DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES: Municipal Toolkit
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities Municipal Toolkit was adapted from the Municipal Toolkit resource originally published by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan recognizes the Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s accomplishments in developing the original toolkit and many of the tools and examples referenced within this document.

We wish to thank Maria Howard, Rebecca Morris, and Heather Cowie, along with other members of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. for their continued collaboration, guidance, and dedication to partnerships that promote dementia friendly initiatives across the country.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities Provincial Advisory Committee was instrumental in adapting and finalizing the Saskatchewan version of this Toolkit, and we thank all the committee members for their expertise and input throughout the process.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Toolkit aims to support municipalities and local governments in Saskatchewan in their efforts to make their communities more supportive of people with dementia. Dementia is a term describing a set of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. Dementia is not a specific disease. Symptoms may include memory loss and difficulties with comprehension, problem-solving, judgement, or language. Dementia is not a normal part of aging. There are many different types of dementia, Alzheimer’s disease is just one type.

Many people with dementia live well in the community for a long time. However, dementia may make participating in activities and staying involved more difficult. People with dementia and their care partners have told the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan (ASOS) that stigma, lack of awareness or understanding, as well as both social and physical barriers, make it more difficult to get around and to feel supported in their communities. They are also at risk of becoming socially isolated, which has a profoundly negative impact on overall health.

In a dementia friendly community, there is an awareness and understanding of dementia, and people with dementia and their care partners are supported and able to participate fully in community life. The ASOS accepts a very broad definition of “community”, recognizing that groups of all sizes can make an impact by becoming more inclusive and supportive of people with dementia. They may be as small as a book club, or as large as an entire city, but there is opportunity for groups of all sizes to create positive change.

After consultation with leading experts, the ASOS has adapted this Municipal Toolkit so that villages, towns, municipalities and cities may be officially recognized as working towards becoming dementia friendly. Becoming a dementia friendly community is a journey rather than a destination.

What are municipalities?

Saskatchewan legislation recognizes municipalities as a level of government with considerable autonomy to govern local matters. Saskatchewan’s population is largely rural and widely dispersed, accentuating the need for strategies that recognize both the strengths and unique challenges posed by various types of municipalities.

In Saskatchewan, there are currently 296 rural municipalities, and 459 urban municipalities (including villages, towns, cities, and resort villages). In Northern Saskatchewan, there are 24 incorporated municipalities and 11 unincorporated settlements.¹

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan knows that Dementia Friendly Communities are important to both rural and urban municipalities. In this document the term “local government” will be used to describe municipalities of all types and sizes.

The steps listed here ensure that communities are able to work towards a common vision based on what is important and meaningful to people affected by dementia. Becoming dementia friendly includes the following key steps:

1. Partner in providing dementia education in your community,
2. Create a dementia friendly working group,
3. Develop a Dementia Friendly Action Plan,
4. Implement your Dementia Friendly Action Plan,
5. Stay accountable by maintaining communication with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan.
The Dementia Friendly Communities initiative assists communities in developing tailored approaches to support people living with dementia through:

1. **Resources**: Education sessions, information on dementia and communication strategies, as well as consultation on the local Dementia Friendly Action Plan.

2. **Networks and Mentorship**: Support to identify key stakeholders in the community and ideas for collaborating to maximize resources for community members living with dementia. Additionally, connecting with others can provide mentorship opportunities and information sharing amongst communities that have already made strides to become more dementia-friendly.

3. **Program integration**: Integration with an existing age-friendly grant or project. The Dementia Friendly Communities initiative adds nuance and emphasizes the needs of people with dementia. A Dementia Friendly Action Plan could be part of a healthy community strategy and included in existing work.

The practical suggestions in this document are compiled from evidence-based best practices and new approaches that show promise in communities around the world. Examples from local contexts and frequently asked questions are included to inform dementia friendly work in a way that acknowledges and builds upon the unique characteristics of various communities.

Any information, examples or resources included in this toolkit are intended to be adapted to local contexts. They should not be confused with provincial certification or monitoring standards.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan recognizes the contributions of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. in supporting the launch of Dementia Friendly Communities in Saskatchewan. This toolkit has been adapted from materials provided by the Alzheimer Society of B.C., and revised to suit the needs of Saskatchewan residents.²

How will this toolkit help municipalities and local government?

This toolkit is intended to introduce the concept of “dementia friendliness” and provide a tangible resource for communities working to become more dementia-friendly.

There are several sections that include background information on dementia, context for the importance of these considerations, as well as practical information about the key steps to implement dementia-friendly initiatives in your own community.

Initial efforts to become more dementia-friendly do not require large commitments of resources.

Even small changes can make a significant difference for those living with dementia and their care partners. Building momentum and sustaining the intention to become more accessible, supportive, and inclusive over time can have a profound impact on a community.

The final sections of this toolkit conveniently include examples of checklists, tips, and links to additional resources and materials. These can assist local working groups to understand the current level of dementia friendliness in their community, as well as create and execute an action plan. The toolkit provides information that allows communities of all sizes to get involved, not just large cities.
The History of “Dementia Friendly”

The concept of dementia friendliness has roots in Japan and the United Kingdom, and in recent years has spread across the globe. A search of literature related to dementia friendly communities will offer results from a host of different countries, including Europe, Australia, the United States, Costa Rica, India, the Netherlands and many more.

While Saskatchewan is not the first province in Canada to adopt dementia friendly initiatives, January 2017 marked the launch of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities initiative as the first of its kind in the province.

In 2016, the ASOS received funding from the Government of Canada via a New Horizons for Seniors Grant. This funding supports a collective impact approach aimed at reducing the social isolation of seniors in south and central Saskatchewan. The launch of the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative is one of several ASOS projects that has been supported by this grant.

While international initiatives and approaches may differ, all Dementia Friendly Communities possess power to combat stigma, to increase inclusion and accessibility, and to support people with dementia to be engaged in their own communities in meaningful ways.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan: Who We Are

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan (ASOS) is the province’s leading dementia care and research charity. With six Resource Centres located throughout the province, we offer Help for Today through our programs and services for people affected by dementia, and Hope for Tomorrow by funding research to find the cause and the cure. Since 1982, we’ve been dedicated to providing help for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias and their care partners.

The Provincial Office and Regina Qu’Appelle Resource Centre are located in Regina, while additional Alzheimer Society Resource Centres are located in Saskatoon, Swift Current, Battleford, Prince Albert, and Weyburn.

“Individuals with dementia deserve nothing less than a dementia-friendly Canada in which they are not only accepted but embraced.”

Senate Report, 2017

“We must broaden society’s perspective of the lived experience of Alzheimer’s beyond the last few years of its course.”

Lynn Posluns
President, Women’s Brain Health Initiative
(As quoted in the Senate Report, 2017³)

“Rural communities are disproportionately affected by dementia because they tend to have a larger share of older adults and fewer dementia-specific services. Despite the challenges, rural communities are known for their problem-solving approach and they are often sites of innovation.

This new Dementia Friendly Communities Municipal Toolkit will be a tremendous resource to rural communities in planning supports for people with dementia and their families.”

Dr. Debra Morgan
Rural Dementia Action Research (RaDAR)

“When it was obvious that my mother’s dementia had reached a point where it was concerning, she moved to where care was more available and she was closer to family. But she lost her sense of community, her closest friends, and those most likely to understand and provide support.”

