provide a blueprint for action in Strathcona County that facilitates the development of policies and programs which enables resident to live in our community according to their capacities and preferences as they grow older” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 23). Community consultation in the form of two surveys (residents over 55 years and residents 45-54 years), key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and roundtable discussions was undertaken in the development of the *OAP*. Development of the *OAP* was also informed by three higher level policy frameworks: *Principles of the National Framework on Aging: a Policy Guide* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998), *Active Aging: A Policy Framework* (World Health Organization, 2002) and *The Findings Report of the Demographic Planning Commission* (Government of Alberta, 2008a).

## **Purpose**

To gain an understanding of the relationship between healthy public policy, municipal planning and transportation policy, specifically with regards to active aging in the suburban context, an analysis of the policy design and the early stages of the implementation of Strathcona County's *Older Adults Plan* (2009a) were performed. These were addressed through the following objectives:

Objective One: To perform an analysis informed by social ecological theory and theories of place to evaluate the strength of the design of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a).

Objective Two: To identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the built environment goals of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a) within the current planning and transportation environment in Strathcona County.

## **Methods**

This study employed a case study approach. Robert Yin (2003) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p.13). In advocating for a ‘settings approach’ to health promotion, Poland, Krupa and McCall (2009) stressed that “to optimize the likelihood of success (buy-in, organizational and personal change, etc.), careful stock must be taken of the local place-specific context of the intervention” (p.506). A case study approach was useful in allowing the researcher to gain a full understanding of the context in which the *OAP* was created and implemented.

Yin (2003) also described the case study as a comprehensive research strategy that “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (p.14). Milio (1987) argued that a researcher studying healthy public policy must personally enter the research setting, both from the inside, through informant interviews, and from the outside, through relevant documentation. Thus, the case study approach, which allows for various sources of data collection, allowed for this type of immersion in the context of Strathcona County and was a natural fit with policy analysis. As explained in Chapter Two, no understanding of a policy can be gained without first understanding the policy environment in which it exists.

The aim of the research was to examine the potential barriers and facilitators to healthy public policy implementation, specifically in municipal planning and transportation departments, in the suburban context. As such, the case of Strathcona County was also seen as an instrumental case study, in which “a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (Stake, 1998, p.88). Thus, using the case study approach allowed the researcher to identify potential barriers and facilitators to policy implementation in Strathcona County’s planning and transportation departments, which will provide insights to other comparable municipalities in Canada experiencing similar challenges.

## Procedures

Data collection strategies undertaken to meet the objectives included document review and semi-structured key-informant interviews. Table 1 provides an overview of the procedures (to be discussed in further detail in subsequent sections) followed in performing this research.

Table 1

*Overview of Procedures*

	Data Sources	How the source will address the objective	Theoretical Frameworks Utilized in Analysis
Objective 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document Review-<i>OAP</i></li> <li>2. Document Review-Seniors Plan Survey (55+ year olds) and Next Generation Questionnaire (45-54 year olds)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. &amp;2. Allow for an analysis of the design of the policy (underlying theory, values, goals, choice of instruments, etc.).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. &amp; 2. Geographical and Social ecological theory</li> </ol>
Objective 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document Review-other municipal and provincial documents</li> <li>2. Key informant interviews</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allow for assessment of congruence between <i>OAP</i> and other planning documents from an outsider perspective.</li> <li>2. Allow for exploration of barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the policy from an insider perspective.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geographical and social ecological theory</li> <li>Social ecological theory (including Bowen and Zwi (2005) framework)</li> </ol>

By way of procedural overview, Table 2 outlines the timelines used for the project activities.

Table 2

*Timelines for Project*

Activity	March 2010	April 2010	May 2010	June 2010	July 2010	August 2010
Obtain Ethical Clearance	■					
Obj. 1: Document Review	■					
Obj. 2: Document Review		■				
Obj. 2: Interviews			■			
Policy Analysis		■				

Detailed procedures for each project activity will now be provided by each Objective.

**Objective one.** To perform an analysis informed by social ecological theory and theories of place to evaluate the strength of the design of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a).

Objective One was accomplished through a document review of the *OAP* as well as the Seniors Plan Survey Final Report (as completed by Bannister Consulting, 2009) and the Next Generation Survey (45-54 year olds). Document review makes use of already existing documents (as opposed to those created through the research such as interview transcripts), and it is used to provide background or detail to understanding a context (Richards and Morse, 2007). The *OAP* was available online from the Strathcona County website (<http://www.strathcona.ab.ca>); a summary of the Seniors Plan Survey was

included in the appendices of the *OAP*. The Seniors Plan Survey final report was publicly available and was obtained by contacting Strathcona County Family and Community Services. The Next Generation Survey (45-54 year olds) was included in the appendices of the *OAP*. No further information on this study was available. Document analysis of the *OAP* and survey reports began immediately upon approval of the research proposal by the thesis committee, as ethical clearance was not required for document review.

Document review of the *OAP* had four main purposes:

1. To briefly consider the process of the development of the *OAP*, including the extent of participation and driving forces behind the development of the *OAP*.
2. To consider themes articulated in the *OAP*, particularly looking at how aging and seniors are defined in the *OAP* and using the social ecological and geographical lenses for closer theoretical examination of the policy framework.
3. To consider the overall internal coherence of the *OAP*, that is, (a) do the goals and strategies match with the perceived problems, and (b) do the resources allocated seem appropriate to meet those goals?
4. To become familiar with the *OAP* to enable the recognition of any incongruence between the *OAP* and other municipal documents to be reviewed for Objective Two.

Analysis of the Seniors Plan Survey Final Report and Next Generation Survey complemented the analysis of the *OAP* by considering the extent to which the reports could be considered representative of the older adult perspective in Strathcona County. This was assessed through critical review of the surveys, examining the nature of the questions asked, the sampling methods used, and the scope of the consultation.

***Theoretical analysis: social ecological and geographical lenses.***

Strathcona County adopted the *OAP* in June 2009, so the policy is currently in the very early stages of implementation, especially with regards to planning and transportation, where manifestation of most goals in the community will take years. Stokols (1996) recommended “analyses of social validity and the ecological depth of anticipated program outcomes” (p. 294) in order to meet the challenge of developing health promotion programs with sustainable effects at several ecological levels while avoiding unintended consequences.

*Social validity* refers to the practical significance and societal value of an intervention (Stokols, 1996), thus it includes considerations such as level of public support, media support and socioeconomic context. Social validity was examined through thematic analysis of the text of the *OAP*. This was supplemented by detailed analysis of the community consultation process and the *OAP*'s goals, strategies and resource allocation.

*Ecological depth* refers to the extent to which positive intervention effects take place over extended periods and at various levels of a community (Stokols,

1996). Analysis of ecological depth was largely determined through a critical reading of the goals and strategies of the *OAP*, considering which ecological level they were aimed at. Assuming that this advice can be extended to policy level interventions, analysis of the policy design will allow the research to inform those responsible for policy implementation in Strathcona County to ensure the best possible population-level health outcomes.

Use of a geographical lens to complement the social ecological evaluation allowed for an analysis of how the process of aging in Strathcona County has been conceptualized. The *OAP*, in structuring its goals and strategies around the WHO's Determinants of Active Aging (WHO, 2002), has clearly positioned itself as taking a well-being focus on aging in Strathcona County. Fleuret and Atkinson (2007) offer a framework (see Figure 2) for exploring the complex notion of well-being from a geographical perspective.

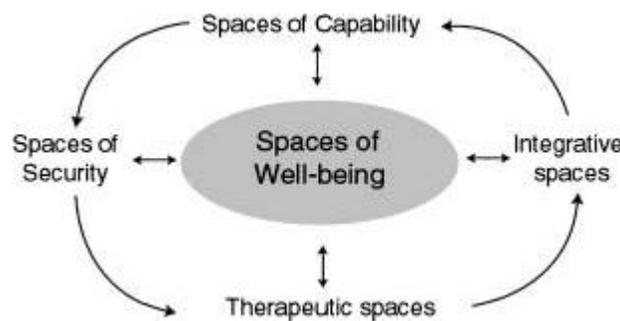


Figure 2. Spaces of Well-being (from Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007, p. 113)

The framework allows for the analysis of ‘spaces of well-being’ through the examination of four forms of spatial construction: spaces of capability, integrative spaces, spaces of security, and therapeutic spaces (Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007). Utilization of this framework will allow analysis of the problem definition and appropriateness of the goals in the *OAP* in creating spaces that offer seniors security, independence, integration and healing in Strathcona County.

Examination of the *OAP* utilizing the social ecological and geographical lenses formed the basis for the analysis of the policy design from a theoretical perspective.

Alignment of the problems identified, goals and strategies, and resources allocated was also examined to further assess the strength of the design of the *OAP*. Theoretical analysis and examination of the coherence of the problems, goals and strategies was managed through the use of *NVivo 8* software. Documents were inputted and coded according to the rubric in Appendix B. Coding in this way allowed for systematic analysis of each perceived problem, as articulated in the *OAP* and surveys, against the proposed goals and strategies to address it. It also allowed for themes related to geographical (spaces of capability, security and integration; therapeutic spaces) and social ecological theory (social validity, ecological depth) to be identified and evaluated. Document analysis of relevant municipal and provincial planning documents for Objective Two also utilized this coding rubric, so that the themes articulated in those documents could be compared against the themes in the *OAP* in order to evaluate congruence.

Theoretical analysis provided the researcher familiarity with the *OAP* to begin the subsequent document review for Objective Two. This analysis also informed question development for the semi-structured interviews used to address Objective Two.

**Objective two.** To identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the built environment goals of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a) within the current planning and transportation environment in Strathcona County.

The built environment goals of interest to this project were those listed in the *OAP* that specifically stated that the Planning and Development department, Engineering and Environmental Planning, or Strathcona County Transit department were responsible for taking the lead role in implementation. These goals have been summarized in Appendix C.

***Document review- selection.*** In order to meet Objective Two, the following municipal documents were reviewed by the researcher for their relevance to the implementation of the *OAP*:

- a) *Strategic Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009b)
- b) *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a)
- c) *Environmental Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2009c)
- d) *Municipal Development Plan* (Strathcona County, 2007b)
- e) *Growing Forward: the Capital Region Growth Plan* (Capital Region Board, 2009) (Land use, Transit and Affordable Housing portions)

f) *Alberta Land-use Framework* (Government of Alberta, 2008b)

Documents (a) through (d) listed above were available online on the Strathcona County website (<http://www.strathcona.ab.ca>). *Growing Forward: the Capital Region Growth Plan* was available online on the Capital Region Board website (<http://www.capitalregionboard.ab.ca>). *Alberta Land-use Framework* was available on the Government of Alberta website (<http://www.landuse.alberta.ca>).

Selection of these documents was guided by a purposeful sampling approach, which “selects information rich cases for in-depth study” (Patton, 1990, p.182). As these documents provide overarching guidance for Strathcona County, the Planning and Development Department and/or the Transportation Department, they were instrumental for review in light of these departments’ responsibility for implementation of the *OAP*’s built environment goals. Review of the documents listed above occurred before the key-informant interviews and followed the analysis performed for Objective One.

***Document review- analysis.*** The purpose of the document review was to provide an understanding of the planning and transportation environment in which the *OAP* is situated, in order to identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP* from the outsider perspective (i.e. from the perspective of an individual not involved with or affected by the *OAP*). The document review also informed question development for the key informant interviews by highlighting incongruencies between the *OAP* and other municipal

documents that could be further explained by a greater understanding of the context of Strathcona County.

Content analysis, or the systematic analysis of text documents (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008), was performed to determine the relationship of each document to the *OAP*. To this end, preliminary analysis of the text was guided by the questions:

1. Is this document linked to the *OAP*?
  - If yes, to what extent is there coherence between the documents?
  - If no, is there an implicit link or an opportunity to link the plans?

Document analysis of relevant municipal and provincial planning documents for Objective Two also utilized the coding rubric for Objective One (Appendix B). As previously noted, areas of overlap between the document and the *OAP* were coded so they could be compared against the themes in the *OAP* in order to evaluate congruence between the documents. Each of the documents was rated as *excellent*, *good* or *poor* based on the amount of overlap between the document and the *OAP*, the similarity of the themes articulated in the document to those of the *OAP*, and the extent to which the document provided policy support for the *OAP*'s goals and strategies. An *excellent* rating indicated that the document had significant overlap with the *OAP*, articulated similar themes and provided policy support to the *OAP*'s goals and strategies. A *good* rating

indicated that areas of overlap between the document and the *OAP* were less extensive, while still articulating similar themes, thus providing less direct policy support, but no barriers to implementation of the *OAP*. A *poor* rating indicated that there was little overlap between the documents and/or that the documents articulated conflicting themes, thus posing a barrier to the implementation of the *OAP*.

***Interviews- sampling and recruitment.*** The purpose of the interviews was to clarify, expand, and provide insight into questions that arose from the document review. The interviews also served to provide an ‘insider’ perspective (i.e. the perspective of an individual involved with or potentially affected by the *OAP*) on barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP*, which were not apparent from the ‘outsider’ perspective of the document review. Prior to contacting key informants regarding interviews, ethical clearance was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Board Panel B at the University of Alberta.

Maximum variation sampling, “purposefully picking a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest” (Patton, 1990, p.182), was used for the selection of key informants who were involved with the development or were key stakeholders of the *OAP*. Several individuals from the *OAP* Steering Committee, Seniors Advisory Committee, County Council, key Strathcona County departments and the local media were invited to participate in an interview. Snowball sampling, which “identifies cases of interest from people who know ...what cases are information-rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 182), was then used to identify other potential key informants. Interviews continued until data

saturation, the point at which new data no longer adds new meaning (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008), was reached. All potential interviewees were contacted by e-mail to invite them to participate. Initial contact emails included an invitation to participate and an information letter (see Appendix D). Non-respondents were sent a follow up email after two weeks. If the individual agreed to participate, another email or phone call was used to schedule the interview. As part of scheduling, participants were encouraged to pick a location for the interview where they felt most comfortable.

***Interviews- content.*** Upon meeting for the interview, the Information Letter (see Appendix D) was reviewed and participants were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the interview. Written informed consent was then obtained from all participants before starting the interview (see Appendix E). Ongoing verbal consent was obtained throughout the interview, and participants were verbally reminded that they were free to decline to answer any questions they were not comfortable answering.

Key informant interviews followed a semi-structured format. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate when “the researcher knows enough about the . . . domain of inquiry to develop questions about the topic in advance, but not enough to be able to anticipate the answers” (Richards and Morse, 2007, p.114). Each interview began with some structured questions to obtain demographic information from the participant, such as department affiliation and the extent to which the participant was involved with the *OAP*. Open-ended questions were then asked, supplemented by planned and unplanned probes (Richards & Morse,

2007). Interview questions varied as appropriate among participants based on their departmental affiliation and level of involvement in the development of the *OAP*. Guiding questions were developed by the researcher following the document review with the feedback from the primary thesis supervisor. A list of questions used in the research is included in Appendix F. The interviews explored such topics as changes in fiscal, administrative, programme staff or training support which have been made in response to the *OAP*. Community stakeholders in the planning department, their relative power and the ways in which this power is exerted as it relates to the *OAP* were also explored. In addition, participants were asked if they considered Strathcona County to be a suburb. This question was asked to explore whether the researcher's own perception of the municipality as a suburb was shared by participants, and if so, what consequences that may have for planning and transportation decisions in Strathcona County. Finally, as many participants were not very knowledgeable of the *OAP*, questions often explored barriers and facilitators to socially sustainable development generally.

As the researcher functioned as both interviewer and data analyst, the interview guide evolved through the course of the interviewing with the emergence of new themes from the key informants. Throughout the interviews, frequent paraphrasing of participant responses (e.g., "Do I understand correctly that you are saying . . .") added to the credibility of the data resulting from the interviews. Most participants did not see the interview guide prior to the interview, but participants who requested the guide were provided with a copy. In all, four participants requested a copy prior to the interview.

With permission, all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist for analysis. Participants were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts; those who chose to do so were provided with their transcripts, and any data participants wished to exclude from the final transcript was removed. Following the interview, the researcher made observational notes regarding her thoughts on key themes, significant body language, and any participant discomfort with answering questions.

Participants were assigned a reference number with which their information was labelled to protect their identity. In addition, any information that could link the participant to their data through their job title was removed from the transcript. A master list of participant names and reference numbers along with original audio files are stored in a locked file cabinet at the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta. Only the researcher and her immediate supervisor have access to the list. After five years, all information will be destroyed.

***Interviews- analysis.*** Prior to analysis, interview transcriptions were ‘cleaned’ by the researcher, i.e., verified against the original recordings, to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions. Content analysis of the interview transcripts was performed by the researcher. *NVivo 8* software was used to manage data. Prior to any coding, transcripts were given an initial reading to allow the researcher to “obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning” (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). This helped ensure the researcher set aside any personal biases or assumptions about the interview before analysis began. As the

researcher is a long-time resident of Strathcona County, she has some preconceptions about planning and transportation in the community. Awareness of these biases helped to ensure that they could be acknowledged and set aside during this research.

Interview transcripts were imported into *NVivo 8*, and units of text were coded based on the Objective Two Coding Guide (Appendix G). Development of this coding guide began with a rubric loosely based on the work of several implementation theorists (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981; Bowen & Zwi, 2005) (see Appendix H for details of these seminal frameworks). Preliminary coding of all of the interviews was used to further develop and adapt the coding guide to the Strathcona County context. Interviews were coded starting with the first and then the last, and then returning to the second and second last, and so on. This allowed the researcher to approach each interview from a new perspective than the one with which she entered it. Allowing space for inductive analysis is critical to the validity of qualitative research (Richards & Morse, 2007). Data that did not fit with one of the predetermined categories of factors that may impact implementation was used to form new thematic codes as appropriate. Following the initial coding, new themes were compared and collapsed into new categories where redundancy was identified. Interviews were then recoded following the same order as previously (i.e. 1,19,2,18,3,17 and so on).

Analysis was initiated concurrently with the interviews. This allowed for verification and/or exploration of emergent themes with later participants. Since

the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (Richards & Morse, 2007), it is imperative that the researcher “think qualitatively . . . being constantly aware and constantly asking analytic questions of data, which in turn, constantly address the questions asked” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p.192). As such, coding memos were used to keep track of coding decisions and to track any changes in the development of codes.

Throughout the analysis process, regular debriefing sessions with the researcher’s supervisor helped to verify the appropriateness of the research design and ensure that researcher bias was minimized. The researcher also kept a personal journal to record reflexive thoughts about possible discussion points and assumptions or biases that may have influenced the analysis.

In conducting the analysis, the framework presented in Table 3 was developed to guide the discussion of the significance of the results and to give a sense of the relative importance of the impacts of the barriers and facilitators identified in the interviews on policy implementation capacity. This framework has been adapted from the work of Bowen and Zwi (2005), which suggested that capacities required to implement policy lie at the individual-, organizational-, and system-level (see Appendix H). Results of the interview data in this research were very consistent with these capacities (*Chapter Six: Results and Discussion- Key Informant Interviews*). For the purposes of this analysis, Strathcona County’s capacity for the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies were considered generally, as many interview participants

had little knowledge of the *OAP*, and *OAP* goals mirrored other County policies in this regard.

Table 3

*Three Levels of Implementation Capacity in Strathcona County for Socially Sustainable Planning and Transportation Policies*

Level of Policy Implementation Capacity	Strathcona County Policy Implementation Capacity
Individual-Level Capacity	
Organizational-Level Capacity	
System-Level Capacity	

Specifically, the four levels of implementation capacity were rated based on:

- 1) Individual-Level Capacity: Indicators considered capacities of key individuals in the policy implementation process, including Leadership, Knowledge and Skills and Values/Beliefs.
  
- 2) Organizational-Level Factors: Policy, processes and procedures of the organization, Partnerships/Networks, Communication, Resource Allocation, Leadership and Knowledge and Skills were used as indicators at the organizational level (the executive and departmental levels in Strathcona County).
  
- 3) System-Level Factors: Indicators included Politics (including intergovernmental relations), Economics, Ideology and Values.

Following review of coded interviews in *NVivo 8*, each indicator was assessed as to whether or not it generally presented a barrier or facilitator to the implementation capacity of Strathcona County with regards to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies. Based on these assessments, each of the three levels of implementation capacity was given an overall rating on the policy analysis table, highlighting the factors that were most likely to facilitate or create a barrier to the implementation capacity of Strathcona County. Policy implementation capacity at each level was rated as ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ based on the specific indicators listed above and further developed in the Coding Guide (Appendix C). A high rating indicated that the capacity at this level was generally supportive of policy implementation. A low rating indicated a level that mainly presented difficulties to implementation, while a medium rating suggested that the implementation capacity faced a fairly even mix of barriers and facilitators at that level. This method was similar to that used by Vogel, Burt & Church (2007) in their cross-case comparison of policy-making capacity for nutrition policy in Canada, Costa Rica and Brazil.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Given that the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (Richards & Morse, 2007), there is the potential for bias to impact study results right from the choice of the research question to the final analysis. This is particularly a risk for this researcher because she is so embedded in the community given her lifelong residence in Sherwood Park. Awareness of the potential bias can go a long way to mitigate its effects (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Strategies such as journaling, regular debriefing and memos helped to reduce this bias. However, ultimately the final analysis of the potential barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP* will remain subjective.

Methodologically, interviews conducted in groups of two or with an observer may have affected the responses given by the participants. In particular, the interview performed with the representative from the Seniors Advisory Committee, who requested that a representative from Family and Community Services (FCS) be present, was likely biased towards more positive responses as the participant was aware that FCS was the driver of the development of the *OAP*. As well, the participants who had the interview guide prior to the interview were likely more calculated in their responses. These interviews were also harder to establish rapport in, as participants had prepared written responses in advance. However, the fact that these interviews produced comparable data and themes to the others indicated that the methodological variation had limited impact on the findings from the interview.

In addition, there is the risk that interview participants may have been worried that participation in the study or answering questions truthfully would jeopardize their employment or relationships with colleagues. While everything was done to maintain confidentiality of the participants, the sample size was not large and Strathcona County is a relatively small organization, and participants only answered questions to their level of comfort. The researcher certainly sensed these concerns most strongly with participants from Family and Community Services, as they were the drivers of the policy, and they clearly felt they were

being personally evaluated. This may also have been of concern to the politicians that were interviewed, who may not have wanted to risk re-election or relationships with stakeholders, particularly given the upcoming election in November 2010. In order to mitigate these kinds of concerns for those interviewed, participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts and delete any portions they were uncomfortable with. In addition, participants were assured that no direct quotations would be used and that their names and specific job titles would not be used in any product resulting from the study.

