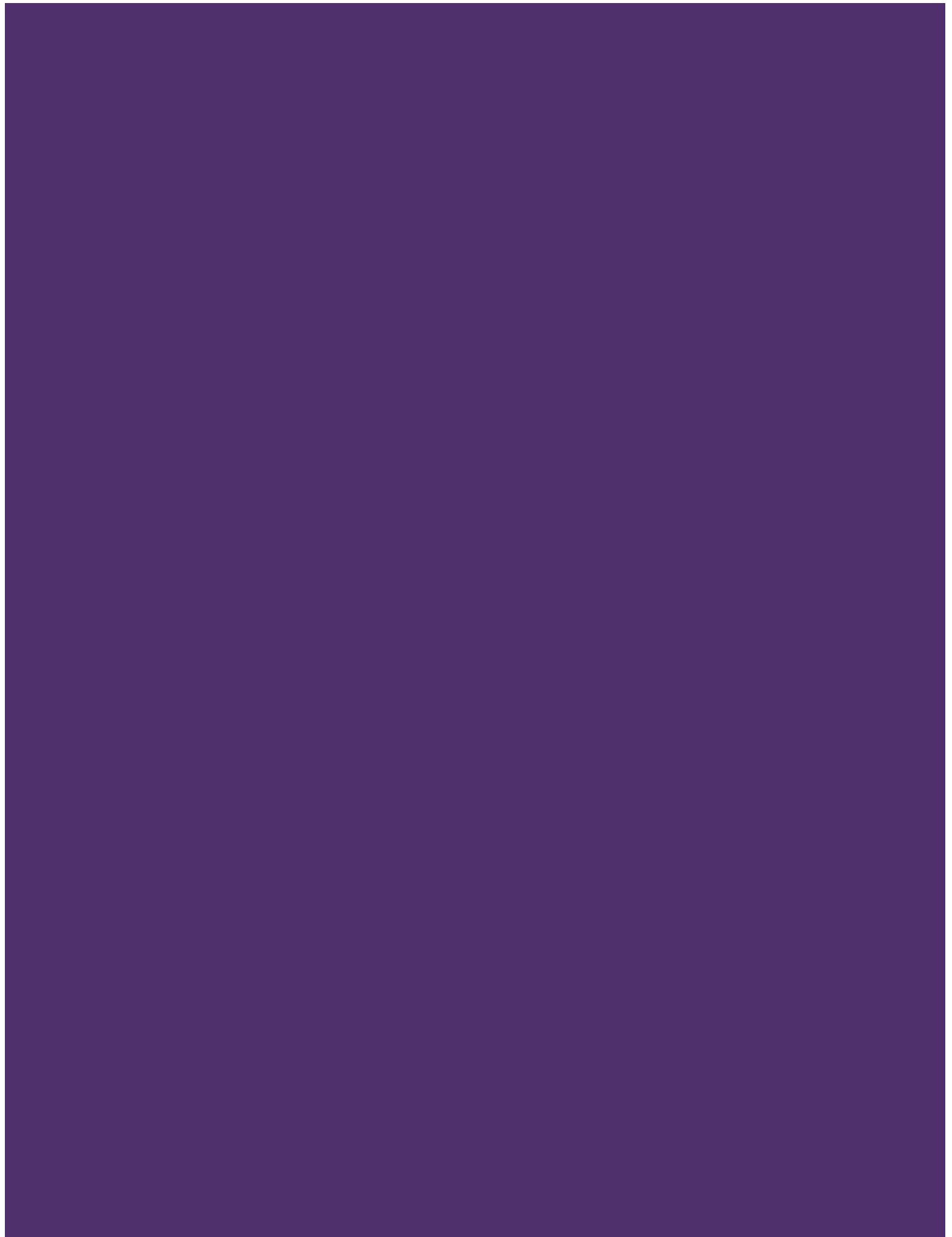




6. Municipality of **RUSSELL BINSCARTH**



INTRODUCTION

Located near the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, the Municipality of Russell-Binscarth amalgamated in 2015 and is home to two major communities (Figure 1). The town of Russell (population 1599) is best known for its proximity to Assinippi Ski Resort. Binscarth, smaller in scale with a population of 407, and sits approximately 16 kilometers to the South of Russell. The two communities, a 10-minute drive apart, are connected by the Yellowhead Highway. As of 2016, an additional 436 residents populate the municipality's rural areas, demonstrating the prominence of agriculture in the area (Statistics Canada, 2017).