Anonymous
Quote from care partner surveyed in Dementia Friendly Communities: Stakeholder Consultation Report (2017)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is dementia?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 2: CONTEXT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-friendly and dementia friendly community initiatives in Saskatchewan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What people with dementia and care partners say</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia friendly communities: Local government considerations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting the process: First steps to becoming dementia friendly</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions local government can take</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies: Urban and Rural</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 4: DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia Friendly Action Plan Worksheet</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 5: TOOLS &amp; CHECKLISTS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia Friendly Outdoor Environment Checklist</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 6: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION 7: LINKS &amp; REFERENCES</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links and Videos</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Dementia Friendly Communities are welcoming to people with dementia, support them to live well, and engage them meaningfully in everyday life.
The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities Initiative

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities initiative exists to reduce the social isolation of seniors with dementia by supporting municipalities, the professional sector, community groups and the general public to become dementia-friendly through tools, education and strategic partnerships.

As the population of our province ages, dementia-friendly considerations will support individuals to age and maintain a better quality of life in their own homes and communities.

Efforts to become more dementia-friendly do not require large commitments of resources, and even small changes can promote greater independence and support for people with dementia to remain in their homes and communities for longer.

The Dementia Friendly Communities initiative will seek to promote supports and address the social and physical barriers that can make inclusion challenging and lead to social isolation for those that are affected by dementia.

By improving the number of locally based supports and strengthening community relationships, dementia friendly communities will provide many benefits to their members including those living with dementia, and the families, friends and care partners who support them.

Vision & Goals

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s ultimate vision is to create communities throughout the province that are welcoming to people with dementia, support them to live well, and engage them meaningfully in everyday life.

Our vision is that these communities will possess a better understanding of dementia and will recognize that a person with dementia may experience the world differently.

These dementia friendly communities will be prepared to make a conscious effort to reduce stigma, social isolation and ensure the social-citizenship and participation of people with dementia.

This initiative aims to:

1. Improve quality of life for people with dementia and their family and friends.
2. Reduce barriers that prevent people with dementia from engaging in community activities.
3. Reduce stigma associated with dementia.
4. Support people with dementia to live comfortably in their own communities for as long as possible.
5. Create safe public and private environments for people with dementia.
6. Build understanding in the professional sector, reducing stressful interactions as a result.

Why are Dementia Friendly Communities important?

Today in Saskatchewan, 10 more people develop dementia every 24 hours.

While this number is projected to increase as the population ages, dementia does not just affect the aged.

Dementia affects families and friends as they take on care partner roles. It affects businesses as staff respond to the needs of clients and customers experiencing changes in abilities, behaviour, or communication. It affects workplaces as employers and colleagues seek to support co-workers that may be experiencing difficulties in cognition.

Dementia also affects both urban and rural communities as they strive to create safe environments for their citizens.
What is dementia?

Dementia is a term that describes a group of symptoms including memory loss and difficulties with comprehension, problem-solving, judgement, or language. It can be explained as an “umbrella term” because there are many different types of dementia.

Some types of dementia are neurodegenerative conditions that progress over time. These include, but are not limited to, Alzheimer’s disease, Vascular dementia, Lewy Body dementia, and Frontotemporal dementia (including Pick’s disease).

There are also some reversible causes of dementia such as vitamin deficiencies, infections, or medication interactions.

Warning Signs

There are ten evidence-based warning signs of dementia. These warning signs can be summarized as the “ABC’s of Dementia” based on changes in Abilities, Behaviour, and Communication. The warning signs a person may experience is dependent on the person’s unique characteristics, as well as the type of dementia they are experiencing, and the area of the brain affected. These ten warning signs include:

- Memory loss affecting day-to-day function
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Disorientation of time and place
- Decreased judgment
- Changes in mood and behavior
- Problems with language
- Loss of initiative
- Changes in personality
- Misplacing things
- Problems with abstract thinking

Distinguishing dementia and normal aging:

Every person is unique, so for something to be considered a warning sign of dementia, it must be a change from normal for that person.

The below examples are intended to help emphasize that dementia is not a normal part of aging. They are not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool.

Normal Aging:
- Not being able to remember small details of a conversation or event that took place a year ago.
- Not being able to remember the name of an acquaintance, or someone that they have only recently met.
- Forgetting things and events occasionally.
- Having occasional difficulty finding words

Dementia:
- Not being able to recall details of recent events or conversations.
- Not recognizing or knowing the names of family members.
- Forgetting things or events more frequently, or repeatedly asking the same question even after receiving the answer.
- Incorrectly substituting words, making up new words, or changes in understanding language, and/or reading text.
Communication Strategies

It is not always possible to tell immediately that a person has dementia. Everyone will experience dementia differently - no two people will have the same strengths and abilities at the same points along the disease trajectory, nor will they experience all of the same challenges.

However, there are some signs that a person may be experiencing symptoms of dementia and some strategies for responding in a supportive way.

- A person’s capability to understand body language is often maintained for a long time along the dementia journey. Take note of your gestures, facial expressions and keep positive. If you are making notes, take a break and make sure to look at the person as you converse.

- Do not assume that every person with dementia has a visual or hearing impairment.

- Avoid using baby talk, or “elder-speak” (for example, “sweetie” or “dear”). Always speak to the person with dignity and respect.

Key tips for communication:

1. Get the person’s attention.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Bring the person to a quieter place where distractions are limited.
4. Speak slowly and clearly.
5. Use one message at a time.
6. Use close-ended questions (yes or no answers).
7. Allow time for response.
8. Respond to feelings, not stories.
9. Connect, don’t correct.
10. Repeat or try again later.

Understanding & awareness: learning the ABC’s of dementia.

Building awareness and understanding of dementia is a critical step to becoming dementia friendly. Stigma is often caused by lack of knowledge or understanding of what a person with dementia may experience.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan promotes awareness of ten evidence-based warning signs associated with dementia through a campaign focused on the ABC’s of Dementia. The ABC’s refer to changes in Abilities, Behaviour, and Communication. With some forms of dementia, changes in the brain affect personality or language before memory loss occurs, this makes it important to recognize that dementia is about more than just memory.

The ABC’s of Dementia warning signs campaign complements the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative. By increasing awareness, stigma is reduced. The warning signs campaign also emphasizes the importance of a timely diagnosis.

Visit www.ABCDementia.ca to learn more about the ten warning signs.

Additional communication strategies are outlined in table format at the back of this document in the “Tools & Checklists” section.
Dementia friendly communities reduce social isolation by increasing locally based social supports. Find out how they make a difference in this section.
Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly Community Initiatives in Saskatchewan

What is an age-friendly community?

The age friendly community concept was developed from the World Health Organization’s active aging framework. The Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism is promoting the development of Age-Friendly Communities throughout the province of Saskatchewan, and has gained considerable momentum with many communities already working towards Age-Friendly designation. In the city of Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Council on Aging has also been implementing age friendly initiatives since 2011.

Age-Friendly Communities supports people to age actively and promotes the inclusion of older adults in all areas of community life.⁶ They aim to optimize opportunities for health, participation and security to enhance quality of life. Furthermore, they aim to anticipate and respond to aging-related needs. Age friendly communities have come to address the capacities and needs of people of all ages, not only those who are “elderly.”⁷

What is a Dementia Friendly Community?

A dementia friendly community is a community that focuses on the inclusion of people with dementia and on stigma reduction. Its community members are educated about dementia and recognize that people with dementia may sometimes experience the world differently. Community members foster understanding about dementia and encourage people with dementia to participate in their communities to the fullest extent possible.

Dementia friendly communities are defined by both social and physical characteristics. The term “community” can refer to a geographical location such as a neighborhood or city. It also includes groups with shared interests or features, including professional groups, faith-based groups, or local businesses. Dementia friendly considerations can help support people with dementia by reducing anxiety, stigma or frustration.

