



# Town of Ajax

## Older Adults/Seniors Recreational Services Strategy

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PREPARED BY CANADIAN URBAN INSTITUTE with the assistance of HEMSON Consulting

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background Trends.....	1
1.2 Purpose of Strategy .....	2
1.3 Policy Framework .....	2
<b>2. RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Methodology Overview.....	4
2.2 Key Terms And Definitions.....	6
2.3 Seniors Recreational Services Trends .....	7
<b>3. EXISTING CONDITIONS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Overview of Recreation Services for Seniors.....	8
3.2 Seniors Programming .....	10
3.3 Spaces.....	11
<b>4. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS AND FORECAST.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5. WHAT WE HEARD .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6. STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1 Key Strategic Considerations.....	20
6.2 Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan .....	23
6.3 Recommendations .....	24

## APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Implementation Timelines
- Appendix B – Inventory of Seniors Programs
- Appendix C – Inventory of Recreation Spaces
- Appendix D – Demographic Analysis
- Appendix E – Detailed Population Tables

# 1. Introduction

This Older Adult/Seniors Recreational Services Strategy (The Strategy) has been prepared to help the Town of Ajax Recreation, Culture & Community Development Department respond to the leisure, social and physical space needs of an aging and diverse older adult and senior population. It is informed by a demographic and ethnographic model, which gauges the number, distribution and diversity of the growing older adult and senior population in Ajax.

Background research was conducted on service delivery models, seniors programming trends and best practises from comparable municipalities. A review all the seniors programs and recreational spaces in Ajax was completed. A survey was distributed and two rounds of consultations with seniors groups and the public were undertaken.

The strategy contains 14 recommendations to improve and /or expand upon existing services and facilities and one recommendation to investigate the feasibility and opportunities to develop a Town operated Seniors Centre.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TRENDS

**Ajax's population is aging.** In 2011, 21,360 residents or almost one in five residents (18.9%) were 55 years or older. By 2041, that number is expected to more than double to 53,550 or 36.5% of the population. The vast majority of the future senior population are people who already reside in Ajax. In 2016, the largest age groups in the population are those between 50 and 54 years of age. By 2031 this group will have aged to be seniors.

There were 9,670 residents aged 65 or older in 2011, representing just over 8.5% of the Town's total population. By the year 2041, it is expected that there will be 38,000 seniors accounting for just over one quarter of the Town's total forecast population of approximately 148,000.

At the same time, **Ajax is also diversifying.** Much like seniors, visible minorities represent a rapidly growing segment of Ajax's community. In 2011, nearly 50,000 residents self-identified as belonging to a visible minority, accounting for just under 46 percent of Ajax's total population. Between 2001 and 2011 Ajax's visible minority population grew by over 32,000 residents. This figure accounts for nearly 90% of the town's total population growth over the ten-year period. The bulk of these new residents were between the ages of 30 and 45 and assuming they will stay in Ajax through their

retirement years, the Town will see a notable increase in visible minority seniors by 2031.

Ajax tends to be a town where **people “age-in-place”**. People move to Ajax to buy a home and stay in their homes and communities for a long period of time. This study identifies migration and settlement trends by area so that Ajax will be better able identify and align future opportunities for seniors services and programming with the distinct needs of Ajax’s overlapping and growing older adult and multicultural communities. Over the next 10, 20 and 30 years, the Town’s programs and spaces will need to continually adapt in response to the increased number and diversity of participants and changing leisure, social and physical space needs and interests.

The Town of Ajax is responding to the of this aging and increasingly diverse older adult and seniors population by engaging with local seniors clubs and individuals and developing this Strategy as a key input into a future Age-Friendly Community Strategy.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for the Town of Ajax to ensure that programs and space for older adults and seniors meet the needs of residents today and in the future and enable these older adults and seniors to continue to or become actively engaged with the Town’s services and facilities.

It provides recommendations to ensure that Town staff are able to effectively manage seniors recreational services, policy, and infrastructure over the next 30 years. The strategy will also help to inform an Age-Friendly Community Strategy, which will be undertaken in the future.

## 1.3 POLICY FRAMEWORK

The federal government, the Province of Ontario and the Town of Ajax have made age-friendliness a priority over the last several years. For example, the Government of Ontario and its ministries introduced a number of progressive strategies, plans and guides to better support the needs of the aging population, including: - The Aging at Home Strategy (2007); Living Longer, Living Well (2012); - Ontario’s Action Plan for Seniors (2012); and - The Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide (2013).

Several of the Town of Ajax plans and strategies refer to or provide recommendations for increasing age-friendliness, including:

- **2015—2018 Community Action Plan** aims to build a strong sense of community and encourages the Town to implement new strategies and partnerships for seniors.
- **Diversity & Community Engagement Plan (2010)** recommends, the Town play a key role in communicating town sponsored and organized events in order for older adults and seniors to be involved with the community, along with other groups in Ajax. The Plan also states that inclusion in programs and services may require financial resources be allocated to support a diverse community, this includes low income families, not-for-profit community groups and seniors.
- **Accessibility Plan – Ajax Accessibility in Action (2012-2017)** describes current achievements in accessibility and establishes a framework for achieving greater accessibility in Ajax. The plan directs new construction of municipal capital projects follow accessibility facility design criteria.
- **Recreational, Parks and Culture Master Plan (2008)** recommends that the Town continually evaluate opportunities to expand and/or add dedicated older adult areas to existing community recreation and leisure facilities; consult with local seniors clubs in the design of expanded or older adult-oriented facilities. It also recommends that a focus continue to be placed on enhancing the service delivery model for older adults through the development of innovative, inclusive and accessible programs focusing on wellness and active living.





## 2. Research and Methodology

### 2.1 METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

There are 4 main components of the Strategy methodology:



#### Research

Background research was conducted on service delivery models, older adults and seniors programming trends and best practises from comparable municipalities. The results of a Promising Practices Review, previously conducted by the Town of Ajax, was used to inform the strategy. The review looked at 15 other seniors centres/models from across Ontario and Canada in terms of their physical characteristics, operating budget, fees, organizational model, operating model, etc.

#### Programs and Space Inventory

The study team worked with Town staff to create a database or 'inventory' of older adults and seniors programs and recreational spaces in Ajax<sup>1</sup>. Lists of existing recreational programs were collected and compiled into one document. Gaps in the list were filled in through feedback from stakeholders who attended focus groups and public meetings. A list of facilities was provided by the Town as the basis of the space inventory. The spaces were categorized and organized by type. Additional research into the type, size and availability of recreational spaces within these facilities was undertaken.

#### Demographic Modelling

A review and analysis of demographic trends was conducted in order to understand the scale and characteristics of demographic change and anticipated future service demand. Forecast models for future growth in Ajax to 2021, 2031 and 2041 were also developed. The forecast refined similar work undertaken across the Greater Golden

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<sup>1</sup> Available in Appendix B and C

Horseshoe to a municipal level, to identify the changing age characteristics and migration patterns within the Town.