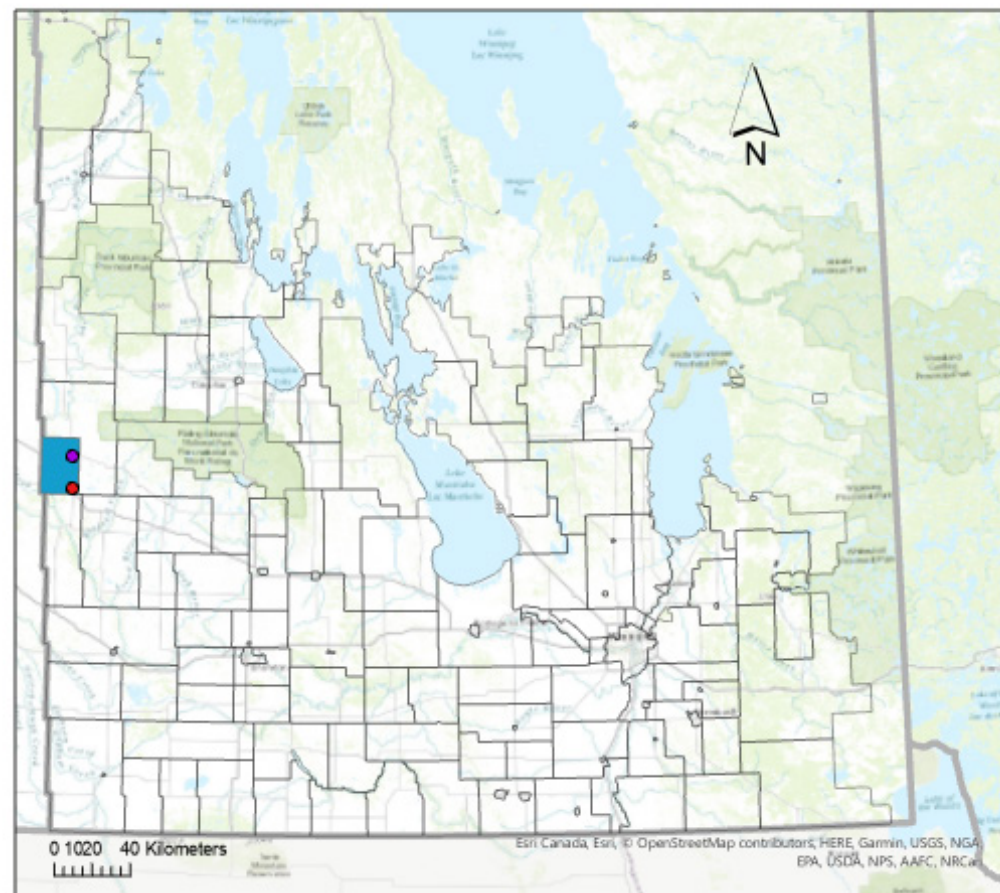
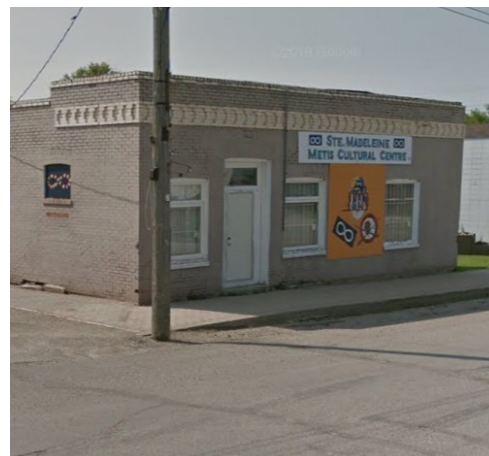


Figure 6-1. Municipality of Russell-Binscarth Regional Context.

- Locations
- Binscarth
 - Russell
- Municipal Boundaries
- Russell-Binscarth
 - Other
- Provincial Boundaries
-

Figure 6-2. Left:
*Historic Russell Main
Street.*

Figure 6-3. Right: *St.
Madeline Metis Cultural
Centre.*



Agricultural settlement and railway development strongly influenced the early histories of both Russell and Binscarth. Russell was originally surveyed as land for a new rail line in 1878, while Binscarth began as a cattle farm in 1880 (Figure 2). Homesteaders from Europe and other parts of Canada arrived in the region shortly after, and were promised free agricultural lands by the federal government. In 1886, a new rail line opened linking Russell and Binscarth, contributing to rapid growth in both communities. The success of the region's farmers helped fuel businesses in both communities, and by the 1950s, Russell was serviced by CN and CP Rail, along with a bus line to Winnipeg. (Binscarth History Committees, 1984; Russell Chamber of Commerce, 1954; Russell Women's Institute, 1967; Western Canada Directories, n.d.)

The municipality has close connections to the regional Indigenous community. Children from nearby Gambler First Nation attend school in both communities, while a band office is also maintained in Binscarth. The St. Madeleine Métis Cultural Centre (Figure 3) is also located in Binscarth, preserving the legacy of a Métis settlement of the same name destroyed by the federal government between 1938 and 1941 to provide pastureland for Euro-Canadian farmers (Gambler First Nation, 2021; Manitoba Historical Society, 2011).

BACKGROUND

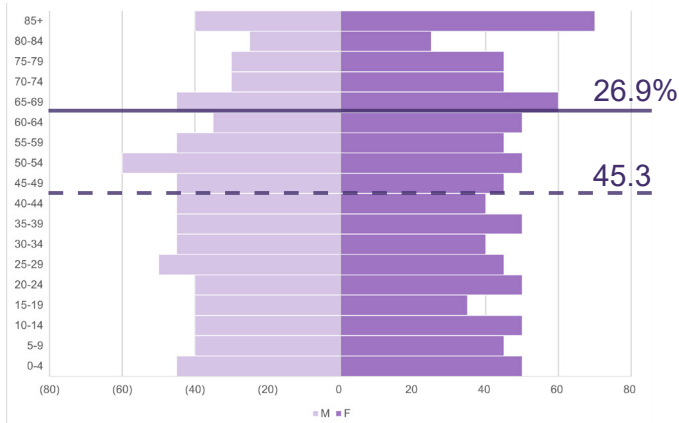
The municipality has a strong Age-Friendly Committee, which has spearheaded numerous initiatives in both communities. Ramps have been installed on several public buildings to make them more accessible, while the handi-van service is frequently used by disabled residents to reach local and regional destinations. There are numerous recreational opportunities for seniors within the municipality, including golf, curling, bingo nights and activity classes, making it an attractive retirement destination (Senior Services of Banner County, 2009) (Figure 4). Seniors in Russell and Binscarth take active roles in shaping their communities and are committed to building upon their previous successes.



