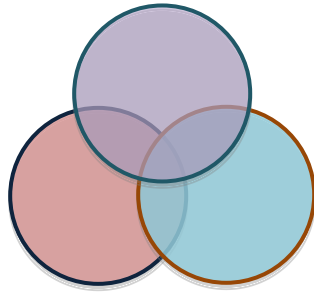


Connecting London Seniors... Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood



MEDWAY COMMUNITY REPORT

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Acknowledgements

The “Connecting London Seniors... Neighbourhood by Neighbourhood” project has been made possible through funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The three year grant was awarded to the Seniors Community Association in November of 2008. Special thanks go to the Boys and Girls Club of London for their assistance in administering the funds.

The Medway community is the fifth and final neighbourhood to be approached through the Connecting London Seniors project. Medway seniors have given generously of their time and ideas to support the needs assessment phase of the project. Although connecting with older adults over the summer months was somewhat of a challenge, attendees at our discussions demonstrated the commitment and enthusiasm Medway residents have for their community and their suggestions and ideas will benefit older adults for some time to come.

Great support was received from numerous neighbourhood resources and agencies to host and promote the outreach and needs assessment process. It is a good example of what a caring neighbourhood Medway is. Specifically, the assistance of the Sherwood Library, Sherwood Forest/Orchard Park Rate-Payers Association, Sherwood Forest Mall, Medway Community Centre and Northwest London Resource Centre is much appreciated.

Finally, members of the Seniors Community Association have been instrumental in promoting the project and offering advice and support for the process. Their donations of time and practical help have been invaluable in ensuring the process is both productive and enjoyable. The experience and advice of the University of Western Ontario Aging and Community Health Research Lab has also been of critical assistance in ensuring that the outreach process is conducted professionally and effectively.

To find out more about the Connecting London Seniors project or the contents of this report, contact Jean Knight, Project Coordinator, at 519-963-4567 or jeanknight@rogers.com.

Background

The Connecting London Seniors project will address the needs of seniors in their local communities and develop a model to support senior leadership that can be replicated in many neighbourhoods. In the five London neighbourhoods approached, there are more than 9,930 seniors aged 65 years or older. These numbers are projected to double in the next 25 years, so the potential impact is immense. This highlights the need to focus on seniors as significant recipients of community services and to engage them as leaders and active participants in the community development that is to come.

Three years of funding for the project was approved in November of 2008 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Medway is the fifth and final neighbourhood to be approached and outreach started in the community in May of 2011. The project recognizes the demand for senior services and funding is growing rapidly and builds on the trend of seniors wishing to remain independent in their own homes.

The Seniors Community Association (SCA) is a collaborative network of seniors and like-minded service providers who work together to address the need for action on seniors' issues in a broad range of areas. The SCA provides general direction and advice on issues of interest to London seniors, as well as taking on specific projects which will enhance the provision of service for seniors. Both the seniors and service providers, who donate their time to the SCA, do so for the sole purpose of making a lasting difference in the quality of life for seniors in London. They recognize that good planning and a focus on community needs can produce innovative ideas and ways to share resources without significant new sources of funding.

The Seniors Community Association (SCA) was founded in 2003 and following the release of the "Working Together to Support London Seniors" Community Action Plan in 2005; four committees were formed to carry out the report's recommendations. The Seniors Community Association is an excellent example of community-building at the grassroots level. Without formal funding, agencies and seniors volunteer their time and expertise to ensure that the needs of seniors are addressed in our city. The *Connecting London Seniors* project is an example of the very proactive response the SCA is undertaking to support seniors' ever-growing needs at a neighbourhood level.

Neighbourhood Profile of Medway

- Medway is a largely residential neighbourhood located in the northwest end of London, Ontario. Currently, Medway is among the top five most populated planning districts despite the fact that its population growth is generally down. According to the 2006 Census Data from Statistics Canada, Medway has a total population of 20,625 accounting for 5.9% of the entire London Population.

Medway's Age Distribution:

- Residents of Medway are generally younger than those of London as a whole. Specifically, of Medway's total population:

~ 28% of residents (n = 5,815) are children and youth aged 0-19 years.