This research utilized a non-traditional approach for the policy analysis of the *OAP*, using a socio-ecological framework rather than a political science-based approach. While this may be considered a weakness in that this framework is largely untested at the policy level, the approach was chosen due to its relevance to health promotion, and it proved effective in highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the policy design in this context. Use of a more established policy analysis framework, such as the one offered by Bacchi (1999), would have given a different perspective on the policy, and comparison of the results would be an interesting direction for future research.

The strength of the study was mainly in its case study design, which allowed the researcher to become very familiar with the *OAP* and its context. Maximum variation sampling and the use of interviewing as well as document review allowed a variety of perspectives to be obtained, yielding a richer understanding of the barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP*. The researcher was also very fortunate in that most interview participants were

very candid in their replies to the questions, and that all participants were positive about participating in the project. This was also reflected in the high response rate obtained in the project.

As no context is static, this research represents the barriers and facilitators to implementation at one moment in time. Contexts change quickly, and significant factors affecting implementation may change just as quickly, for example a government change or big change in the economy. Findings presented in subsequent chapters should be considered in this light.

### **Significance**

Curtice and colleagues (2001) noted that intersectoral policies often suffer from implementation failure and recommended that “evaluation of key aspects of this phase can act as an early warning and actively encourage the process of change” (p.323). Similarly, O’Neill & Pederson (1992) noted that applied policy analysis is ‘for’ policy, seeking to produce policy relevant information that may be used to resolve problems and recommend courses of action in specific political settings, and in this way extends to policy advocacy. As such, the intent of this research was to position itself to contribute to Strathcona County’s overall evaluation of the *OAP* by providing (a) an outsider perspective informed by insider information on the policy and potential barriers and facilitators to its implementation; and (b) concrete recommendations informed by literature review on healthy aging and built environments as well as healthy public policy with consideration of the specific context of Strathcona County.

## **Dissemination and Knowledge Transfer**

As indicated above, this research sought to produce policy-relevant information, and as such, effective dissemination of research results back to decision-makers and stakeholders in Strathcona County is essential. As this research connected the researcher with senior administrators in the planning and transportation department as well as County Councillors, the researcher will continue to work with these individuals to develop dissemination strategies that would be most effective for their respective departments. All the participants expressed interest in knowing the results of the study, and the researcher is committed to producing a summary report for all participants at the conclusion of this project.

In order to ensure the study results are available to other comparable municipalities, the researcher will seek to publish findings in a journal aimed at enhancing communication between health policy researchers, decision-makers, and professionals concerned with developing, implementing, and analysing health policy, such as *Health Policy*. Additionally, the researcher will seek opportunities to present at public health and planning related conferences.

## **Chapter Four: Results and Discussion- Document Review *OAP***

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the document review of the *OAP*, performed to meet Objective One of this research: to perform an analysis informed by social ecological theory and theories of place to evaluate the strength of the design of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a). Review of the *OAP* included a thematic analysis of the document using both a social ecological lens and a geographical lens. The community consultation process was also examined, including a review of the surveys used to inform its development. Finally, the coherence of the document was considered by examining the alignment of the problems defined and the goals and strategies proposed to address them. An overview of the vision, objectives and plan development is provided in the Executive Summary of the *OAP* (see Appendix A).

### **Process of Development/Community Consultation**

Document review of the *OAP* first considered the process of development of the *OAP*, with particular interest in the driving forces behind its development and the extent of community participation in the process. The *OAP* was largely the result of a recommendation of the March 2007 Social Sustainability Framework developed by Strathcona County, which identified a need for “a comprehensive community seniors plan that will identify high priority needs and develop strategies for delivery of appropriate programs or services to ameliorate these needs” (2007a, p. 34). This recommendation arose out of demographic

analysis performed as part of the research for the Social Sustainability Framework, which indicated that the senior population is expected to increase quickly in Sherwood Park, as globally, as baby boomers reach their senior years. For the purposes of the *OAP*, a senior was defined as a person aged 55 years or more.

Family and Community Services (FCS) led the development of the *OAP*. Development of the *OAP* began with a demographic analysis of the older adult population of Strathcona County and a review of older adult programs and services delivered by the federal government, the Government of Alberta, Alberta Health Services and Strathcona County. A Steering Committee comprising 12 representatives from Strathcona County departments and external service providers was created, and it “provided ongoing input and advice at all key stages of the plan” (p.26, Strathcona County, 2009). Notably absent from the list of departmental representatives was one from Engineering and Environmental Planning (EEP). Otherwise the Steering Committee appeared to represent a reasonable cross section of County departments and relevant stakeholders. However, older adults were not included as decision-making participants in the development of the *OAP*. Their role was strictly consultative, rather than being given any real authority over the development of the *OAP*. Table 4 provides a summary of the “extensive community consultation involving over 1100 participants” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 26). For those interested, detailed survey results are available in the appendices of the *OAP* (Strathcona County, 2009a).

Table 4

*Summary of Community Consultation for Development of the OAP*

Component	Participants	Type of Consultation	Sampling Method	Purpose
Seniors Plan Survey	Seniors and Adults 55+ from Strathcona County (n=676; 78% urban; 13% rural residential acreage; 2% rural hamlet; 3% farm/other rural residential; 57% female; 31% male)	Paper/Online Survey-administered in August 2008	Convenience-survey available at County and partner facilities (7/8 in Sherwood Park), facilitated sessions at various seniors and care facilities.	To gather a clear and accurate representation of the needs and strengths of the community's population 55 years of age and older.
Next Generation Questionnaire	Adults 45-54 years from Strathcona County (n=300; 65% urban; 35% elsewhere in County)	Telephone Survey-administered in August 2008	Random- no indication of response rate is given.	To ensure the long-term recommendations of the <i>OAP</i> considered the needs of this group.
Roundtable Discussions (2)	Seniors and Adults 55+ who had completed the survey and were interested in providing more input (n=48)	Facilitated Roundtable	Self-selection from Seniors Plan Survey.	To explore specific seniors issues in more detail (facilitated around 6 predetermined questions- See Appendix I).
Seniors Advisory Committee	Composed of nine older adults from the County (including 2 councillors)	Ongoing advisory	Strathcona County appointed committee	Makes recommendations regarding seniors' issues and needs.
Stakeholder Interviews	Key internal and external individuals (n=38)	Semi-structured interviews	Purposeful	To gain stakeholder perspectives on seniors' issues.
Stakeholder Focus Groups (9)	Key internal and external individuals (n=90)	Focus Groups-organized around themes in the <i>OAP</i>	Purposeful	As above

Strathcona County engaged over 1100 participants in the process of the development of the *OAP*, and this large number of participants may have increased awareness of the *OAP* and seniors' issues in the community. However, closer analysis of the Seniors Plan Survey (55+), Next Generation Survey (45-54

year olds) and the roundtable discussions revealed that the value of the consultation process was limited by the sampling methods used, the nature of the questions asked in the surveys and by an incomplete analysis of the results. Closer examination of the Seniors Advisory Committee showed that it did little to broaden the narrow seniors' perspective captured in the consultation process.

**Seniors Plan Survey (55+ years old).** Despite the impressive number of older adults who completed the survey (n=676), the sampling method used in the Seniors Plan Survey captured the perspective of a very limited group of seniors in Strathcona County. The survey was available in three ways: in paper form at County and partner facilities (7/8 of which were in Sherwood Park); online on the Strathcona County website; or through facilitated sessions at various, unnamed seniors and care facilities. This represented a form of convenience sampling, which is likely to result in a biased sample (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Only older adults who were out and active in the community, those who were comfortable with and had access to a computer (and who chose to go to the Strathcona County website), or those who were already in a care facility had the opportunity to participate in the survey. The bias in the sample was compounded by the fact that older adults also self-selected to fill out the survey, whether at a facility, online, or in a seniors or care facility. This self-selection may have resulted in a response bias, which occurs when the individuals who responded to the study are different than those who did not (Kelley, 1999).

Convenience sampling combined with self-selection resulted in the survey results being representative of only a specific group of seniors: those who were

likely in better health, more mobile, better educated, wealthier, and more interested and integrated in the community than those who did not fill out the survey. This survey would not have captured seniors who were the most vulnerable, such as lower income, abused or isolated seniors: the very seniors that the *OAP* stated it was developed to help. As a result, the results of the survey may have underestimated the problems with drug use, alcohol, abuse, isolation, physical and mental health, and low income in older adults. In addition, the sample captured very few rural older adults: 78% of the respondents were from Sherwood Park, with another 13% being from rural residential acreages in close proximity to Sherwood Park. Only 2% of those who completed the survey were from the rural hamlets, and only 3% resided on a farm or other rural residential. The *OAP* reported that over 29.3% (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.28) of those between 65-79 years old in the County were rural residents (although they do not provide a breakdown of the different types of rural residence). Thus, the rural perspective was likely very under represented in this sample. Similarly, 57% of survey respondents were female compared with 31% who were male. Although older seniors populations (i.e., over 80 years) did tend to have a greater proportion of women (Strathcona County, 2009a), 76% of survey respondents were under 74 years of age, suggesting that the male perspective was also under represented in this sample.

The quality of the survey instrument used in the Seniors Plan Survey further limits the usefulness of the results of the community consultation. For example, to identify the issues of most importance to older adults in Strathcona

County, participants were given a list of twelve choices, with “other” given as a final option, and told to identify the three most important issues facing seniors in Strathcona County. The first two choices on the list were access to seniors’ housing and access to healthcare, which turned out to be the responses chosen most often. Given their location on the list and the general social climate, where these issues were frequently present in the mainstream media (local, provincial and national), they were heavily biased to be chosen as the most important issues, and this likely resulted in the underestimation of the importance of other issues either on or off the list.

Transportation was an issue which was poorly explored. In the Senior Plan Survey (55+), the question “What type of transportation do you use most often?” was asked. Respondents were allowed to choose only one response: 84% chose “drive yourself”, only 2% chose “transit”, and 10% did not respond to this question. Limiting respondents to one check-box answer does not fully explore many aspects of transportation. Seniors’ use of, or preference to use, other forms of transportation, were likely underestimated, such as walking and taking the bus. As well, the survey did not allow for the exploration of nuances of travel. For example, an older adult who drives most often but is uncomfortable doing so and would prefer to have other options would have been unable to indicate this.

Perhaps the most poorly explored question was “When you do not get out, what is the main reason?” Thirty nine percent of respondents chose “prefer to do things at home”, while 16% selected “other”. Although there was a space provided on the questionnaire to explain what “other” might be, this information

was never provided in the final report. Twenty four percent of respondents did not answer the question. This leaves 40% of respondents for which this issue has not been fully explored. Thus, it is difficult to assess whether the goals and strategies presented in the *OAP* are appropriate to deal with transportation concerns for seniors when the real problems may not have been identified or well defined.

In addition, many questions were asked with a Likert-scaled response (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree), which did not allow for further explanation of the responses given. For example, the statement “I feel safe walking alone in my neighbourhood after dark” is not well explored. A response such as *Somewhat Agree* may have been due to anything from vision problems to fear of crime, an important distinction when you are trying to use the results of the survey to develop goals and strategies to aid older adults in the community.

The quality of the survey process was further eroded by the poor analysis of the data that was conducted. Only the first question of the survey, which directly asks about issues of concern, was used to identify issues for older adults in the *OAP*. Replies to other survey questions were not analyzed to identify other issues from participants’ responses, resulting in the potential omission of some key issues in the document. For example, the Senior Plan Survey results indicated only 51% of respondents reported engaging in mild activity (e.g. slow walking, bowling) more than four times a week. Further, only 35% of survey respondents reported engaging in moderate activity (e.g. brisk walking, bicycling) more than

four times per week. Considering the bias in the sample, this number may have been significantly overestimated and older adult activity levels were likely even less than reported. In addition, 40% of respondents indicated that they had one or more medical conditions that limited their daily activities. Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that older adults engage in 30-60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003), which would indicate that physical inactivity and the related chronic diseases that can result from that inactivity were potentially serious issues in Strathcona County. Since only 12% of older adults identified access to recreation, culture and leisure activities as an issue in Strathcona County, reasons for this inactivity are likely more complex than this.

**Next Generation Survey (45-54 year olds).** Similar to the Seniors Plan Survey, the Next Generation Survey obtained a respectable sample of 300 participants in this random telephone questionnaire administered to adults 45 to 54 years old. The stratified, random method of sampling would have ensured that a more representative sample of Strathcona County adults had the opportunity to participate in the survey than the convenience sampling of the Seniors Plan Survey. The methodology resulted in an equal proportion of male and female respondents. The stratification to ensure that 35% of respondents resided outside of Sherwood Park also ensured that the rural voice was better reflected in this survey as well. However, no indication was given as to the response rate for the telephone questionnaire, which limited the extent to which the actual bias in the survey could be assessed. While some of the same biases that affected Seniors

Plan Survey results with regards to self-selection would be expected to have impacted the results of the Next Generation Survey as well, the random sampling basis of this survey may have decreased the amount of bias compared to the older adult group.

It was difficult to assess the nature of the questions asked and the way the results were analyzed in the Next Generation Survey because the purpose for performing the survey is described only as “to ensure the long-term recommendations of the *OAP* considered the needs of this group” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 31). Most of the questions in the survey required a Likert-scaled response, which limited respondents to giving their opinions on a list of predetermined issues again. However, since each issue was addressed separately, adults surveyed were able to express concern with more than just three issues. According to the *Note* at the beginning of the questionnaire (Appendix IV in the *OAP*), open-ended questions were asked, but as this was the only report on the survey available, the questions asked as well as the responses to them were not provided. While the Seniors Plan Survey results were referenced as related to each goal and strategy in the *OAP*, there was no indication as to how the results of this survey were utilized, if at all.

**Round-table discussions.** Two round-table discussions were conducted by Strathcona County with a total of 48 participants who had completed the Seniors Plan Survey and indicated that they were interested in giving more input into the development of the *OAP*. As with the survey itself, this sub-group of 48 of the original 676 survey participants would have had to self-select again to

pursue further participation in the project, further narrowing the diversity of the individuals likely to have contributed to the discussion. Despite this, there was the potential for the County to gather more detailed input from seniors who had not felt that they were able to express all of their concerns through the structured format of the survey. However, the round-tables did not allow for any open discussion of seniors' issues, but rather there were six predetermined questions asked (see Appendix I). The question around transportation, "how can transportation services be improved?", was specifically asked with reference to rural residents and their potential isolation. As previously noted, the original survey sample was composed of only 13% of rural residential acreage and 5% of other rural residents living more distantly from Sherwood Park, and the percentage was likely even a lower percentage in those 48 that self-selected to come to the round-tables. This means that round-table participants were likely not representative of rural residents who were experiencing isolation because of transportation difficulties.

**Seniors Advisory Committee.** The final opportunity for older adults to have input into the development of the *OAP* was through the Seniors Advisory Committee. The description of the committee in the *OAP* states: "the Seniors Advisory Committee is a Strathcona County Council appointed committee that makes recommendations to Council regarding seniors issues and needs" (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 41). The committee "provided valuable feedback throughout the development of the plan" (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 26). According to the list of members of the Seniors Advisory Committee, there were

nine committee members, two of whom were Councillors and one who was also a member of the Steering Committee. This meant that only six members of the committee were simply seniors from the County. Further, only two of these six members were women. The *OAP* reported that the proportion of women in the community rises with age; while the percentage of men and women in Strathcona County were basically equal under 80 years, 62.8% of the population of Strathcona County over 80 years old were female (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 27). This means women were significantly under represented on the Seniors Advisory Committee. In addition, the type of senior that would volunteer to participate on a board such as the Seniors Advisory Committee would be a senior who was active in the community, likely well educated, and whose participation would be less likely to be limited by health or transportation. While the real extent of the Seniors Advisory Committee's participation in the development of the *OAP* is difficult to determine from the document review, from an outsider viewpoint, the perspective of the committee would be potentially quite limited in its ability to represent the breadth of seniors residing in Strathcona County.

The fact that seniors on the committee were appointed by the County also could not be ignored. The Committee could potentially be biased to support County initiatives, as County Council may have appointed seniors who were well known to and had good relations with the County. For example, one member of the Seniors Advisory Committee was publically known to be a very prominent businessman in Strathcona County.

**Summary of the community consultation process.** Results of the document review of the *OAP* and the community surveys revealed that Strathcona County utilized a very top down approach (Labonte, Polanyi, Muhajarine, McIntosh and Williams, 2005) in the development of the *OAP*, resulting in a report based largely on stakeholder input rather than real community participation in the process. In terms of the numbers of seniors consulted, it appeared on the surface that Strathcona County was very diligent and significant resources must have been invested in the consultation process. Despite reported good intentions, the use of poor sampling, close-ended questions, and meagre analysis of survey results, followed by round-tables that allowed for only specific input into predetermined issues limited the utility of the process. The consultation with seniors provided incomplete information that is potentially biased and cannot validate that the problems defined in the *OAP* are truly those of seniors in the County.

Strathcona County is not the only municipality to have failed to provide true participation in the development of healthy public policy. As Richard and Gauvin (2007) noted, there is “an inherent challenge of reconciling objectives related to multi-level community outcomes on the one hand and maximizing community participation . . . on the other hand” (p. 324). At best, seniors’ participation in the development of the *OAP* struggles to achieve even tokenism, in which residents are given information or consulted, let alone being empowered to participate as equals with authority over major decisions (Tones and Green, 2004; Arnstein, 1969). This may act as a barrier to the implementation of the

planning and transportation goals of the *OAP*, as community engagement and participation in planning and decision-making have been found to be central to effectiveness of health promotion strategies (Jackson, Perkins, Khandor, Cordwell, Hamann and Buasai, 2007). Without meaningful participation, problem definition and the goals and strategies designed to alleviate those problems may be inappropriate and may lack the public support required for their implementation.

### **Thematic Analysis**

For the purposes of the *OAP*, a senior was defined as a person aged 55 years or more, although the report recognizes that “health, rather than age, plays a critical role in determining what services are needed by older adults” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.25). Much of the *OAP* drew on themes from World Health Organization’s *Active Aging: a Policy Framework* (2002):

For aging to be a positive experience it must be accompanied by continuous opportunities for physical, mental and social well-being. It must also allow for the maintenance of autonomy and independence which contribute to quality of life. The World Health Organization has adopted the term “active aging” to describe the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 14).

The *OAP* also acknowledges the diversity of Canadian seniors, noting that the “population of persons aged 55+ ... is a very heterogeneous population in terms of health, abilities, attitudes, needs, wants and desires” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 15). The document claimed to take a strength-based approach, noting that “our whole society benefits when older adults, with their wisdom and lifetime

of experience, are given opportunities to further develop and transmit their skills and perspectives through initiatives based on their strengths” (p.16). The *OAP* mirrors the WHO report, taking a determinants of healthy aging approach. The goal and strategies of the *OAP* are structured around the WHO’s five determinants of healthy aging: social, physical, economic and behavioural determinants as well as the availability of health and social services (Strathcona County, 2009a). Although the *OAP* noted the cross cutting determinants of culture and gender, there is no further mention of them in the text of the document or in culture or gender specific goals and strategies. While the focus of this research was on planning and transportation related goals, which, given their mainly macro environmental-level focus, are inherently aimed at entire populations rather than specific sub-populations, the question of whether Strathcona County should have considered cultural or gender specific interventions in the *OAP* is a valid one and warrants further exploration in other research.

Themes articulated in the *OAP* will now be discussed through the use of two lenses: social ecological theory and geographical theory.

***Social ecological analysis.*** The *OAP* was structured around the social determinants of health perspective. Prior to the discussion of the social validity and ecological depth of the *OAP*, consideration will be given to the similarities and differences between the social determinants of health theory and the social ecological theory. The social determinants of health theory postulates “that economic and social factors are the primary determinants of health” (Raphael, 2006, p.115), and as such it calls for intersectoral action to address these

determinants. Ecological models of health promotion are similarly “founded on a broad conception of health determinants” (Richard and Gauvin, 2007, p.323), but they specifically stress the importance of the ecological depth, or multi-level nature of an intervention.

Social ecological analysis of the *OAP* centred around two major concepts: social validity and ecological depth. *Social validity* refers to the practical significance and societal value of an intervention (Stokols, 1996), thus evaluation of the social validity of the *OAP* considered such factors as level of public and media support. Demographic information included in the *OAP* indicated that the number of seniors in Strathcona County was expected to increase to 25% of the total population by 2031 (Strathcona County, 2009a). Data from the Seniors Plan Survey also indicated that 90% of respondents plan to remain in Strathcona County as they age, as did 59% of Next Generation Survey participants (with a further 19% indicating that they were unsure). These results would indicate that significant growth in the senior population of Strathcona County is imminent, which would also likely raise the profile of seniors’ issues in the community. In addition, the *OAP* referenced a number of documents, produced at the international, federal, provincial and municipal level to deal with aging of the population, indicating that aging of the population was considered an important issue at all levels of government. The perceived societal value of the *OAP* was supported through this changing demographic and by the increasing profile of seniors’ issues.

Evaluation of the social validity of the *OAP* was also considered in the socioeconomic context of Strathcona County. The *OAP* highlighted data from Statistics Canada which indicated that the median income for individuals 65+ years was \$23 000 per year, as opposed to the median income for all individuals in the community, which was \$79 600. In addition, thirty percent of those 55+ indicated that cost had prevented them from participating in a recreation or leisure activity. These statistics suggest that there are likely a number of seniors who may be more vulnerable to challenges to healthy aging due to their low income, particularly in relation to the high median income in Strathcona County. Since it is well established that individual having lower incomes tend to have poorer health outcomes (Raphael, 2006), the comparatively low income standing of many seniors in the community should have to the societal value and significance of the *OAP*.

Societal value was decreased, however, by the poor consultation process that resulted in the *OAP* being based on limited stakeholder input rather than genuine participation from older adults in the community. Although the document claimed to take a “strength-based approach” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.16), lack of meaningful participation reduces this text to rhetoric. Ultimately, the societal value and practical significance of the *OAP* was reflected in the goals, strategies and resources allocated to the implementation of the *OAP*, as this was an indicator of real political and public support for the goals. The goals and strategies of the *OAP* were generally vague, with few evaluation indicators and no apparent accountability for implementation, particularly with

regards to planning and transportation. The fact that few resources were allocated for the implementation of the *OAP*, other than in FCS, indicated that the goals were either not valued by or redundant to the departments charged with implementing them. From this perspective, the *OAP* had little practical significance or societal value, thus minimal social validity.