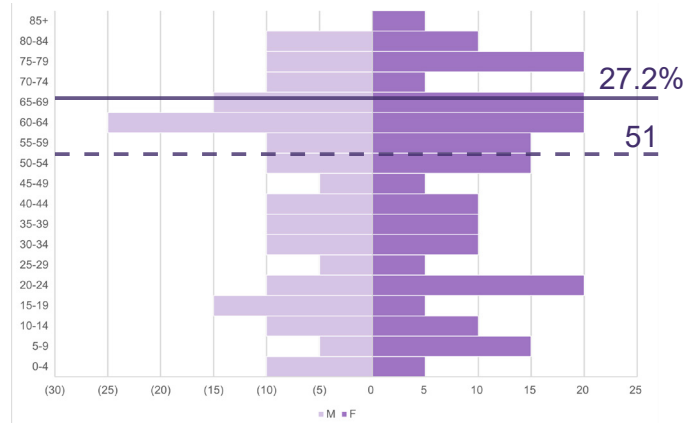
Figure 6-4. *Bingo Day Participants in Russell.*

Population pyramids comparing Russell and Binscarth highlight higher median ages and larger percentages of residents over the age of 65 than in the City of Winnipeg (Figure 5). Comparing the Municipality of Russell-Binscarth to the Province of Manitoba describes similar relationships, with comparable median ages of 46 and 38, and percentages over 65 of 25% and 16% . With higher senior populations and median ages, age-friendly initiatives are crucial to the success of these communities to continue to support the seniors who are choosing to reside in the Municipality.

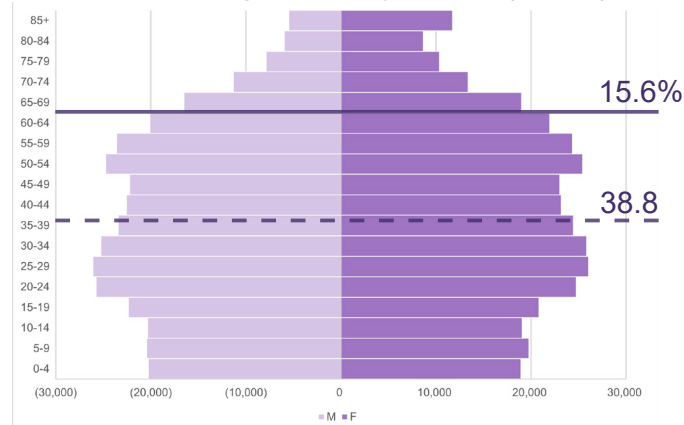
Russell Pop. Pyramid (2016)



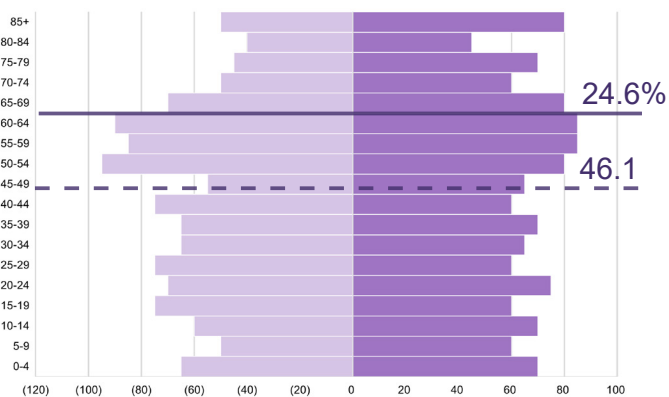
Binscarth Pop. Pyramid (2016)



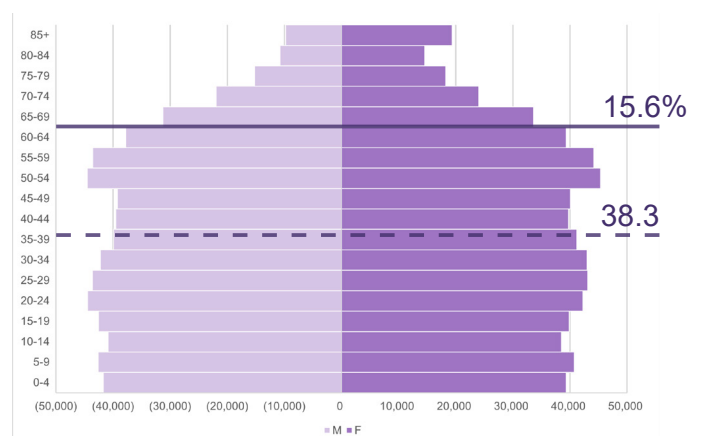
Winnipeg Pop. Pyramid (2016)



Municipality of Russell Binscarth Pop. Pyramid (2016)



Manitoba Pop. Pyramid (2016)



Percentage Over 65

Median Age

Figure 6-5. Population Pyramids for Russell, Binscarth, Municipality of Russell-Binscarth, Winnipeg, and Manitoba.

HOUSING

Housing is a critical component to aging in comfort. Whether seniors choose to age-in-place in their own homes or live in supportive housing, there are several considerations that must be made to ensure housing options are suitable. Universal accessibility, home affordability, access to home-care services and amenities, housing options and community integration are important factors for where seniors choose to live (WHO, 2007, p. 36). Prioritizing housing strategies as outlined in the *Global Age Friendly Cities* document will enhance the comfort and safety of seniors aging in this community.

Existing Strengths and Areas for Improvement

The municipality falls in the Prairie Mountain Health Region, which provides a well-established home care program free of charge to the community (Prairie Mountain Health, n.d.). When speaking with the Age-Friendly Committee, it was noted that this is a well-used service that helps many seniors stay in their homes.