Similarities and differences of Age and Dementia Friendly initiatives

These initiatives are uniquely different, although they share many overlapping qualities.

Age friendly community planning does not necessarily incorporate people with dementia into the process of implementing change. Dementia does not just affect older persons, with people being diagnosed under the age of 65.

Actively incorporating dementia-friendly considerations into current policy and projects will help empower people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias and may also address the needs of others living with cognitive impairments.

In Saskatchewan, Age-Friendly Communities follow the guidelines and milestones set out by the World Health Organization. However, these make no specific reference to meeting the needs of people with dementia.

Dementia-friendly initiatives recognize not only considerations for physical accessibility, but also address the cognitive changes that result from neurodegenerative conditions, and the stigma often associated with them. This “dementia lens” has applicability in planning, policy, programming, and design.
Why are dementia friendly considerations an asset to existing age friendly initiatives?

- Dementia friendly communities complement age friendly initiatives by adding nuance and depth with respect to the needs of people with dementia and their care partners.
- Working specifically with dementia in mind is more instructive and inclusive of both physical and cognitive impairments. For example, while adding more outdoor seating is age friendly, if the seating design is ambiguous or does not clearly indicate its function, it is not a dementia-friendly change.
- Dementia-friendly planning acknowledges care partners and the concepts of interdependence and reliance.
- It also recognizes people with other impairments who may feel excluded from the active aging framework guiding age-friendly work.
- It is important that older age not become equated with dementia, which is a reason for encouraging the use of two different initiatives.
- Overlapping areas of interest between age-friendly and dementia-friendly initiatives mean that already working to become age friendly can build on existing successes to increase support for dementia-friendly considerations that can extend benefits to all members.
- There is potential to reduce injury and isolation. Everyone benefits when community members can respond appropriately if a person with dementia is wandering or experiencing disorientation.
- People with dementia and their care partners are at risk of social isolation, and people with dementia who are socially isolated may experience faster rates of decline. Dementia friendly communities reduce social isolation by increasing locally based social supports.

What makes a difference to people living with dementia?

As part of a survey assessing the “dementia friendliness” of communities in Saskatchewan, the ASOS conducted focus groups to gather information from people with dementia about their experiences in their communities.

The results indicated the following important areas as being essential components to dementia friendly communities:

1. The built environment, including both indoor and outdoor spaces, is accessible and incorporates dementia-friendly design considerations (navigational aids, signage, streetscapes),
2. Availability of support services (day programs, home care, community-based health care, caregiver respite),
3. Supportive social networks (family, friends, community members, social groups for people with dementia),
4. Opportunities for civic duty and volunteering,
5. Awareness and understanding amongst health care providers, public service organizations, and the general public.

Full results of this Dementia Friendly Communities: Stakeholder Consultation Report or its Executive Summary can be requested by contacting the ASOS via email at friends@alzheimer.sk.ca.
What People with Dementia and Care Partners Say:

The following quotes were gathered using the Dementia Friendly Communities Survey for Care Partners, and in accompanying focus groups with people with dementia.

**Barriers to Dementia Friendliness in Communities**

“Some days are harder to cope and therefore scared to commit to regular group activity. Large groups can be stressful unless someone understands your struggles.”

“Support for the caregiver is vital to the effective care of the person with dementia... such support is not widely available or recognized.”

“Lots of people make no differentiation where you’re at on the continuum (of the disease). They expect if you have it... you should be what they picture of that end stage.”

“If someone has cancer, everyone comes in to hug you. If you have dementia, they all just scatter.”

**Enablers to Dementia Friendliness in Communities**

“I use routines and try to keep consistent patterns when I go around... I walk the same routine all the time. I couldn’t do it if it was different.”

“I use the card (Independence Card) to show people that I have dementia. The card lets me show people I have dementia and that’s what’s causing this.”

“The neighbours on my Bay know I have it (dementia) and can help me if they see me.”

Figure 1. Quotes from Dementia Friendly Communities: Stakeholder Consultation Report (2017)
If resources are limited, there are many small changes and dementia friendly considerations that can be implemented with minimal or no additional cost. Discover examples in this section.
Dementia Friendly Communities: Local government considerations

People want to age in place and stay at home for as long as possible and many experts agree this is best, especially for a person with dementia. When people must leave familiar settings due to the changes brought on by the illness, and the resulting stigma and embarrassment about behaviour changes, they experience a tremendous amount of stress. There can be a loss of independence, sense of belonging, and identity associated if people with dementia have to leave their home. People with dementia want to live a good quality of life in their neighbourhoods and still be valued community members, be acknowledged and feel a sense of belonging.

Many of the noticeable difficulties people with dementia face in their social and physical environments can be decreased when barriers causing disability are reduced or removed. When communities are dementia-friendly, a person is able to navigate the familiar landscape around them, or be more likely to ask for assistance from a compassionate passerby.

Social environment

A dementia friendly community member recognizes that:

- A person with dementia is more than their diagnosis, but may experience the world differently since dementia can affect a person’s abilities, behaviour and communication.

- Everyone has a role to play in seeing people with dementia as a part of their community and supporting their safety, independence, value and inclusion.

A few examples of what a dementia-friendly social environment may look like:

- Dementia education is available to help community members reduce stigma that is often associated with dementia and better awareness of the warning signs empowers people to receive a timely diagnosis.

- Members of the community have a basic understanding of dementia and are aware of practical information such as communication strategies to provide appropriate assistance for a person with dementia.

- Community organizations include people with dementia in their regular programming and through specifically designed activities, allowing increased participation of people with dementia in community life.

- City staff at all levels are dementia-educated and able to recognize and communicate effectively with a person with dementia. Others in the community, such as emergency responders, bank tellers, and bus drivers may receive dementia education specific to their job during orientation and staff training.

Building Dementia Friendly Communities... one Friend at a time.

A Dementia Friend is someone who decides to learn more about dementia, and about what they can do to be more inclusive and supportive of those affected by it.

Dementia Friends are encouraged to Learn, Share, and Act, but there is no requirement to volunteer time or donate. Dementia Friends make a difference simply by increasing their own understanding and awareness, and using this information in their own interactions and in their own communities.

Dementia Friends focuses on efforts of individuals to increase their own knowledge and competency. Dementia Friendly Communities focus on how sectors and organizations can work to become dementia-friendly. This is a systemic focus, with an organizational level of commitment.

Visit www.DementiaFriendlySaskatchewan.ca to become a Friend.
**Built environment**

The built environment⁸ “refers to the human-made or modified physical surroundings in which people live, work, and play” - characteristics such as buildings, parks, schools, transportation systems and other infrastructure that is used on a daily basis.

A built environment that is welcoming to people with dementia includes:

- Flat, wide and unobstructed sidewalks with smooth, plain, non-slip, non-reflective paving.

- Clearly marked accessible washrooms in public spaces with options for family washrooms that can allow care partners to provide assistance if necessary.

- Landmarks, distinctive structures, open spaces and places of activity and rest.

- Easy-to-use street furniture in styles familiar to people. Preliminary studies indicate that style is less important than clarity of function and use. Ambiguity of design is challenging for persons living with dementia.

The built environment, through its design and use, can have a positive or negative impact on independence and safety. It may affect a person with dementia’s ability to access, comprehend and utilize their surroundings. Any built form that negatively affects orientation, confuses or increases the risk of falls puts community members with dementia in challenging situations. Many people with dementia have a tendency to limit going out, but a dementia friendly community should make it easier and more appealing to participate and socialize.