## Consultation

The Strategy has been substantially informed by input from the 200+ seniors and older adults who participated in focus groups, public meetings and a survey. The first round of consultation occurred in October 2016 and included two focus groups and one public meeting, as well as the Older Adult and Senior Survey. About 60 people attended the focus groups and public meetings and 183 people completed the survey.

The focus of the consultation was based around the following set of questions:

- 1) What types of programs do older adults and seniors in Ajax want?
- 2) How do they want them delivered?
- 3) Do the types of programs people want and how they want them delivered differ by age, income, and ethnicity?
- 4) Are the types of programs needed by the seniors in ethno-cultural communities different from what are currently offered by the Town of Ajax? What types of programs are they? How should they be delivered?
- 5) What are the challenges to delivering programs that seniors need / want in Ajax?
- 6) What are your thoughts on current & future program space for older adults and seniors?



The second round of consultation took place in December 2016 and included 2 public meetings – one in the afternoon and one in the evening – at the Ajax Community Centre. The purpose of these meetings was to present and gather input on the Draft Strategy. Results were incorporated into the Strategy.

The public meetings and the survey were promoted by the Town, using newspapers, posters in community centres, seniors residence and the library, e-blasts and mobile street signs. Focus groups were conducted with representatives from key stakeholder groups, including both seniors clubs, PROBUS, the library, and ethno-cultural groups. Hard copies of the survey were distributed in each seniors centre and local community centres.

## 2.2 DEFINITION OF SENIORS AND OLDER ADULTS

In Canada, “seniors” are typically described as all people aged 65 and over.<sup>2</sup> The term “older adult” is sometimes used to refer to people aged 55-65 or in other cases it simply refers to those who may technically be considered seniors but don’t like to be called a senior yet. Some places go further to define ‘pre-retirement seniors and ‘older seniors.

However, neither “seniors” nor “older adults” are homogeneous demographic groups. Clearly, there are significant differences between life at age 65, compared to age 75 and 85-plus. These age groups are also heterogeneous in some ways, reflecting diverse values, educational levels and socioeconomic status. Women and men also experience aging in different ways. Different groups are likely to have different recreational needs.

An example of how Ajax could categorize seniors into age categories is included in Table 1.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Description of Age Categories**

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<sup>2</sup> FCM: *Canada's Aging Population The municipal role in Canada's demographic shift*

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from *Town of Whitby: 2014–2018 Recreation and Leisure Services Seniors Strategy*



<b>Older Adults (55-64)</b>	Many still in the workforce. Work and family commitments may limit social and physical activities. Interested in sports leagues, fitness, evening and weekend programs. Pursue activities similar to younger years, although physical ability may have declined slightly. Social networks are wide reaching. This group places a high degree of importance on travelling, the arts, active living, and entertainment. They enjoy active pursuits, learning new games, volunteering and are interested in health and wellness seminars.
<b>Seniors (65-84)</b>	Seek passive, less rigorous leisure. Place strong focus on socialization and supporting local community. Social networks are primarily linked with like-minded people of a similar age. They enjoy traditional special events, slower paced fitness activities and volunteering.
<b>Older Seniors (85+)</b>	May have limited mobility and health conditions. Social interaction is a high priority. Support of family and friends and community is critical for their social well-being. They enjoy slower paced social occasions. May need assistance with transportation and mobility aids.

## 2.3 OLDER ADULTS AND SENIORS RECREATIONAL SERVICES TRENDS

There are a number of key trends identified through background research that impact older adults and senior's lifestyles and preferences towards recreation, such as:

- Increasing ethno-cultural diversity requiring new programs and services and new kinds of active outreach
- Seniors (and especially 'boomers') are the fastest growing demographic in most municipalities - meaning increased pressure on municipal services.
- Increased regulations and requirements around accessibility.
- Seniors are becoming more active and interested in a wider range of activities. This may indicate less growth in demand for passive activities such as playing cards. Although opportunities for socializing are important.
- There is a wide range of financial means among seniors (some are still working/making good money, while others are on pensions or fixed incomes).
- Greater collaboration and cooperation among recreation service providers.

## 3. Existing Conditions

### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF RECREATION SERVICES FOR SENIORS

The Town provides recreational and leisure programming for seniors at three Town owned community centres, as well as several outdoor spaces in the summer time. Most of the programs are open to all adults 18+ yrs, while a few are tailored to seniors. Seniors are given a 50% discount on all recreational programs.

There are currently two dedicated seniors clubs located in buildings owned by the Town of Ajax. The Pickering & Village Seniors Club, which operates within the Village Community Centre, and the Ajax Seniors Friendship Club, which operates within the St. Andrews Community Centre. Both act as independent clubs with support from the Town.

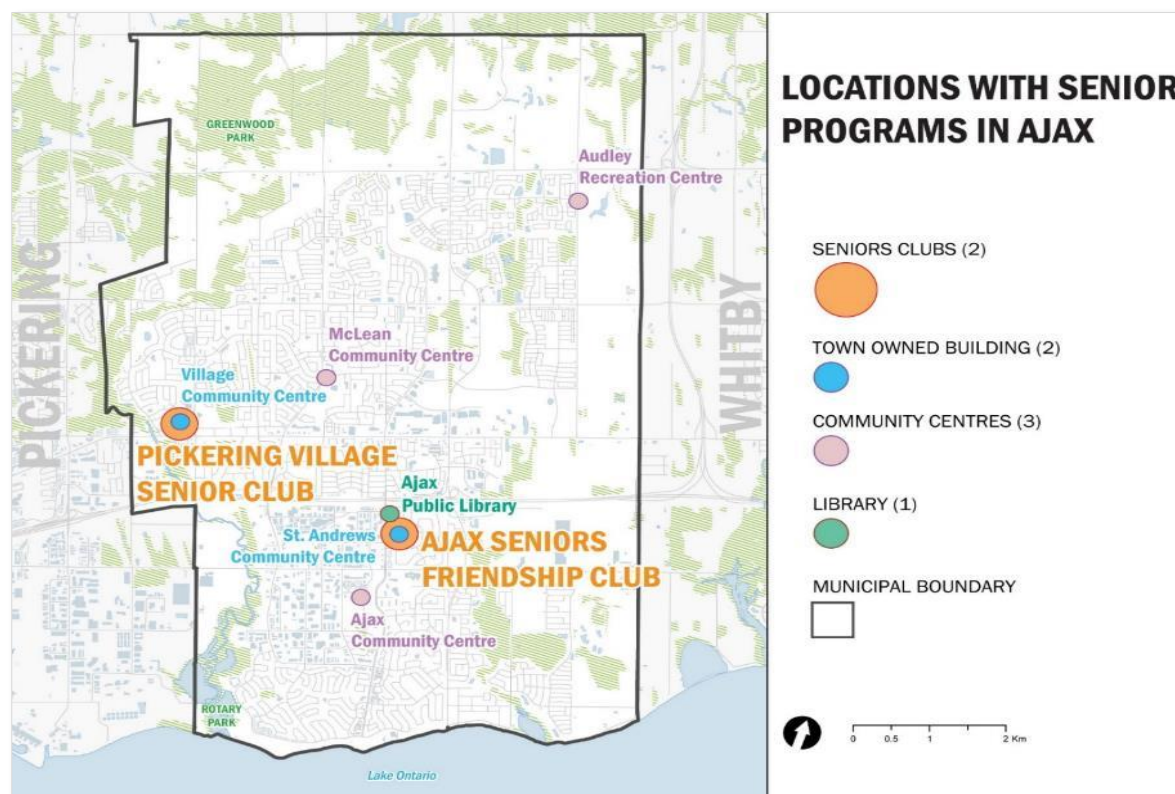
Each club offers a range of drop-in and session-based programs, and hosts events and the occasional trips throughout the year. A membership fee of \$15/year gives seniors access to both seniors clubs and additional fees are required to participate in daily programming. These fees are used to pay for the operation of the programs and activities.