The Municipality has several senior-specific housing options available in Russell (Figure 6):

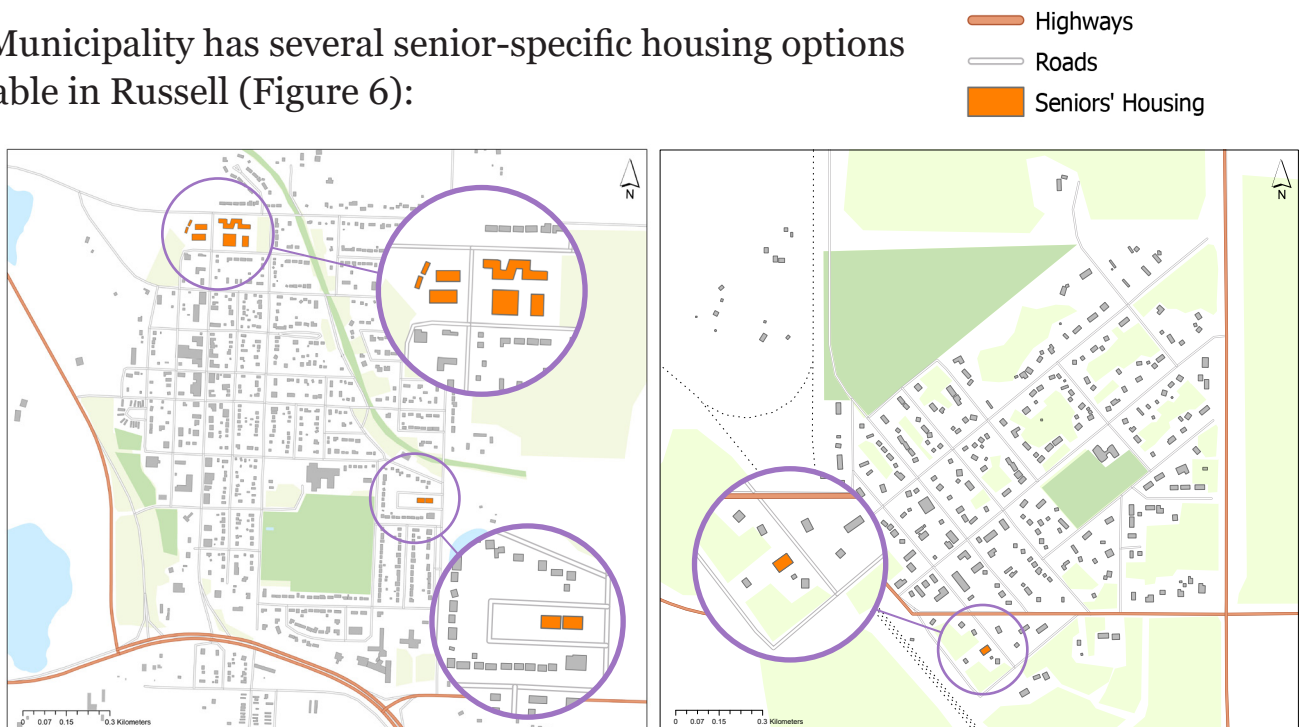


Figure 6-6. Map of Seniors Housing Locations in Russell.

Figure 6-7. Map of Seniors Housing Locations in Binscarth.

1. Lions Manor

- Life lease (\$47,600 - \$65,700)
- Monthly rent (\$768 - \$1106)
- Two suites available as of April 2021 (Reagh, 2021)

2. Park Manor

- Life lease (\$55,000 - \$65,000)
- Monthly rent (\$821 - \$1005)
- Eleven suites available as of April 2021 (Reagh, 2021)

3. Elks Legion Court

4. Banner County Court

5. Eastview Estates (Fourplex)

6. Russell Personal Care Home

- \$14,000 - \$34,000 per year depending on household income
- Offers medical services, personal care, meals, and activities (Prairie Mountain Health, n.d.)

With one seniors housing option in Binscarth (Figure 7):

1. Sunset Haven (Fourplex)

The Russell Personal Care home (Figure 8) is currently in need of renovations to be repaired; however, members from the Age-Friendly Committee noted that the community is not able to provide the funds required to begin the renovation process.

While there are many seniors housing options in the area, 37% of all seniors (resident over age 65) live in senior-specific housing in Russell, and only 9% in Binscarth (Statistics Canada, 2017). As the majority of senior residents are living in their own homes, priorities for areas of improvement have been made for aging-in-place.



Figure 6-8. *Russell Personal Care Home.*

Access to services is a priority of *Global Age Friendly Cities*. As the majority of senior residents do not live within senior-specific housing, walking maps were used to understand access to amenities from residences in both communities. Most homes in Binscarth are within walking distances of 400-800m (4-15 minutes) to the amenities on Russell Street (Figure 9) allowing residents to walk to many of the community services offered in town. In Russell, access to the Multiplex, IGA, Russell Pool, Russell Seniors Centre, and