*Ecological depth* refers to the extent that positive intervention effects take place over extended periods and at various levels of a community (Stokols, 1996); thus, analysis centred on the goals and strategies proposed to address challenges related to aging. To assess the ecological depth of the *OAP*, its goals and strategies were categorized based on the ecological level they were designed to influence (i.e., as focusing on the individual or the environment). Environmental interventions were then designated to be either *micro* level- “with close proximity to the individual”- or *macro* level- “of the wider population” (Egger and Swinburn, 1997, p.479). An example of a micro environmental intervention would be the installation of automatic door openers to assist those with disabilities at local community facility, whereas a macro environmental intervention would be a change to the municipal planning system.

Critical examination of the goals in the *OAP* revealed that all were aimed at environmental modifications, whether they were physical, economic, sociocultural or organizational, to facilitate healthy aging in the community. Goals 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were focused on macro level interventions (see Appendix A for details of the goals and strategies). The remaining goals (2, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) were micro level goals, representing interventions which

closely impacted older adults in Strathcona County. Tables 5, 6 and 7 summarize the examination of the ecological depth of the *OAP* strategies for each level of focus (individual, micro- or macro- environmental), including the department charged with taking the lead on the strategy, the resources allocated to that strategy ,and the timeframe within which the strategy was to be completed.

Table 5

*Individual-Level Strategies in the OAP*

Goal/Strategy Number	Responsible Department	Resources Allocated/Timeframe
8/1	RCMP	None (ST)
8/2	RCMP	TBD (ST)
9/1	IVC	None (ST)
10/1	HR/CALC	None (ST)
10/2	FCS	None (ST)
11/8	RPC	None (ST)
15/1	FCS	Staffing/\$5000 (ST)

*Note.* ST = short-term; TBD = to be determined; IVC = Information and Volunteer Centre; CALC = Community Adult Learning Council; HR = Human Resources; FCS = Family and Community Services; RPC = Recreation, Parks and Culture.

Table 6

*Micro Environmental-Level Strategies in the OAP*

Goal/Strategy Number	Responsible Department	Resources Allocated/Timeframe
2/2	FCS	Staffing (ST)
2/3	FCS	Staffing (ST)
2/4	FCS	\$5000 (ST)
2/5	FCS	Staffing (ST, MT)
3/1	Library/RPC/Facilities/EEP	None (ST)
3/2	RPC	None (ST)
3/3	FCS	Staffing (ST)
3/4	SC departments	None (ST)
4/1	Library/FCS/RPC/CALC	None (ST)
4/2	Library	NA (ST), None (MT)
4/3	CALC	NA (ST), Staffing (MT)
4/4	Library	Staffing (ST, MT)
4/5	FCS	None (ST)
6/4	Transit	NA (ST), Staffing (MT)
6/5	Transit	NA (ST), \$10000 (MT)
6/6	FCS	NA (ST), Staffing (MT)
6/8	FCS	NA (ST), \$50000 (MT)
6/9	FCS/CPIA	None (ST)
9/2	HR/CALC	None (ST)
9/3	EDT	NA (ST), None (MT)
10/3	SC departments	TBD (ST)
11/2	RPC	None (ST)
11/3	RPC	None (ST)
11/4	RPC	None (ST)
11/5	RPC	NA (ST), None (MT)
11/6	RPC	NA (ST), None (MT)
11/7	RPC	None (ST)
11/9	RPC	None (ST)
11/11	RPC	NA (ST), None (MT)
12/1	RPC	None (ST)
12/2	ES	None (ST)
13/1(a)	FCS	Staffing, \$10000 (ST)
13/1(b)	FCS	NA (ST), Staffing, Supplies TBD (MT)
13/2	FCS	Staffing (ST)
13/3	FCS/HR	None (ST)
13/4	FCS	NA (ST), TBD (MT)
14/1	FCS	Staffing (ST,MT,LT)
14/2	FCS	Staffing (ST,MT)
15/2	FCS	Staffing (ST, MT)
15/3	FCS	Included in 14/2

*Note.* SC = Strathcona County; ST = short-term; MT = mid-term; LT = long-term; TBD = to be determined; NA = not applicable; CALC = Community Adult Learning Council; HR = Human Resources; FCS = Family and Community Services; RPC = Recreation, Parks and Culture; CPIA = Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs; EDT = Economic Development and Tourism; EEP = Engineering and Environmental Planning; ES = Emergency Services.

Table 7

*Macro Environmental-Level Strategies in the OAP*

Goal/Strategy Number	Responsible Department	Resources Allocated/Timeframe
1/1	FCS	Staffing (ST)
1/2	FCS	None (ST)
2/1	COMM	\$10000 (ST)
5/1	CPIA	None (ST)
5/2	PDS	NA (ST), None (MT)
5/3	ES	NA (ST), None (MT)
5/4	PDS	None (ST)
5/5	PDS	NA (ST), None (MT)
5/6	PHF	TBD (ST)
6/1	Transit	NA (ST), TBD (MT)
6/2	Transit	NA (ST), TBD (MT)
6/3	Transit	None (ST)
6/7	CPIA	None (ST)
7/1	SC departments	None (ST)
7/2	EEP	TBD (ST)
7/3	PDS	NA (ST), None (MT)
11/1	RPC/EEP	None (ST)
11/10	RPC	None (ST)
12/2	SC	NA (ST), None (MT)

*Note.* SC = Strathcona County; ST = short-term; MT = mid-term; TBD = to be determined; NA = not applicable; FCS = Family and Community Services; RPC = Recreation, Parks and Culture; CPIA = Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs; PDS = Planning and Development Services; EEP = Engineering and Environmental Planning; PHF = Pioneer Housing Foundation; ES = Emergency Services; COMM = Communications.

Tables 5 and 6 suggest that strategies aimed at the individual or micro-environmental level tended to be those in which a community service organization, such as FCS or Recreation, Parks and Culture took the lead in implementation. Departments more concerned with the physical environment of the community, such as Engineering and Environmental Planning (EEP) and Planning and Development Services (PDS) were more likely charged with macro-environmental level interventions. For the macro level strategies (Table 7), only the staffing of the coordinating committee (strategy 1/1) and the development of guidelines on an age-friendly format for communications, materials and signage

(strategy 2/1) were allotted any resources. Most of the allocated resources were for micro level strategies, and other than the Library, FCS was the only department to commit specific staffing or dollar amounts in the short-term.

Short-term goals were defined as those in years one to three of policy implementation. Mid-term goals were defined as those in years four to fourteen, while long-term goals were over fifteen years away from implementation. Other than the completion of a review of their accessible transportation program, Transit's strategies were not to be implemented until the mid-term (i.e. after 2012). Similarly, most of the PDS goals were also to be implemented in the mid-term. The majority of the remaining strategies from the other departments were to be implemented in the short-term. The *OAP* indicated that "initiatives undertaken in each year will continue in subsequent years" (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 73). Thus, it appeared that Strathcona County intended for the programs to be sustained over the long-term. However, whether or not intervention effects occur over a sustained period of time would be determined by ongoing commitment to funding the initiatives.

The fact that so many departments were cited as the lead on strategies in the *OAP*, and the fact that all of the goals could be considered to be environmental rather than individually focused, lent strength to ecological depth of the *OAP*. However, it is apparent from the results displayed in Tables 5, 6 and 7 that many of the strategies designed to achieve these goals were individual or micro-environmental level interventions focused very close to the individual. However, if macro-environments are not supportive of good health, "programs aimed at

influencing individual behaviour can only be expected to have a limited effect” (Egger & Swinburn, 1997, p.479).

Swinburn, Egger and Raza (1999) noted that “macro environmental structures are essentially beyond the influence of individuals and even nongovernmental organizations usually have difficulty in influencing these sectors because of their size, complexity, and other priorities (especially the profit motive within the private sector and politics within the public sector)” (p.566). Moreover, macro level changes are unlikely to be popular (Egger & Swinburn, 1997). Therefore, it was not surprising that the *OAP* made fewer attempts at influencing macro environments. In the *OAP*, many macro-environmental level changes, particularly those from planning and transportation related departments, were designated to be mid-term goals, meaning that their implementation was not scheduled to begin until four to fourteen years after the *OAP* was passed in 2009. Since the more proximal goals have short-term timelines, resources may have been better used trying to address macro level goals first to have ensured the best chance for success of the micro and individual-level strategies. Since macro-environmental changes may take years to happen given their complexity and political nature. Since Baby Boomers started to turn 65 in 2010, it would be difficult for Strathcona County to have achieved any significant change in their macro environments in time to affect the aging process for many in this demographic: the very demographic the *OAP* stated that it tried to impact. Thus, the ecological depth of the *OAP* seemed unlikely to support a significant policy impact from the *OAP* in Strathcona County, particularly in the short to medium

term. However, policy impacts of the *OAP* would ultimately depend on the commitment of County Council and departments to ensuring that adequate resources were dedicated to achieving the strategies.

***Geographical analysis.*** The *OAP* did not specifically utilize a geographical perspective to conceptualize aging in Strathcona County. A text search of the *OAP* reveals only one instance of the use of the word *space* or *place* in a geographical sense. This was in Goal 3, Strategy 1: Provide older adult “gathering” space in community facilities as opposed to constructing additional “purpose built” facilities, for example, the new library “Community Living Room” concept (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 47). There are some references in the *OAP* where the concept of place building was faintly heard, such as a reference back to Strathcona County’s vision, which begins with the statement “Strathcona County is a safe, caring and autonomous community” (Strathcona County, 2009a, 23). Similarly, the *OAP* quotes the Social Sustainability Framework:

A healthy community is one that is continually creating and improving physical and social environments and expanding resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential. It is promoted when residents feel comfortable with the safety and cleanliness of their environment and have timely, equitable access to key services such as health, education, transportation and housing (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.110).

While Strathcona County did not utilize geographical theory explicitly in the development of the *OAP*, the *OAP* did articulate implicitly strategies to create a community which is a space of well-being. Geographical analysis of the *OAP*

utilized Fleuret and Atkinson's (2007) framework for the assessment of spaces of well-being, considering how the *OAP* conceptualized spaces of capability, security and integration, as well as therapeutic spaces. Thematic analysis of the text of the *OAP* revealed that there are frequent mentions of the importance of maximizing security, integration and capability, which seemed to reflect an authentic understanding of these issues. This was consistent with the fact that the *OAP* was developed around the active aging framework of the WHO, which is centred on the three pillars of Health, Participation and Security (WHO, 2002).

The *OAP* sought to ensure older adults in Strathcona County had the opportunity to remain integrated, through such strategies as intergenerational programs, the provision of gathering spaces in the community, and increased local transit. Capability was addressed through strategies that provided increased language learning opportunities, increased access for those with disabilities, and senior friendly communication. Strategies to decrease the incidence of elder abuse, fraud and crime addressed issues of security. However, the extent to which these strategies could actually create spaces of well-being was intimately related to the ecological depth of the strategies. For example, while program level strategies may have some limited success in improving an individual's integration in the community through the provision of a taxi voucher, achieving sustainable improvements in integration at a population level will require that the local transportation system be made more equitable in the long-term.

That many of the goals of the *OAP* were centred on home support and enabling seniors to remain in their homes seemed to indicate that the home was

conceptualized as the appropriate therapeutic space and ideal setting for aging. Given the strong push by the province to keep people in their homes as long as possible [e.g., as indicated in the Government of Alberta's Continuing Care Strategy: Aging in the Right Place (2008)], this reflected the reality of aging in Alberta. However, the fact that some of the best funded and most quickly implemented goals in the *OAP* were those which supported older adults through snow removal and yard maintenance indicate that Strathcona County had interpreted *aging in place* as enabling seniors to remain in their single-detached home rather than just in their community. Although this strategy is presented as one to increase a senior's integration in their community, one has to wonder how well integrated the senior was to start with if they have to rely on a volunteer matching service in order to find someone to clear their driveway. Recent findings from the Demographic Planning Commission note that this is not the intention of the aging in place agenda:

It is important to note, however, that Albertans do not think "aging in place" means remaining in a single place. Current and future seniors wish to remain connected to their communities, but they do not all expect to remain in the same physical location forever. They are likely to be increasingly mobile, adapting their housing and lifestyles to suit their changing needs and priorities. A better expression may be "aging in the right place" (Government of Alberta, 2008a, p.37).

Given the short supply of alternatives to single-detached housing in Strathcona County, remaining in a single-detached home may have been the only way to keep seniors in the community. However, in the long-term, providing services to maintain a senior in a single-detached home is not sustainable, environmentally, economically or socially.

**Summary- theoretical analysis of the OAP.** Generally, the *OAP* was based on adequate theory of healthy aging, utilizing a social determinants of health perspective to structure the document. Although explicit use of geographical themes may have provided the *OAP* with a more complete vision of Strathcona County as a space of well-being, providing a deeper understanding of how goals and strategies of the document worked together to create an age-friendly place, it is doubtful that this will change the eventual policy impact of the *OAP*. However, Strathcona County's commitment to having the breadth of departmental representatives involved in the process has not translated to the necessary depth of interventions. In combination with the low practical and societal value of the *OAP*, the lack of ecological depth in the document seems likely to lead to the demise of the *OAP*, with micro environmental interventions becoming unsustainable without macro environmental change. If the planning and transportation macro environmental strategies are achieved, it is more likely to be due to internal policy documents that made a difference in those departments rather than to any significance of the *OAP*.

### **Problems/Goals/Strategies**

The top five issues identified by older adults through the Seniors Plan Survey were access to senior's housing (65%), access to health care (58%), rising costs of living relative to fixed incomes (56%), availability of personal care and household support (31%) and transportation (20%). These results were obtained by having survey participants choose three key issues from a pre-specified list of thirteen. Taking into account all community consultation (i.e. round-tables, focus

groups and interviews), the *OAP* added outreach services and information about programs and services to the list of key issues identified in the community. Table 8 summarizes the key goals and strategies developed to address these issues. A complete list of goals and strategies is included in the Executive Summary of the *OAP* (Appendix A).

Table 8

*Goals, Strategies and Resources Allocated to Key Issues*

Problem	Goal(s)	Strategies	Resources Allocated
Access to Seniors Housing	Goal 5: There is a range of affordable and accessible housing options appropriate for older adults.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support SC's Affordable Housing Plan.</li> <li>2. Promote the development of flexible building designs and a variety of housing types to developers.</li> <li>3. Include increased numbers of handicapped parking stalls in the LUB.</li> <li>4. Encourage land-use planning that combines commercial and residential uses so that services are closer to home for older adults.</li> <li>5. Develop a 15 year lodge and subsidized housing plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. None (ST)</li> <li>2. NA (ST); None (MT)</li> <li>3. None (ST)</li> <li>4. NA (ST); None (MT)</li> <li>5. TBD (ST)</li> </ol>
Access to Health Care	Goal 12: A spectrum of health and wellness programs is available to older adults.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate health promotion activities such as recreation, health clinics, education and socialization into "one-stop" shopping, wherever possible.</li> <li>2. Expand the falls prevention project to include additional locations and provide education to caregivers.</li> <li>3. Advocate to AHS for mobile health clinics, increased funding for geriatric care, increased beds in facility living, increased adult day program funding, increase in number of family doctors.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. None (ST)</li> <li>2. None (ST)</li> <li>3. NA (ST); None (MT)</li> </ol>
Rising Cost of Living/Fixed Incomes	Goal 10: Older adults have the means to support themselves financially through retirement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide education on financial planning.</li> <li>2. Provide information for older adults regarding municipal, provincial, federal subsidies and assistance in filling out forms.</li> <li>3. Implement further municipal subsidy programs for vulnerable seniors as needed and continue with the Recreation Access Program, transit subsidies, and property tax rebates.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. None (ST)</li> <li>2. None (ST)</li> <li>3. TBD (ST)</li> </ol>
Availability of Personal Care/Home Support	Goal 13: Older adults are provided necessary supports to remain in their homes as long as it is safe and appropriate.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a range of home services support including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) a volunteer matching program that promotes and coordinates able persons to assist elderly and disabled individuals with snow removal and yard maintenance.</li> <li>(b) a County provided home maintenance/adaptation service for older adults who meet eligibility requirements using volunteer and/or contracted staff.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Created and maintain a database of interested groups, businesses and individuals with a variety of needed skills who are willing to volunteer to assist older adults.</li> <li>3. Increase the capacity of the Home Support Program by developing an employee attraction and retention plan.</li> <li>4. Expand the subsidized homemaking services to accommodate additional hours of light housekeeping support.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 (a) Staffing, \$10,000 (ST)</li> <li>(b) NA (ST); Staffing, supplies TBD (MT)</li> <li>2. Staffing(ST)</li> <li>3. None (ST)</li> <li>4. NA (ST); TBD (MT)</li> </ol>

Problem	Goal(s)	Strategies	Resources Allocated
Transportation	Goal 6: Transportation options are affordable, accessible, safe and address the diverse needs of older adults.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve local transit system to better access popular destinations.</li> <li>2. Transit will strive to become barrier-free.</li> <li>3. Complete SCAT review.</li> <li>4. Implement a volunteer Transit Buddy Program.</li> <li>5. Implement a marketing campaign to encourage riders to use the public transit system, using tools such as a Customer Appreciation Day.</li> <li>6. Develop a volunteer driver and car pool program.</li> <li>7. Investigate Independent Transportation Network (ITN) operating in the Capital Region.</li> <li>8. Partner with local taxi companies for rider discounts and provide travel vouchers for financially vulnerable older adults.</li> <li>9. Increase availability of older adult driver education programs in SC.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NA-ST; TBD-MT</li> <li>2. NA-ST; TBD-MT</li> <li>3. None-ST</li> <li>4. NA-ST; Staffing-MT</li> <li>5. NA-ST; \$10,000-MT</li> <li>6. NA-ST; Staffing-MT</li> <li>7. None-ST</li> <li>8. NA-ST; \$50,000-MT</li> <li>9. None-ST</li> </ol>
Outreach Services	<p>Goal 14: Vulnerable older adults and their families receive the emotional supports/interventions and advocacy they require to adjust to the changes they experience.</p> <p>Goal 3: Opportunities for social connection are encouraged and facilitated.</p> <p>Goal 15: The incidence and prevalence of elder abuse is reduced; services and supports are available to assist those who are affected.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14/1. Develop an outreach program for at-risk older adults that provides psycho-social supports, interventions, case planning and coordination of services.</li> <li>14/2. Establish a caregiver support service.</li> <li>3/3. Develop and implement a friendly visitor and phone buddy program.</li> <li>15/2. Create a coordinated response to elder abuse consisting of key service providers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14/1. Staffing (ST/MT/LT)</li> <li>14/2. Staffing (ST/MT)</li> <li>3/3. Staffing (ST)</li> <li>15/2. Staffing (ST/MT)</li> </ol>
Information about Programs and Services	Goal 2: Older adults receive clear, user-friendly information about services and programs in a variety of formats.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop guidelines on an age-friendly format for communications materials and signage.</li> <li>2. Create and maintain a variety of print and media communication tools, resources and methods for informing older adults about municipal services and programs.</li> <li>3. Create and maintain a web based resource for comprehensive information on programs/services/information for older adults.</li> <li>4. Create and maintain a printed Seniors Resource Directory.</li> <li>5. Provide an identified resource person in locations utilized and accessible to older adults to assist with accessing information on programs and services, filling out government forms and providing simple assistance with accessing websites.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. \$10,000 (ST)</li> <li>2. Staffing (ST)</li> <li>3. Staffing (ST)</li> <li>4. \$5,000 (ST)</li> <li>5. Staffing (ST/MT)</li> </ol>

*Note.* LUB = Land-Use Bylaw; SC = Strathcona County; SCAT = Strathcona County accessible transportation; ST = short-term; MT = mid-term; LT = long-term; TBD = to be determined; NA = not applicable; AHS = Alberta Health Services.

As previously discussed, problem definition in the *OAP* was largely based upon the perception of seniors' issues by key stakeholders rather than by seniors themselves, as the consultation process did not allow for seniors to give any real input. In addition, analysis of the information seniors did provide was not complex enough to reveal other real threats to healthy aging in Strathcona County. Closer examination of survey results revealed that physical inactivity was a key issue in older adults that will impact healthy aging in Strathcona County. Since there was no way of knowing what other issues may have been identified by seniors (i.e., other than based on what was reported), discussion of the problems, goals and strategies in the *OAP* focused on the seven identified in the *OAP* in addition to physical activity: access to seniors housing; access to healthcare; rising costs combined with fixed incomes; availability of personal care and home services; transportation; outreach services; and information about programs and services.

While physical inactivity among seniors in Strathcona County was not specifically identified as a major issue, goal 11 in the *OAP* was to ensure “a variety of opportunities are available for social, recreational and cultural activities” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.63), which indicated that Strathcona County was at least aware of the problem. Strategies around this goal set out to deal with inactivity through education regarding active living, the provision of specialized equipment and making recreation programs more accessible physically, economically and temporally. As previously discussed, these all represent micro-environmental level intervention or individual level strategies. It

is important for a community to provide these kinds of services. However, because these strategies were not balanced with broader environmental supports for physical activity, they are unlikely to make a large impact on physical activity levels in the community. Further, the survey data showed that those older adults in the County with a household income of less than \$50 000 were less interested in recreation, culture and leisure activity. Thus, these micro-environmental level strategies will be even less likely to impact physical activity levels of economically vulnerable seniors.

Additionally, individual-level approaches to promote physical activity work for a relatively small group of people, and their effects tend to dissipate over time (Sugiyama and Thompson, 2007), whereas environmental changes are more permanent and their benefits can extend to whole neighbourhoods, or even larger areas when policy changes are implemented. Macro level interventions, such as facilitating compact community design and walkability, were not presented as strategies to increase physical activity in older adults in Strathcona County, despite that “it has become increasingly apparent that increases in routine and lifestyle forms of physical activity that can be incorporated naturally throughout a person’s day may provide the most effective means for increasing physical activity in the population at large” (King, Rejeski and Buchner, 1998, p.330). Walking in the neighbourhood is also a very appropriate activity for older adults. After reviewing the literature around physical activity and older adults, Paterson et al. (2007) concluded that “physical activity recommendations for the older adult should emphasize activities that maintain functional capacity and

independence. . . . At the relative fitness level of most older adults, moderately vigorous walking offers a cardio-respiratory activity of appropriate intensity” (p. S69). Thus, providing opportunities for active living may have been a far more effective strategy than attempting to increase recreational physical activity for older adults in Strathcona County.