The Town of Ajax Library provides a range of older adult and seniors programs out of the main branch, and has an Older Adults Advisory Committee. In addition, there are a number of other community groups, clubs and ethno-cultural groups, that deliver social and recreation services to older adults/seniors in Ajax- out of rented spaces throughout the town. For example, the two PROBUS Clubs offer a wide range of programs and activities for seniors. They meet once a month in spaces rented from the Town, and their programs are run out of rented spaces, in church space or members' homes. PROBUS Clubs have a \$20-\$40 annual fee (dependent on which club and the related expenses associated with the space rental).

**Table 2: Overview of Ajax Recreation Service Provides and Spaces**

Ajax Seniors Recreation Services					
THE TOWN OF AJAX	AJAX SENIORS FRIENDSHIP CLUB	PICKERING & VILLAGE SENIORS CLUB	THE LIBRARY	COMMUNITY GROUPS (e.g. PROBUS)	
Community Centres and Parks	St. Andrews Community Centre	Village Community Centre	Main Branch Library	Rented space	
Seniors-Only Program	Adult Programs Open to Seniors	Membership, Session/Drop-in Programs (55+)	Membership, Session/Drop-in Programs (55+)	Seniors and Adult Programs	Seniors and Adult Programs

**Map 1: Locations with Seniors Programs in Ajax**

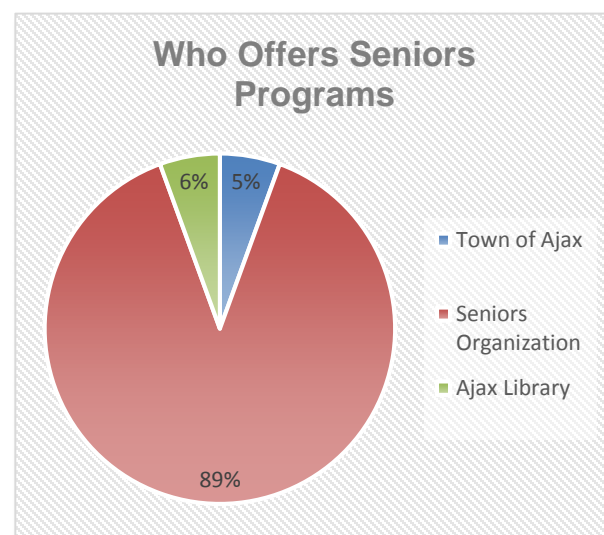
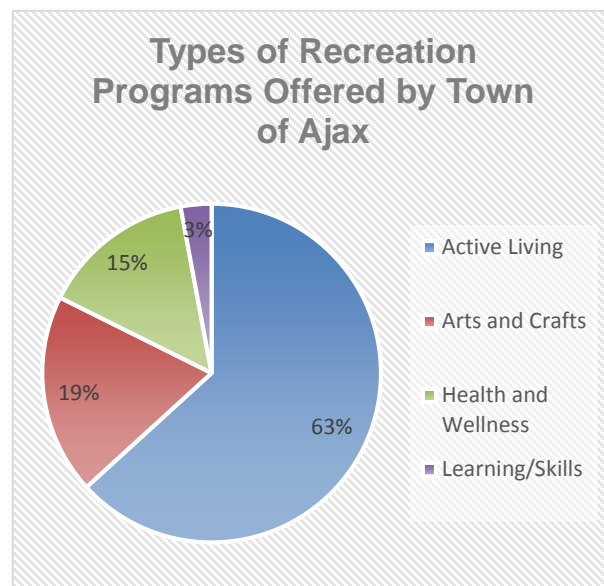


## 3.2 SENIORS PROGRAMMING

The Town offers almost 70 recreation programs open to anyone over 18 years of age, a range of one-time events. The majority of the Town's programs (63%) are 'active living', which include activities such as Badminton, Dancing and Swimming. The second most common type of programs is 'arts & culture' which make up 20% of the programs offered. This includes programs such as painting, drawing and cooking classes. Several yoga classes and two Tai Chi classes are also offered. There are also two culturally targeted programs: Cricket and Bollywood Dance. Many older adults and some seniors use these programs on a regular basis. Seniors who register for these programs are eligible for a discount. For those still requiring additional support, they can access the Town's Financial Assistance program.

Most of the seniors specific programs (89%) are provided by third parties - Pickering & Village Senior Club, Ajax Seniors Friendship Club, PROBUS Club of Ajax and PROBUS Club of Durham West. Four of the Town programs are specifically dedicated to seniors. (e.g. yoga – older adult, older adult fitness, adult barre and balance).

At the seniors clubs, (Pickering & Village Seniors Club, Ajax Seniors Friendship Club) volunteers are responsible for developing and running the programs. Instructors are hired and paid by the clubs. According to the Programs Inventory, the highest percentage of seniors programs are 'games and hobbies', which includes bridge, pool, bingo, darts, and euchre. The second highest is 'social' which includes potlucks and special guest events. Active living programs are popular and include Zumba, Pickleball, carpet bowling and table tennis. The lowest percentage of programs offered at seniors centres are 'health and wellness'.





The PROBUS Club of Ajax offers a number of social activities, games and hobbies, learning/skills programming and trips and events. Examples are book clubs, bridge and euchre, a family history group, golf and a travel group.

