



CANADIAN CENTRE ON DISABILITY STUDIES

LIVABLE & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

*From Research and Knowledge to Better Practices:
Building Strategies and Partnerships for Livable Communities
that are Inclusive of Seniors with Disabilities*

May 2008 to March 2009

RESEARCH OUTCOMES: AGING & DISABILITY

Background

In 2007-08, CCDS conducted a participatory action research project on Aging with a Disability, funded by the Office for Disability Issues (ODI). The purpose of the project was to identify needs, gaps and effective service models for individuals with long-term disabilities who are aging, specifically as it related to the areas of home supports, caregiving, transportation and housing. Project activities included the completion of an environmental scan and literature review, as well as roundtable consultations with stakeholders in British Columbia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia and a national forum hosted by CCDS. The results of the research led to the development of recommendations for policies, programs and services to more effectively assist individuals aging with disabilities.

Introduction

In May 2008, CCDS received a grant from ODI to continue work in the area of aging and disability, building on the previous research findings and recommendations. The goal of the project was to contribute to the development of Livable and Inclusive Communities by piloting and testing an innovative and comprehensive Livable and Inclusive Community model for seniors with disabilities, in three provinces: British Columbia; Manitoba; and Ontario. The intention of the project was to assist communities to evaluate elements associated with Livable and Inclusive Communities for seniors with disabilities; build knowledge,

leadership and partnerships; and develop a plan to address the gaps identified.

Project Methodology

A participatory approach was used in the project, including community stakeholders to identify priority areas as well as in testing the Livable and Inclusive Community model, evaluation and planning tools that were developed. This process was facilitated to transfer the evaluation findings into action steps to address the gaps identified.

A literature review and environmental scan were conducted, a Livable and Inclusive Community model, community assessment and planning tool were developed to measure the extent to which the community meets the needs of seniors with disabilities.

Results

The Livable and Inclusive Community model is based on the premise that there is a direct correlation between citizens' overall health, well-being and quality of life and the political, social, physical and economic environments, and in order to develop communities that are truly livable and inclusive for all citizens, the four environments must be addressed in tandem. In addition, the concepts of private and public, and policy and practice are applied to each of the four environments and act as a lens through which the model is applied and used as a measurement of Livable and Inclusive Communities. These concepts are reflected in the principles, elements and indicators that

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form the model.

The principles are a collection of morally based standards that act as a guide to the measurement of the elements. They are purposely broadly stated so that they can be easily incorporated into the measurement process. The principles include: Participation, Community Connections, Leadership, Sustainability, Universal Design and Affordability.

Based on a review of the literature, an examination of other initiatives focused on seniors or persons with disabilities, and previous research conducted by CCDS, it

was determined that Livable and Inclusive Communities consist of ten common elements. The six principles listed above act as a guide when examining each element and determining the degree to which it reflects livable and inclusive communities. Just as the principles are connected with the elements, each element is interconnected with another. The elements include: Housing, Transportation, Support Services, Health and Well-being, Education & Training, Spiritual/ Cultural, Leisure/ Recreation, Outdoor Environment, Employment/ Jobs and Volunteerism.