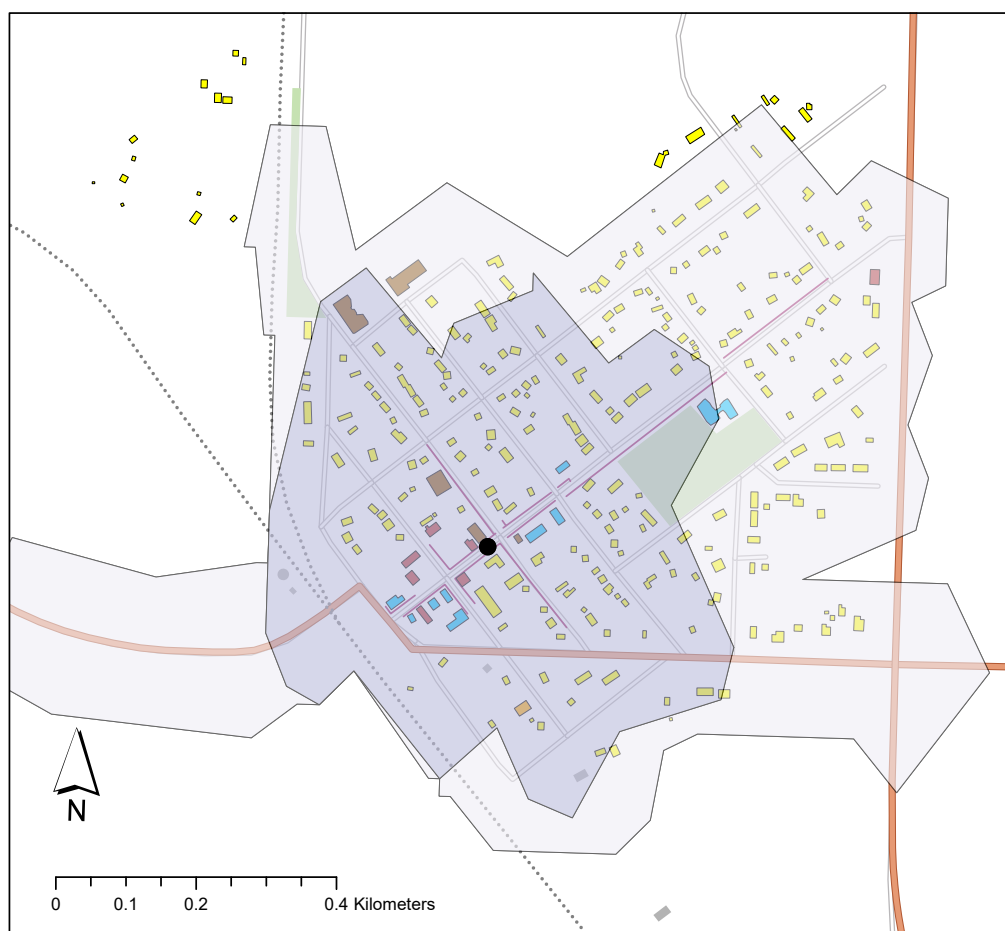


Figure 6-9. *Map Outlining Walking Distances from Binscarth Town Centre*

Russell Health Care Centre were considered (Figure 10). Amenities are within walking distance for many residents living within a few blocks from Main Street however, many residents in the north west are not within walking distance to any mapped amenity. Proposals for increasing the accessibility of these services and amenities can be found in later in this document.

Rental opportunities in both Russell and Binscarth are low with only 13.5% and 2.5% of residents currently living in apartments (Statistics Canada, 2017). Analysing household incomes in the municipality found that 28% of residents make less than \$35,000 a year which creates a priority for increasing affordable rental housing in the area to accommodate those who may be in core housing need.



SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

Renovate Russell Personal Care Home



Obtaining funding for renovating the Russell Personal Care home is prioritized to support seniors in the area who require higher amounts of care. There are significant barriers to this project due to the lack of provincial and federal funding currently available through grant programs. Community fundraising initiatives would be prioritized to find some financial support options.

Develop Affordable Rentals



Increasing affordable rental options in Russell-Binscarth will allow more seniors who are moving to the area, or are in-between housing options, to age-in-place safely. Fourplexes and multifamily housing is proposed for development in the current vacant lots in both communities (Figures 11 and 12). Fourplexes have been proposed (Figure 13) as they will maintain the communities' housing character while providing increased rental options. All new-build

Figure 6-10. Left:
Proposed Development Locations in Binscarth

Figure 6-11. Right:
Proposed Development Locations in Russell

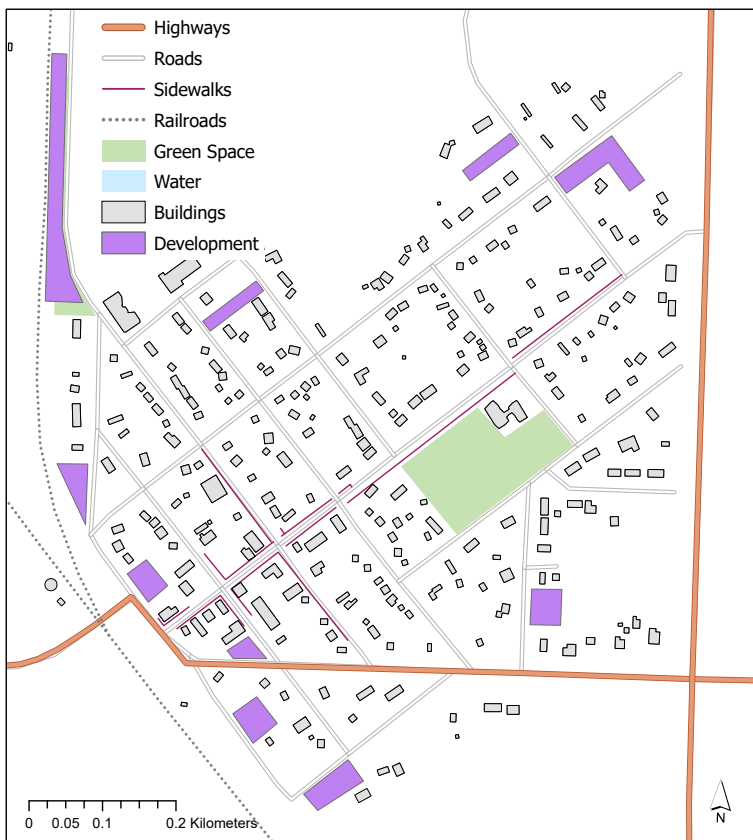




Figure 6-13. *Multi-Family Home Options*

construction will be mandated to be visitable. Visitable housing provides a barrier free walkway and entrance, with wheelchair accessible wider-entrances, hallways, and main floor washroom (Visitable Housing Canada, n.d.). Universally accessible and visitable construction has minimal increase costs when considered before building and will allow for safe and senior-friendly accommodations.