Here are some reasons the built environment is so important for people with dementia and their care partners:

- A person with dementia’s abilities change as the disease progresses. While this change will limit their interaction with the outdoor environment, this interaction, according to research, provides some sense of independence and self-respect at a time when they are experiencing the loss and new challenges due to their cognitive impairment.

- The majority of people with dementia, particularly in the mild to moderate stages, continue to go out alone daily, but may be limited in where they go or how they get around to doing things closer to home. For example, some older adults with dementia limit their outside activities to relatively undemanding situations, such as going to the corner shop, posting a letter or going for a short walk.

- People with dementia may experience anxiety, disorientation or confusion in complex, crowded or heavily trafficked places or when startled by sudden loud noises.

- People with dementia may visualize planned routes, and tend to use familiar landmarks or other visual cues they regularly encounter, rather than following maps and written directions as wayfinding techniques.

### Example 1: Considerations for dementia friendly signage

Additional resources for dementia-friendly built environments are included in Section 7. A few examples of dementia-friendly signage include:

- Avoiding highly stylized text or ambiguous symbols that may be difficult to interpret.

- Ensuring visibility by situating signage at key decision-making points to aid navigation.

- When possible, place signs on the object they refer to, with ample contrast to the background so they are easily distinguishable.

- Ensure adequate contrast in the colour of the sign, and choose matte or non-reflective materials.
In considering the design and construction of streets, public spaces and buildings, municipalities could incorporate a dementia friendly lens to address the points above, and also reduce the likelihood of injuries to both people with dementia and care partners who may assist them in the community. A dementia friendly lens employs the key principles listed below that are fundamental to dementia friendly design. Using these principles may also improve your community’s accessibility and inclusivity for other groups as well.10, 11

1. **Inclusion** - In this instance, inclusion is characterized by interest in the lived experience of dementia, so that the feelings and experiences of people with dementia are legitimized and respected. For neighbourhoods to be considered sustainable and inclusive, they should allow for equality of access and opportunity regardless of ability or age. A well-designed built environment can enhance independence, which in turn has an impact on quality of life factors such as confidence, health and self-respect.

2. **Accessibility** - The principle of accessibility addresses how urban public spaces enable people with dementia to reach, enter, use and walk around the places they visit. Due to the progression of dementia and ongoing changes to the urban landscape, accessibility is characterized as a constantly-changing experience between the person and public spaces.

3. **Distinctiveness** - Distinctiveness helps people understand where they are and helps them identify which way they should go. Connected with the principle of familiarity, distinct places have easily legible features that give clues to help people understand where they are and what is expected of them in that space. Distinctive places also retain local character through built form, design features, colours and materials that give the streets and buildings their own identity. Employing familiar designs is one example, as is maintaining long-established landmarks that are positioned at decision points for ease of navigation.

4. **Safety** - Only when people perceive the outdoors to be safe can they enjoy being out in the community. The possible benefit of having safe outdoor environments is an improved quality of life for citizens, especially if the environment is inclusive of a range of physical and cognitive abilities.

5. **Familiarity** - Familiarity addresses the recognizable nature of urban public spaces and the extent to which older persons can easily understand and navigate their environments. Familiarity helps with wayfinding.

6. **Comfort** - Comfort refers to the ability to visit places without mental or physical discomfort. Comfort is often associated with calm, welcoming, informal and pedestrian-friendly spaces.

Example 2: Considerations for dementia friendly outdoor spaces

One way that parks and public spaces can address inclusion, accessibility, and safety is to provide seating for pedestrians of all ages and abilities to rest along pathways. However, to be dementia-friendly, it is also necessary for these seating features to be familiar and recognizable. This means that a bench should look like a bench, and efforts to add artistic flair should not cause the items purpose to become ambiguous.

For a person with dementia, abstract designs may be difficult to interpret, and therefore improper design can prevent the item from being useful.
Starting the process: First steps to becoming a dementia friendly community

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is here to help. With evidence-based information, resources and support, we can support a community’s steps towards becoming dementia friendly. One of the first steps a community should take is to connect with the Society to receive consultation on your projects and to make sure you receive the appropriate recognition for your work. The Society provides materials, including toolkits, sector-specific materials and other resources to unite your community with our provincial initiative.

If you let us know what your community is doing, we will also be better able to advocate for dementia friendly work throughout the province, as we strive to increase support from various organizations and stakeholders.

People with dementia in your community are key to this initiative. We encourage you to consult with them before committing to an action plan. By making sure that your Dementia Friendly Action Plan is informed by the lived experience of people with dementia in your community, your efforts are more likely to be effective and targeted at the areas that are most meaningful. Furthermore, involve municipal staff from different departments - such as Engineering, Libraries, Parks, Planning, and Police - in order to inform the Dementia Friendly Action Plan and build ownership and commitment in support of implementation.

By making a formal commitment to become a more dementia friendly community your municipality sends a strong message: that dementia is important and that you are working toward inclusivity for all community members affected by dementia.
Becoming a Dementia Friendly Community

**Step 1. Partner in providing dementia friendly education.**

- Hold a Dementia Friendly Communities presentation for the Mayor and the local government council.
- Co-host a Dementia Friendly Communities presentation for the general public and encourage participants to sign up as Dementia Friends to continue learning more.
- Appoint a point-person to be the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s contact.

**Step 2. Set up a Dementia Friendly Working Group.**

- Identify key stakeholders and community members to join a working group responsible for advising on your local government’s Dementia Friendly Action Plan. People with dementia should be included as a core part of this working group and should consult on dementia-friendly work in the community.

**Step 3. Develop a Dementia Friendly Action Plan.**

- Work with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, local government staff and the DF working group to create a Dementia Friendly Action Plan tailored to your community. See the Dementia Friendly Action Plan worksheet at the back of this toolkit.
- Focus the Dementia Friendly Action Plan on key areas identified locally by people with dementia, care partners and the DF working group.
- Develop a strategy to communicate the dementia-friendly work being taken in the community with the general public. This should be created in partnership with city staff and the DF working group.

**Step 4. Implement your Dementia Friendly Action Plan.**

- Present the Dementia Friendly Action Plan to the Society for review.
- If endorsed, share with City Council, and request an endorsement or a resolution to work towards becoming dementia-friendly.
- Continue to meet with the DF working group regularly and include people with dementia to work on the Dementia Friendly Action Plan.
- Continue to work with the Society to review Dementia Friendly Action Plan progress and ongoing efforts.

**Step 5. Stay accountable.**

- Engage people with dementia on an ongoing basis in guiding and consulting on dementia-friendly goals and actions.
- Provide a maximum one-page brief each year, or organize a short update meeting annually with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan.
- Complete an annual self-assessment (worksheet provided by the Society) on your community’s progress.
Actions local government can take

Dementia friendly communities will look different depending on the size and resources of each municipality. If resources are limited, there are still many small changes and dementia friendly considerations that can be implemented with minimal or no additional cost.

The key for effective policy change is to inform the thinking of underlying policy so it is inclusive of people with dementia and their care partners.

A sampling of examples related to education, bylaws, policies, programs, and partnerships are included here.

These examples are intended to provide inspiration and illustrate the range of possible actions that can promote dementia friendliness.

Education examples

- Educate local government councils with Dementia Friendly Communities presentations, and encourage both new and existing council members to become Dementia Friends.
- Host an educational public event in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan.
- Promote ongoing Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan dementia education sessions in accessible community spaces such as local libraries.