~ 37% of residents (n = 7,635) are aged 20-44 years.

~ 25% of residents (n = 5,205) are aged 45-64.

~ 10% of residents (n = 1,970) are aged 65 years and older.

~ *The majority of senior residents live with their spouse and/or children.*

Medway's Ethnicity:

- The top five ethnic origins of residents of Medway are: Chinese, British, Polish, Indian & Columbian.
- The top five languages spoken by residents of Medway are: Spanish, Arabic, Polish & Chinese, with the vast majority speaking English.

~ 20% of residents (n = 4,100) are visible minorities.

~ 1% of residents (n = 190) are Aboriginal.

Medway's Education: (for residents aged 15 years and older)

~ 11% of residents (n = 2,355) have less than grade 12 education.

~ 19% of residents' (n = 3975) highest level of education is the completion of high school.

~ 39% of residents (n = 7,980) have a college or university diploma or degree.

Medway's Income:

- 15% of residents have an incidence of low-income.

All information was obtained from the City of London website at:
http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/About_London/infomedway_nopics.htm

Speaking to Medway Seniors

Seniors Focus Groups

Six focus groups were held with Medway seniors from May to September 2011. A total of 27 seniors attended the sessions held across the Medway community. The purpose of these sessions was to give seniors the opportunity to talk about the key issues identified in the *Working Together to Support London Seniors* Community Action Plan (specifically access to information, health and mental health, recreation and leisure, and transportation) as they pertain to their daily lives and the lives of their neighbours in the Medway community. As well, seniors were asked to identify which of these key issues was a priority to address in their community.

DEMOGRAPHICS Medway Focus Groups (N=27)	
Gender:	
<i>Men = 5 participants (18.5%)</i>	
<i>Women = 22 participants (81.5%)</i>	
Age:	
<i>Average = 69.3 years +/- 7.2 years</i>	
<i>Range = 59 - 85 years</i>	
<i>Median = 69 years</i>	
Marital Status:	
<i>Married or living common law = 11 participants (40.7%)</i>	
<i>Single = 3 participants (11.1%)</i>	
<i>Separated/Divorced/Widowed = 13 participants (48.1%)</i>	
Living Arrangements:	
<i>Alone = 7 participants (25.9%)</i>	
<i>With Spouse or Partner = 17 participants (63.0%)</i>	
<i>With a Family Member = 1 participant (3.7%)</i>	
<i>With a Non Family Member = 2 participants (7.4%)</i>	