BARRIERS

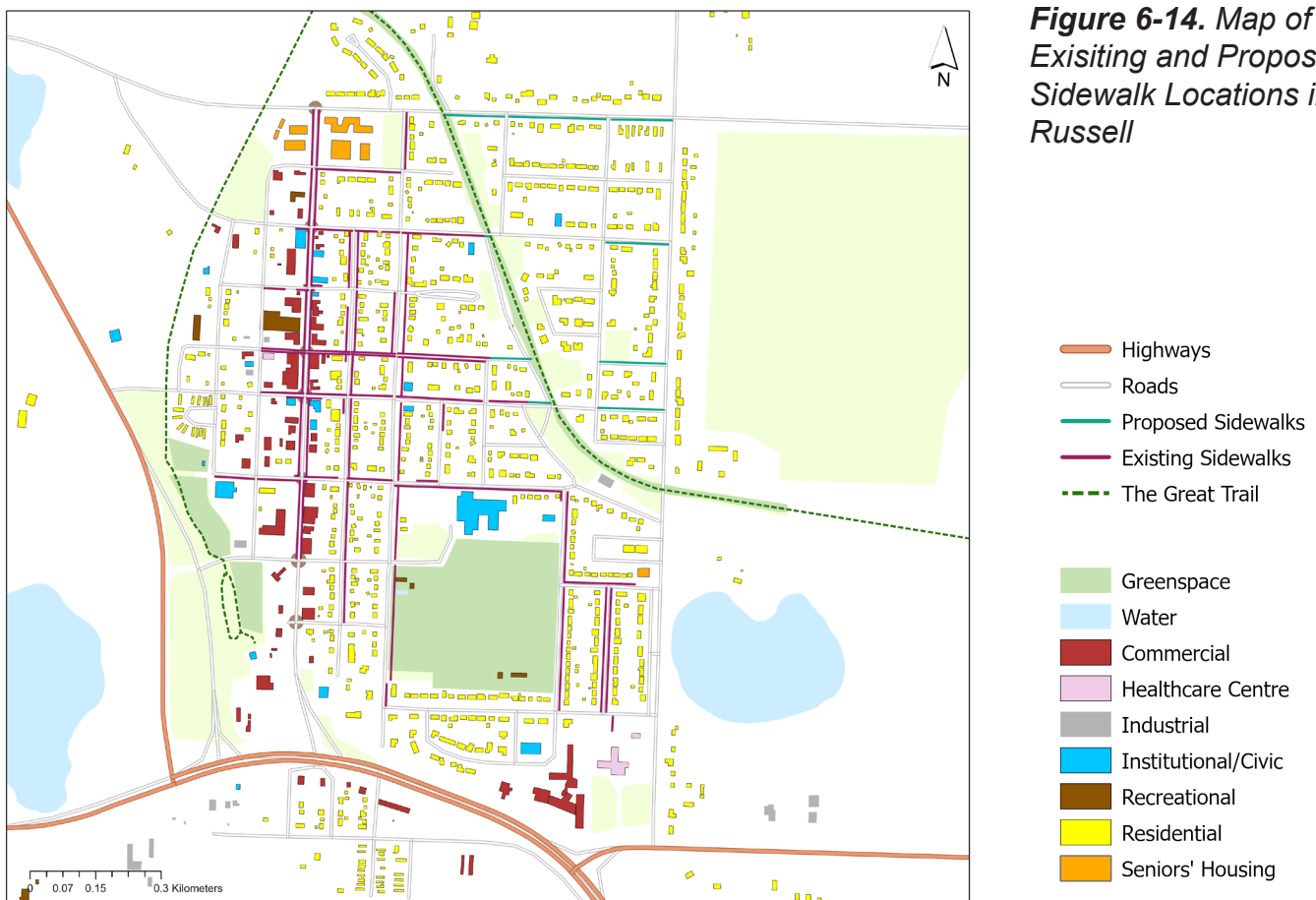
There are currently no federal or provincial grants available for accessibility renovations for homeowners. Without these grants, residents with disabilities or seniors with accessibility needs are forced to move to new housing options that may be more expensive. Lack of funding opportunities prevents residents from aging-in-place safely and independently.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a crucial factor in all aspects of age-friendliness. Without adequate means to access community services, commercial areas, medical care and opportunities for social interaction, improvements made in these categories will have limited benefits to a community's aging population. *Global Age-Friendly Cities* echoes this idea, arguing that “transportation, including accessible and affordable public transport, is a key factor influencing active ageing” (WHO, 2007, p. 20).

Existing Strengths and Areas for Improvement

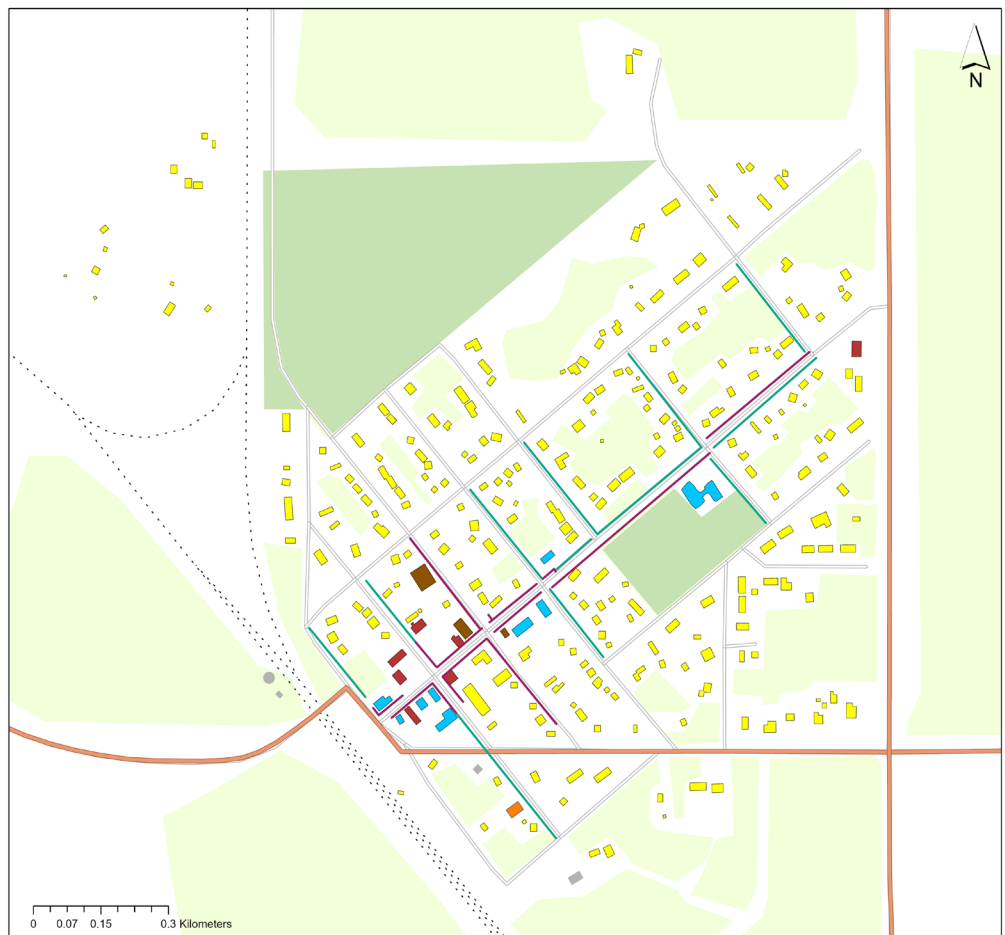
According to members of the community, walking and the use of personal vehicles are the primary modes of transportation for seniors within the municipality of Russell-Binscarth. Sidewalk coverage and connectivity is particularly strong in Russell, which features a highly walkable main street and a well-developed network in most