The Inventory shows that there are just over 75 programs offered at locations in Ajax by the Pickering & Village Seniors Club, Ajax Seniors Friendship Club, PROBUS Club of Ajax, PROBUS Club of West Durham, the Town of Ajax Library and the Town of Ajax. The chart at the right indicates the distribution of these programs across the various program categories.

Appendix B provides an inventory of programs, including the location and sponsoring club.

### 3.3 SPACES

The three community centres where the town operates seniors programs are: Ajax and McLean Community Centres and Audley Recreation Centre).

The two seniors clubs operate out of buildings owned by the Town; both are in a five-year agreement with the Town until 2019. Transportation to and from the centres are provided by the Town 1 day/week. The Town provides facility equipment (tables, chairs) and custodial support. Neither facility has a licensed<sup>4</sup> food preparation kitchen.

The Village Community Centre, the Town owned building that Pickering & Village Seniors Club operates out of is located just north of the 401 at HWY 2 and Church Street. Built in 1963, the building is 3,842 square feet and is accessible. It has one main room, which is used for programming.

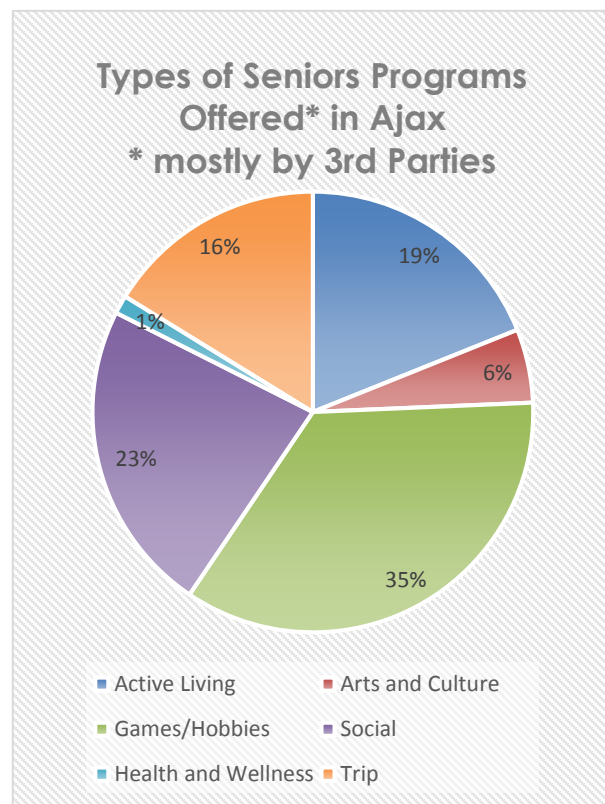


Photo: Audley Recreation Centre

<sup>4</sup> This usually refers to fire suppression equipment which is required if the kitchen is to be used for full meal preparation rather than a 'heat and serve' function

It is responsible for general custodianship of the centre (e.g. opening, and closing). The Club has available space to expand programming to additional days/evening, however, it is limited by the amount of time volunteers can spend opening, closing and managing the building due to limited custodial services.

The St. Andrews Community Centre, the building the Ajax Seniors Friendship Club operates out of, is located just south of the 401 and within walking distance of several high-rise buildings where many seniors live. At 8,079 sq. ft. it is significantly larger than Pickering & Village Seniors Club. Part-time custodial services are provided and paid for by the Town. The main programming room is the Banquet Hall. Programs are often full., there is not enough space to support program expansion.

The Town of Ajax Library has recreational space that is sometimes used for seniors programming; however, it is already at capacity. The Town's community centres also have multi-purpose spaces that can be used for seniors programming or rented out to the public. For example, the PROBUS Clubs rent space in the Ajax Community Centre and the Ajax Library.