The issue of access to seniors housing was addressed through goal five: “There is a range of affordable and accessible housing options appropriate for older adults” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 51). Strategies designed to deal with the number one problem on the issue list, with the exception of increasing the number of handicapped stalls required, were vague, difficult to evaluate and had no resources allocated to their implementation. As previously mentioned, many of these macro level interventions were also not scheduled to begin until the mid-term (4-14 years), leaving their effects, if any, years away. Further, the *OAP* was limited to reiterating PDS strategies previously enshrined in departmental documents, such as educating developers and encouraging mixed land-use, without any concrete goals for development. The *OAP* also pledged to “support Strathcona County’s Affordable Housing Plan” (Strathcona County, 2009a. p.51), a policy already completed and being implemented through Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs. The final *OAP* strategy to increase housing options was to “develop a 15 year lodge and subsidized housing plan” (Strathcona County, 2009a. p.51), with resources to be announced. Thus, the *OAP* did little to add to what was existing policy in the County prior to the *OAP*’s creation or to change the housing situation for seniors.

Similarly, access to healthcare, addressed through goal 12: “a spectrum of health and wellness programs is available to older adults” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 68), was to be improved through general goals such as advocacy to Alberta Health Services and integration of health promotion activities. Since no additional resources were allocated to any of these strategies, it could be assumed that these initiatives had already been accounted for in departmental budgets prior to the development of the *OAP*. In defense of Strathcona County, affordable housing and healthcare are provincial level responsibilities, so their ability to resource and affect changes in these areas was quite limited.

The pattern of vague goals and strategies with no resource allocation continued with the third most important issue, the rising cost of living on a fixed income. The fact that two of the three strategies designed to address this issue are educating seniors about financial planning and how to fill out financial assistance forms seemed to indicate that Strathcona County viewed seniors in financial difficulties to be that way due to a lack of information. However, these strategies also represented an attempt by the County to affect a determinant largely out of their mandate.

The next problem, the availability of personal care and home support services, represents the first one to fall squarely within a municipal mandate, as the province contracts out these services through Strathcona County. Goal 13, “older adults are provided necessary supports to remain in their homes as long as it is safe and appropriate” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.69), was addressed mainly through the first strategy, which involved developing a volunteer matching

program to help elderly and disabled individuals with yard maintenance and snow removal. This strategy seems to be the most well resourced initiative in the *OAP*, being provided with staffing and a \$10 000 budget in the short-term. Ironically, this strategy is the only one to be identified by this study as in conflict with another strategy. As previously mentioned, this strategy enabled seniors to remain in their single-detached homes. As such, this strategy could be seen to work against PDS goals to promote the development of a greater variety of housing types in the community by lowering demand for more dense forms of housing.

Transportation was identified as the fifth most important issue for older adults. As noted previously, this issue was particularly under-explored in the consultation process, meaning it was impossible to conclude if strategies were appropriate because the problem(s) was not clearly identified. Notably, strategies to ensure that affordable, accessible and safe options for transportation in the community were available revolved around motor vehicle transportation, and none conceptualized any active form of transportation. This limited view of transportation options may have been a product of the culture of Strathcona County, or it may have resulted due to the absence of departments such as EEP and Transportation and Agricultural Services, as these were the departments responsible for such things as trails clearing and maintenance, sidewalk maintenance and road crossings. As discussed in the physical activity section, not improving opportunities for lifestyle-related physical activity was a lost

opportunity that potentially could have improved both physical activity levels and access to transportation in the community for seniors and the general public.

Of the transportation strategies in the *OAP*, none had any short-term funding, and most were mid-term goals. The fact that Transit's goals were all to be implemented in the mid-term, except the completion of their accessible transit review, supported the theory that the *OAP* was largely redundant to this department. While this research was being completed, the Transit department was in the process of developing a Transit Master Plan. Transit was likely waiting for the results of their own consultation process and report to implement any real changes in the department.

The goals created to address the final issues on the list, outreach services and information about programs and services, seemed congruent with the strategies and resources allocated to them. Other than the one strategy to develop guidelines on an age-friendly format for communications materials and signage, led by Communications, the lead department in all of these individual and micro environmental-level strategies was FCS, with no other departments even listed as support for the strategies. Since these issues were included on the original list in the Seniors Plan Survey and were identified as important issues through the stakeholder interviews conducted by FCS, it could be inferred that FCS was already aware of the need for these services in the community without input from an intersectoral steering committee. These goals and strategies seemed largely consistent with regular programming and services that a service oriented department like FCS would traditionally offer.

There was no indication of any plans for evaluation of the *OAP*. In addition, few strategies had any clear indicators to measure their implementation, and there was no apparent accountability for achieving the goals of the *OAP*. As Tones and Green (2004) noted, “all [planning] models must inevitably consider ways in which to assess whether or not the programme has worked” (p.6). Lack of consideration of evaluation in the planning process of the *OAP* was a key omission and is likely to negatively impact the implementation of the *OAP*.

### **Objective One: Document Review *OAP*- Summary**

The purpose of the document review of Strathcona County’s *OAP* was to evaluate the strength of the design of the *OAP* in order to identify any weaknesses that may affect its implementation. Results of the document review of the *OAP* revealed many factors concerning the process of development, community consultation process, and design of the *OAP* that could potentially affect its implementation. These are summarized according to whether they are likely to be facilitators or barriers to the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP* in Table 9.

Table 9

*Potential Design Related Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of the Planning and Transportation Related Goals of the OAP*

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Barriers

- Poor sampling methods and survey design: potentially important problems may not have been identified, strategies may be inappropriate, may affect public participation necessary to reach goals
- Lack of ecological depth: focus on proximal strategies to address issues may limit effectiveness and sustainability of interventions
- Lack of commitment of resources
- Potentially conflicting strategies: keeping seniors in single-detached homes may decrease market demand for housing variety in community
- Strategies are vague with few evaluation indicators

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Facilitators

- Large sample sizes in surveys may have increased awareness of *OAP* and seniors' issues
  - Policy is based on sound theory: utilizes a determinants of health theory to structure plan, consistent with creating spaces of well-being
- 

The design of the *OAP* presents significant barriers to its own implementation. How surmountable these obstacles turn out to be will largely depend on the commitment to fund the initiatives, which, given the lack of accountability in the document, will depend on the good will of Council and the support of municipal departments. Supportive policies (pre-existing or planned) unrelated to the *OAP* in departments other than FCS may also be able to affect the macro environments in Strathcona County enough to achieve some of the targeted policy impacts. Review of the *OAP* brings into question the value of the intersectoral nature of the planning process and resulting policy in this case, as the *OAP* seemed to add little to what already existed in the community. This will be further explored in the discussion section of the interview results.

## **Chapter Five: Results and Discussion-**

### **Document Review-Relevant Policy Documents**

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the document review of other policy documents relevant to Strathcona County's planning and transportation departments. This review was performed as part of the procedures designed to meet Objective Two of this research: to identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the built environment goals of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a) within the current planning and transportation environment in Strathcona County. To this end, each document was reviewed to determine the purpose of the document, whether or not it was linked to the *OAP*, and, if so, level of congruence between the areas of overlap.

All documents reviewed were found to have an explicit or implicit link to the *OAP*. The *OAP* specifically articulates its relation to the Social Sustainability Framework (Strathcona County, 2007a), and thus the documents were considered to be explicitly linked to one another. Other municipal documents reviewed were considered to be implicitly linked to the *OAP* because they were part of Strathcona County's overarching sustainability framework, established in the Strategic Plan (Strathcona County, 2009b). Provincial policies were also considered to be implicitly linked to the *OAP*, as municipalities are required to ensure their plans and decisions are consistent with regional plans (Government of Alberta, 2008b).

Review of relevant municipal and provincial planning documents revealed that there is very good congruence between these plans and the *OAP*. As mentioned previously, congruence was rated as *excellent*, *good* or *poor* based on the amount of overlap between the document and the *OAP*, the similarity of the themes articulated in the document to those of the *OAP*, and the extent to which the document provided policy support for the *OAP*'s goals and strategies. Generally, while the plans for Strathcona County were more relevant for local planning decisions, the provincial plans articulated similar themes and posed no barriers to the implementation of the *OAP*. Table 10 summarizes the results of the document review.

Table 10

*Relationship of Planning Documents to OAP*

Document	Purpose of Document	Linked to <i>OAP</i> ? (Implicit, Explicit or No)	Areas of Overlap	Congruence
<i>Strathcona County (SC) Strategic Plan (2009b)</i>	SC's principal guiding document for governance, community development and service delivery.	Implicit (through Social Sustainability Capstone Policy)	Incorporates the principles of Social Sustainability into County decision-making processes which impacts accessibility and housing choices. Seeks to increase trail linkages throughout the County, and incorporate lifestyle choices as part of infrastructure and program planning.	Excellent
<i>SC Social Sustainability Framework (2007a)</i>	To help decision makers at the governance and service delivery levels determine the impact of their decisions on social sustainability.	Explicit ( <i>OAP</i> was a recommendation of this policy)	Guiding principle of social inclusion identifies transportation and community affordability (housing) as community priorities.	Excellent
<i>SC Environmental Sustainability Framework (2009c)</i>	To help decision makers at the governance and service delivery levels determine the impact of their decisions on environmental sustainability.	Implicit (through overarching Sustainability Framework of the <i>Strategic Plan</i> )	Transportation (seeks to encourage effective and efficient multi-modal travel); Sustainable development (encourages variety of housing and mixed land use)	Excellent
<i>SC Municipal Development Plan (MDP) (2007b)</i>	A tool for Council, the public and administration to establish policies to aid in making decisions pertaining to growth and development in an orderly manner over the next 20 years and beyond.	Implicit (through overarching Sustainability Framework of the <i>Strategic Plan</i> )	Encourages development of pedestrian & bicycle oriented communities; mixed-use development; public transit; creating a diversity of housing types; develop affordable housing for a diversity of residents.	Excellent

Document	Purpose of Document	Linked to <i>OAP</i> ? (Implicit, Explicit or No)	Areas of Overlap	Congruence
<i>Alberta Land-use Framework</i> (Government of Alberta, 2008b)	Sets out an approach to manage public and private lands and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals. It provides a blueprint for land-use management and decision-making that addresses Alberta's growth pressures.	Implicit (Municipalities are required to ensure their plans and decisions are consistent with regional plans)	Support for higher-density infill development and the development of an integrated transportation system.	Good
<i>Growing Forward: the Capital Region Growth Plan</i> (Capital Region Board, 2009)	Provide an integrated and strategic approach to planning for future growth in the Capital Region.	Implicit (Municipalities are required to ensure their plans and decisions are consistent with regional plan)	Sets targets for regional planning in land use, transit and affordable housing.	Good

## **Municipal documents**

Since 2007, Strathcona County has rewritten and expanded all of their overarching policy documents. First in 2003, then updated in 2009, the *Strategic Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009b) set out a new strategic direction and established the framework the County was to use to achieve their vision. The community development perspective of the framework laid out three Capstone Policies which compelled decision-makers in the County to consider “how the decision will affect the well-being of our residents, the sustainability of our community and the economic viability of our community” (Strathcona County, 2009b, p.1).

Establishment of this framework led to the creation of the *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a), the *Environmental Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2009c) and the Economic Sustainability Framework (under development at the time of this research). Strathcona County’s framework closely follows themes first articulated at the 1987 United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development and further developed at the 1995 United Nations’ World Summit for Social Development. Together these documents provided a decision-making framework and overarching policy direction for County Council and the entire organization of Strathcona County at the time of this research.

The *OAP* reiterates and is based on the four themes of social sustainability established in the *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a): social inclusion, community connectedness, social responsibility and health and well-being. Given that the need for the *OAP* was also identified in this framework,

there is a very explicit link between these documents. It follows that, through the relationship of the *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a) to the *Strategic Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009b), the *OAP* is linked to all these strategic policy frameworks in the County, and that their themes are very consistent with one another. By providing this structured, sustainability-focused framework for decision-making, the *OAP* is well supported by these documents, which should facilitate the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals and strategies.

Similarly, Strathcona County's *Municipal Development Plan (MDP)* (2007b) showed excellent congruence with the *OAP*. The *MDP* was based on the Natural Step's framework (Natural Step, 2010), a non-profit organization which "provides a clear, compelling, science-based definition of sustainability and a strategic planning framework to help communities make smart decisions that will move them step-by-step towards a successful and sustainable future". Although the *MDP* centred around twelve themes of sustainability, these themes assessed social, economic and environmental sustainability in community development. Residential objectives in the *MDP* "promote the development of a broad range of housing types and locations, capable of meeting the needs of residents of various age groups, family types, lifestyles and income levels (Strathcona County, 2007b, p.5.1) and "encourage suitable housing opportunities and the provision of convenient community services for residents having special housing requirements" (Strathcona County, 2007b, p.5.1). In addition, the *MDP* specifically mentions the growing demographic of seniors in the community and

the necessity to address their housing needs. As such, there was a large amount of overlap between the documents, and the *MDP* provided policy support for *OAP* goals and strategies.

However, it must be noted that, although it was positive that the discourse of the *OAP* and the other planning documents from Strathcona County were congruent, these documents suffered from the same vagueness and lack of accountability for reaching policy goals that the *OAP* did. As these documents did not specifically set out concrete targets for sustainable development (i.e., five percent of housing built will be affordable), they could only facilitate the implementation of planning and transportation goals of the *OAP* in so far as their policies were brought to the ground through the many stages of development process. At the time of this research, Strathcona County was rewriting its Land-use Bylaw, so the extent to which higher level policies would be reflected in this document remains to be seen. However, as Corburn (2004) pointed out, planning is a profession that manages conflicts over political power and values that arise in decision-making. While the congruency of all the planning documents in Strathcona County does help in setting a general policy direction for decision-making related to development in the community, the lack of clear targets leaves the development process more vulnerable to political pressures from stakeholders whose interests are not best served through sustainable development.

## **Provincial Documents**

*Alberta's Land-use Framework* (Government of Alberta, 2008b) was also found to have good congruency with the *OAP*. The framework was developed with the goal “to sustain our growing economy, but balance this with Albertans’ social and environmental goals” (Government of Alberta, 2008b, p.6). Although the main theme of the land-use framework was environmental sustainability, it gave consideration to social aspects of development as well. The framework planned to create seven planning regions in the province, to be implemented by 2012. Although the regional plans were not completed at the time of this research, the document states that “once completed, the regional plans will provide guidance to future updates of the metropolitan plans” (Government of Alberta, 2008b, p.44), meaning that Capital region plans will need to ensure consistency with this framework. While this provincial level plan does not have the same degree of overlap with the planning and transportation related goals and strategies as the municipal documents, the framework promotes higher density development and mixed use development, so should provide further policy support to the implementation of the *OAP*.

Review of *Growing Forward: the Capital Region Growth Plan* (Capital Region Board, 2009) found that this document also had good congruence with the *OAP*. The growth plan addressed three areas related to the *OAP*: land-use, housing, and inter-municipal transit. While the *OAP*'s transit related goals are centered on local service, the mandated creation of an inter-municipal transit plan helped increase the profile of transit in the Capital region, which may have

positive effects on local service as well. The land-use component of the growth plan stated that it “lays out a strategy to manage our expected growth, minimize our development footprint, strengthen communities, increase our transportation choices, and ensure our economic development is strongly supported” (Capital Region Board, 2009, p.10). The housing component of the growth plan focused on providing a sufficient supply and diversity of housing to meet the needs of the region. In addition, one of the four housing initiatives was to “develop a resident education and awareness campaign to support intensification and Smart Growth principles” (Capital Region Board, 2009, p. 14). It was particularly important that the themes of the provincial level documents aligned with those of the *OAP* since housing and transportation are largely provincial level responsibilities, and vertical integration of the policies is essential for successful implementation.

Themes of increased densities and transportation options were consistent with the goals of the *OAP*, thus the growth plan, while not as pertinent to the *OAP* as County documents, provided further policy support to the implementation of the *OAP*.

However, as was the case with the municipal documents, the extent to which these provincial level documents lend support to the goals of the *OAP* will depend largely on how well the initiatives are funded. This is particularly true of the transit and affordable housing related goals.

## **Objective Two: Review of Planning Documents- Summary**

The purpose of the document review was to provide an understanding of the planning and transportation environment in which the *OAP* was situated, in order to identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP* from the outsider perspective. Not surprisingly, given the fact that all of the municipal and provincial documents reviewed were developed within two years of the *OAP*, there was very good congruence between all of the documents. All the documents articulated themes of sustainability through increased housing and transportation options, increased densities, and more mixed land-use. From an outsider perspective, it seemed that all of the documents would potentially help to facilitate the implementation of the *OAP*. Again, a more specific vision of sustainability with concrete targets and accountability for reaching them would offer more certain policy support, but at the very least, the other municipal and provincial level documents presented no barriers to the implementation of the *OAP*.

## **Chapter Six: Results and Discussion: Key Informant Interviews**

This chapter details the results and discussion of the key informant interviews performed (along with the document review of relevant policy documents) to meet Objective Two in this research: to identify barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the built environment goals of the *Older Adults Plan* (Strathcona County, 2009a) within the current planning and transportation environment in Strathcona County. By way of triangulation of the other data sources, the discussion of the interview results will also include integration of document review results as appropriate.

In all, 19 in-person interviews were performed with 21 participants during May and June 2010. Two participants from the same department requested that they be interviewed together. Another participant presented for the interview with a colleague who he felt would also be a valuable informant. In these cases, interviews were conducted with two participants present. In addition, the participant from the Seniors Advisory Committee requested that a representative from Family and Community Services be present for the interview. All other interviews were conducted one on one.

In total, 25 requests for interviews were sent, for a response rate of 80%. Two potential informants refused participation, and two did not reply to the request. One informant agreed to participate, but had to cancel due to a family emergency. For compassionate reasons the researcher chose not to pursue an

interview at a later date with this individual. Table 11 details the general affiliations of the participants and those who declined to be interviewed.

Table 11

*Affiliations of Participants and Refusals*

Affiliation	Interviewed	Declined
Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs	2	1
Family and Community Services	2	0
Planning and Development Services	5	1
Engineering and Environmental Planning	3	1
Transit	3	0
County Council	3	0
Seniors Advisory Committee	1	1
Pioneer Housing Foundation	1	0
Media	1	0
Seniors Advocacy Organization	0	1
Total	21	5

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in the identification of five broad categories of factors that could influence the implementation of the *OAP*: policy design, individual-level, organizational-level, system-level and structural factors. Table 12 summarizes the barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the planning and transportation goals of the *OAP* reported in each category. A detailed coding guide defining each category is included in Appendix G. The second column of Table 12 links the barriers to the recommendations extended to Strathcona County (provided at the end of this chapter; see pages 152-154) to address each of these challenges to socially sustainable planning and transportation in the community

Table 12

*Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of Socially Sustainable Planning and Transportation Policies in Strathcona County*

Barriers and Facilitators Identified	Associated Recommendations
<b>POLICY DESIGN FACTORS</b>	
Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity/Evaluability of <i>OAP</i> goals: vague, difficult to measure</li> </ul>	3, 5
<b>INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL</b>	
Facilitators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values/beliefs: social responsibility for health, sustainability</li> <li>• Leadership: presence of champions</li> <li>• Knowledge/skills: understanding of principles of sustainability</li> </ul>	
Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values/beliefs: lack of personal buy-in from staff , resistance to change</li> </ul>	1, 7, 8
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL FACTORS</b>	
Facilitators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership: supportive dimensions included Strathcona County’s reputation as a leader in sustainability initiatives, strong leadership at the senior administrative and departmental levels, and support for innovation</li> <li>• Policy, processes and procedures: decision-making frameworks, alignment of policies (i.e. SSF, MDP)</li> <li>• Partnerships/networks/communication: participation of all departments in key internal and external groups; with developers, interdepartmental and with public</li> <li>• Knowledge/skills: understanding of social sustainability in planning and transportation</li> </ul>	
Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, processes and procedures: lack of implementation tools, specific targets and evaluation indicators, developer driven development process, conflicting policies (i.e. free parking)</li> <li>• Leadership: perceived lack of ownership of the OAP by departments other than FCS, leading by example were less supportive dimensions</li> <li>• Resource allocation: time to attend meetings, budget cycle</li> <li>• Communication: with developers and public</li> </ul>	3, 4, 5, 7, 8
<b>SYSTEM-LEVEL FACTORS</b>	
Facilitators	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologies/values: increasing public value of sustainability generally</li> <li>• Politics: support by current municipal council, policy mandate (strategic direction of County; provincial level (CRGB)); decision-making frameworks</li> </ul>	
Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologies/values: of public, community culture, self-selection to suburban community, history of community</li> <li>• Politics: Lack of clearly stated policy direction/vision, NIMBYism, lack of public support for goals/participation in municipal politics; stakeholder power dynamics (developers, vocal minorities); lack of authority, jurisdictional issues</li> <li>• Economics: market demand, developer profit, provincial downloading, economics of transportation (low ridership, time, cost to park), affordability of community, economy</li> </ul>	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8
<b>STRUCTURAL FACTORS</b>	
Barriers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing infrastructure: Sherwood Park almost completely built out; car-oriented design of existing development, inconvenient current bus routes</li> <li>• Rural nature, Climate</li> <li>• Lies in Capital Region: affected by regional decisions</li> </ul>	4,5

It is important to note that many interview participants were not very familiar with the planning and transportation related goals and strategies of the *OAP* (eight of the twenty-one participants had little to no knowledge of the *OAP*). Such strategies in the *OAP* included encouraging land use planning that combines commercial and residential uses, promoting the development of a variety of housing types to developers, establishing the requirement for the construction of new or renovated buildings to use the ‘Principles of Universal Design’, and improving local transit. These strategies were tantamount to socially sustainable development as described in the *MDP* (Strathcona County, 2007b) and *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a), documents that all participants who were County staff members were very familiar with. Interview participants unfamiliar with the *OAP* were instead asked “What do you think are the barriers or facilitators to socially sustainable growth in Strathcona County?” and “What do you think are the barriers or facilitators to local transit growth in Strathcona County?” Thus, in this chapter, the phrase *barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the goals and strategies of the OAP* will be used interchangeably with that of *barriers and facilitators to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies*, as was done in the interviews.

Since the results of this research were highly consistent with the capacities for policy implementation identified in the work of Bowen and Zwi (2005), the following framework (based on their work) was utilized to guide the discussion of results (see Table 13 below). This framework helps to give a sense of the relative

importance of the barriers and facilitators (as reported by participants) to the capacity of Strathcona County to implement healthy planning and transportation policies.

As noted in *Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures*, the three levels of implementation capacity were rated based on:

- 1) Individual-Level Capacity: Indicators considered capacities of key individuals in the policy implementation process, including Leadership, Knowledge and Skills and Values/Beliefs
- 2) Organizational-Level Factors: Policy, processes and procedures of the organization, Partnerships/Networks, Communication, Resource Allocation, Leadership and Knowledge and Skills were used as indicators at the organizational level (the executive and departmental levels in Strathcona County).
- 3) System-Level Factors: Indicators included Politics (including intergovernmental relations), Economics, Ideology and Values.