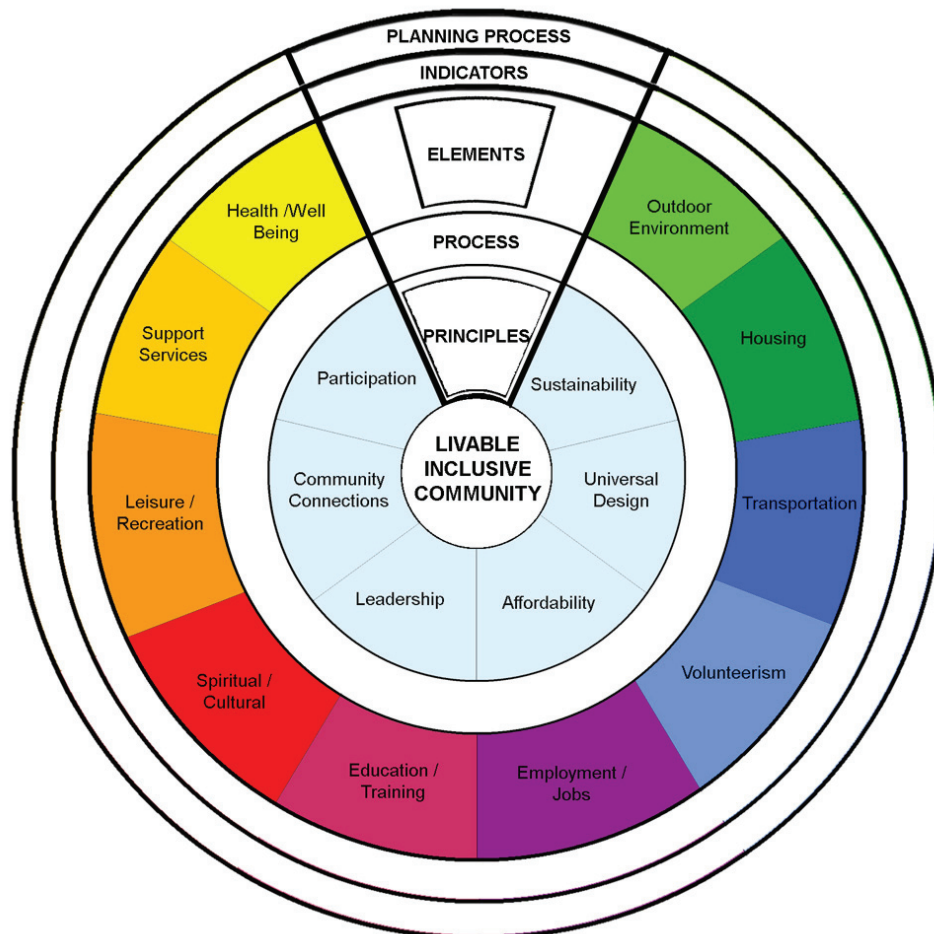


Figure 1: Livable and Inclusive Communities model

Community Evaluation Tool

Indicators were developed as a means of measuring or evaluating the presence or absence of the principles and elements in community. There are a total of sixty indicators in the evaluation tool; six indicators for each of the ten elements reflecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The activities of the evaluation were conducted by a Community Working Group that consisted of members that were representative of the key elements of Livable and Inclusive Communities.

For example, the indicator for the housing element that reflect the principle of participation would be that ‘Seniors with disabilities are required to participate directly in the planning process as it relates to housing development as well as neighbourhood design. Participation can take place at the provincial, municipal or community levels. Policy(s) exists that the participation of seniors in the planning process is mandatory.’

Community Planning Tool

The pilot Community Planning Tool was developed for the purpose of guiding the participating communities through a planning process that would transform the priority areas identified in the community evaluation process into action. It asks participants to identify priority areas for improvement, timeframe (short or long term), action steps for priority areas, who is responsible for the action, potential partners to include, identify any funding needed and potential sources and anticipated start and completion dates of the activities.

Synthesis Papers

CCDS commissioned two synthesis papers to be developed on transportation and housing as a means of applying the pilot Livable and Inclusive Community model and demonstrating best practice as it relates to seniors and disabilities. They look at both urban and rural contexts, in both private and public environments and identify promising practices in transportation and housing. Recommendations are made in relation to these elements their interconnection with others, and the usefulness of the Livable and Inclusive Community model.

Think Tank- Blue Print for Action

A Think Tank was held in Winnipeg in March 2009 to discuss future steps and receive final feedback on the model, tools and processes. The participants were asked to discuss in small groups the question ‘What broad actions would you want to see in place in order to facilitate achievement of the long term priorities identified by the communities?’ The broad actions to address the longer term priorities as identi-



Community Working Group Members
Rossburn, Manitoba

fied by the community participants are categorized below according to key success factors:

1. Adoption of the Principle of Universal Design and Visitability in All Realms is the New Norm
2. Inclusion of Persons with Lived Experience
3. Create Tools for Visioning and Marketing
4. Create National Awareness and Action

Resource Guide

A Resource Guide was developed that outlines various community planning documents and funding sources to assist pilot communities to establish Livable and Inclusive Communities for seniors with disabilities. The document stems from the environmental scan conducted and provides resource material that range from grassroots community mobilization and partnership building, to information on funding sources that are available to pilot communities to move forward based on their evaluation findings and identified priority areas. Community members, service providers and policy makers can utilize the information in this guide.

Recommendations

Each pilot community developed action steps based on their findings from the community evaluations and made recommendations on how the model, tools and processes could be improved upon should additional funding be granted.

The project encourages continued:

- Participation and leadership of seniors with disability at the grassroots, program and policy levels

- Partnership and coordination in existing partnerships and new partnerships among planners, policy-makers, and citizens in planning and implementing community development projects
- Knowledge and education that increases the knowledge of community stakeholders in community evaluation and planning processes that can be applied to various target areas
- Sustainable planning to develop a plan to meet the needs of present and future residents of the community
- CCDS facilitation to ensure actual implementation of the Livable and Inclusive Community model by expanding work with pilot communities (mentorship and twinning); in-depth focus on other community elements, in addition to housing and transportation (analysis of policies and practices and recommendations); target involvement of key-players including municipalities, community planning bodies, business sector; and involvement of aboriginal communities
- Knowledge and research sharing with all levels of government such as Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial – HRSDC/ODI and provincial Disability Issues Office, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Public Health Agency, Senior Secretariats, Canadian Disability Studies Association and others
- A further scan of Canadian legislation, policy and practice could be undertaken with the following goals:
 - To compare and contrast existing services and programs both in the seniors sector and the disability sector and to determine gaps and cross over;
 - To evaluate the effectiveness of ex-

isting programs as well as equality and human rights legislation for seniors with disabilities;

- To identify areas where new legislation and policy would be valuable to improve the social inclusion of seniors with disabilities

Conclusions/ Next Steps

This pilot project tested community based model, instruments and tools that can be applied to many different scenarios in planning our communities. Additional testing and implementation of the Livable and Inclusive Community model and its impact is required both in three pilot provinces as well as across Canada. Participants have viewed this project as a major catalyst for community mobilization, community planning and design, intersectoral collaboration and coordination and future seniors with disabilities policy and program development in Canada. It has raised awareness of issues between many sectors and lessons to be shared; seniors/aging and disability, that very rarely interact in collaborative manner (or who had not seen the need to come together before) and has facilitated collaboration on new ideas and directions. This project has been critical in steps to address the rising seniors with disabilities population that we are facing in participatory, inclusive and sustainable ways. The Livable and Inclusive Community model is central to building active, thriving, inclusive and safe communities for all.

For more information or copies of the final report visit CCDS' website:

www.disabilitystudies.ca

Project Team

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Fort St. John Association for Community Living
Measuring Up the North Community Liaison
Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
City of Selkirk
Rossburn Drop-In Centre

Funder

Office for Disability Issues, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada



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