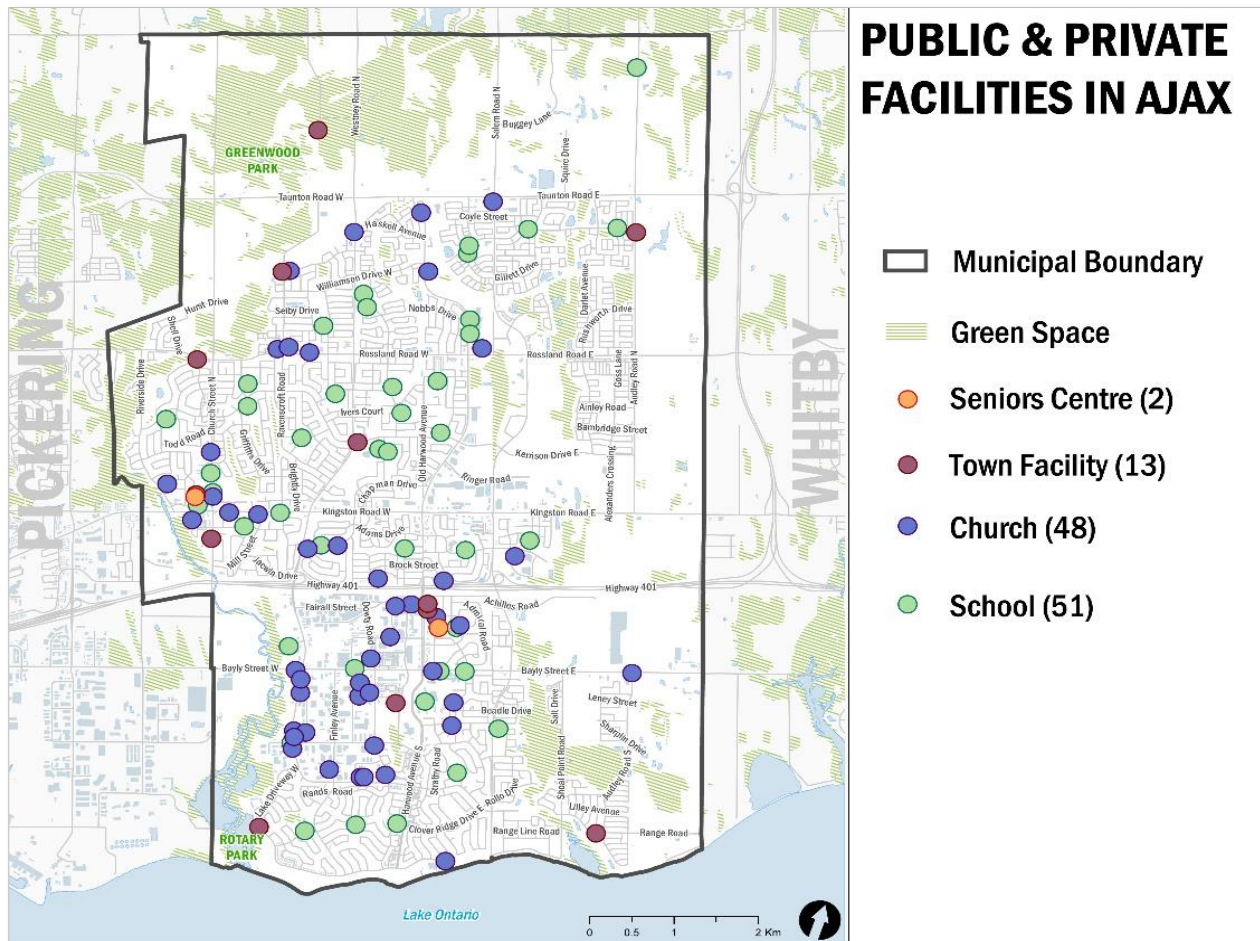


*Photo: Ajax Public Library Main Branch*

There are spaces within places of worship and schools in Ajax that could potentially be considered for program use. There are almost 50 places of worship spread throughout the Town. Some places such as St. Paul's United Church are rented for seniors programs by third party groups. Some places of worships have multi-purpose rooms that can be rented out, however many do not currently rent to the public. Not all places of worship are accessible. The map below shows that places of worship are well distributed throughout Ajax and could be considered as a resource to meet emerging space requirements.

There are 51 school facilities well distributed throughout Ajax. Some recreational programs are run out of school gyms, however school gyms are often booked in the evenings and Board of Education rules limit access by the general public to school property during the day. School facilities should be considered a potential resource to meet the program needs of a rapidly growing older adult and senior population.

**Map 2: Public and Private Recreation Facilities in Ajax**

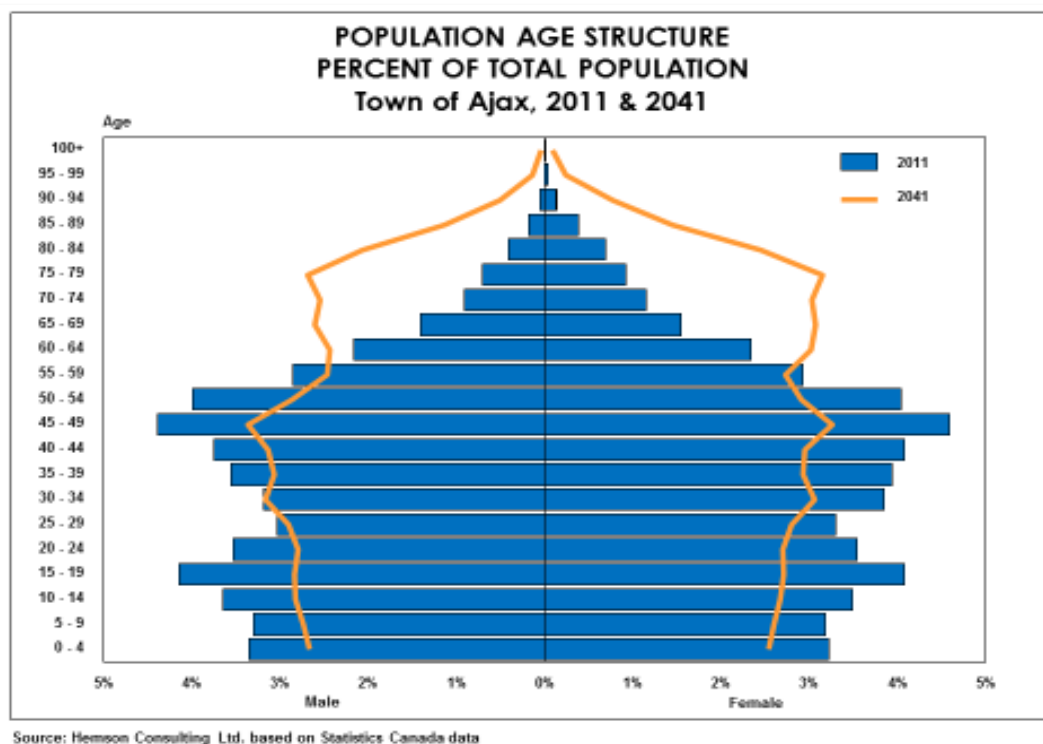




## 4. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS AND FORECAST<sup>5</sup>

The population of Ajax was 113,260<sup>6</sup> in 2011 – the most recent census year. As of mid-2016, Ajax's population is estimated to have grown to about 121,000<sup>7</sup>. Growth is expected to continue with the Town projected to reach 137,500 by 2031 and 148,000 by 2041.

In 2011, 21,360 residents or almost one in five residents (18.9%) were 55 years or older. By 2041, that number is expected to more than double to 53,550 or 36.5% of the population. Of those, it is forecast that nearly 38,000 or 25% of the population of Ajax will be 65+. The bar graph below shows that the largest age groups in the population are those between 45 and 54 years of age. By 2031 this group will have aged to be older adults and seniors. The vast majority of the future senior population are people who already reside in Ajax. People who live in Ajax tend to stay in Ajax and 'age in place'.



<sup>5</sup> The source for all graphs is Hemson Consulting Ltd. using data from Statistics Canada.

<sup>6</sup> Accounts for census net undercoverage: (often referred to as "undercount") refers to the number of Canadian residents not recorded in the official census at time of data collection by census staff. Statistics Canada conducts a Reverse Records Check (RRC) following each census period in order to estimate the number of persons missed in the preceding census, as well as the number of people who may have been double counted, in order to estimate net undercoverage.

<sup>7</sup> Memo prepared for the study by Hemson Consultants, November 11, 2016

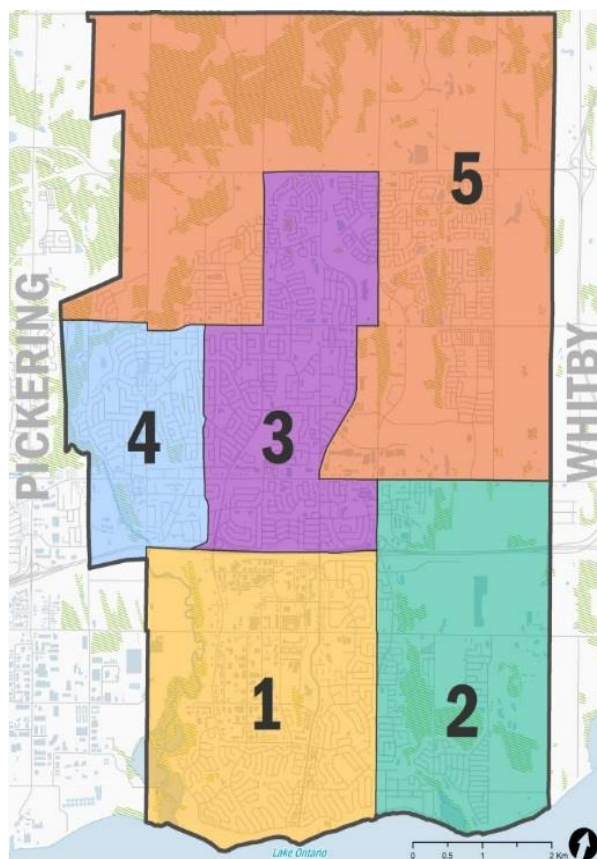


To give some indication of how the future older adult population will be distributed throughout Ajax, the study team divided the Town into 5 'sub-areas'. Each sub area was made up of census tracts. Each sub-area was attributed a percentage of the overall town-wide migration in each census year based on current Official Plan intensification areas, greenfields and where future housing development may occur (or is occurring). This produces an overall population forecast for each sub-area. Taking the known population growth forecast for each sub-area, the process is then repeated at the Census tract level. Each Census tract is allocated a share of the total growth of their respective sub-area. This establishes the overall 2041 population of each census tract. Detailed tables are available in Appendix E.