Policy implementation capacity at each level was rated as ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ based on these specific indicators. A high rating indicated that the capacity at this level was generally supportive of policy implementation. A low rating indicated a level which presents mainly difficulties to implementation, while a medium rating suggested that the implementation capacity faced a fairly even mix of barriers and facilitators at this level. As previously mentioned, this method is similar to that used by Vogel, Burt & Church (2007).

Table 13

*Three Levels of Implementation Capacity in Strathcona County for Socially Sustainable Planning and Transportation Policies*

Level of Policy Implementation Capacity	Strathcona County Policy Implementation Capacity
Individual-Level Capacity	High
Organizational-Level Capacity	Medium → High
System-Level Capacity	Low → Medium

Discussion of the results will be structured around Table 13. Discussion of each level of capacity will be divided into the factors (indicators) that were identified by interview participants as barriers and facilitators to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies in Strathcona County. First, the results for each indicator will be presented with an explanation of the assigned rating for each capacity level. This will be followed by a more detailed discussion linking results to the literature in the area and considering the significance of the results to practice.

**Individual-Level Capacity**

**Leadership.** Leadership, particularly the presence of champions of socially sustainable development and transportation policies, was identified by interview participants as an important facilitator to the implementation of *OAP* goals within Strathcona County. In particular, the previous Chief Commissioner and former manager of PDS, now the Associate Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services division, were singled out as key leaders in the County’s

sustainability initiatives. This type of leadership was seen as a facilitator to the goals of the *OAP* and was identified as instrumental to ensuring that the workforce had the knowledge and skills necessary to implement sustainability initiatives.

However, another kind of leadership, that of leading by example, was reported by some participants to be lacking. For example, a few participants noted that not a single employee of the Transit department used the bus to get to work each day, while other participants who were County staff members spoke of how much they enjoyed driving their trucks and would resist any other form of transportation.

**Knowledge and skills.** Knowledge and skills of key individuals in the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies were also seen as factors that could impact implementation of the *OAP*. There was a great deal of variation in the beliefs that participants expressed when asked about how much responsibility a municipality or department had for seniors' (population) health. Generally, participants who worked in Strathcona County departments showed a strong understanding of the way that decisions made in their respective department affected human health. This was likely due to the fact that these participants were all well educated in principles of sustainability through their academic training, with most having some sort of professional planning designation. Participants who were not employed by the County were more likely to see individual attributes, behavioural factors, and healthcare as the principal determinants of health. Participants revealed that strong leadership had

resulted in the hiring of many capable individuals to advance the County's sustainability initiatives. This was described as a major strength of the organization.

The lack of knowledge of the *OAP* among participants in PDS and EEP, with only the departmental representatives having any real knowledge of the *OAP*, would appear to be a barrier to the implementation of the goals of the *OAP*. However, interview participants from these departments, and Transit as well, indicated that knowledge of the *OAP* was not essential to attaining its planning and transportation related goals, as the *OAP* goals were reiterations of previously existing departmental policies.

**Values and beliefs.** While participants reported some individual-level variation in buy-in to principles of social sustainability amongst team members in intersectoral meetings, generally, participants felt that Strathcona County employees were personally committed to these principles. It was also apparent to the researcher that the employees of Strathcona County who were interviewed for this study were sincere in their desire to make the community more senior-friendly and generally more inclusive.

**Explanation of rating.** Participants in this research provided consistently positive comments regarding the leadership, knowledge and skills, and values and beliefs of individuals involved in the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies in Strathcona County. The researcher also saw this understanding and commitment demonstrated in the willingness of

interviewees to participate in the research and during the interviews. Thus, individual-level capacity in Strathcona County for the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policy was rated as High.

### **Organizational-Level Capacity**

Organizational-level factors pertained to Strathcona County as an organization, and thus included those in the executive administration or at a departmental level.

**Policy, processes and procedures.** Strathcona County policies, processes and procedures were frequently cited as factors that could affect the implementation of the *OAP*. Only participants from Family and Community Services indicated that there had been changes made in their department directly as a result of the *OAP*. Other departments indicated that there had been changes in their departments with regards to sustainable development, but that these changes had come about because of initiatives of the *Social Sustainability Framework* (2007a), *Municipal Development Plan* (2007b), or other specific departmental initiatives (e.g., Transit's mandate to purchase only accessible new buses for their fixed route service). These policies that drove departmental changes were described as supportive of the goals of the *OAP*, just aimed more generally at social sustainability and not focusing on one demographic, i.e. older adults.

Many participants spoke to the clarity and evaluability of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP*, and some described the goals as “vague”.

Some participants felt this lack of clarity made the goals difficult to evaluate and decreased accountability for reaching them. Several others felt that the impact of the *OAP* could be measured through repeating the senior surveys. While the implementation committee for the *OAP* was considered by several to be a way of evaluating if individual goals of the *OAP* had been reached, participants reported that no process evaluation of the *OAP* as a whole had been planned.

Generally, there was little mention of any conflicting strategies in the *OAP*. One participant, however, noted how strategies that encourage or enable seniors to remain in their single-detached homes may act as a barrier to the development of a variety of housing types in the community by decreasing demand for that type of housing. This same participant, who worked closely with seniors in the community, also noted that s/he did not feel keeping seniors in their single-detached homes helped keep them integrated in their community. Conversely, this participant felt this strategy led to isolation of these seniors.

Few departmental-level policies whose goals conflicted with the *OAP* were identified by participants. However, while the interviews were being conducted, the decision was made in Strathcona County not to charge for surface parking in the new Centre in the Park Development. Sherwood Park was originally developed as a suburb of Edmonton, and as such it had been developed without a central core. In a move to provide Sherwood Park with a downtown, focal point of the community, the Centre in the Park development had been under construction for several years. New facilities included new accommodation for the Strathcona County Library, expansion of the municipal buildings and the

addition of an art gallery, as well as several new apartment style condominiums. Original plans for the area recommended that there be a charge for parking in this new, denser center of Sherwood Park. Several participants mentioned how this decision not to charge for surface parking was a barrier to increasing local transit to the area, and how the public resistance to this initiative showed how residents were unwilling to acknowledge the increasing urban nature of the municipality.

Participants noted that recent overarching municipal policies had entrenched social, environmental and economic sustainability into the strategic direction of the County [through the Strategic Plan (2009b)]. Generally, participants agreed that the new decision-making framework, which included analysis of each decision explicitly with regards to the potential environmental, economic and social impacts, had made it easier for their departments to make decisions consistent with the Strategic Plan (2009b). However, many participants also reported that the County's sustainability policies lacked a concrete vision of what sustainability meant in the County, and without this vision, sustainability could be little more than rhetoric.

The nature of the development process was identified as a barrier. Many participants explained that development in Strathcona County was a developer-driven process, which meant that only what was brought forward by developers was built. In addition, participants spoke about the gap between policies that advocated for sustainable development and what was actually happening on the ground. This was often the result of a lack of implementation tools. For example, many policies pertaining to social sustainability were not reflected in the Land-

Use Bylaw (which was being updated at the time of this research) or by Engineering Design Standards, which ultimately dictate what is built on the ground. Participants from PDS also explained that developers were unsure about what it meant in practical terms to develop sustainably, as they were not given specific targets that they were required to meet. Generally, participants reported that lack of implementation tools, specific targets, and evaluation indicators led to a loss of accountability for goals of the *OAP*.

As noted previously, many participants referred to the fact that Sherwood Park was almost at build out, meaning that there was little land left to be developed, and what was left had mostly been planned already. Participants noted that for change to happen in the County, redevelopment would have to be considered. Participants indicated that policies around redevelopment had not been well established and were likely to face resistance from residents, who may be unhappy with changes to their established neighbourhoods, such as allowing for increased density of housing. Thus, development of policy to guide sustainable redevelopment would likely be impeded by politics.

**Communication and partnerships or networks.** Partnerships or networks and communication were other aspects of the organization that were identified as potential barriers or facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP*. Some participants felt that development of policy frameworks such as the *OAP* had helped to improve interdepartmental communication, however these tended to be individuals who had been directly involved in the development of these frameworks. Other participants felt that communication between departments had

not improved with the development of these frameworks or was more related to the attitude of the upper administration of the County, waxing and waning with each new Chief Commissioner. Almost all of the participants felt that the Transit department had become much more involved in interdepartmental communication in the last few years, mainly due to their move from being a contract to an in-house service. This was seen as a facilitator to improved transit service in the County. Three individuals outside of transit reported that they felt the organizational structure that placed Transit in a different division than PDS, EEP and Transportation and Agricultural Services negatively impacted communication between the departments involved with transportation and transportation planning. Individuals in Transit, however, did not report that this impacted their ability to remain in close communication with these departments.

Participation in key internal networks and groups, such as the implementation committee for the *OAP* and other sustainability initiatives, like the urban villages, was identified as a facilitator of socially sustainable planning and transportation goals. Similarly, communication with developers, particularly for the purposes of education about Strathcona County's strategic direction and sustainability initiatives, was frequently identified as an important facilitator of the planning goals of the *OAP*. Many participants cited lack of buy-in from developers as a barrier to implementation of the goals, and expressed that this could only be overcome by developing a relationship of understanding and trust with them. Open communication with and education of the residents of

Strathcona County was also mentioned as a facilitator to achieving the goals of the *OAP*.

Participants also spoke to the importance of membership in regional planning groups, such as the Capital Region Board. Without exception, membership in these groups was seen as a strong facilitator of socially sustainable policy as Strathcona County was in such close proximity to the city of Edmonton. This factor will be further discussed in the politics section.

**Resource allocation.** Closely related to the factors of leadership and policy, processes and procedures, resource allocation was recognized as another factor that could affect implementation of the *OAP*. Participants noted that departments often had to apply for funding for initiatives, and that they had to apply at the right time in the budget cycle to ensure funds were granted. Thus, departments who did not seek funding at the appropriate time could delay the implementation of the goals while they waited for the next year's cycle. Department heads also had to be willing and able to commit staff to policy development and implementation. One member of EEP noted that because his department is funded on a project basis, there are very few resources left for participation in planning and implementation committees, which acted as a barrier to his department's involvement in interdisciplinary groups.

Participants pointed out that the rural nature of Strathcona County was a real barrier to the implementation of the transportation related goals of the *OAP* largely because of resources. Large distances between hamlets and the low

density of rural areas made it difficult to serve with accessible transit and consumed many of the Transit department's resources. Furthermore, the low density of the existing urban development was also difficult and expensive for transit to service, hindering improvements to local service. Several participants noted that while the local transit system was not perfect, it was heavily invested in on a per capita basis.

**Leadership.** Interview data revealed that leadership at the executive and departmental levels was a key factor in the potential success of the implementation of the *OAP*. Several participants spoke to how Strathcona County had a reputation as an innovator and leader in trying new things, which helped them to attract the right type of individuals to work in the organization. Several of those interviewed indicated that they had come to work in Strathcona County because of this reputation. As with the individual level category, participants said that buy-in to the *OAP*'s goals varied at the departmental level, with some departments buying in to concepts of social sustainability more quickly than others.

Many participants also noted how the transit system in Sherwood Park was traditionally seen by transit planners in the community as a feeder system for the commuter routes to Edmonton, not as a system designed to get people around the community locally. This perception was seen as a barrier to improving local transit service in Strathcona County. Participants indicated that this departmental view seemed to be shifting with new leadership in the department, and that the

shift would be reflected in the new Transit Master Plan (under development at the time of this research).

The degree to which departments felt ownership for the *OAP* was another dimension of leadership that could potentially affect its implementation. One participant made direct reference to this factor, noting that projects and information were still housed in departments, and that the Social Sustainability Framework (2007a) and *OAP* were housed in FCS. S/he was concerned that this may be a barrier to the implementation of goals for the other departments, as the *OAP* was seen as FCS's initiative, and s/he was unsure the extent to which other departments had embraced it as their own. The interview data revealed that there were many instances where participants refer to the *OAP* as a FCS document (i.e., "Family and Community Services are very good at communicating their programs they are implementing"), which would indicate that this was indeed the dominant perspective.

These positive and negative descriptors of leadership at the organizational level resulted in leadership being categorized as both a barrier and facilitator to the goals of the *OAP*.

**Knowledge and skills.** Participants were positive about opportunities in the organization to develop knowledge and skills related to social sustainability initiatives. One interviewee had just participated in a workshop to learn about the application of the Social Sustainability Framework (Strathcona County, 2007a) in

the morning before their interview. For the most part, participants felt Strathcona County as an organization valued and developed a skilled workforce.

**Explanation of rating.** Interview participants generally expressed that the organization of Strathcona County valued social sustainability in the community, was committed to taking action on sustainability issues, and had invested a great deal in employee and policy development around sustainability in the County. Participants noted membership of departmental representatives on a variety of internal committees, including the *OAP* steering and implementation groups, as well as others related to urban villages, affordable housing, and sustainability. Participants also spoke about participation in key external groups related to planning in the region. These various forms of participation were all seen as strong facilitators to socially sustainable policies in Strathcona County.

While communication within and between departments, with developers, and with the public was generally reported to have improved significantly over the last five years, many participants acknowledged that there was room for improvement. Departmental silos for information and policy remained to some extent. Resources to send representatives to meetings were not always available, particularly for those in EEP.

Participants, particularly with regards to planning in the community, noted that some significant ‘policy gaps’ remained. These gaps, largely due to principles of social sustainability not being reflected in regulatory tools at each stage of the development process, often resulted in municipal development that was

inconsistent with principles of sustainability. In part, some of these gaps were reported to exist because broader policy documents failed to provide a concrete vision of what socially sustainable development meant in practical terms (e.g., did not provide a target density or percentage of affordable housing required in new development). Lack of specificity also made sustainability policy difficult to evaluate. Participants did, however, express an awareness of these gaps and noted that efforts were underway in many areas to address them, for example, updating of the Land-Use Bylaw. Further, participants mentioned that there was little existing policy concerning redevelopment of existing suburban development to increase social sustainability. Given that Sherwood Park is almost at build out, this is an important area in which to develop new policy.

Thus, organizational-level factors with the potential to influence the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation in the community were generally described as supportive. However, some barriers were reported to remain, although many participants felt that the County was working towards eliminating many of these. Thus, organizational-level capacity for the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation in the community has been rated as Medium→High.

### **System-Level Capacity**

System-level capacity included broad factors participants recognized in Strathcona County that could affect the implementation of the *OAP*, including

politics, economics, ideology, and community values. These factors formed the context in which Strathcona County operated as an organization.

**Politics.** Political factors highlighted by participants included political commitment of County Councillors, public participation or support for *OAP* goals, the decision-making process, stakeholder power dynamics, the media, and the County's policy mandate for sustainable development. Generally, most participants saw current Councillors as supportive of the *OAP* goals and strategies, which could facilitate the implementation of the goals. Several participants also noted, however, that the upcoming municipal election meant that little action was happening in Council at the time of the interviews. They also acknowledged that support for the initiatives could change with a new Council, which may have different priorities. Key decision-making in planning and transportation projects required the support of Council, so in that way, Council could be seen as either a barrier or facilitator to the *OAP* goals.

Developers were identified by several participants as the stakeholders who often had a disproportionate degree of influence on planning decisions, as they were the ones who owned the land and were driving the process. However, most participants were quite positive about how developers had come on board with sustainable planning initiatives currently underway in the County, such as the Emerald Hills development. The Emerald Hills project was sustainable urban village project that developers had collaborated with the County to create. Other participants noted how there tended to be little public interest in planning decisions in the County, but when residents decided to resist a development, often

one which would increase densities in a neighbourhood, they were very effective in swaying Council decisions. These groups were also described as very effective in engaging the media. This public resistance to change, or NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard), was frequently cited as a barrier to achieving a greater variety of housing choices in the County. Thus, many participants indicated that public support for the goals of the *OAP* would be the key to their implementation. Given that Sherwood Park was reported to be essentially at build out, and that redevelopment of older areas of this urban core were cited as necessary to increase density of the County, managing this public resistance to change is likely to be an increasing challenge to the implementation of socially sustainable planning.

Several participants noted how lack of public interest in municipal government was a barrier to the achievement of socially sustainable planning. One decision-maker interviewed pointed out how s/he had little sense of how residents truly felt about planning decisions. S/he noted that most planning decisions would elicit a response from a small number of residents who were particularly passionate about the issue, as in the case of a new higher-density development,. This participant expressed frustration that s/he often had to make decisions based on the feedback of developers or particularly vocal resident groups, without the input of the silent majority. All Councillors interviewed for this research did, however, express a strong interest in building public participation in local government, citing various strategies from knocking on doors to utilizing social networking sites. In addition, another participant noted

that a current project in his/her department was to develop a new model for public participation in the County.

Participants noted that recent overarching municipal policies had entrenched sustainability into the strategic direction of the County [through the Strategic Plan (2009b)]. Generally, participants agreed that the new decision-making framework, which included analysis of each decision explicitly with regards to the potential environmental, economic and social impacts, had made it easier for council to make decisions consistent with the Strategic Plan (2009b). However, many participants also reported that the County's sustainability policies lacked a concrete vision of what sustainability meant in the County, and without this vision, sustainability could not extend beyond rhetoric.

The proximity of Strathcona County to the Capital Region and Edmonton was mentioned by some participants as a barrier to the development of concrete sustainability targets. Participants stressed that changes must be made across the region for real changes to be feasible in Strathcona County. One participant noted that in Strathcona County, sustainability meant little more than offering a product with more amenities at a lower cost than Edmonton. In short, if consumers were not offered the type of housing they desired (i.e., single-detached, residential acreages), then they would just choose to live (and pay taxes) elsewhere. Similarly, if developers faced too many restrictions developing in Strathcona County, they would choose to develop (and invest) elsewhere. Each of these present important planning and fiscal realities for municipal decision-makers. Participants stressed that clear sustainability targets must be set and enforced

across the region in order for any municipality in the Capital region to achieve sustainability goals.

Most of those interviewed felt that the recent formation of the Capital Region Board and the creation of the *Growing Forward: the Capital Region Growth Plan* (Capital Region Board, 2009) strengthened the policy mandate of the County to develop sustainably. This view was supported in this research by the document review of *Alberta's Land-Use Framework* (Government of Alberta, 2008b) and the growth plan. Participants described the importance of these provincial-level planning documents as their publication had raised the profile of transit and planning at a regional level, increasing public and Council support for socially and environmentally sustainable planning and transportation policies. However, participants also stressed that, while recent provincially mandated planning in the region was a step in the right direction towards sustainability, more tangible, stricter targets still were needed. With regards to transportation in the region, participants also noted that, while there was now some preliminary planning for public transportation improvements, the province had been backing off on their commitments to fund the initiatives.

**Economics.** Participants emphasized the importance of economics as another factor key to the implementation of the planning and transportation goals of the *OAP*. Many participants spoke to how they felt that the province was downloading many of its responsibilities onto the municipality without providing adequate resources, particularly with respect to affordable housing and transit. Participants reported that this had become even worse with the recent economic

downturn. One participant interviewed also noted that the capacity of Strathcona County to fund the *OAP* goals was limited because the County, as a municipality, does not have the right to tax with the exception of property taxes.

Market demand for transit and housing were also seen as factors affecting the implementation of the *OAP* goals. Participants noted that developers felt that there was no demand for anything but single-detached homes in Strathcona County, with some participants expressing this as a real problem and others feeling that developers just perceived it to be a problem. The recent economic downturn was also reported to have slowed down housing sales in Emerald Hills (a sustainable urban village currently under development in Sherwood Park), resulting in developers changing plans from a more mixed, higher density development representing backslide towards more traditional suburban development. Several participants noted that developers made the most profit with the least amount of risk when building single-detached homes, which made them favour this kind of development in slower economic times and impacted the variety of housing options available in the County.

Many participants spoke to the general economics of transportation in Strathcona County as a barrier to improved local transit. They noted that residents of Strathcona County tended to be quite affluent and placed a great deal of value on their time. Since transit travel time was reported to be a lot higher than automobile travel time to the same destination, and there were no other incentives not to drive (e.g., prohibitive parking costs), residents were encouraged to take their own vehicles. Because ridership was so low, routes remained inefficient due

to lack of a stable funding source, creating a vicious circle. Participants generally agreed that there would be little improvement in local service without changing the economics of transportation in the community. Many participants also indicated that although there were some things the County could do to change the economics of transportation, these strategies were not yet politically viable due to lack of public support.

Economics were seen by participants as at least partly a product of values and beliefs. Individual values and beliefs about transportation and housing were identified as important drivers of market demand. Participants told the researcher that residents of Strathcona County valued the convenience of personal vehicle travel, and that it was the preferred social norm for individuals who had the ability to drive. This lack of demand for transit had led to a poor system in the community, which further decreased transit's desirability among potential users. Similarly, participants noted how individuals came to the County to buy single-detached homes, ultimately limiting other housing choices in the community. Interviews revealed that through the political process, the high demand for good transportation networks for personal automobiles and single-detached homes had led to a history of decision-making in the County, and the province for that matter, that continued to make these choices available and economically feasible.

**Ideology and Values.** The overall culture of Strathcona County and community values, as well as general ideology of the public were also system-level factors that participants felt could affect the implementation of the *OAP's* planning and transportation goals. All participants spoke to the dominant car

culture in Strathcona County, many quoting statistics that suggested that Strathcona County had one of the highest rates of vehicle ownership in the country. This was often referred to as the most significant barrier to improved local transit. Words such as *affluent*, *upper middle class*, and *homogeneous* were used by many participants to describe the culture of Strathcona County, yet many still considered the community to have a caring, small town feel that was supportive of the goals of the *OAP*. Some participants also expressed that they felt that a shift in the ideologies of the general public towards a greater understanding of environmental and social consequences of planning and transportation choices was slowly changing the culture of Strathcona County, which would eventually lead to more public support for sustainable development.

Research participants were asked if they considered Strathcona County to be a suburb, and almost all agreed that it was. A few of the participants noted that Strathcona County was an autonomous community with a culture distinct from that of Edmonton, but without exception, they agreed that the County had been developed in the traditional low density, automobile-oriented suburban form. Participants stressed how self-selection to a suburban community such as Strathcona County meant that most residents had little interest in public transportation or housing options other than single-detached homes. Participants noted that if individuals valued mixed development or better public transportation options, they would have chosen a community known for these types of amenities. Many participants felt public support for policies that attempted to

change the design of the region would likely meet with more resistance in Strathcona County than in an area with more variety of development.