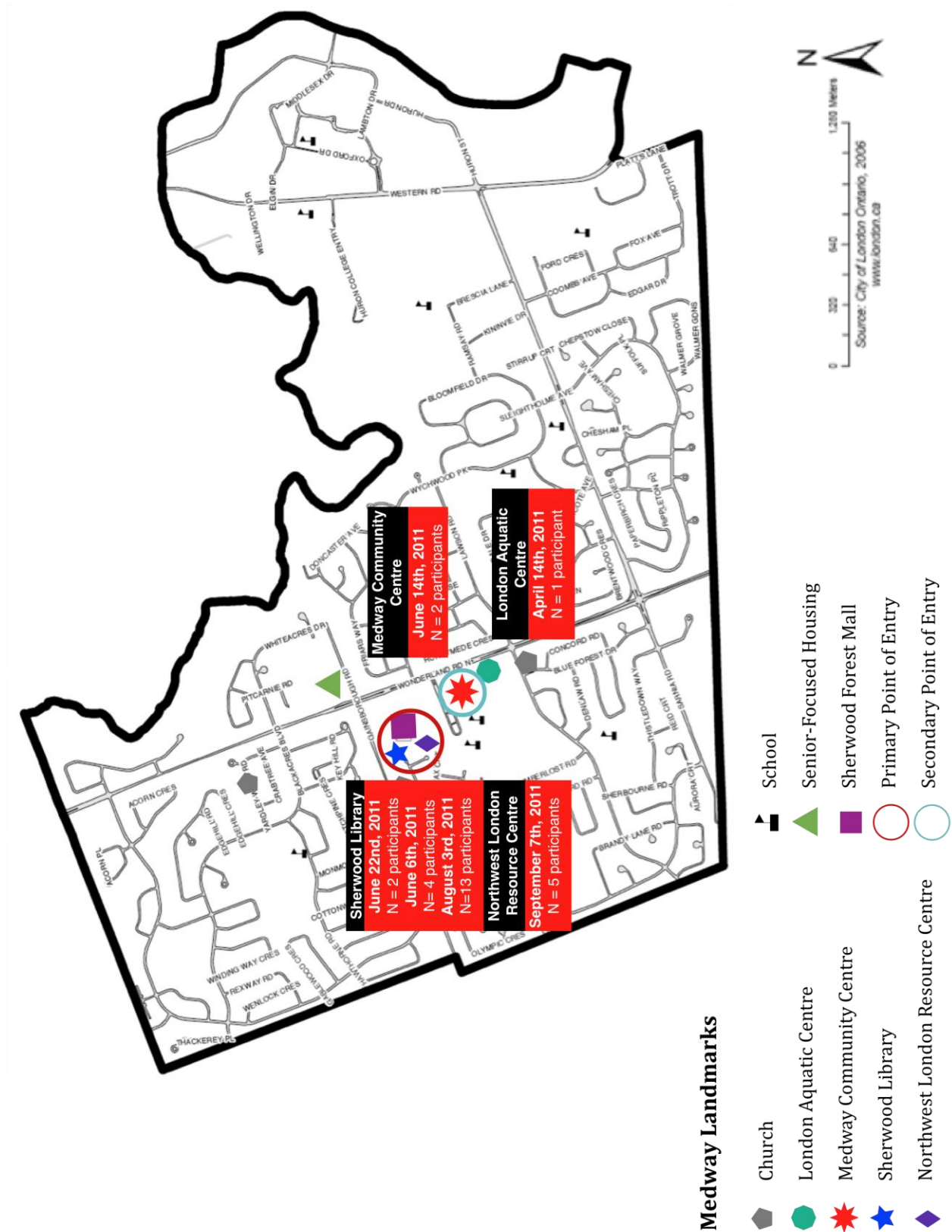
Priority Issue for Medway

Focus group participants were asked at the start of each discussion to rank the 4 key issues identified in the *Working Together to Support London's Seniors* Community Action Plan, with a ranking of one pertaining to the issue requiring the most improvement in their neighbourhood and a ranking of four as the issue requiring the least improvement. Below are the results:

KEY ISSUES	1 <i>(Most Important)</i>	2	3	4 <i>(Least Important)</i>
<i>Transportation</i>	11	6	4	3
<i>Recreation & Leisure</i>	8	9	5	2
<i>Access to Information</i>	8	6	6	4
<i>Health & Mental Health</i>	6	5	5	8

As shown in the table above, there was only a marginal difference at the outset of each discussion in the rating of the priority issues for the vast majority of participants in Medway. In further discussion however, it quickly became apparent that residents in the Medway community strongly feel that their community needs more local recreational activities and programs to bring the community together and to help foster social interactions, health and wellbeing and the ability to learn and try new things.

Medway Resources and Discussion Locations



Key Issues/ Responses by Medway Seniors Transportation

“London is a city for drivers. You need a car to go from A to B, if you’re not mobile”

“ I don’t know because I’m still driving”

“I don’t feel safe crossing the street”

“I find I don’t want to take the bus, it takes too long, it’s too convoluted”

Top 4 Key Issues or Themes:

1. Public transit routes are a barrier to accessing local services

- Routes are indirect and time consuming
- Obtaining information on schedule changes is difficult and confusing

2. Making Medway pedestrian-friendly

- Need for frequent pedestrian crossings and extended walk signals
- Curbs and speed bumps make it difficult when using mobility aids
- Interest in organizing walking groups and ecological walking tours in natural areas

3. Issues with snow and ice removal

- Lack of adequate snow removal forces people to walk on roads
- Need for affordable, reliable assistance for home snow removal and yard maintenance

4. Information on transportation options

- Limited information on what transportation services are available once someone can no longer drive, affordability, frequency, etc.