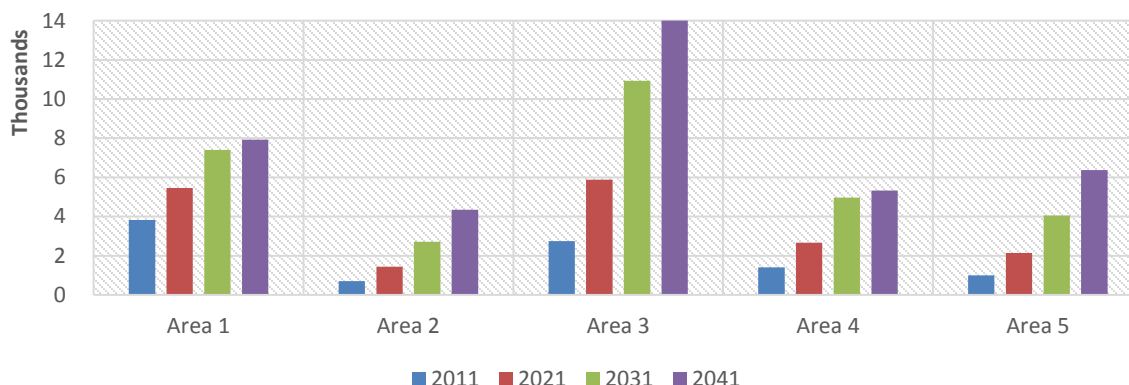
As of 2011, the largest concentration of senior residents was located in the southwest neighbourhoods of Ajax (Area 1). Over 3,800 seniors reside in this neighbourhood, representing over 15% of the local population and nearly two fifths of the Town's senior population.

Through to 2041 each area will experience a four to six-fold increase in senior residents with the largest growth forecast in Area 3, which is expected to see its senior population rise to 14,000 residents, representing 37% of Ajax's total senior population. Areas 3 and 1 will continue to have the largest concentration of seniors in terms of total number of residents by 2041. Senior residents are expected to claim a much larger share of the population in each local area, with seniors representing between 24 and 29% of all residents depending on the neighbourhood.

**Map 3: Demographic Analysis Sub-Areas**



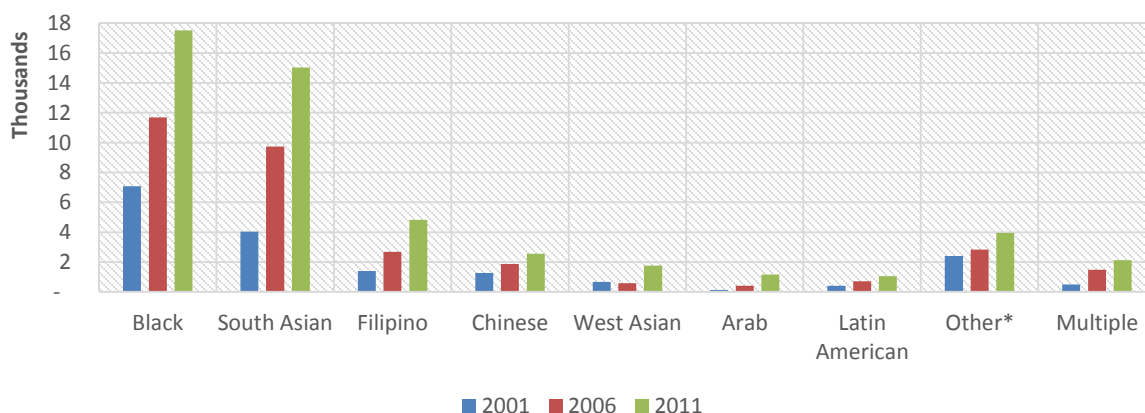
### Forecast Growth in Seniors Population (Age 65+) By Sub-Area, Town of Ajax, 2011, 2021, 2031 & 2041



### Ethno-cultural Outlook

Much like seniors, visible minorities represent a rapidly growing segment of Ajax's community. In 2011, nearly 50,000 residents self-identified as belonging to a visible minority, accounting for just under 46% of Ajax's total population. Between 2001 and 2011, Ajax's visible minority population grew by over 32,000 residents. This figure accounts for nearly 90% of the Town's total population growth over the ten-year period. The bulk of these new residents were between the ages of 30 and 45 and assuming they will stay in Ajax through their retirement years, the Town will see a notable increase in visible minority seniors by 2031.

### Population Growth in Visible Minority Communities Town of Ajax, 2001, 2006 & 2011



Black and South Asian residents comprise the largest segments of Ajax's visible minority groups, representing 35 and 30% of the total visible minority population, respectively. Counted together, members of these two communities account for 30% of Ajax's total population. Other cultures are present throughout the Town, with Filipino, Chinese, West Asian, Arabian and Latin American communities also being prominent.

Members of these ethno-cultural groups reside in areas across the Town of Ajax, with the highest concentrations of visible minority residents found in central Ajax (Area 3) and northern parts of the town (Area 5). This settlement pattern aligns Ajax's pattern of housing development, which saw the bulk of new residential units added to these two areas in recent years, with the in-migration of new visible minority residents to the Town over the past 10 years. Future settlement patterns amongst these visible minority groups will likely continue to follow this trend, with continued growth in central and northern Ajax as the Town builds out its remaining greenfield land supply.

## Economic Profile

While incomes in senior's households tend to be lower than others due to most members being retired and on a fixed income, the incidence of low income seniors in Ajax is quite low. Only 5.6 percent of local seniors fell below Statistics Canada's after-tax low income threshold in 2011, as compared to the province wide average of 8.3%. Given the economic characteristics of many residents of Ajax, it is not anticipated that the incidence of low income seniors will rise significantly over the course of the forecast period, though some need will remain.



## 5. What We Heard

The following is an overview of the feedback received from the consultation activities, including the focus groups, public meetings and survey. ‘What We Heard’ provides the basis for the development of the Strategy framework and recommendations in Section 6.0. The feedback has been organized around 4 themes: space, programs, being inclusive and challenges.