Bylaw examples

- Create separate bike and pedestrian pathways with considerations for snow and ice removal in winter months that will ensure accessibility and safety of users.
- Use traffic calming methods such as narrow traffic lanes and residential traffic diversion to reduce traffic speed and volume. Encourage active transportation as well as public transit with legibly labelled and accessibly located bus stops.
- Improve signage in your area. Use large graphics and symbols with clear colour contrasts such as dark lettering on a light background. Part of improving signage is placing signs along a path with easy-to-follow instructions in visible locations that assist someone getting from one location to another.
- Encourage mixed land use through zoning, in order to promote multi-purpose spaces near residential areas, ideally within a five- to ten-minute walk.
- Provide support for home maintenance and update building codes to provide for accessible housing. For example, the British Columbian City of New Westminster, as part of its Age- and Ability- Friendly Community Initiative, implemented an Adaptable Housing Policy and Bylaw. More specifically, the City, through its zoning bylaw, requires 40 per cent of all new single-storey, multi-family units to be adaptable.

Policy examples

- Educate city staff through a Dementia Friendly Communities presentation and with access to appropriate dementia-related resources. Consider including these resources and ongoing education as part of the new staff orientation process, or as regular professional development policy for city staff.
- Build public toilets which are accessible for persons with mobility impairments and their care partners; for example, designate washrooms as family or mixed gender washrooms and ensure they are well marked as such.
- Increase the duration of crossing walk lights and ensure they include both visual and audio cues.
- Consider specific policies that guide the placement and design of features such as public benches that are easily recognizable, and can be useful additions to parks and pathways.
- Create safe parking drop-off zones in front of facilities so care partners are able to take a person with dementia safely inside, before parking the car.
Program examples

- In partnership with your local business bureau, organize a Dementia Friendly Communities presentation series specifically for businesses in your community.

- Work with recreation centres to develop programming that is accessible for people with dementia of various ages, so it is appropriate for both people affected by younger onset and for those ages 65 and older. Consider offering these opportunities at times of the day that may be most suitable to people with dementia and their care partners to attend, or in locations that would allow someone with dementia to use public transportation to travel to and from.

- Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment through projects like community gardens. Ensure these spaces are designed to suit a range of mobility requirements including features such as raised garden beds and planters. Research supports a strong relationship between exposure to nature and the reduction of stress, chronic disease, depression, anxiety, improved concentration and cognitive functioning.

Partnership examples

A dementia friendly community is one with benefits for more than one subgroup of people; however, sometimes change can be met with uncertainty and may be slow to catch on. To maximize engagement, consider who you can encourage to be key stakeholders or champions of the work, such as:

- Banks, emergency services, municipal employees, pharmacies, grocery stores, recreation centres, local parks, community associations, post offices and health authorities.

- Retail, restaurants, coffee shops, taxis, cinemas and theatres.

- Home care providers, non-governmental organizations, food banks, hospitals and telephone providers.

Your local service clubs may also be a great resource; for example, they could help with street safety projects by clearing footpaths and repairing broken paving to provide safer mobility.

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Example 3: Additional actions local government can take for programs and policy

In the recent Dementia Friendly Communities: Stakeholder Consultation Report (2017), people with dementia identified supports that allow them to continue to be engaged in volunteering and civic duty as being important enablers to dementia friendliness.

A few examples may include:

- Support the involvement of people with dementia in community events through volunteer programs that can promote meaningful social engagement.

- Ensure volunteers and staff at community events are provided with access to appropriate dementia-related resources that can encourage understanding and awareness.

- Consider ways that community events such as town hall meetings, elections, and announcements can be made more inclusive by hosting them in accessible venues with supports available to assist people with dementia to participate.
Rural community considerations

Many rural communities in the province have aging populations of older adults. While dementia is not a normal part of aging, age is the largest risk factor. Thus, rural areas should be prepared to address the issue of dementia.

Rural communities, depending on their size, may have a limited staff capacity and fewer resources to undertake projects in support of a dementia friendly community. Fewer available health-care services in the continuum of care in rural areas may pose significant challenges for older adults who may need a continuum of care or assistance services to cope in their communities.

Many communities might have gaps in service provision, including limits to:

1. Transportation
2. Respite care
3. Support for informal carers
4. Home care and daycare
5. Resources for medical practitioners to offer families
6. Education for health-care providers

However, there are many positive aspects of smaller and rural communities, including strong social interaction and ties, relationships with service providers and appropriate services addressing local needs.

Often there are strong social networks and informal social supports, such as commitment from community members, families and health-care providers to support people with dementia. These networks are a significant asset and highly valued by the community. They provide a sense of safety in the community and are key resources when formal supports are limited as in the examples above.

People who were always active in their communities will likely be well-supported, but this same support may not be felt by those who were not as well connected before their diagnosis, who display responsive behaviour or who live alone. The connectivity of a smaller community may also be perceived as negative for those who would like to keep their diagnosis private or limited to a small circle of supporters.

Why should rural communities consider becoming dementia-friendly?

- Dementia friendly communities can provide community-based supports where fewer formal supports exist.
- The ASOS is mobile, and may be able to travel to rural communities to provide dementia education. The Dementia Helpline also offers a toll-free number available throughout the province.
- The Action Plan provided in this toolkit is designed to be adapted to suit the needs of communities of all sizes, including remote, rural, and urban areas.
- This is an opportunity to provide education and awareness in communities that may be historically underserved with medical services and information.
- Dementia friendly communities can better support citizens to stay in their communities for longer periods of time.
- Statistics Canada results indicate that rural populations are older than urban populations, and rural areas are also aging faster than their urban counterparts in terms of the change in the share of seniors over the age of 65. Dementia friendly communities can help provide supports that allow citizens to live well in their own communities for longer.
CASE STUDIES

The following case studies were originally published in the Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s Dementia-Friendly Communities Local Government Toolkit. They have been replicated here as examples of urban and rural communities that have committed to become more dementia friendly.

URBAN: CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER

Why does New Westminster want to be dementia-friendly?

The City of New Westminster has undertaken significant work in the area of Age- and Ability-Friendly Communities, including an extensive consultation process with older adults and seniors. This work is informing the City’s Official Community Plan. It has also been used to facilitate the development of a number of initiatives in support of an Age- and Ability-Friendly Community, including an Adaptable Housing Policy and Bylaw, an Age-Friendly Business Initiative, a Century House Inclusion Project, an annual Connecting Seniors to Services Fair, a Seniors Engagement Toolkit, a Seniors Services Directory and a “Wheelability Assessment Project.”

New Westminster, similar to other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, is experiencing an aging population. As people age, they report more health and activity limitations. Dementia also becomes more prevalent as people age. In New Westminster, it is estimated that 940 people currently have dementia, with this number projected to almost double to 1,830 by 2034. Additionally, research shows that about half of the people with dementia live in the community.

Given that about 500 people with dementia are currently living in the community, the question of planning for their needs becomes important - ensuring that the built environment is accessible and that people with dementia have opportunities for involvement and social interaction. This is critical for their independence and quality of life.

The City has a key role to play, as it informs the built environment and is responsible for civic facilities and infrastructure such as sidewalks. It also offers a range of programs and services including fire, library, police and recreation.

“On a daily basis, this is the level of government that most impacts all citizens’ lives.”

What are your goals?

The City of New Westminster is working towards becoming more dementia-friendly. In October 2013, City Council endorsed three Senior Advisory Committee recommendations in support of becoming a dementia-friendly community. The City also successfully applied for a 2015 Age-Friendly Community Planning and Project Grant and will use this funding to develop a Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan and three Action Guides.

The plan will be based on a comprehensive literature review and consultation process, including with people living with dementia, their care partners, family members and health care professionals.