Many participants indicated that the history of Strathcona County as a bedroom community for Edmonton had impacted the culture of the planning department in the past, acting to perpetuate this model of development. Almost all of the Strathcona County employees interviewed agreed that this culture had evolved in the organization, which was now more focused on planning as if Sherwood Park was an urban area. However, many indicated that this vision of the community as an urban one was not necessarily yet accepted by the residents, as reflected in public resistance to pay for parking in the new Centre in the Park development. One participant suggested that sometimes change had to be forced upon residents, noting the current waste management system in the County, which had faced a lot of resistance when first implemented but was now well accepted in the community. Thus, participants revealed that the suburban nature of Strathcona County not only presented physical challenges to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies, but it is also likely to present greater political, economic and cultural barriers than would a more traditionally developed community.

One factor a few participants mentioned was that community expectations of facilities had significant space requirements. For example, one participant involved in planning infrastructure in the community explained the difficulty of trying to reduce the size of roads to improve walkability, yet still meet the

demands for vehicular traffic (particularly if there was a school nearby), storage of snow, community green space, and parking.

Several participants spoke of how the values held specifically by older adults could affect implementation of the *OAP*. They explained that many older seniors today had lived in their homes for many years, sometimes upwards of 40 years, and that they had a strong desire, and sense of entitlement, to stay in those homes, as they aged. However, many participants felt that this ideal was changing as younger seniors in the community came from a generation that was more mobile, and thus they would be more willing to move to a higher density style of housing as they aged. This was generally seen as an attitude change that would increase the demand for a greater variety of housing in Strathcona County, thus facilitating that goal in the *OAP*. Participants also noted the aging of the population was likely to bring more light to seniors' issues generally, which would act to facilitate the planning and transportation goals of the *OAP*.

With regards to transportation, some participants noted that many seniors (as well as other residents) had never taken a bus before, potentially affecting their willingness and confidence to try local transit. This was also considered as a potential barrier to local transit growth by many participants. Thus, educating seniors on its use was seen as a facilitator to increased ridership on local transit.

**Explanation of rating.** All study participants acknowledged system-level factors to be the biggest barriers to socially sustainable development and transportation in Strathcona County. At the time of this research, participants

reported that the current Council was highly supportive of sustainable planning in general and that Council had made some lasting policy decisions that had entrenched concepts of sustainability into all decision-making in the County. Recent developments in the politics of regional planning were also seen as supportive of socially sustainable planning and transportation. In addition, some participants felt that there was a slow cultural shift taking place in Strathcona County, partly due to increasing awareness of sustainability issues and partly due to the aging of the population. These factors were seen as facilitators to the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP*.

However, participants also noted that councils change every three years so the support of Council may change with each election. In addition, although there had been a lot of policy written with regards to social sustainability, many participants still felt that these policies did not provide a clear vision to guide the County. The development of tangible goals, such as density targets, was described as limited by political factors such as stakeholder resistance and lack of public interest and support. Although some participants acknowledged the disproportionate influence of developers in the community, the greater number of those interviewed felt that NIMBYism was a greater community barrier in the community with regards to socially sustainable development. This was particularly anticipated to be a factor in future redevelopment initiatives.

Economics and cultural values in the community were the most often cited barriers to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies, and they were reported to drive many of the political barriers to socially

sustainable development. Most participants expressed that while the economic and cultural barriers present in the community were similar to those in the entire region, the suburban nature of Strathcona County served to amplify them.

Provincial downloading and lack of authority to use many policy levers to affect the economics of transportation were cited as major economic barriers to the implementation of socially sustainable policy. Where the County had the ability to change the economics of transportation, participants noted that strategies were not yet politically viable due to lack of public support. Lack of demand for housing other than single-detached homes, coupled with the fact that developer profit was maximized on this style of housing, limited the variety of housing available in the region.

Participants generally agreed that implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP* faced many political, economic, and values related barriers, despite current levels of support from Council. As a result, the system-level capacity of Strathcona County to implement sustainable planning and transportation policies has been rated as Low→Medium.

## **Discussion of Results**

The following section will discuss the study results in further detail, linking to other research where appropriate and considering the significance of the results to Strathcona County decision-makers. Data from all components of this research will be considered in this final analysis.

Research results indicated that the most significant barriers to the implementation of socially sustainable policies in Strathcona County's planning and transportation department exist at the broad system-level, with politics, economics, and values being identified by participants as limiting the municipality's capacity to put the *OAP*'s planning and transportation goals into action. These findings are consistent with those of Jackson and Riley (2007), who found in their overview of the history of health promotion in Canada that "health promotion is largely determined by economics and values" (p.217).

Individual-level capacity in Strathcona County was found to be high, with participants reporting that individuals involved in the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies were generally knowledgeable and possessed the right skills necessary for implementation. Generally, participants also expressed that these individuals had a personal belief in and valued a socially inclusive community. Economos et al. (2001), in their exploration of factors that have helped guide previous attempts at social change, noted that key individual leaders, or "sparkplugs" (p. S53) are important for focusing attention on social issues. Similarly, participants in this research identified specific individuals who were crucial in bringing issues of social sustainability forward. Strong individual-level capacity can be used as a significant resource for Strathcona County in addressing other barriers to policy implementation.

Similarly, institutional-level capacity in the County was reported to be quite strong. Smith, Vogel & Cromwell III (2009) suggested an "architecture that

could empower governments and other policy participants to move from words to deeds” (p. 54). Their framework was developed with regards to climate change, but is similarly applicable to complex policy issues that require a range of strategies across multiple sectors. These authors cited two institutional needs within a governmental organization in order to adapt to policy change: “(1) mainstreaming, integrating the consideration [of the policy issue] into the everyday decision-making of an institution, and (2) coordination, or the constructive engagement of multiple government agencies or departments, possibly across geographic jurisdictions and substantive focus areas” (p. 55). Data in this research (from both the document reviews and the interviews) indicated that Strathcona County had made clear steps towards meeting both of these institutional needs. Participants noted that recent overarching municipal policies had entrenched social, environmental and economic sustainability into the strategic direction of the County [through the Strategic Plan (2009b)], and they generally agreed that the new decision-making framework, which included analysis of each decision explicitly with regards to the potential environmental, economic and social impacts, had made it easier for their departments to make decisions consistent with the Strategic Plan (2009b). Similarly, reported participation in key internal and external groups with regards to municipal and regional planning, transportation, and affordable housing were indicators that Strathcona County was committed to engaging with a variety of partners to meet the goals of social sustainability in the community. With the creation of the Capital Region Board, membership of all municipalities in the Capital area in

regional planning had been mandated. Without exception, this was seen by participants to be a facilitator of the planning and transportation goals of the *OAP*. However, participants stressed that Strathcona County must continue to advocate for the allocation of funds necessary to implement regional transit plans, and to continue to push for the adoption of more aggressive targets for socially sustainable growth in the region in order to affect change in their own community.

One significant institutional barrier to the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP* noted by many participants was the lack of implementation tools to bring broad policy documents to the ground, resulting in a policy gap. Participants told the researcher that developers were unlikely to devote a lot of resources to sustainability initiatives, since regulatory planning documents, such as the Engineering Design Standards, did not require it. Grant (2009) examined challenges to the implementation of sustainability principles in the suburbs of three Canadian Cities (Markham, Ontario, Calgary, Alberta, and Surrey, British Columbia) through interviews with developers, planners and Councillors in the municipalities. In Calgary, Grant (2009) found that the policy gap the city experienced early in the implementation process was due to lack of commitment of Councillors, resistance from developers who felt that the market would not support it, and lack of implementation tools for city planners. This contrasts findings from this study, where participants noted that Strathcona County currently has a Council committed to sustainability initiatives, although that may change with the next election. However, similar to Calgary's

experience, lack of implementation tools makes implementation of the initiatives difficult.

Stakeholder interests, particularly NIMBYism and that of developers, political commitment of Council, public participation and strategic direction at the municipal and provincial level were all seen to have affected the development of *OAP*'s goals and strategies. Participants felt these political factors would continue to affect the resources allocated to the *OAP* and the development of necessary policy, process and procedures for implementation into the future. The disproportionate influence of developers in the municipal development process has been well documented (Grant, 2009; Buzzelli & Harris, 2006; Lightbody, 2006), and some participants pointed to this as a barrier to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies in Strathcona County. Resistance from developers is likely to increase in the development of policies that will directly impact developers, such as changes to the Land-use Bylaw and Engineering Design Standards. Participants noted how County Council needs to remain true to its vision of sustainability. However, as previously described, most participants were reasonably positive about developers' support of sustainability principles of sustainability, considering resident resistance to changes in urban form to be of greater concern. Given Sherwood Park's particular situation of reaching build out, this factor was expected to become more of an issue with attempts at redevelopment of its older areas. While a great deal of exploration has been performed around redevelopment of older, inner city neighbourhoods, particularly with regards to gentrification (Blomley & Pratt, 2001; Palen &

London, 1984), little has been done to explore issues of trying to increase the social sustainability of established suburban neighbourhoods in Canada. This is likely because suburbs are just reaching the age where they are in need of redevelopment. Participants suggested that the *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a) could assist Council to make decisions consistent with the Strategic Plan (2009b), which could help to a certain extent in managing the politics of planning.

While the intent of this research was to examine the barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the *OAP*, rather than the adoption of the policy itself, it is also important to consider barriers and facilitators to the development of policies and regulatory documents that would support the implementation of the goals of the *OAP* in Strathcona County. Community values that were at odds with the goals of sustainable development were a major barrier to the development of strong policies with effective implementation tools to produce socially sustainable development and transportation in Strathcona County. The relationship between public opinion and policy-making is complex, and there are several theories which attempt to describe the relationship (Downs, 1972; Shapiro & Jacobs, 1989). However, it is generally accepted that “it provides the backdrop of norms, attitudes and values against which the policy process is displayed” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p.74).

Since policies can be thought of as translations of beliefs (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999), ultimately, the design of the *OAP* and other sustainability policies in the community reflected the values and beliefs individuals in the

community (as perceived by decision-makers). The Advocacy Coalition Framework suggests that two of the pathways to policy change in a policy subsystem are external subsystem events and policy-oriented learning (Weible, Sabatier & McQueen, 2009). External shocks include broad changes in public opinion and socioeconomic conditions (Weible, Sabatier & McQueen, 2009). Changing public opinion about transportation and housing beliefs was reported by participants to be particularly difficult in Strathcona County due to a self-selection of individuals to the suburban community, dominated by car culture and single-detached homes.

Further, the community is strongly conservative, reflected in the continued election of socially and fiscally conservative members of Parliament since the 1950s (Parliament of Canada, 2010). Hawe (2009) noted that currently in Canada “it’s widely believed that personal health behaviours are the strongest determinants of health . . . Contrary views are associated with the political left and potentially controversial” (p.292). However, research has also found that a person’s belief in the attribution of responsibility for causes of social inequalities was strongly associated with support for policies to address these causes (Iyengar, 1989). Furthermore, these associations persisted when controlling for partisanship, political ideology, and SES (Iyengar, 1989). This is significant because “deep core beliefs” (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999), such as conservative beliefs, are unlikely to change. Thus, theoretically, shifting popular discourse from a focus on individual responsibility to a focus on social responsibility for health could create support for socially sustainable planning and

transportation even in a conservative context. Niederdeppe, Bu, Borah, Kindig, & Robert (2008) suggested that communication science offers valuable insights into the development of better messages to shape public opinion and debate about the social conditions that impact the health of populations. These authors proposed that appropriate message framing and the use of narratives and visual images would allow for the field of population health to increase the public's and policy makers' understanding of social determinants of health (Niederdeppe, Bu, Borah, Kindig, & Robert, 2008).

In Strathcona County, altering the discourse around health and healthy aging from a focus on individual responsibility to one of social responsibility could result in a public opinion shift. This could change the external policy subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999), while at the same time providing policy-oriented learning for decision-makers, potentially leading to support for policy change to improve the social sustainability of development and transportation in the County. With regards to decision-makers, Lavis, Farrant and Stoddart (2001) explored barriers to the use of information related to the health consequences of unemployment and job security in policy making. They found that values-related barriers were a significant factor barrier to the use the information, with “respondents citing conflicts between the policy implications of the information and current department philosophies, priorities or strategies” (Lavis et al., 2001, p.13). The authors proposed that repackaging the information could help it to fit more easily with an economic development viewpoint. Thus, advocates for socially sustainable planning and transportation policies may be

more successful in moving initiatives forward by presenting the economic benefits of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies. From analysis of the interview data gathered in this study, it was evident that knowledge of the way planning and transportation affected the health of the community was a major strength of the organization. Thus, Strathcona County already has this positive resource to support this policy-oriented learning and issue framing.

Results of this research indicated that efforts to increase the acceptability of different styles of housing (other than single detached) and public transportation in Strathcona County (and regionally and provincially) was the most important place for Strathcona County to start in order to affect the politics and economics of the region. The importance of changing the community's attitudes regarding housing and transportation to facilitate the implementation of the goals of the *OAP* suggests that the strategies to meet these goals need to focus more on public education. For example, the only strategy that addressed public support in the *OAP* was Goal 6, strategy 5, "implement a marketing campaign to encourage riders to use the public transit system, using tools such as Customer Appreciation Day" (Strathcona County, 2009a, p. 54). While trying to improve ridership is an important strategy, other research (Niederdeppe, Bu, Borah, Kindig, & Robert, 2008; Hawe, 2009) suggested that a campaign focusing on how transportation can improve or reflects the health of a community may be a better use of resources and ultimately be more successful in increasing ridership than a Customer Appreciation Day. This kind of approach is not meant to replace the other strategies in the *OAP*. Health promotion literature has found that

comprehensive strategies are necessary to affect changes in health status of populations (Jackson et al., 2007), and this approach could enhance the effectiveness of the other initiatives in a comprehensive strategy to facilitate healthy aging

All goals in the *OAP* that are exhortation related, such as education of developers and the business community, are mid-term goals, meaning that they are to be implemented in the four to fourteen year time frame. Findings from this research suggest that these goals, as well as further education of the general public regarding social determinants of health, should begin immediately, particularly if the *OAP* hopes to affect the baby boomer generation.

It is important to note that these findings are not suggesting a top-down exhortation campaign for the community. Participants stressed the importance of public involvement in implementing the goals of the *OAP*, and healthy promotion ideals describe authentic participation as essential in identifying the needs of the community and ensuring that interventions to meet those needs are successful (Tones & Green, 2004). Seniors and other citizens of Strathcona County have the most complete knowledge of how the community impacts their health. Personal narratives and visuals from the community could provide strong messages regarding the social consequences of planning and transportation decisions, which could be instrumental in shifting the understanding of the public and policy makers. While interest in municipal politics tends to be very low in Canada (Tindal & Tindal, 2000; Lightbody, 2006), all of the Councillors who participated in this study described a genuine interest in increasing public involvement in

decision-making in the County. These participants expressed many ways they were trying to connect with their constituents, including through email, social networking sites (such as Twitter) and by knocking on doors in the community. Increased connection resulting in improved public involvement in decision-making could be another potential facilitator to socially sustainable planning and transportation in the County.

Ultimately, for socially sustainable planning and transportation to be successful, participants stressed that the economics of transportation and housing need to change. However, the intersectoral action required to make these kinds of changes are largely out of the reach of local governments. As Bos (1998) noted:

Intersectoral collaboration is not a self-generating or even a self-sustaining phenomenon. As a concept, it goes against the grain of most government systems, particularly at the national level. Ministers, usually representing specific disciplinary areas and professional groups, must defend their sector's (vested) interests and compete with each other over limited budgets. At lower levels of government, the competitive characteristics are taken over by a perception that collaboration may actually be favourable, and at the district level the intersectoral barriers are usually non-existent. At this level, good intentions may, however, be hampered by restrictive national policies or limitations in the way earmarked funds can be spent (p. 1).

In addition, municipalities do not have the authority to use many policy levers needed to affect change. As one participant interviewed in this research explained, municipalities cannot charge taxes, other than property taxes, making it difficult to affect the economics of housing and transportation, and also limiting local funds available for other economic incentives, such as subsidies. While there are some policy levers that could be used to change the economics of housing and transportation in Strathcona County (e.g., charges for parking), participants noted

how these options are not yet politically viable due to lack of public support. This was exemplified in the recent decision not to charge for parking in the new Centre in the Park (as previously described on page 115). Langlois (2010) explored the ability of planning departments to guide residential development by comparing residential development in Markham, Ontario, where a New Urbanist approach has guided development since the early 1990s, with that of Vaughan, Ontario, an adjacent municipality with a market-led development approach. He found the communities had nearly identical built environments, leaving him to conclude that sustainable planning outcomes were more likely to occur in good economic times when developers were more willing to try new things. Municipal planning policies were only “capable of moderately accelerating positive trends and moderately retarding negative trends” (Langlois, 2010, p. 449). These results suggest that affecting the economics of housing and transportation may achieve more changes in urban form than direct attempts to plan for them.

Despite municipal limitations on policy levers related to planning and transportation, Hancock (1999) noted, health is fundamentally local and largely about community: “the creators of health are the people who produce our food, manage our wastes, keep our air and water clean, build our housing, create jobs and wealth, educate our children and so on” (p.423). This sentiment was echoed strongly by one of the Councillors interviewed, who felt that local governments were best positioned to provide for the health of their residents because of their ability to affect these important determinants of health. Participants who spoke about provincial downloading of responsibilities onto Strathcona County, as in the

example of providing affordable housing, expressed no issues with taking on this responsibility as they felt the organization had the capacity to provide these services. However, the problem they articulated was that appropriate funding for action was not allocated along with the responsibility. This situation highlights a fundamental problem with many initiatives to address social determinants of health: while other levels of government and other ministries pay for improvements that improve health, healthcare reaps the savings (Hancock, 1999). Without these healthcare savings being channeled back into the upstream interventions, there will be insufficient funding to sustain these health-promoting initiatives. Thus, it is imperative that Strathcona County (along with other municipalities) educate the public and decision-makers about their role in the health of the community, while lobbying for municipal government reform to ensure they have the authority and resources to meet these added responsibilities.

Ultimately, planning and transportation policies to increase social sustainability need to create a push back to affect the environment in which they exist. As Economos et al. (2001) noted in their exploration of lessons from previous attempts to guide social change, “there is overwhelming agreement that policy and environmental change is key to initiating and sustaining systematic change” (p. S54). In the same way that non-smoking legislation in Alberta has helped to change social norms around smoking, a clear policy for sustainable development in the community, supported by measureable goals and real accountability, could act to change individual values and beliefs about planning and transportation. Affecting the economics of housing and transportation will be

key in implementing socially sustainable planning and transportation policies. As Leggat (2004) reported in her research on child health policy, “to be effective in changing the paradigm . . . the exhortation process will require back up by more coercive governing instruments” (“Consensus Building,” para. 9).

**Insights for intersectoral action.** A reoccurring theme that emerged from exploring all of the study data was the apparent redundancy of the participation of the planning related departments, and, to a lesser extent, the Transit department in the development and implementation of the *OAP*. Triangulating the results from all of the data sources, this research brought into question the appropriateness of Strathcona County’s use of intersectoral action for a targeted population group such as older adults. Data from the document review of the *OAP* itself and other provincial and municipal documents revealed that there was already plenty of planning and transportation policy in place related to social sustainability in general, most of which also made reference to the aging of the population. This suggested that the *OAP* may be redundant as a policy tool. Data from the interviews supported this perception of redundancy, with participants from EEP and PDS in particular and Transit to a lesser extent, indicating that the *OAP* was not a significant policy document for their departments. In fact, for PDS, EEP and Transit, focusing on the needs of seniors rather than just all individuals with special housing, accessibility and/or transportation needs seemed to be taking a step backwards. Certainly, targeting older adults for environmental-level interventions also seemed fundamentally at odds with text in the *OAP*, which claimed to take a “strength-based approach” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.16) and

stressed that baby boomers “are less likely to accept the designation of ‘senior’” (Strathcona County, 2009a, p.43). Framing environmental modifications as important for older adults rather than just for general accessibility may have served to add to the stigma of seniors as frail and disabled.

The Public Health Agency of Canada’s (PHAC) 2007 report, *Crossing Sectors: Experiences in Intersectoral Action, Public Policy and Health*, noted that “targeted approaches to intersectoral action may be useful in situations where there is a strong public and stakeholder perception of the need to address a specific population group, disease or risk factor” (p.20). Findings from this research indicated that there was a strong perception of the need to address the changing demographics in Strathcona County. The *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a) identified the growth in the number of seniors in the community as an issue. In addition, several interview participants, particularly those from FCS, noted that there was an increasing push from the public to explain how the County planned to address the aging of the population. Thus, the *OAP* was developed as a response to the perceived problem of community aging. However, the PHAC report also noted that these targeted approaches face the risk of having a narrow focus on downstream effects and often result in a duplication of efforts (2007), which the *OAP* exemplified. As previously discussed, the *OAP* suffered from a lack of ecological depth and a focus on proximal determinants of healthy aging. Further, planning and transportation’s participation in the development of the *OAP* only resulted in a

rewriting of policy statements which were already entrenched in other municipal documents.

In addition, intersectoral action is very resource intensive and the benefits must warrant the investment cost (PHAC, 2007). There is no indication that the participation of planning and transportation representatives in the development of the *OAP* provided any value-added for older adults in Strathcona County than would have been otherwise achieved by some basic collaboration between the service-oriented departments, such as FCS and Recreation, Parks and Culture. Further, interview data revealed that the implementation committee for the *OAP* was struggling to be relevant; it was reported that several members felt that their time was not well spent attending these meetings. In reality, with no members from any other levels of government represented on the steering committee, the *OAP* was largely an interdepartmental collaboration. Thus, Strathcona County utilized horizontal integration, the engagement of several sectors at the same governmental level, which is important to maximize resources, increase capacity, and minimize duplication of effort (MacLean et al., 2010). However, true intersectoral collaboration on complex health issues involves both horizontal and vertical (i.e. multiple levels of government) approaches to integration (MacLean et al., 2010). Thus, it is imperative that Strathcona County work with other levels of government, particularly the provincial government with regards to land-use, housing and transportation, in order to minimize the effects of economics on socially sustainable development in the community.

These findings do not imply that there is no value in providing services specifically to seniors, or that intersectoral collaboration is not required in the development of healthy public policy. Clearly, seniors' services and programming are essential services provided in Strathcona County (and elsewhere), and this research did not in any way seek to evaluate the appropriateness of the programming provided by FCS. As well, intersectoral action is critical to the success of efforts to improve equity and population health (WHO, 2008). Results of this research suggest, however, that the use of an intersectoral approach in the development of a targeted plan was neither an appropriate nor effective use of resources for planning and transportation related departments in this case.