**Table 3: Summary of Community Feedback**

SPACE	PROGRAMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many people find the current seniors centres satisfactory; however, some respondents indicated that was room for improvement in some areas. Example included: Not large enough; No reception area; Out-of-date; tired-looking; Too small; Poor air circulation; inadequate kitchen facilities.</li> <li>Seniors indicated that they wanted a space that they can call their own and that is open throughout the day.</li> <li>More seniors liked the idea of having one central centre located on a bus route vs. many smaller ones.</li> <li>It was felt that having one centre could alleviate many of the challenges with operating two spaces.</li> <li>A new seniors centre was seen as something that could be a home-base for seniors programs, activities, entertainment, and more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ajax seniors have a wide variety of activity/program interests, including social activities, trips, active living, arts and culture, and learning.</li> <li>The current programming at the seniors clubs does not appeal to everyone. Many people listed “not interested in their programs” as a main reason for not being a member of one of the seniors clubs.</li> <li>Seniors appreciate drop-in programs or programs that allow them to participate when it is convenient for them.</li> <li>Keeping membership and program fees low is important for many seniors in Ajax.</li> <li>More seniors prefer seniors-only activities; however, a significant number would rather participate in programs open to adults of all ages.</li> <li>Keeping an active mind is a key motivating factor for seniors participation in recreational programs and activities.</li> <li>Socializing, having fun and staying fit are also important factors.</li> </ul>



**Table 3 (Continued): Summary of Community Feedback**

BEING INCLUSIVE	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preferences towards recreation differ by age, ability and ethno-cultural background. Younger seniors may prefer more active recreational programs.</li> <li>• It was often mentioned that active living program instructors need to be sensitive to the physical abilities of older adults.</li> <li>• Income/cost of programs is an important consideration; respondents felt that it was important to keep costs low.</li> <li>• Participation in games and hobbies especially impacted by cultural background. Activities or games that may be popular with one group are often unfamiliar to newcomers</li> <li>• Making people feel welcome and creating a safe environment is an important first step.</li> <li>• It was felt that there was a need to engage more newcomers to learn about their needs/interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of space in the 2 seniors centres limits current program expansion and opportunities to offer the range of programs that people are interested in.</li> <li>• Ability to use available space was limited by the amount of time volunteers are available to open, close and manage the building due to limited custodial services.</li> <li>• One day a week transportation limits access to programs to one day a week for many seniors.</li> <li>• Lack of seniors centered information limits the number of people who know about seniors programs.</li> <li>• Low membership and program fees limit the range of programs that can be offered.</li> </ul>

## 6. Strategy

### 6.1 KEY STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The key strategic considerations emerged from the consultation activities, including the focus groups, public meetings and the survey as well as the background research, demographic modelling and forecasting. They can be helpful in informing the Town of Ajax as it works to develop specific service delivery plans and to allocate resources.

**1) The older adult and senior population in Ajax will grow significantly.**

- The vast majority of that population are people who already reside in Ajax. By 2041, the number of older adults and seniors (55+) is expected to more than double to 53,550 or 36.5% of the population.

**2) Ajax will see a notable increase in the diversity/composition of seniors by 2031.**

- In 2011, nearly 50,000 residents self-identified as belonging to a visible minority, accounting for just under 46% of Ajax's total population.
- Between 2001 and 2011 Ajax's visible minority population grew by over 32,000 residents. This figure accounts for nearly 90% of the Town's total population growth over the ten-year period.
- The bulk of these new residents were between the ages of 30 and 45 and it is assumed that they will stay in Ajax through their retirement years.

**3) Residents in Ajax tend to 'age-in-place'.**

- People move to Ajax to buy a home and stay in their homes and communities for a long period of time.
- The growth of both the senior population and the diversity of that population will tend to follow a settlement pattern based on housing development.
- Future settlement patterns will see continued growth in central and northern Ajax as the Town builds out its remaining greenfield land supply

**4) "Seniors" are not a homogeneous group.**

- Older adults and seniors have varied interests, abilities, and income levels
- Older adults and seniors like to participate in a wide range of activities: social, physical, educational, cultural, etc.
- Some seniors drive, while others don't; some like seniors-focused programs, while others don't.

- It's important to actively engage seniors and older adults to understand the changing mix of needs and interests

**5) Availability of space is a key factor in service delivery.**

- This refers to both the location of space within the Town as well as the quality and accessibility of that space
- While the older adult and senior population will grow significantly in all areas of Ajax, the most significant growth in senior population will follow Ajax's pattern of housing development that saw the bulk of new units added in Area 3.

**6) Programs need to be adaptive and diverse for different ages, abilities, incomes and cultures.**

- Cost can be a barrier to participation for a large number of seniors in Ajax; income should not preclude participation.
- Where cost of the program is prohibitive for the user, options for support (i.e. the Town's Financial Assistance program) should be utilized .
- Most seniors are happy with the current membership-based model, and stress the importance of keeping the cost low
- Some of the adult fitness programs are too strenuous for older seniors or those with less mobility; physical activities that cater to the less mobile are needed.
- Efforts need to be made to address a number of barriers that prevent people from different ethno-cultural backgrounds from participating, including language, not knowing the games/activities or not feeling welcome.

**7) Socializing is a key motivator.**

- Spending time with friends and meeting new people at social activities is a motivating factor for a lot of people. The opportunity to make new friends as one ages helps prevent isolation.
- Participation in recreation and social activities can help to address loneliness, especially among those living alone.

**8) A daily, prepared, affordable hot meal is seen to be a key motivator of participation.**

- A daily hot meal at a low cost often motivates people to travel to a seniors club. Providing a facility with a licenced kitchen would allow seniors groups to offer a daily hot meal, host social activities and create opportunities for cross cultural learning (eg: cultural cooking classes).

**9) Being able to get to and from an activity (i.e. transportation) is critical to participation.**

- Getting to and from recreational activities is a major factor in when and how seniors participate in recreational programs
- Currently most seniors drive or are driven; and only a small portion take transit
- Public transit is often seen as intimidating and can be inconvenient with transit routes not accessing community hubs and/or seniors centres.
- Expansion of current 1 day per week transportation to seniors centres is important and therefore advocacy with Durham Region Transit to explore routes to community hubs, senior's specific centres, etc. would be advantageous.

**10) Seniors want recreation opportunities that support an active mind and healthy body.**

- Seniors are motivated to participate in recreational activities by the idea of keeping their minds active and staying fit and healthy.