The plan will also inform the development of the City’s Official Community Plan, which is a policy document which sets the vision, goals and objectives for the future of the city. It also provides an overall framework for decisions on a range of areas including planning, land use, building and development, housing, neighbourhood character, social policy and transportation.
On January 26, 2015, New Westminster became British Columbia’s first dementia-friendly City Council, with councillors participating in a Dementia Friends workshop conducted by the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

What partners are you considering working with?

The City of New Westminster will be working with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. and Fraser Health. The City and the Society are currently collaborating to raise public awareness about dementia. Specifically, the City and the Society participated in a dementia-friendly community panel at the New Westminster Seniors Festival, which attracted over 500 seniors.

The City will also explore developing a more formal relationship with Fraser Health related to the development of the Action Plan and three Action Guides.

What are your next steps?

The next steps are to retain the services of a consultant and to establish a working group which will work towards the development of the Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan and three Action Guides. This work will be completed by December 2015. At this time, the working group will shift from planning to implementation.

**RURAL: VILLAGE OF VALEMOUNT**

Why does Valemount want to be dementia friendly?

Keeping people in their home where everything is familiar and comforting is important. We all live in communities, and most importantly our communities are made up of people - a village’s citizens. We all need a sense of belonging and we all need to keep engaged in life. Valemount has a large number of seniors, some living with dementia. As a community, we need to know how to communicate and how to make their lives safe, productive and comfortable.

What are your goals?

Our goals are to make our community knowledgeable about dementia. Local businesses of all kinds need to be aware of what to look for and how to react when someone living with dementia comes in. We need to be vigilant and caring about all our citizens. We also need to be aware of the stresses that care partners are facing and know how to assist them.

“...make Valemount a warm and welcoming place where our friends living with dementia feel confident to walk out their front doors and venture into town without worry.”

What partners are you considering working with?

1. Chamber of Commerce
2. Local government
3. School
4. Bank
5. Library
6. Medical clinic
7. Seniors housing
8. Robson Valley Support Society
9. Hotels and restaurants
10. Non-profit societies
11. Home based businesses
12. First responders
13. All our citizens

What are your next steps?

Our next step is to work on our Dementia-Friendly Action Plan.
SECTION 4: DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The Dementia Friendly Action Plan can be tailored to suit the context, capacity, and priorities of each unique community. Learn how to develop an Action Plan that meets the needs of your community.
How to develop your Dementia Friendly Action Plan

People with dementia deserve the same service and have the same human rights as all other community members, including engagement in their community. Becoming dementia-friendly means you can communicate more respectfully with all citizens, while meeting the communication and service needs of people living with dementia. To achieve this, your Action Plan does not necessarily need to make large promises: small, meaningful changes can make a significant difference.

The Action Plan can be a high-level overview document to help organize your priorities and commence the discussion about dementia friendly communities. It should be tailored to the needs of each community’s context. As your community moves forward in its work, your actions may change or develop. You are not bound by your Action Plan, only encouraged to accomplish what is determined as feasible by your community.

This initiative is not intended to burden resources, but rather to be incorporated into existing systems, policies and programs, and to nuance action within your community through consideration of the lived experience of people with dementia.

During the process, it is important to consider your community’s capacity to achieve these actions and plan accordingly. It may be helpful to conduct a needs assessment to identify where current community strengths may be built upon.

Local governments may also pass a resolution to become dementia-friendly and endorse their Dementia Friendly Action Plan with the recommendation that:

Council endorses the proposed activities and agrees to provide overall financial management related to the subject plan conducted as part of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities initiative.

We encourage you to submit your Action Plan to the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan for consultation and feedback. A sample Dementia Friendly Action Plan worksheet is included on the next (3) pages to help you get started.

Tips for successful implementation of your Dementia Friendly Action Plan:

To increase your chance of success in implementing your specific actions:

- Nominate a willing point-person in the community to be the Society’s contact person for dementia friendly communities.
- Convene a working group that includes people with dementia. Support communication amongst group members by conducting meetings face to face, rather than via teleconference whenever possible.
- Engage with the private as well as non-profit sector: the private sector can be just as important for people living with dementia as it is for the rest of the community.
- Consider ways to promote your efforts to become more dementia-friendly through word-of-mouth, by hosting a community forum, or by connecting with local seniors’ groups and community centers.
- Connect with local Age Friendly Communities committees to learn about their successful strategies and opportunities to work together. This reduces unnecessary duplication and can help to engage key community stakeholders and members.
Dementia Friendly Action Plan Worksheet

Please list at least two actions for each category. If you require suggestions or recommendations, feel free to connect with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan. Upon completion, send the Action Plan to friends@alzheimer.sk.ca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATION</th>
<th>Name of the working group:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Location:</td>
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<td>Date established:</td>
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<tr>
<th>DFC WORKING GROUP POINT-PERSON</th>
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<td>Contact information for point-person:</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKING GROUP MEMBERS</th>
<th>Name and organization (OR if they are living with dementia or are a care partner)</th>
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<tr>
<th>ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS</th>
<th>Explain who has been involved in the development of the plan if they are not on the working group (ie. “Consulted Community Members”)</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISION</th>
<th>What is the working group’s vision for a dementia friendly municipality/community?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example, “Our objectives aim to engage with the local community to provide education about dementia that will enable community members to make changes and take positive steps towards becoming a dementia-friendly community”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example, “Work with local stakeholders to make the community a friendly place for people with dementia and their care partners to live, work and play.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This plan has been submitted for consultation with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan (ASOS):
- No
- Yes (Date submitted: __________________________)

The ASOS representative has:
- Accepted the “Working to become dementia friendly” status.
- Provided feedback for revisions to be made to the plan.

Feedback for any suggested revisions:

Name and position of the ASOS representative:

Signature of ASOS representative:

Date:

### ENGAGING PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Actions (2x)</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resources required</th>
<th>Possible outcomes</th>
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</table>
| Actions to take to engage people with dementia in the process of becoming dementia friendly | Who will be responsible for this action?  
E.g. organization name or individual name | When will this action be completed?  
E.g. Fall 2018 | What will be required to achieve this action?  
E.g. volunteers, materials | Identify the level of impact.  
E.g. policy change, program development, increased awareness, etc. |
<p>| <strong>For example,</strong> “Organize a focus group of people with dementia from the community to identify challenges and needs they experience in the community.” | | | | |
| <strong>For example,</strong> “Engage people with dementia in ‘walking interviews’ to assess the built environment and current levels of accessibility in the community’s public spaces.” | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th>SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT</th>
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<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resources required</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible outcomes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible actions to positively influence the social environment</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for this action?</td>
<td>When will this action be completed?</td>
<td>What will be required to achieve this action?</td>
<td>Identify the level of impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For example, “Challenge stigma, myths, misconceptions through education by incorporating Dementia Friends and dementia-related components into training and orientation for staff.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>For example, “Identify key partners, services, and businesses within our local context.”</td>
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<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resources required</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible outcomes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible actions to positively influence the built environment</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for this action?</td>
<td>When will this action be completed?</td>
<td>What will be required to achieve this action?</td>
<td>Identify the level of impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For example, “Design accessible ground level public toilets in popular public locations that allow care partners to provide assistance.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>For example, “Build more street furniture, whose design clearly identifies its purpose.”</td>
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<th>POLICY</th>
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<td><strong>Actions (2x)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resources required</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possible outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible actions to positively influence municipal policy</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for this action?</td>
<td>When will this action be completed?</td>
<td>What will be required to achieve this action?</td>
<td>Identify the level of impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For example, “Reviewing existing policy, practice, programming.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Remove barriers to change by addressing current municipal policy and bylaws.”</td>
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Dementia Friendly Communities are defined by both social & physical characteristics. Tools in this section can help you to create friendlier environments & interactions.
The following is a summary of key findings based on a research project of the Wellbeing in Sustainable Environment Research Unit of the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development. Use the following checklist to assess the existing dementia-friendly features in your community and to conceptualize possible next steps for your community. Offering preliminary guidance for all levels of urban design, this checklist may be useful for planners, designers and architects.