neighbourhoods, as demonstrated by Figure 14. Binscarth's sidewalk network, shown in Figure 15, is less developed and is characterized by a lack of coverage in residential areas, with sidewalks often ending abruptly. Pedestrian crosswalks are present on the main streets of both communities but are not controlled by lights.

Seniors living in the municipality who are unable to operate a personal vehicle are supported by a strong sense of community and can often depend on other residents with cars to help them reach local destinations. Currently, no taxi service or public transit options exist in the municipality. For residents with disabilities, Senior Services of Banner County operates an accessible handi-van service that offers transportation to both local and regional destinations. However, seniors without disabilities do not have access to this service (Senior Services of Banner County, 2020). Primarily, residents travel outside of the community to regional centres such as Brandon, Manitoba and Yorkton,

Figure 6-15. Map of Existing and Proposed Sidewalk Locations in Binscarth



Saskatchewan for shopping opportunities and medical appointments.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

Increase Walkability

Increasing sidewalk coverage, especially in Binscarth, would increase walkability within the communities and render a variety of destinations more accessible by foot. Figure 15 highlights proposed upgrades in Binscarth which would extend sidewalks along both sides of Russell Street and expand the network into some of the community's residential areas, connecting them to the central commercial corridor. In Russell, increasing sidewalk infrastructure in the northeast corner is suggested, as shown in Figure 14, opening up the wider network to residents of the area. Other minor improvements to the sidewalk network could include:

- Installing flashing lights at crosswalks (Russell and Binscarth)
- Paving the Great Trail (Russell)
- Prioritizing clearing sidewalks after snowstorms (Russell and Binscarth)

Create a Public Transit Service

The WHO emphasizes the need for seniors to be offered a variety of transportation options, allowing them to choose a mode which best fits their travel needs (WHO, 2007). Establishing a basic public transit service in Russell would