**11) Seniors want flexibility to participate when possible**

- More seniors like the idea of having one central centre vs. many smaller ones
- The current seniors clubs have limited hours, which limits programming, and how people use the facility
- There is a desire to have a place dedicated for seniors, that is convenient with a good range of available hours of operation
- Drop-in programs are generally preferred, because they allow people to participate when it works for them

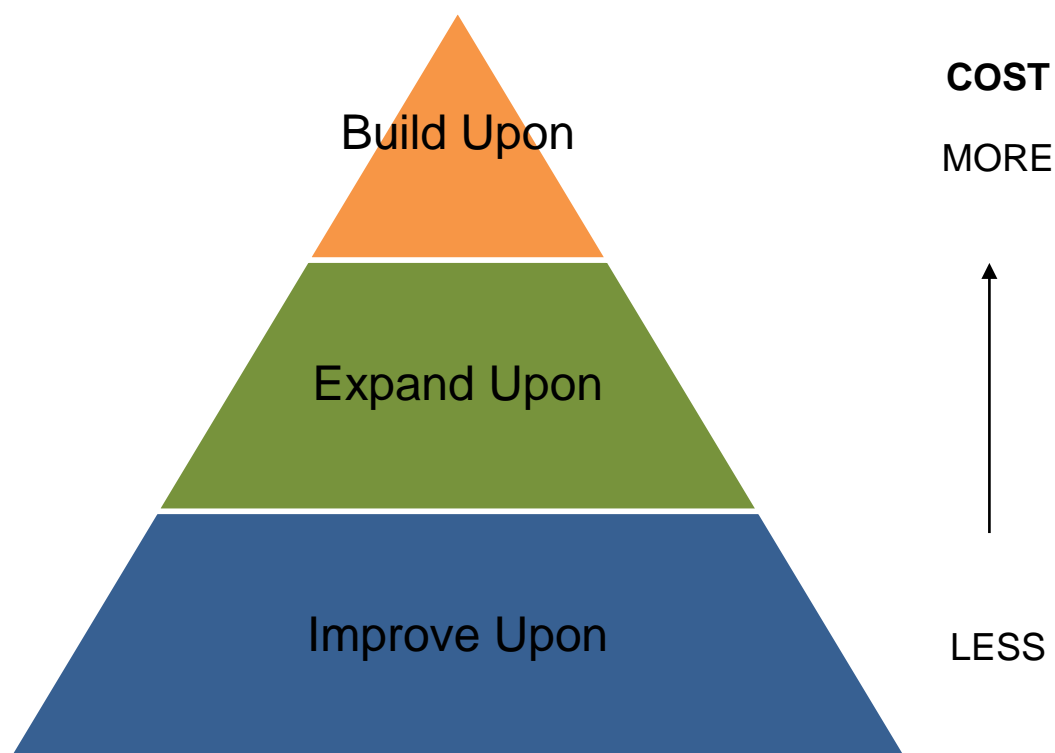
**12) Information on recreation activities needs to be easy for seniors to find, convey, read.**

- Not knowing about the activities provided by the Town or the two seniors clubs acts a barrier for many people.



## 6.2 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The strategic framework helps to organize the recommendations around two considerations – the timeline for implementation and the resources (cost) of implementation. This is useful when considering what recommendations might be brought forward for consideration in the Town’s service delivery plans, capital plans and the budget process.



The exact timelines for the recommendations to be implemented will need to be determined by the Recreation, Culture & Community Development Department, in collaboration with Town Council and the other departments within the Town; however, some direction in terms of short, medium and long term timelines is provided in Appendix A.

## 6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Improve Upon

**1) Maintain and elaborate upon local recreational opportunities for seniors in community centres**

- As per the 2008 Recreation, Parks and Culture Master Plan the Town continually evaluates opportunities to expand and/or add dedicated older adult areas to existing community recreation and leisure facilities.

**2) Make information about programs more accessible to seniors**

- Investigate the feasibility for a dedicated, large-print publication/newsletter for seniors programs
- Develop a dedicated page for older adults and senior's programs, services and events on the Town's web site (AODA compliant).
- Investigate opportunities for volunteers to develop face-to face outreach methods in the community; i.e. outreach through community displays, churches, libraries, etc.

**3) Continue to provide seniors clubs with administrative support**

- Continue to assist administratively, promoting events, and providing liaison support as needed
- Provide information sessions on marketing/promotions techniques/support
- Investigate opportunities for volunteer roles to assist clubs/organizations with marketing/promotional support

**4) Continue to adapt fitness programs to be more sensitive to the abilities of older adults**

- Ensure current adult and seniors programs continue to cater to needs of less abled

**5) Make current seniors clubs welcoming to new members**

- Host meet and greet programs
- Explore the opportunity to develop a volunteer receptionist position for each club and investigate opportunities to create receptionist areas in each club

## **6) Refresh current facilities**

- Work with Club Executives to develop a maintenance plan for each facility and investigate the feasibility for various facility refreshes/maintenance within an annual schedule
- Investigate facility/infrastructure grants when possible
- Investigate improving Wi-Fi services in Seniors facilities

## **Expand Upon**

### **7) Investigate the feasibility of increasing custodial hours at both clubs to assist in building club capacity**

- Increased custodial support will result in less strain on current volunteers, more activities due to increased hours of operation, greater accessibility and safety

### **8) Investigate the feasibility of hiring a full time Senior's Program Coordinator**

### **9) Investigate opportunities to increase transportation to and from seniors clubs to increase participation.**

- Advocate and seek support from Durham Region Transit on routes and services available.
- Promote Ride Share programs within club membership.
- Explore opportunities to increase transportation to and from seniors clubs to more than 1x per week.

### **10) Establish an Ajax Seniors Advocacy Group**

- To assist staff with the Town's age-friendly approach and advise on older adult and seniors program and service delivery.

### **11) Investigate and pilot more seniors-focused programs and new seniors programs that reflect diverse interests**

- Expand the offering of health and wellness programs including social, trips, active living, dancing, music, walking, outdoor activities, computer skills, tai chi, nutrition, aging-well
- Explore opportunities to expand seniors programming to meet the needs of Ajax's growing ethno-cultural communities

- 12) Investigate the opportunity to expand kitchen capacity to prepare and serve hot meals at existing seniors centres through service providers**
- 13) Explore opportunities to expand seniors programming into places of worship and other possible locations within the community**

## **Build Upon**

- 14) Investigate the feasibility and opportunities to develop a Town-owned Seniors Centre, exploring the following aspects during the feasibility study:**
  - Examine further possibilities for new build, utilizing existing infrastructure/facility space, or existing facility retro-fit
  - Budget implications
  - Space that is bright, vibrant and provides opportunities for social interaction
  - Space and programming caters to both older adults/seniors
  - Town-owned and operated
  - Opportunities for volunteers
  - Convenient with a good range of available hours of operation Full range of programs
  - Food service/kitchen facilities
  - Access to transportation
  - Opportunities for co-location