While this may seem to be a negative finding, this redundancy is likely the result of some positive intersectoral collaboration that has already occurred in Strathcona County in the development of broader policy documents, in particular the *Social Sustainability Framework* (Strathcona County, 2007a). That work seems to have rendered the involvement of departments such as PDS and EEP, who tend to deal with macro environments, unnecessary to the development and implementation of the *OAP*. If anything, Strathcona County may have been too keen in their efforts to facilitate healthy aging in the community. This is a particularly important finding given the current economic downturn and the lack of resources that departments, particularly EEP, reported to have in order to send representatives to intersectoral meetings. Findings of this research provide support for investment in intersectoral action to address broad determinants of health,

suggesting that resources can later be saved on more proximal, targeted interventions. This confirms other health promotion research that advocates for downstream strategies to deal with specific health concerns, such as addictions and obesity (Hancock, 1999).

Despite findings that suggested the *OAP* was redundant to the planning and transportation related departments, this research still offered valuable insights into the implementation of socially sustainable planning and development practices in the context of Strathcona County: these are discussed below.

### **Recommendations for Strathcona County**

Based on the results of this research and as a summary of this research, the following recommendations are respectfully extended to Strathcona County.

Table 12 (Chapter Six, page 109) links these recommendations to the barriers they hope to address.

- 1. Promote dialogue in the community that frames health as a social rather than individual issue.** Use the media to educate seniors and the general public about the consequences of planning and transportation decisions on health of seniors and all individuals in the community. Public response to paying for parking in the community is a good indicator that Strathcona County may not be ready for concrete policies around sustainable development and transportation yet. Understanding of these principles will be important to facilitate redevelopment in the community.

- 2. Market new development in the County to appeal to individuals who value socially sustainable development.** Present Strathcona County as a community that values equity and sustainability to attract like minded people to the community.
- 3. Critically evaluate the use of intersectoral action.** Invest in intersectoral approaches to address issues of social sustainability at a broad level, rather than with regards to specific demographics, particularly those which engage with other levels of government. Ensure process evaluation of initiatives is performed so that more effective ways of collaborating continue to be developed.
- 4. Develop policies around redevelopment of older, existing areas of urban centres and continue to develop implementation tools that reflect these and other socially sustainable policies in the County.** As far as possible, attempt to ensure these policies influence the economics of housing and transportation in the region.
- 5. Continue to work with the Capital region and advocate for concrete, stricter policies around unsustainable development in the region.** Try to ensure the economics of housing and transportation are affected at a regional level to level the playing field for all municipalities.
- 6. Lobby provincial and federal governments to ensure adequate resources are made available to fund provincial-level responsibilities, such as public transportation and affordable housing.** Frame information about principles of social sustainability in terms of economic

advantages whenever possible when advocating to decision-makers. Show how these principles can fit with their objectives.

- 7. Improve mechanisms to increase public participation in Strathcona County decision-making.** Continue with efforts to increase participation in all aspects of municipal government. When consulting the public, ensure survey methods are the best possible to reduce bias in results.
- 8. Continue to work with developers and residents as stakeholders in the development process.** Continue to strengthen policies that provide decision-making guidance to Councillors and that help them manage political pressures.

While one must exercise extreme caution when generalizing from case study data, these recommendations would likely be appropriate for other municipalities implementing healthy public policy designed to improve the social sustainability of planning and transportation in other Canadian suburbs similar to Strathcona County. Other municipalities should consider their context when extending these findings to their own circumstances.

## **Chapter Seven- Implications and Conclusion**

### **Implications for Further Research**

As with all research, this thesis has raised a number of other questions that further research is needed to address. As previously mentioned, there has been little exploration of redevelopment in existing suburban neighbourhoods in Canada. Redevelopment research has tended to concentrate on central redevelopment and revitalization in cities, particularly with regards to issues of gentrification. Strategies to improve the social sustainability of suburban areas have received less attention. In addition, since economics were identified as one of the most important barriers to socially sustainable planning in Strathcona County, further research investigating interventions to change the economics of housing and transportation in suburban Canada would be a valuable complement to this research.

### **Conclusion**

This research set out to answer two foundational research questions: (1) What are the factors that potentially influence the successful implementation of healthy public policy in municipal and, specifically, suburban contexts?; and (2) How do suburban planning and transportation policies interface with healthy public policy aimed at physical environmental changes to shape the built environment in ways that are theorized to affect seniors' health? Through the use of the case study method and an examination of Strathcona County's Older Adults

Plan (2009a), this research identified several potential barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP*.

Results from the document review of the *OAP* revealed that the *OAP* was based on appropriate theory, utilizing a determinants of healthy aging perspective to structure the document. Although the text of the *OAP* did not explicitly refer to geographical theory, the inclusion of several strategies which considered the integration, security and capability of seniors in the community suggests that the concept of Strathcona County as a place of well-being was implicit in the document. The findings of the document review most likely to influence the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP* included its basis on a poor consultation process, lack of commitment of resources to fund its strategies, and the vagueness of its goals and strategies. Interview data confirmed that the latter two barriers were likely to reduce the likelihood that the goals of the *OAP* would be implemented.

From the document review of the *OAP* and relevant policy documents for planning and transportation in the County, as well as from interview data, it was clear that there was very good to excellent congruence between the planning and transportation goals articulated in the *OAP* and those contained in other departmental, municipal and provincial planning documents. While congruence of the plans was not found to be a barrier to the implementation of these policies, research findings suggested that the vague nature of the all of the policies and lack of concrete, measureable goals for sustainable development was likely to prove a significant hurdle.

Generally, most factors at the individual- and organizational-levels that were reported by participants to influence implementation of the goals were supportive, resulting in strong individual- and organizational-level capacity for Strathcona County to implement socially sustainable development in the community. However, the system-level capacity of Strathcona County to implement socially sustainable policies in the region was reduced by a number of political, economic and values related factors. These factors were seen by all participants in this research as the biggest barriers to the feasibility of implementing socially sustainable policies in Strathcona County's planning and transportation departments.

This research also sought to explore the way the suburban nature of Strathcona County's built environment impacted the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP*. Study participants confirmed the researcher's perception that Strathcona County was a suburb. Participants also revealed that the suburban nature of Strathcona County presented more than just physical challenges to the implementation of socially sustainable planning and transportation policies. They expressed that Strathcona County was likely to present greater political, economic and cultural barriers to policy implementation than would a more traditionally developed community. Participants felt this was largely due to the self-selection of individuals to the community who desired single-detached homes with private yards and did not tend to be interested in public transportation.

As set out in the methods section of this thesis, the intent of this research was to position itself to contribute to Strathcona County's overall evaluation of the *OAP* by providing (a) an outsider perspective informed by insider information on the policy and potential barriers and facilitators to its implementation; and (b) concrete recommendations informed by literature review on healthy aging and built environments as well as healthy public policy with consideration of the specific context of Strathcona County. Based on the results of the three components of the research performed to meet the objectives of this study, several recommendations have been extended to Strathcona County. It is hoped that these recommendations may be of use to the County in the implementation of the planning and transportation related goals of the *OAP*, as well as to enable the implementation of future healthy public policies in the community in general.

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**Appendix A:**

**Executive Summary of Strathcona County's Older Adults Plan (2009a)**

Full Document can be accessed at

<http://strathcona.ab.ca/NR/rdonlyres/eluy5lh5h7pqcwsicm4pstejnyj3vp7igr1qbbgl3z2adbedwnz76ipehzy3u56qhnqodybsxwlnnmm2g4ykzceesmg>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The need for the development of an Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County was identified as a recommendation in Strathcona County's Social Sustainability Framework (adopted in 2007). It recognized the need to prepare for the changing demographics. In 2007, Strathcona County residents aged 65 and older comprised 13 per cent of the total population. By 2031, as a result of the baby boomer generation becoming seniors, this number is expected to increase to 25 per cent of the total population.

All levels of government, community organizations, churches, neighbourhoods, families, and individuals have a role to play in supporting the healthy aging of our population. The strategies in this plan focus primarily on what Strathcona County can do over the next 15 years.

### VISION

Strathcona County is an age-friendly and caring community that values the contributions and strengths of older adults, is responsive to their diverse needs and desire for choice, and provides a spectrum of opportunities for active and purposeful lives.

### OBJECTIVES

The Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County has seven main objectives:

1. To explore the major issues facing older adults that include:
  - social determinants including social supports, social connections and life long learning opportunities
  - physical environment determinants including housing, transportation and mobility, accessibility and safety issues
  - economic determinants including income, employment and social protection
  - behavioural determinants including recreation and leisure, healthy lifestyles and volunteerism
  - health and social services determinants including health, long term care, mental health and outreach services
2. To recognize the strengths and assets that older adults contribute by developing a strength based approach
3. To identify gaps in services, currently and anticipated in the future
4. To recommend strategies/programs to address issues and gaps, in the short (1-3 years), mid (4 - 14 years) and long term (15+ years)

5. To identify respective roles for implementing the Older Adults Plan, recognizing that it requires a coordinated effort from all departments and senior serving organizations
6. To ensure the sustainability of programs for older adults
7. To maximize opportunities for older adults to contribute to their families, community and economy

### PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from Strathcona County departments and key external service providers, was formed. Its function was to provide guidance for the development of the Older Adults Plan.

An analysis of the older adult population was undertaken, along with a review of current programs and services (federal, provincial, municipal, community). A comparative review of services in other communities also took place.

Extensive community consultation was carried out using a variety of methods. Two surveys were administered. The first targeted adults in Strathcona County 55+ years, and provided information about current strengths and needs. The second survey was administered to 45-54 year olds. It provided valuable information that assisted in the planning for future needs of older adults. In addition, key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and roundtable discussions were held.

The Strathcona County Seniors Advisory Committee was instrumental in reviewing this project at all stages and providing input and guidance.

### KEY ISSUES

The top issues identified during the consultation phase were:

1. Access to seniors housing
2. Access to health care
3. Rising living costs combined with fixed incomes
4. Availability of personal care and home services
5. Transportation
6. Outreach services
7. Information about programs and services

### GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following 15 goals and 65 strategies address the needs identified during the consultation phase.



Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County

Goals	Strategies	Lead Role	Resources Short Term (1 – 3 years)	Resources Mid Term (4 – 14 years)	Resources Long Term (15+ years)
<u>Goal 1</u> Services for older adults in Strathcona County are coordinated and emerging needs are identified and addressed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish an Older Adult Services Coordinating Committee for Strathcona County that will plan and coordinate services and programs across municipal departments and sectors.</li> <li>2. Ensure the Older Adult Services Coordinating Committee links with existing seniors organizations at the municipal and provincial levels, and in particular the Seniors Advisory Committee to gather input into trends and emerging needs of older adults.</li> </ol>	FCS  FCS	Staffing  None		
<u>Goal 2</u> Older adults receive clear, user-friendly information about services and programs in a variety of formats.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop guidelines on an age-friendly format for communications materials and signage.</li> <li>2. Create and maintain a variety of print and media communication tools, resources and methods for informing older adults about municipal services and programs.</li> <li>3. Create and maintain a web based resource for comprehensive information on programs/services/information for older adults.</li> <li>4. Create and maintain a printed Seniors Resource Directory.</li> <li>5. Provide an identified resource person in locations utilized and accessible to older adults to assist with accessing information on programs and services, filling out government forms and providing simple assistance with accessing websites.</li> </ol>	COMM  FCS  FCS  FCS  FCS	\$10,000  Staffing  Staffing  \$5,000  Staffing		
<u>Goal 3</u> Opportunities for social connection are encouraged and facilitated.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide older adult “gathering” space in community facilities as opposed to constructing additional “purpose built” facilities, for example, the new library “Community Living Room” concept.</li> <li>2. Assist existing seniors centres in attracting new members, planning for the needs of older adults and promoting programs in their communities. (see also goal 1, strategy #2)</li> </ol>	Library, RPC, Facilities, EEP  RPC	None  None		

ACRONYMS: CALC – Community Adult Learning Council; COMM – Communications; CPIA – Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs; EDT – Economic Development and Tourism; EEP – Engineering and Environmental Planning; ES – Emergency Services; FCS – Family and Community Services; HR – Human Resources; IVC – Information and Volunteer Centre; PDS – Planning and Development Services; PHF – Pioneer Housing Foundation; RPC – Recreation, Parks and Culture



Older Adults Plan for Strathcona County

Goals	Strategies	Lead Role	Resources Short Term (1 – 3 years)	Resources Mid Term (4 – 14 years)	Resources Long Term (15+ years)
<u>Goal 3 cont.</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a friendly visitor and phone buddy (telephone reassurance) program.</li> <li>Ensure that opportunities for inter-generational interaction are maximized for all Strathcona County led activities.</li> </ol>	FCS  Strathcona County Departments	Staffing  None		
<u>Goal 4</u> Older adults are provided with a variety of local choices for new learning opportunities and new skill development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the variety of life-long learning programs that are offered to include formal for credit, formal non-credit, and informal learning opportunities; formats should include classroom, workshop, conversation circles; affordability should be monitored.</li> <li>Explore Strathcona County being deemed a Designated Learning Community.</li> <li>Increase English Language Learning opportunities.</li> <li>Expand access to Strathcona County Library services and programs through outreach (bookmobile), distance learning (videoconferencing), e-books, or by offering programs outside of the library, such as in senior lodges.</li> <li>Organize an older adult conference once every two years.</li> </ol>	Library, FCS, RPC, CALC  Library  CALC  Library  FCS	None  NA  NA  Staffing  None	None  None  Staffing  Staffing	
<u>Goal 5</u> There is a range of affordable and accessible housing options appropriate for older adults.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Strathcona County's Affordable Housing Plan.</li> <li>Promote the development of flexible building designs (life-stage housing) and a variety of housing types to developers.</li> <li>Educate and influence developers regarding the optimum number of people with limited capability housed together who will require assistance during an emergency situation.</li> <li>Include increased numbers of handicapped parking stalls (exceeding current building standards) in the Land Use Bylaw.</li> <li>Encourage land use planning that combines commercial and residential uses so that services are closer to home for older adults.</li> <li>Develop a 15 year lodge and subsidized housing plan.</li> </ol>	CPIA  PDS  ES  PDS  PDS  PHF	None  NA  NA  None  None  TBD	None  None  None  None	

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Goals	Strategies	Lead Role	Resources Short Term (1 – 3 years)	Resources Mid Term (4 – 14 years)	Resources Long Term (15+ years)
<p><u>Goal 6</u></p> <p>Transportation options are affordable, accessible, safe and address the diverse needs of older adults.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve local transit system to better access popular destinations (medical and recreational facilities, shopping areas, etc).</li> <li>2. Transit will strive to become barrier-free.</li> <li>3. Complete Strathcona County Accessible Transportation review.</li> <li>4. Implement a volunteer Transit Buddy Program.</li> <li>5. Implement a marketing campaign to encourage riders to use the public transit system, using tools such as a Customer Appreciation Day.</li> <li>6. Develop a volunteer driver and car pool program.</li> <li>7. Investigate Independent Transportation Network (ITN) operating in the Capital Region.</li> <li>8. Partner with local taxi companies for rider discounts and provide travel vouchers for financially vulnerable older adults.</li> <li>9. Increase availability of older adult driver education programs in Strathcona County.</li> </ol>	<p>Transit</p> <p>Transit</p> <p>Transit</p> <p>Transit</p> <p>Transit</p> <p>FCS</p> <p>CPIA</p> <p>FCS</p> <p>FCS / CPIA</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>NA</p> <p>None</p> <p>NA</p> <p>NA</p> <p>NA</p> <p>None</p> <p>NA</p> <p>None</p>	<p>TBD</p> <p>TBD</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>\$10,000</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>\$50,000</p>	
<p><u>Goal 7</u></p> <p>Strathcona County will follow the 'Principles of Universal Design' in the design and construction of new or renovated buildings.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify design issues that may enhance the effective use of indoor and outdoor public places by older adults, and recommend changes.</li> <li>2. Educate the business community about the wide range of design disciplines including environments, products and communications, that are required to meet the needs of older adults.</li> <li>3. Establish the requirement for the construction of new or renovated buildings to use the 'Principles of Universal Design'.</li> </ol>	<p>Strathcona County Departments</p> <p>EEP</p> <p>PDS</p>	<p>None</p> <p>TBD</p> <p>NA</p>	<p>None</p>	
<p><u>Goal 8</u></p> <p>Crime prevention initiatives will reduce the incidence of older adults impacted by scams and crime.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase public education and awareness of scams and frauds targeting older adults in a comprehensive way (eg: Wise Owl program).</li> <li>2. Educate older adults about home security and crime prevention through physical design principles.</li> </ol>	<p>RCMP</p> <p>RCMP</p>	<p>None</p> <p>TBD</p>	<p>None</p>	



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<p><u>Goal 9</u></p> <p>Opportunities exist for meaningful paid and volunteer work for older adults.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the benefits of older adult volunteerism to both older adults and community agencies.</li> <li>Adapt retirement planning courses to include post-retirement employment planning.</li> <li>Educate business/ employers regarding the benefits of hiring the mature worker.</li> </ol>	<p>IVC</p> <p>HR / CALC</p> <p>EDT</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>NA</p>	<p>None</p>	
<p><u>Goal 10</u></p> <p>Older adults have the means to support themselves financially through retirement.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide education on financial planning.</li> <li>Provide information for older adults regarding municipal, provincial, federal subsidies and assistance in filling out forms.</li> <li>Implement further municipal subsidy programs for vulnerable seniors as needed and continue with the Recreation Access Program, transit subsidies, and property tax rebates.</li> </ol>	<p>HR / CALC</p> <p>FCS</p> <p>Strathcona County Departments</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>TBD</p>		
<p><u>Goal 11</u></p> <p>A variety of opportunities are available for social, recreational and cultural activities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the Strathcona County Open Spaces and Recreation Facility Strategy (OSRFS).</li> <li>Develop a program plan in partnership with senior centres that addresses the needs of older adults while exploring the sharing of resources. (see goal 3, strategy #2)</li> <li>Expand the partnership with Sherwood Park Primary Care Network and explore additional opportunities with other health service providers to support at-risk older adults with healthy living options.</li> <li>Develop partnerships with seniors housing complexes to deliver recreation programs on site (including both resident and non-resident participants).</li> <li>Develop and provide no-cost wellness programs to vulnerable adults in neighbourhoods and community centres while investigating potential grants or contributions from the business community to maintain programs.</li> </ol>	<p>RPC / EEP</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>		<p>None</p>

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Goal 11 cont.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Provide integrated/flexible programming space and specialized equipment for older adults.</li> <li>7. Ensure adequate opportunities for older adult oriented programs in the evenings.</li> <li>8. Implement a marketing campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of active living, and opportunities for active living throughout the community (including information about low-cost/subsidized programs).</li> <li>9. Promote the Ambassador Program to encourage older adult card holders to be role models and support new participants.</li> <li>10. Examine the use of schools (e.g.: Emerald Hills) and community centres as service hubs for delivery of programs and spontaneous use.</li> <li>11. Investigate installing a therapeutic warm pool when a new recreation facility is built. (The Aquatics Strategy to be developed as part of the OSRFS in 2012).</li> </ol>	<p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p> <p>RPC</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>NA</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>NA</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>
Goal 12 A spectrum of health and wellness programs is available to older adults.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate health promotion activities such as recreation, health clinics, education and socialization into “one-stop” shopping, wherever possible.</li> <li>2. Expand the falls prevention project to include additional locations and provide education to caregivers.</li> <li>2. Advocate to Alberta Health Services for mobile health clinics, increased funding for geriatric care, increased beds in Facility Living, increased adult day program funding, increase in number of family doctors.</li> </ol>	<p>RPC</p> <p>ES</p> <p>Strathcona County</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>NA</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>
Goal 13 Older adults are provided necessary supports to remain in their homes as long as it is safe and appropriate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a range of home services support including:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) a volunteer matching program that promotes and coordinates able persons to assist elderly and disabled individuals with snow removal and yard maintenance.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>FCS</p>	<p>Staffing \$10,000</p>		

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Goal 13 cont.	<p>(b) a County provided home maintenance/home adaptation service for older adults who meet eligibility requirements (sliding fee scale) using volunteer and/or contracted staff.</p> <p>2. Create and maintain a database of interested groups, businesses and individuals with a variety of needed skills who are willing to volunteer to assist older adults.</p> <p>3. Increase the capacity of the Home Support Program (homemakers and health care aides) by developing an employee attraction and retention plan.</p> <p>4. Expand the subsidized homemaking services to accommodate additional hours of light housekeeping support.</p>	FCS  FCS  FCS / HR  FCS	NA  Staffing  None  NA	Staffing Supplies TBD   TBD	
Goal 14 Vulnerable older adults and their families receive the emotional supports/interventions and advocacy they require to adjust to the changes they experience.	<p>1. Develop an outreach program for at-risk older adults (economic, social, health) that provides psycho-social supports, interventions, case planning and coordination of services.</p> <p>2. Establish a caregiver support service that provides emotional support and coordination of support groups for caregivers.</p>	FCS  FCS	Staffing  Staffing	Staffing  Staffing	Staffing
Goal 15 The incidence and prevalence of elder abuse is reduced; services and supports are available to assist those who are affected.	<p>1. Implement a community awareness campaign regarding elder abuse.</p> <p>2. Create a coordinated response to elder abuse consisting of key service providers.</p> <p>3. Provide caregiver supports to reduce the risk of elder abuse.</p>	FCS  FCS  FCS	Staffing \$5,000  Staffing  (included in goal 14, strategy #2)	Staffing	

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**ES** – Emergency Services; **FCS** – Family and Community Services; **HR** – Human Resources; **IVC** – Information and Volunteer Centre; **PDS** – Planning and Development Services; **PHF** – Pioneer Housing Foundation; **RFC** – Recreation, Parks and Culture