Key Questions	Responses
What are important places that you need to get to?	- Doctor; hospital; church; groceries; Sherwood Forest Mall; Royal Canadian Legion; Aquatic Centre; Theatre; to visit family
What modes of transportation do you usually use to get to these places?	- LTC bus, rides from family/friends, car (driving), Paratransit, Meals on Wheels, Voyageur, Checker Limousine, bike, taxi, walking

<p>Are there any obstacles or barriers that make it difficult to get to the places you need to go?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is not a bus into Sherwood Forest Mall• There is not a bus that goes all the way down Wonderland (to Westmount or Food Basics)• There is not a bus that goes down Gainsborough (can't get to church by bus)• No access to No Frills at Fanshawe despite being a 3 minute drive from the mall• Masonville, 5 minute drive but an hour and two transfers on the bus• Weather is always a concern, especially when having to wait for bus transfers• Changing bus schedules and routes all the time, not knowing about the new schedules• Difficulty finding information on the bus routes (which bus stop to stand at)• Difficulty carrying shopping on the bus, little room• Sometimes LTC cancels buses if they are a bit behind, no warning• Cost of alternative modes of transportation (taxis; Checkers Limosine does has a seniors rate, more companies should follow)• Costs and difficulty finding parking downtown• No more malls being built, everything is becoming big box stores, difficulty walking from one to another• Paratransit, you don't have to transfer, it's great, but have to apply with a doctor, not available for all seniors• Safety in terms of walking and taking the bus at night• Need for community buses/shuttles to other malls and grocery stores• Poor snow removal at bus stops• Poor snow removal of sidewalks and cross walks makes it difficult to cross the street and reach the walk buttons.• Difficulty crossing streets around Sherwood Forest Mall, Corner of Wonderland and Gainsborough, not enough time to cross safely if you are a little slower.• Need for bike etiquette on sidewalks• Fear of dogs on long leashes
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Recreation & Leisure

“You say just go out, but you need to know where to go”

“Do we not have it because there is no demand for it, or do people just not know what’s happening?”

“Everywhere has a little bit of everything. Is it better to have 3 or 4 places doing a lot, or many things going on in different places but you don’t know about them?”

Top 4 Key Issues or Themes:

1. Need for local neighbourhood hub

- Need for a local seniors centre or community meeting place that is affordable and accessible
- Need for a stronger social network in the community (no longer knowing neighbours)

2. Address public transportation routes and advocate for improved schedules

3. Need for better collaboration and coordination of social programs

- Planning to avoid duplication of programs and better dissemination of information (Brown Bag Lunches etc.)
- Provide a forum or opportunity to identify specific interests (book club, speakers etc.)

4. Limited access to recreational information

- Not knowing what programs are currently being offered in the Medway area
- Better promotion and recognized locations for community information (Neighbourhood newsletter?)

Key Questions	Responses
What activities do you participate in for fun?	- Red Hat Groups, Newcomers groups, Probus, Church, cards (euchre, bridge) theatre, day trips, walking group, walking along paths, jigsaw puzzles, reading, swimming, volunteering, activities at apartment buildings, shuffle board at arena, library, tai chi, Univeristy exercise programs, exercise at the community centre, music, gardening, singing, photography, birdwatching, home improvements, geneology, activities at the Kiwanis Centre, canning, cooking, bowling, sewing. Dance, salsa, line dancing

<p>Do you find any barriers to being able to participate in recreation or leisure activities in your neighbourhood?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in local groups (i.e. walking groups) keep dwindling, so there are limited recreational activities in area • Medway Resource Centre hours are minimal, only 1 paid position • London is a very difficult city to integrate to for newcomers • Need for more multi-generational activities • Transportation to programs outside of Medway is difficult • Attendance and participation to most community programs is low. • Programs being canceled due to poor attendance (i.e. no more book club at the library) • Need for activities geared to different levels of abilities • Need for people who are educated in seniors programming and exercise • Many programs being duplicated • Cost of programs • Swimming Pool at Aquatic Centre is too cold to swim in • Spectrum is not user-friendly, difficult to find senior-specific programs in Medway • Closing of Sherwood Forest Public School, upset about losing a community green space, suggestions to turn it into a community centre • Concerns over safety of local walking paths • No activities on the east side of Wonderland • There is no non-commercial community hub • Need for a stronger social network in the community (no longer knowing neighbours) • Need for better information and advertising of what is going on in the community • Programs for those whose second language is English • If nobody volunteers to run a program, programs don't run • Need for more senior programs in the Community Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ majority are children-oriented programs
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Access to Information