### Characteristics

#### Sidewalks and Streets

- Walking trails and sidewalks are wide, flat, well-maintained and clean.
- Crosswalks and public toilets are at ground level.
- Unavoidable level changes have a slope with a maximum gradient of one in 20.
- Crosswalks are placed at adequate intervals to provide safe access.
- Some sidewalks are tree-lined or pedestrianized to offer protection from heavy traffic.
- Street clutter (signs, advertising billboards and pillars) is minimalized.
- Bicycle lanes are separate from sidewalks.
- Crosswalks have audible cues at a pitch and timing suitable for older people.
- Paving is flat, smooth, non-slip, plain and non-reflective in clear colours and in textural contrast to building walls.
- Street lighting is adequate for people with visual impairments.
- Street types are hierarchically designed and varied in their size and use: main streets, side streets, alleyways and trails. Quiet side roads provide alternative routes away from crowds and traffic.
- Blocks are small and laid out on an irregular grid based on an adapted perimeter block pattern.
- Streets are short and fairly narrow. Streets are well connected and gently winding with open ended bends to enable visual continuity. Forked and T-junctions are more common than crossroads.

#### Street furniture

- Street furniture is designed in a familiar way, obviously indicating its use as a resting place. Seating is sturdy with arm and back rests and made from materials that do not conduct heat or cold.
- Bus shelters are enclosed and have seating.
Dementia Friendly Outdoor Environment Checklist

**Overall**

- The variety of landmarks includes historic and civic buildings (such as war memorials or churches), distinctive structures (such as a water tower and public art) and welcoming open spaces and places of activity (such as urban squares, parks or playgrounds).
- Land uses are mixed. Services and facilities are within 5-10 minutes walking distance of housing.
- The outdoor environment is welcoming and unintimidating, with quiet alternative routes away from crowds and traffic. Acoustic barriers, such as planting and fencing, reduce background noise.
- Urban areas have small, well-defined open spaces with toilets, seating, shelter and lighting.
- Spaces and buildings are oriented to avoid creating areas of dark shadow or bright glare.

**Signs**

- Signs give simple, essential information at decision points, such as intersections or junctions. Signs are easily visible, in clear locations that are not cluttered with other signs.
- Signs locating important places and buildings are hung horizontally on the wall or are attached perpendicularly to the wall.
- Signs have large graphics with realistic symbols in clear colour contrast to the background, preferably dark lettering on a light background.
- Signs have non-glare lighting and non-reflective coverings.
- Notices such as this one may be placed at eye-level near entrances to public washrooms: “Members of another gender might be in this washroom assisting someone.”

**Design**

- The architectural features used in design are familiar or easily understood in a variety of styles, colours and materials.
- Obvious cues are positioned where sightlines end, especially at decision points, such as junctions and bends, to make directional decisions easier.
- Entrances to buildings or public areas are clearly visible and obvious.
- Gates and/or doors have no more than two kilograms of pressure to open and have lever handles.
Dementia Friendly Outdoor Environment Checklist

Example 1. Image #1 includes both text and an icon on a matte background with sufficient contrast to the surface, all of which help to make it simpler to understand. Images in #2 are abstract, shiny, and do not identify the door as leading to a washroom. This type of signage can be difficult to understand for people with dementia.  

Example 2. Image #1 depicts familiar seating design. Images #2 to #4 depict ambiguous seating designs that are less welcoming and can be challenging for people with dementia to recognize and use.

Why a Dementia Friendly Environment is Important:

Dementia may cause changes in a person’s abstract thinking ability, vision and memory. Ambiguous design is challenging for people with dementia because of changes in their abstract thinking. Changes in judgment may also make determining the function of certain objects difficult. With dementia, there may be challenges with sequential thinking that cause difficulties interpreting cues that signal the use of buildings.

Since dementia affects memory and people with dementia may forget things more often, retracing a path may become more difficult. Dementia can also affect a person’s vision and depth perception, increasing the likelihood of falls.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs</th>
<th>Communication strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with memory.&lt;br&gt;As the disease progresses a person with dementia may forget things more often and not remember them later, especially more recent experiences. A person living with dementia may forget an appointment, or the sequence or details of an event. They may forget to pay for their dog license or may have lost a tax bill.</td>
<td>• Do not argue. If a person with dementia does not remember a discussion you had previously, for example, it is because he or she is no longer able to properly store that memory due to changes in their brain.&lt;br&gt;• When at all possible try to adjust to a person with dementia’s reality because they may no longer be able to adjust to yours. You can do this by responding to feelings not necessarily the stories the person shares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with familiar tasks.&lt;br&gt;A person with dementia may have trouble with tasks that have been familiar to them all their lives. This is related to challenges in abstract or sequential thinking. Completing paperwork or following directions may now be challenging for them.</td>
<td>• Try demonstrating rather than providing directions verbally.&lt;br&gt;• Don’t rush - this may mean booking a longer appointment or meeting.&lt;br&gt;• Take things one step at a time.</td>
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<td>Inability to follow a conversation or find the right words.&lt;br&gt;Everyone has trouble finding the right word sometimes, but a person with dementia may frequently forget simple words or substitute a less appropriate word for the one they really want. This can make their sentences or accounts of events difficult to understand.</td>
<td>• Speak slowly and provide one message at a time. This will give the person the time they need to digest the information.&lt;br&gt;• When possible use close-ended or yes or no questions. When this is not possible use questions that have parameters: for example, “Tell me about going to the bank yesterday afternoon” rather than “What did you do yesterday?”</td>
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<td>Disorientation of time or place.&lt;br&gt;It’s normal to briefly forget the day of the week or your destination. But a person with dementia can become lost somewhere familiar, not knowing how they got there or how to get home. New spaces like an unfamiliar newly-developed city square or building may make a person with dementia anxious.</td>
<td>• If you have concerns about someone’s ability to get home safely, ask them how they are planning to travel. With a person with dementia’s permission, it might be necessary to walk him or her to the bus stop or wait with them until a taxi arrives.</td>
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## Communication Strategies

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<th>Signs</th>
<th>Communication strategies</th>
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<td>Poor judgment. A person living with dementia may experience decreased judgment. This could mean a variety of things: the person may dress inappropriately for the weather, may experience less social inhibition or their behaviour may put them at risk of becoming a victim of a crime or personal injury.</td>
<td>• Make suggestions tactfully and respectfully. For example, instead of saying, “Why are you dressed in a t-shirt in November? You must be freezing!” it may be helpful to say something like “It has gotten cool all of a sudden, would you like to borrow a sweater?”</td>
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<td>Problems with abstract thinking. A person with dementia may have challenges with tasks that require abstract thinking. This may make answering open-ended questions difficult and it may be challenging to make sense of symbols or images. This may include being unable to make sense of bathroom signs that use highly stylized or alternative images to represent which is men’s or women’s.</td>
<td>• Because dementia affects a person’s ability to use abstract thinking, try to use straightforward language. Avoid metaphors or turns-of-phrase like “a penny for your thoughts” or “woke up on the wrong side of the bed.” • Stay positive, but avoid jokes or sarcasm, as these require advanced abstract thinking skills that can be difficult for some people with dementia.</td>
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<td>Challenges in mood or behaviour. Everyone experiences changes in mood. But a person with dementia can sometimes become suspicious, withdrawn or even more outgoing than before. Over time a person with dementia may become more apathetic, fearful or even paranoid. For example, they may lose interest in activities they previously enjoyed: a person who loved going for walks is no longer interested in doing so.</td>
<td>• Adapt to the changes the person is experiencing. Like all of us, people with dementia will have “good days” and “bad days.” If a person with dementia is having a bad day it may be helpful to reschedule a meeting or appointment. • Acknowledging the feelings of a person with dementia, as expressed by their mood, can be helpful even if you feel their stories may not be accurate. Addressing their feelings may help address challenging behaviour.</td>
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SECTION 6: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Find answers, examples, and inspiration to help your community get started.
How can our own community join the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative?