## Appendix B: Coding Guide Objective One

Code	Definition
<b>Process of Development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent of participation</li> </ul>	Referring to those involved in developing the <i>OAP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving Forces behind Development</li> </ul>	Referring to the rationale for developing the <i>OAP</i> , who initiated it
Aging	How is aging defined?
Senior	How is a senior defined in the <i>OAP</i> ?
<b>Social Ecological Theory</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social validity</li> </ul>	Practical significance, societal value of the <i>OAP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecological Depth</li> </ul>	Extent to which intervention effects will be over an extended period of time at various levels.
<b>Geographical Theory</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spaces of capability</li> </ul>	Referring to effects of aging, disability, or stigmatization on well-being of seniors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spaces of security</li> </ul>	Referring to aspects of security and well-being including affects of fear on health behaviours, elder abuse, crime, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrative spaces</li> </ul>	Referring to aspects of social integration of seniors in the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Therapeutic Spaces</li> </ul>	Referring to aspects of the environment and its effects on healing or therapeutic space
<b>Other Theory</b>	Referring to theory other than Social Eco/Geography (i.e. Determinants of Health).
<b>Problems</b>	Identifies potential barriers/determinants of healthy aging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transportation</li> </ul>	Difficulty in finding/accessing transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing</li> </ul>	Availability of affordable/appropriate housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility</li> </ul>	Accessibility problems other than above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> </ul>	Problems with communication about services/resources available in the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Care</li> </ul>	Referring to primary health care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and Wellness</li> </ul>	Referring to disease/injury prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leisure Activities</li> </ul>	Referring to recreational, social and cultural activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home Support</li> </ul>	Referring to support to remain in the home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Support</li> </ul>	Referring to services for vulnerable seniors/caregivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Inclusion</li> </ul>	Referring to opportunities for social connection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial-Economic</li> </ul>	Referring to financial difficulties for seniors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety</li> </ul>	Includes elder abuse, crime, fraud, perceived safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning and Skill Development</li> </ul>	Includes educational opportunities, language learning, etc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaningful Work</li> </ul>	Includes paid or volunteer work
<b>Goals/Strategies</b>	Proposed solutions to barriers to healthy aging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transportation</li> </ul>	Transportation related solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing</li> </ul>	Solutions for housing seniors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility</li> </ul>	Other than transportation and housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> </ul>	To improve communication about services/resources available in the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Care</li> </ul>	Referring to primary health care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and Wellness</li> </ul>	Referring to disease/injury prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leisure Activities</li> </ul>	Referring to recreational, social and cultural activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home Support</li> </ul>	Referring to support to remain in the home

• Social Support	Referring to services for vulnerable seniors/caregivers
• Social Inclusion	Referring to opportunities for social connection
• Financial-Economic	Referring to financial difficulties for seniors
• Safety	Includes elder abuse, crime, fraud, perceived safety
• Learning and Skill Development	Includes educational opportunities, language learning, etc
• Meaningful Work	Includes paid or volunteer work
<b>Resources- needed</b>	
• Transportation	Resources needed for transportation
• Housing	Resources needed for housing
• Accessibility	Other than transportation and housing
• Communication	To improve communication about services/resources available in the community
• Health Care	Referring to primary health care
• Health and Wellness	Referring to disease/injury prevention
• Leisure Activities	Referring to recreational, social and cultural activities
• Home Support	Referring to support to remain in the home
• Social Support	Referring to services for vulnerable seniors/caregivers
• Social Inclusion	Referring to opportunities for social connection
• Financial-Economic	Referring to financial difficulties for seniors
• Safety	Includes elder abuse, crime, fraud, perceived safety
• Learning and Skill Development	Includes educational opportunities, language learning, etc
• Meaningful Work	Includes paid or volunteer work
<b>Resources- Allocated</b>	
Resources that have been allocated to address problems identified	
• Transportation	Referring to resources for transportation
• Housing	Referring to resources for housing
• Accessibility	Other than transportation and housing
• Communication	To improve communication about services/resources available in the community
• Health Care	Referring to primary health care
• Health and Wellness	Referring to disease/injury prevention
• Leisure Activities	Referring to recreational, social and cultural activities
• Home Support	Referring to support to remain in the home
• Social Support	Referring to services for vulnerable seniors/caregivers
• Social Inclusion	Referring to opportunities for social connection
• Financial-Economic	Referring to financial difficulties for seniors
• Safety	Includes elder abuse, crime, fraud, perceived safety
• Learning and Skill Dev.	Includes educational opportunities, language learning, etc
• Meaningful Work	Includes paid or volunteer work
Culture/Gender	Referrals to culture or gender as a determinant of healthy aging, also stats/info about culture/gender in SC. May include either culture as ethnicity of individuals or the culture of Strathcona County.
<b>Relation to OAP</b>	
• Explicit	Explicit mention of the OAP
• Implicit	Mention of “triple bottom line” approach, three pillars of sustainability, Social Sustainability Framework, Strategic Plan.

## **Appendix C: Summary of Relevant OAP Goals/Strategies**

Goals/strategies of interest are ones which identify Planning and Development or Strathcona County Transit as responsible for taking the lead in implementation. These include:

Goal 5: There is a range of affordable and accessible housing options appropriate for older adults.

- Strategy 2: Promote the development of flexible building designs (life-stage housing) and a variety of housing types to developers.
- Strategy 3: Include increased numbers of handicapped parking stalls (exceeding current building standards) in the Land Use Bylaw
- Strategy 4: Encourage land use planning that combines commercial and residential uses so that services are closer to home for older adults.

Goal 6: Transportation options are affordable, accessible, safe and address the diverse needs of older adults.

- Strategy 1: Improve local transit system to better access popular destinations.
- Strategy 2: Transit will strive to become barrier-free
- Strategy 3: Complete Strathcona County Accessible Transportation review
- Strategy 4: Implement a volunteer transit buddy program
- Strategy 5: Implement a marketing campaign to encourage riders to use the public transit system, using tools such as a Customer Appreciation Day

Goal 7: Strathcona County will follow the 'Principles of Universal Design' in the design and construction of new or renovated buildings.

- Strategy 2: Educate the business community about the wide range of design disciplines including environments, products and communications that are required to meet the needs of older adults.
- Strategy 3: Establish the requirement for the construction of new or renovated buildings to use the 'Principles of Universal Design'.

## **Appendix D: Information Letter**

### Exploring Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of Healthy Aging Policy in Suburban Planning and Transportation Departments: A Case Study of the Strathcona County Older Adults Plan

Principal Investigator: Debbie Rawson (MSc Candidate)  
Supervisor: Dr. Candace Nykiforuk

#### **Background**

Canada, like other developed nations, is experiencing rapid increase in the number of seniors as the Baby Boomer generation reach their senior years. Several municipalities have begun to create municipal plans to prepare for the aging of their populations. Many of these include modifications of the man made environment to facilitate active aging in their communities.

Furthermore, much of this aging will take place in the suburbs, as more than one-third of seniors are living in the suburbs today. It is vital to develop planning and transportation policies, such as land use bylaws which favour mixed development, that support healthy aging in these municipalities.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to examine the potential barriers and facilitators to healthy public policy implementation in municipal planning and transportation departments. To gain an understanding of the relationship between healthy public policy, municipal planning and transportation policy, I am performing an in depth analysis of Strathcona County's *Older Adults Plan*.

The intent of this research is to position itself to contribute to Strathcona County's overall evaluation of the *Older Adults Plan*, so that it may maximize the plan's success in facilitating active aging in Strathcona County. Ideally, some of the findings of the research may be of use to others in similar municipalities in Canada looking to make their communities age-friendly places as well.

#### **Procedures**

In order to understand the background the *Older Adults Plan*, I am reviewing several of Strathcona County's municipal documents that are related to the plan, such as the *Municipal Development Plan*. In addition, I am conducting interviews with individuals involved with or potentially affected by the *Older Adults Plan*. This research is being carried out for the purpose of my Master's of Science thesis in Health Promotion Studies at the University of Alberta.

You are being asked to be interviewed because you are an individual involved with or potentially affected by the *Older Adults Plan*. If you agree, I will contact you again to schedule a meeting at a time and place convenient for you. I anticipate interviews will last 60-90 minutes. With your permission, interviews will be digitally recorded. You may decline use of the recorder or request that recording be stopped at any time during the interview. Following the interview, I will ask you to suggest names of other

individuals whom you believe could provide relevant information to this research project. *Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and there will be no penalty for declining to participate.*

### **Confidentiality**

The interviews will be digitally recorded if you agree. In our records, you will be assigned a number and your name will only appear on a Master List that links your name with your interview tape/transcript. This way, any information you give us will only be linked to a number. This will help protect your privacy. The tape recorded information and the Master List will be stored in a locked and secure storage cabinet at the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta. These materials will only be available to me and my supervisor. After 5 years, these materials will be destroyed.

### **Possible Risks and Benefits**

I am aware that Strathcona County is a relatively small organization. Paraphrasing will be used in final documents, and your responses will not be directly quoted. You will have the opportunity to review your transcripts in case you would like to have anything you say removed from them. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point in time without penalty. You may also choose to not answer any of the questions I ask, without having to give reason.

Possible benefits to being involved in the study include the opportunity to help Strathcona County to achieve a significant policy impact with the Older Adults Plan as well as other municipalities who are involved in similar policy endeavours.

### **Use of Data**

Information from the interviews will be used to complete my Master's thesis. In addition, results will be shared with Strathcona County. I will also seek publication of the results in a peer-reviewed health policy journal so that other municipalities may learn from my findings. Findings may also be presented at conferences to inform decision-makers and other public health professionals.

### **Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns or would like to stop participating in the study at any time, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor:

Debbie Rawson (drawson@ualberta.ca; 780-405-9533)

Dr. Candace Nykiforuk (candace.nykiforuk@ualberta.ca; 780-492-4109)

Clearance to conduct this study has been obtained from the Health Research Ethics Board, University of Alberta. *If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, they can be contacted at 780-492-0302.*

## **Appendix E: Informed Consent Form**

Exploring Barriers and Facilitators to the Implementation of Healthy Aging Policy in Suburban Planning and Transportation Departments: A Case Study of the Strathcona County Older Adults Plan

Principal Investigator: Debbie Rawson (MSc Candidate) (drawson@ualberta.ca; 780-405-9533)

Supervisor: Dr. Candace Nykiforuk (candace.nykiforuk@ualberta.ca; 780-492-4109)

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this project?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Do you understand who will have access to your responses?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
I agree to take part in the study.	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
If you agree to participate, would you like to review your transcripts?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
If you agree participate, do you consent to have this interview audio recorded?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>

---

Who explained the study to you? \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Interview Guide

(Note: Questions varied with participant affiliation and involvement with the *OAP* and as new themes emerged from earlier interviews. This is a comprehensive list of all questions that were used during the interview. Universal questions were asked to all participants. Variable questions varied between participants.)

### Universal Questions

- How long have you been (insert title) with Strathcona County? What other roles do you hold in the County/ Region?
- Were you involved in the development of the *OAP*? If so, in what way? OR
- How familiar are you with the Older Adults Plan?
- In your opinion, how will you gauge if the *OAP* has made a difference in Strathcona County?
- (Discuss Planning and Transit related goals of the *OAP* ie. more walkable communities with increased housing options and increased transit service.)
  - What do you think are the barriers to sustainable growth in Strathcona County?
  - What do you think are facilitators to sustainable growth in Strathcona County?
  - What do you think are the barriers to transit growth in Strathcona County?
  - What do you think are facilitators to transit growth in Strathcona County?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about the *OAP* before we finish up?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Is there anyone else you think I should talk to about the *OAP*?
- Can I follow up with you if anything comes up in subsequent interviews that I need some clarification on?

### Variable Questions

- Has the *OAP* affected any decisions made by Council since its creation?
- Are your constituents aware of the *OAP*?
- Do you think the development of policy frameworks such as the *OAP* have changed patterns of interaction between municipal departments?

- What do you think are the factors that could potentially affect successful implementation of healthy public policy (such as the *OAP*) in Strathcona County?
- The impetus for developing the *OAP* seems to have come from demographic analysis (discuss that top three issues from community consultation for Social Sustainability Framework were: Children and Youth, community affordability and stress), not from community consultation. Do you think this will affect the implementation of the plan?
- There is a strong culture of autonomy in Strathcona County (discuss a bit). Do you think this has an impact on the potential success of healthy public policy in the community?
- How do you think the goals of the *OAP* fit in with the culture of Strathcona County generally?
- Reading through municipal plans such as the Social Sustainability Framework, I get the sense that there is an issue with the clarity of roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government.
  - Is this an accurate perception?
  - If so, how will this affect the implementation of the *OAP*?
- Who are the primary stakeholders in Strathcona County with respect to planning and transportation?
  - Do all the stakeholders have equal influence on decisions?
  - How is this influence exercised?
  - How do the goals of the *OAP* fit with the goals of other stakeholders?
- Where does Council come in on the decision-making process for development?
- Have policy frameworks such as the Social Sustainability Framework and the *OAP* changed the capacity of Strathcona County departments/Council in creating more socially sustainable environments?
- How are the three pillars of decision-making prioritized?
- The Alberta Land Use Framework and the creation of the Capital Region Growth Board obviously represent the province taking a more direct role in the planning and development decisions in Strathcona County .
  - How do provincial goals mesh with goals of the *OAP*/ Strathcona County?
- As far as you know, how is the seniors' perspective included in this plan?

- How much has the *OAP* been covered by the media? Why or why not? What has been driving the coverage?
- Who has been promoting the *OAP* in the media? Have you had any letters from residents about it?
- How aware/interested do you think the residents of Strathcona County are in the *OAP*?
- How interested do you think the residents of Strathcona County are in municipal politics in general? Why? How can this be changed?
- How important do you think it is for culture/gender specific programs to be included for seniors in Strathcona County?
- How do different stakeholders in development use the media?
- Have any changes been made in the Planning department in response to the *OAP*?
  - Probes: Fiscal? Administrative? Programme Staff? Training Support?
- In the *OAP*, no departments other than Family and Community Services, the library, and communications have allocated any staffing or monetary resources for implementation of the strategies in the short-term. Do you think the goals of the *OAP* can be met without specific resource allocation from planning?
- Would you consider Sherwood Park/Strathcona County a suburb? Why or Why not?
  - Does this affect the culture of your department?
- How important do you think it is for your department to be involved in planning for the aging of the population?
  - Is this view in line with general workplace culture in your department?
- I notice in the *OAP* that only 2% of seniors reported that they use transit as a means of transportation. Why do you think that is?
- How are transit and transportation related in Strathcona County?
  - Why are the transit and transportation plans being developed separately?
- Do you think having the implementation/coordinating committee is affecting the implementation of the plan now that it is complete?
  - Probes: Is the committee effective, if not, how could it be improved?
- Do you think other departments represented on the committee recognize the role they have to play in healthy aging?

- Probe: What kind of buy in is there from other departments?
- What kind of demand is there from residents of Pioneer Housing facilities for public transit?
  - How many of the residents drive?
  - Do they want to take regular transit? SCAT?
  - Does transit access the destinations they would like to go to?
- What was the role of the Seniors Advisory Committee in the development of the plan?
  - Is the role ongoing with the implementation committee?
- How much responsibility do municipalities have in ensuring the healthy aging of their residents?
  - Who's responsibility is health? Individual's? Provincial? Municipal?
- To date, have the short-term staffing and resource requirements been allocated as outlined in the *OAP*?
- How have you defined resources in the *OAP*?
- How well has the *OAP* structured implementation to date?
  - Are there things that you would change now if you could go back?
- Sherwood Park is almost at build out. Is there any work being done in the department around redevelopment of older areas?
- In your opinion, have the problems facing older adults in Strathcona County been appropriately identified in the *OAP*?
  - Do you think the goals of the plan address the problems identified?
- Would you consider Strathcona County to be an elder friendly community?
- As a senior in Strathcona County, do you feel that you have the opportunity to remain connected to the community as you age?
  - Do you think other seniors in the community feel this way as well?
  - Will the *OAP* impact this?
- How important is public participation to achieving the planning and transportation goals of the *OAP*?
- How does planning for effective use of places by older adults fit in with compliance with design and construction standards?
  - Is there sometimes a conflict with professional standards?
- Where does Council come in on the decision-making process for transportation?

- Probes: will this potentially affect the implementation of the *OAP*?
- How is aging in place defined in Strathcona County?
  - How does aging in place (thus defined) fit in with Strathcona County's principles of sustainability?

## Appendix G: Coding Guide Objective Two

Code	Definition
Policy Design Factors	Intrinsic factors of the <i>OAP</i> policy that may affect implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the planning/implementation process</li> </ul>	Referring to participants of steering/implementation committees including SC departments and others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Consistency</li> </ul>	Alignment of problem definition, goals and instrument choice; referrals to conflicting goals/strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity/Evaluability</li> </ul>	Referrals to ability of <i>OAP</i> to structure implementation; the clarity/evaluability of goals/strategies; obligation to meet goals; commitment to review progress.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content</li> </ul>	Referring to the omission of key problems/goals/strategies
Individual-Level Factors	Referring to key individuals in the policy implementation process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>	Referring to the presence of champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values/Beliefs</li> </ul>	Referring to personal qualities (values, beliefs, commitment) of key individuals including sustainability and transportation related beliefs; buy-in; resistance to change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and Skills</li> </ul>	Awareness of <i>OAP</i> ; knowledge of local context; procedural knowledge; understanding social sustainability in planning and transportation decisions; understanding of individual contribution to implementation of <i>OAP</i>
Organizational-Level Factors	Referring to factors at the administrative or departmental level in the policy implementation process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, process and procedures</li> </ul>	Supportive/conflicting departmental policy; availability of implementation tools; nature of the development process in Strathcona County; indicators in place to evaluate progress (specific targets, accountability, integration into regulatory frameworks); departmental changes in response to <i>OAP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships/Networks/Communication</li> </ul>	Includes interdepartmental communication and between municipal departments; participation in key internal and external groups, networks, communities and partnerships, including implementation committee, developers (education of developers), public.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Allocation</li> </ul>	Willing/able to commit staff to policy implementation; willing to apply for funding and at the right time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>	Organizational and cultural norms; support for innovation; valuation of <i>OAP</i> goals; change

	management; ownership of <i>OAP</i> ; motivation to see goal through.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and Skills</li> </ul>	Workforce development opportunities; knowledge of <i>OAP</i> ; departmental understanding of social sustainability, seniors issues.
System-Level Factors	Referring to broader factors in Strathcona County which may affect the policy implementation process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics</li> </ul>	Political commitment/will; public support for goals/participation in municipal politics; NIMBYism; decision-making process; stakeholder power dynamics; advocacy; uncertainty in regional planning, media; policy mandate (strategic direction of County; provincial level (CRGB))
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics</li> </ul>	Capacity of SC to fund <i>OAP</i> goals; market demand; developer profit; provincial downloading; economics of transportation (low ridership, time, cost to park); affordability of community; economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideology</li> </ul>	Referrals to general ideologies of the public; epistemic communities (global network of knowledge-based professionals in scientific and technological areas that often have an impact on policy decisions).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> </ul>	Culture of Strathcona County; self-selection to suburban community; support by opinion leaders, government; history; community expectations of facilities.
Structural Factors	Referring to physical constraints of Strathcona County
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing Infrastructure</li> </ul>	Referring to the fact that Sherwood Park is almost completely built out; nature of existing infrastructure (including bus routes); efficiency/convenience of current bus routes; car-oriented design.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Nature</li> </ul>	Referring to the rural nature of Strathcona County
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate</li> </ul>	Referring to weather, snow removal as factors which may affect implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of Capital Region</li> </ul>	Referrals to implementation difficulties based on location in Capital Region.

## Appendix H: Frameworks Informing Policy Analysis

### 1. Capacities Required for Policy Adoption and Adaptation (from Bowen and Zwi, 2005, 0604)

**Table 3.** Capacities Required for Policy Adoption and Adaptation

Level	Category	Capacity
Individual level	Leadership	Supportive personal qualities—visions, values, beliefs, history
		Commitment
	Knowledge and skills	Competency in analysis of information
		Assessment and adaptation of skills to local context
		Learning and development mechanisms (reflection, practice, review)
	Resources	Procedural knowledge
	Organizational	Human, financial, knowledge, administration, skills
		Clear guidelines/policy directives
	Partnerships	Participation in strategic planning processes
		Part of professional and community networks, groups, or a grapevine
Interest, epistemic community, interagency, professional/peer		
Organizational level	Policy, processes, and procedures	Project based
		Supportive workplace and organizational values, culture, and ethics
		Recognition in recruitment, retention, and planning strategies
		Links to champions, resources
		Management support for policy action
	Partnerships	Identified strategy/policy/statement
		Planning processes
		Accessible, efficient systems to support work, e.g., documentation and reporting, communication, information, decision-making
		Support for and participation in key internal and external groups, networks, communities, and partnerships, e.g., interest, epistemic community, interagency
		Resource allocation
	Leadership	Technology to support work
		Skilled and competent workforce
		Research evidence and knowledge available
		Critical mass (researchers, practitioners) and incentives
		Organizational and cultural norms: support for innovation, valuation of issue/action, leadership for action, management of change
Knowledge and skills	Active primary innovator, knowledge broker	
	Workforce development opportunities	
	Appraisal of skills, work recognized	
	Stated strategic directions and agenda of the system	
	Decision-making processes	
System level	Politics	Policy networks—mutual exchange, joint creation of knowledge
		Advocacy
		Interest groups/pressure group activity/public opinion
		Stated strategic directions and agenda of the system
	Economics	Funding, “slack resources” available
		Evidence of cost effectiveness
	Ideology	Epistemic communities
		Communities of learning
	Values	Powerful lobbyists/groups
		Support by opinion leaders and government
		Government sees the issue as important, values this issue and action

2. Preconditions for Successful Implementation (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984, p.199-206)
  - a. Circumstances external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraints.
  - b. Adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme.
  - c. The required combination of resources is actually available.
  - d. The policy to be implemented is based upon a valid theory of cause and effect.
  - e. The relationship between cause and effect is direct and that there are few, if any, intervening variables.
  - f. Dependency relationships are minimal.
  - g. There is understanding of, and agreement on, objectives.
  - h. Tasks are fully specified in correct order.
  - i. There is perfect communication and co-ordination.
  - j. Those in authority can demand and obtain perfect compliance.
  
3. Variables Involved in the Implementation Process (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981, p.7)

*Tractability of the Problem*

- a. Availability of valid technical theory and technology
- b. Diversity of target behaviour
- c. Target group as a percentage of the population
- d. Extent of behavioural change required

*Ability of Statute to structure implementation*

- a. Clear and consistent objectives
- b. Incorporation of adequate causal theory
- c. Financial resources
- d. Hierarchical integration with and among implementing institutions
- e. Decision-rules of implementing agencies
- f. Recruitment of implementing official
- g. Formal access by outsiders

*Nonstatutory variables affecting implementation*

- a. Socioeconomic conditions and technology
- b. Media attention to the problem
- c. Public support
- d. Attitudes and resources of constituency groups
- e. Support from sovereigns
- f. Commitment and leadership skill of implementing officials

## **Appendix I: Questions Facilitated at Round-Table Discussions**

1. What is needed for seniors to stay in their homes? Is aging in place the best solution?
2. How can transportation services be improved?(concern with rural transportation and isolation)
3. How can the health system be more responsive to seniors needs?
4. How would you like to receive information on seniors programs/services?
5. How can the safety of seniors be enhanced?
6. What is the best delivery model for programs and services?

Their responses were incorporated into our strategies

Questions provided by Family and Community Services, R. Robertson-Postik (personal communication, April 6, 2010). No analysis of the round-tables are available.