“It’s important that people get the information. It’s great to have information out there, but you have to get it to people somehow.”

Top 4 Key Issues or Themes:

1. No central information source for seniors

- Not knowing who to ask, gaps in receiving Londoner or other community newspapers

2. Need for someone to take responsibility to collect, maintain, disseminate information

- Benefits of a community newsletter or high-traffic bulletin boards identified for current info

3. Limited access to and knowledge of computers

- Interest in computer access and assistance that is not rushed or time-limited
- Need for a person to address questions

4. Interest in local speakers and educational presentations on needed services

- Interests include public transit, consumer protection, alternative health services, canning etc.

Key Questions	Responses
<p>Where do you go to find out what is happening in your neighbourhood?</p>	<p>- Word of mouth (children and grandchildren); newspapers (Londoner {has a seniors’ section}, London Free Press); seniors’ resource books; Information London; pamphlets, internet, library bulletin boards; doctor, news; Telehealth, Spectrum, notices in the apartment building, librarian, City Hall</p>
<p>Are there any barriers to finding and accessing the information you need to stay active and healthy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things are not advertised effectively on the TV and radio, often out of date. • No central place to get info (not always on the computer) • Need to be able to be able to talk to someone over the phone (too many automated services) • City website is difficult to use • Bulletin boards are messy/chaotic, you have to know what you are looking for • Need for more support/info sessions for key issues for seniors (retiring, downsizing, pension/estate forms, frauds & scams etc.) • Library is the only local resource for information • Door to door salesman, scams for seniors, poor service, feeling like you have to way to solve these concerns without experience, no local consumer protection group • Nowhere to go to get support and advice for using computers, searching the internet etc.

Health & Mental Health

“You almost need to be healthy in order to get a doctor”

Top 4 Key Issues or Themes:

- 1. Limited access to health and mental health information**
 - Knowledge of clinics taking new patients or local walk-in clinics
 - Finding alternative health services
- 2. Isolation and lack of social connections**
 - As neighbourhoods change, no opportunity to know neighbours or stay connected
- 3. Travel challenges to receive health care services and maintain basic needs**
 - Public transit issues to visit doctors/specialists or find affordable groceries, parking costs.
- 4. Continuity of primary health care**
 - Difficulty finding a family physician when you are older/have multiple chronic conditions
 - Lack of time to discuss multiple issues or adequately understand health resources
 - Having to learn to advocate for yourself and your health concerns

Key Questions	Responses
What does good health and mental health mean to you?	- Mind, body and spirit; ability to get out and do things; being independent; keeping your brain busy; mobility, as long as I can walk, I feel healthy; not having to rely on others
What resources are available in your neighbourhood that help you remain physically and mentally healthy?	- Doctors, pharmacist, eye doctors, dentist; Kiwanis Centre, CCAC; walk-in clinics; alternative medical therapies (acupuncture etc), physiotherapy, Western Dental Clinic, aquafit, walking group

What are barriers to you remaining mentally and physically healthy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty getting to, and finding walk-in clinics• Distance to get to some medical services (often take a couple of buses)• Difficulty finding accurate medical information on the internet• No vision services in the community• Many seniors living in own their homes, concerns about isolation; losing friends to long term care facilities etc.• Physicians lack experience and understanding of seniors (seeing them as a whole person, not just a condition)• Cannot change physicians, if you have one, you are lucky• Some physicians are really fast, in and out, difficulty getting questions answered• Expense of grocery stores and pharmacies in Medway (Metro, Shoppers)• Need for nutritional advice, cooking for one etc.• Cost of eye glasses, dentists etc.• No farmers market in Medway Area• Need for more alternative medicines• Costs of home support services
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Conclusion and Next Steps