- Visit [www.dementiafriendlysaskatchewan.ca](http://www.dementiafriendlysaskatchewan.ca)
- E-mail the ASOS at friends@alzheimer.sk.ca to request more information and provide the following:
  - Name and best contact information for the person/organization issuing the request
  - Location (name of community)
  - Details about the community, such as whether there are currently any Age-Friendly Community initiatives underway

We will connect you with a volunteer or staff person to follow-up.

What are some key things we can do to be successful?

Recruiting, retaining and including community partners and individuals who share in your dementia friendly community vision, who have a strong network, and are part of the community’s key decision-makers can help your working group be successful. You may also want to work with the ASOS to identify tools to allow volunteers and other stakeholders to promote and sustain local momentum.

We are already working towards being Age-Friendly, how can our community become dementia friendly too?

Age-Friendly Communities and Dementia Friendly Communities share many similar goals - to be more supportive, inclusive, accessible and welcoming for community members. Communities already working towards Age Friendly designation may find including dementia friendly considerations in their planning processes reduces duplication of efforts.

For communities that are already Age-Friendly, these successes can lay a strong foundation for which additional dementia specific considerations can be built with quicker uptake. Consider having one or more members of the existing Age-Friendly committee also join the DFC working group, and contact the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan to learn more about the similarities and differences of AFC and DFC.

How do we set up a Dementia Friendly Working Group?

1. Encourage Mayor and council to become Dementia Friends.
2. Gauge interest of staff at city or town hall and host a Dementia Friendly Communities presentation that is open to the public.
3. Work with people who are interested in sustaining awareness and change in the community. Aim for about five to eight dedicated members and, most importantly, include people living with dementia and their care partners. They are the experts with lived experience.
   
   Learn about their experiences of living in the community: Where do they feel supported? Where can improvements be made?
4. Work with other people and organizations already implementing age-friendly considerations in the community.
5. Organize an accessible location to meet regularly to keep Action Plan items on track.
What are some guiding questions our community might begin to address?

- What types of organizations should be involved in dementia friendly community planning?

- Does your community already have dementia friendly elements? How can these successes be built upon?

- What would have an impact on people with dementia and their care partners in your area?

Is Dementia Friendly Communities a new initiative?

The official launch of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan’s Dementia Friendly Communities initiative took place in January 2017. It is the first of its kind in the province. The development of the ASOS’ Dementia Friendly Communities initiative has been supported by funding from a New Horizons for Seniors grant provided by the Government of Canada in 2016.

As a concept, dementia friendliness has been growing as a global movement for several years, with initiatives in many international communities including the United Kingdom, Europe, United States, Japan, Australia and more. In Canada, other Alzheimer Society federated partners have also undertaken initiatives to create dementia friendly communities.

How do Dementia Friendly Communities initiatives in Saskatchewan work together with Dementia Friends and Dementia Friends Canada?

The Dementia Friendly Communities initiative and the Dementia Friends program complement each other, but are separate projects. The provincial Dementia Friends program is focused on building understanding and reducing stigma on an individual level, while the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative focuses on groups, businesses, and organizations. That is, individuals can sign up as Dementia Friends, while communities and groups can also work to become more dementia friendly.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan has developed www.dementiafriendlysaskatchewan.ca to provide information about dementia friendly initiatives in the province, including a form to sign-up as a Dementia Friend.

One way to describe the difference is that the Dementia Friends program is helping to “Build Dementia Friendly Communities... one Friend at a time.”

What kind of messages will help us to engage local community members or other stakeholders?

- Present a unique selling point, for example, “You will be a trailblazer in your community.”

- This is an opportunity for stakeholders to improve the services they provide to seniors, which may enhance their reputation for good customer care or, in the case of a municipality, as a great place to live.

- Participating can be better for business, especially in communities that have many seniors who would feel safer and more confident where there is an increased level of understanding.

- On a personal level, the Dementia Friends program and the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative can provide people with increased sensitivity and understanding when interacting with friends and family affected by dementia.
SECTION 7: LINKS & REFERENCES
LINKS AND VIDEOS

Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan
www.ABCDementia.ca
www.DementiaFriendlySaskatchewan.ca

Alzheimer Society of B.C.
Jim’s Story
Dementia Friendly Communities Local Government Toolkit (2016)
Making your workplace dementia-friendly: Information for financial professionals
Making your workplace dementia-friendly: Information for housing professionals
Making your workplace dementia-friendly: Information for legal professionals
Making your workplace dementia-friendly: Information for recreation service providers
The dementia policy lens toolkit, Penny MacCourt, PhD (March 2009)

Canadian
Building strong communities, University of Waterloo
Community dementia action plan: designing a way forward, BrainXchange (June 2015)
Dementia-friendly outdoor environments, age friendly communities: tools for design and dementia, BrainXchange
Intersection between the built and social environments and older adults’ mobility: an evidence review, National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (November 2012)

Age-Friendly Communities
Age-Friendly Communities - Public Health Agency of Canada
Canada’s Aging Population: The municipal role in Canada’s demographic shift (2013)
Age-friendly Communities in Canada: Implementation Guide
Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide
Age-Friendly Saskatchewan

International
A tool kit for building dementia-friendly communities, Wisconsin Healthy Brain Initiative (USA) (May 2015)
Aging in place bibliography, American Planning Association (USA)
Comments from the Sikh community: dementia-friendly Gurudwaras, Alzheimer’s Society UK (July 2014)
Dementia resource suite for schools, Alzheimer’s Society UK (2014)
Dementia-friendly churches, Livability (UK)
Dementia-friendly town of Crawley, Alzheimer’s Society UK (July 2014)
Developing dementia-friendly communities (physical features checklist), Housing Learning & Improvement Network (UK) (June 2012)
Developing dementia-friendly communities: learning and guidance for local authorities, Innovations in Dementia and The Ageing Well program (May 2012)
Guide to practical examples of dementia-friendly initiatives, Alzheimer Society of Ireland (September 2013)
Small changes help make a dementia-friendly community, Alzheimer’s Society UK (March 2014)
REFERENCES

1 Government of Saskatchewan, “About the Saskatchewan Municipal System”
2 Alzheimer Society of B.C., Dementia-Friendly Communities Local Government Toolkit, (2016)
4 Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, “What is dementia?”, (2014)
5 Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, “Ways to communicate”, (2014)
14 This summary is derived from research and reports conducted by Dr. Elaine Wiersma, Department of Health Sciences at the Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada;
   Elaine Wiersma and Alison Denton, Dementia in rural northwestern Ontario: Understanding the context and issues, (2011)
   Additional statistics in this section are taken from the following source:
   Kimberley Dandy and Ray D. Bollman, Seniors in Rural Canada, Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin, 7(8), 2008
16 The images depicted in these examples are real signs located in Saskatchewan establishments. Pictures by Abby Wolfe.