In terms of demographics, the Medway community is a large area that is comprised of several distinct neighbourhoods all with their own unique personalities and interests. It is a largely residential area and the majority of the older adults who participated in the initial needs assessment discussions primarily lived on the east side of Wonderland with many years of residency in the Medway area. Of those that have participated to date, the majority were women and living alone, with an average age of 69 years. It is interesting to note that census data confirms that currently Medway has approximately 2,000 residents that are aged 65+. This is a relatively small percentage of the overall population, but when you factor in those that are aged 45 to 64, 25% of the population (or 5,200 people) will be approaching retirement age in the coming 20 years. This will substantially increase the interest and importance of seniors' issues in the coming years for the Medway community.

It was unfortunate that outreach commenced over the summer in Medway. It proved to be a challenge to reach older adults and get them involved. However, it is important to note that the initial needs discussions are just the start of the process and that any effective community development is an ongoing process that continually evolves and invites new participation. Given the numbers noted above, it would be wise for seniors' issues to be considered and aligned with the broader community initiatives undertaken by either the local Rate-Payers Association or the Northwest London Resource Centre. The benefits of aligning with existing community groups and sharing valuable volunteer time and effort are evident.

In Medway, discussions predominantly revolved around the need to foster a stronger community atmosphere through more social and educational opportunities. Consistently, whether participants were older and less mobile or still active in the community, concern was expressed around feelings of isolation and the need for a community hub where information and coordination of needed services could be found. In the discussions to date, many simple suggestions were made which could positively impact the lives of older adults in the Medway neighbourhood. We hope that the process of asking a broad range of seniors to come out and talk to one another begins to address the need for stronger social connections. The new relationships started through the discussion groups will hopefully foster a broader sense of community and provide additional opportunities to work together.

In each of the four areas we addressed, opportunities for future improvement were identified. Medway seniors proved that they were both innovative and practical in brainstorming options. A summary of the Connecting London Seniors' suggestions follow, but they are only a sampling of the ideas that may be considered by Medway seniors for future action and improvement. The suggestions made include ambitious, long-term projects like that of a dedicated neighbourhood hub and small wins that can be acted on fairly simply.

- Work together to build a stronger social network in the community for older adults
- Advocate for improved public transit routes and/or community buses/shuttles to other malls and grocery stores
- Meet with the City of London to discuss traffic lights and concerns with cross walks
- Address the need for better community information (newsletters, bulletin boards that are current, public education sessions and speakers)

- Advocate for a government help desk in the mall once a month to answer questions
- Establish a local consumer group to help seniors make decisions in choosing services
- Find a champion to organize Brown Bag lunches or meetings with area service providers to discuss needed services and encourage collaboration
- Offer a basic technology program to teach seniors the fundamentals of computers, cell phones, etc.

Next Steps

- ⇒ **Review** the Medway Community Report and discuss it with your neighbours
- ⇒ **Share** copies of the Community Report with other seniors, service providers and community members to generate awareness of community needs
- ⇒ **Form** a Medway Seniors Neighbourhood Advisory Council to champion the needs of older adults and identify local activities that could make a positive difference in their neighbourhood
- ⇒ **Get involved** to whatever level you are interested - receive additional copies of the report, attend future community meetings and identify issues of particular concern to you
- ⇒ **Ask** for help from the Seniors Community Association
- ⇒ **Align** your efforts with local associations, service providers and businesses to address issues and make even small changes possible
- ⇒ **Learn** what other neighbourhoods are doing for seniors and what Medway older adults want
- ⇒ **Educate** community leaders on what seniors want in Medway
- ⇒ **Advocate** for needed community services and resources
- ⇒ **Invite** new ideas and new seniors to continually come forth and get involved
- ⇒ **Enjoy** the camaraderie and benefits that come from taking an active role in seniors issues in the Medway community

To get involved and find out more about opportunities for seniors in Medway, contact:

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519-963-4567
www.scalondon.ca