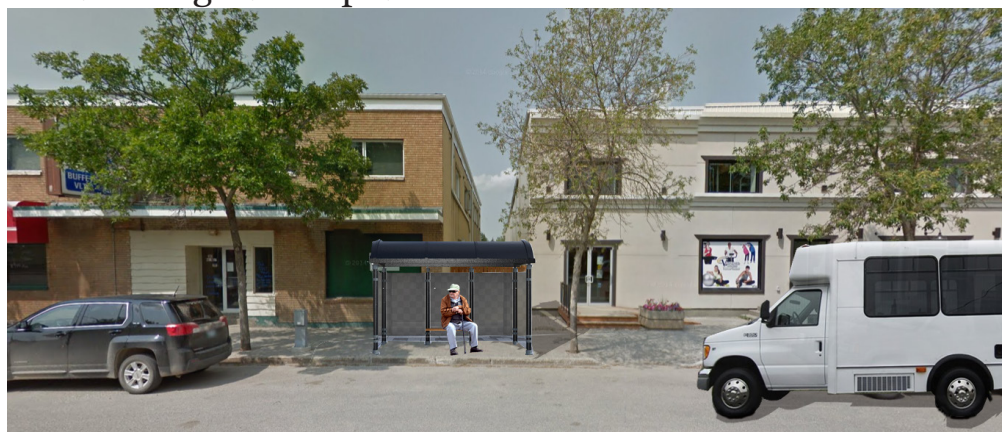


Figure 6-16. Rendering of Bus Stop in Russell

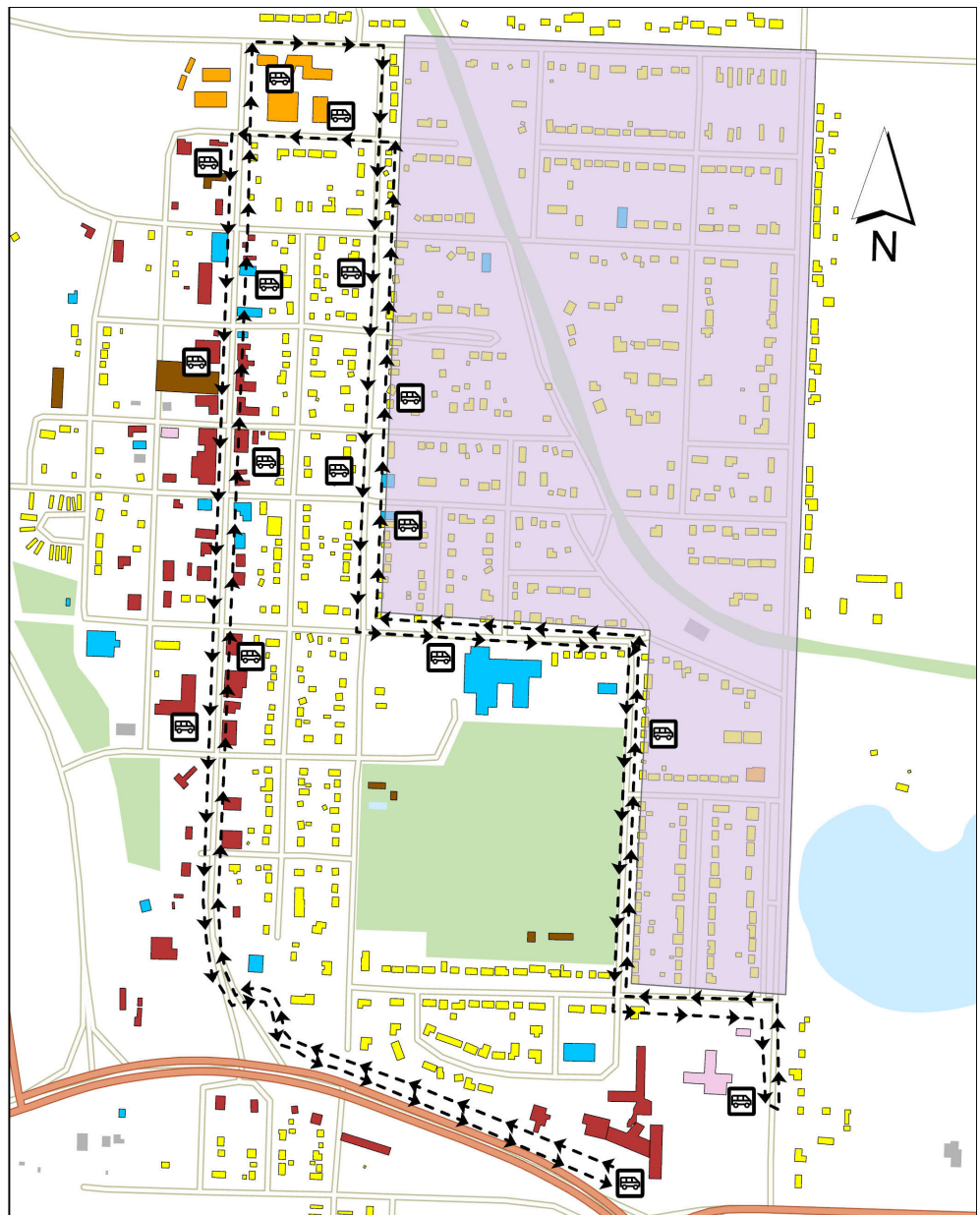
provide all seniors, and other residents, with a reliable alternative to walking or the use of a personal vehicle (Figure 16). Using a hybrid model focusing fixed-route service along the town's recently revitalized main street and using a taxibus-style approach in residential areas (Figure 17), has worked in other small Canadian communities (Northern Alberta Development Council, n.d.). This format would also provide a high degree of service without leading to unreasonable travel times. In the long term, the route could be expanded to include service to the nearby Asessippi ski resort, and Binscarth.

Figure 6-17. Map of Proposed Transit Route in Russell



Scale: 1:8,000

0 0.07 0.15 0.3 Kilometers



BARRIERS

Funding represents the most significant challenge to implementing any of the proposed suggestions. Sidewalk improvements rely on local governments to make them a priority, or to take advantage of funding from other levels of government such as the now-closed *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program* (Province of Manitoba, n.d.).

Although public transit systems in small communities are generally more efficient financially than those in larger urban areas, finding the right balance between levels of service, frequency, and cost can be a challenge (Northern Alberta Development Council, n.d.). The small city of Selkirk Manitoba funds its public transit service using a mix of revenues, sponsorships, and provincial funding, for example, but served over 30,000 passengers in 2015, operating at a much larger scale than Russell (City of Selkirk, n.d.).

Partnering with the local business community is another alternative, especially since the Russell Inn is currently in possession of an accessible shuttle bus. A route which runs from the inn north up Main Street before continuing to more residential areas would also benefit the local business community, bringing tourists into the commercial corridor. The increase in traffic could justify the levying of a small tax on Main Street businesses to help pay for shuttle costs, a practice which does have precedence in other jurisdictions (NCGrowth, 2020). Building a big enough ridership to sustain the service for an extended period of time is a longer-term challenge facing this proposal.

BUILDINGS AND OPEN SPACE

Existing Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Both towns, Russell and Binscarth, have ample open space and have undertaken placemaking initiatives to promote distinct community identities and develop a sense of place. The Binscarth Museum has installed interpretive heritage signs at key sites within the community, while Russell has revitalized its main street through a series of design guidelines, which were developed by MMP Architects (MMP Architects, n.d.). Binscarth however, lacks wayfinding signage making navigation difficult for newcomers or visitors. While strides have been made in improving the accessibility of public buildings, some remain difficult to enter for residents with decreased mobility. Residents of Binscarth have made their own winter walking trails to increase their community's walkability, but could benefit from more permanent solutions. Underutilized spaces which could be enhanced to promote informal social interaction are present in both communities.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

A series of improvements in several key areas are proposed (Figures 18 and 19):

Sidewalks



In Binscarth, to increase walkability, a set of sidewalks branching off Russell Street onto the adjacent roads are proposed, complementing existing infrastructure.

In Russell, four strips of sidewalk are proposed in the north east area to connect to the Great Trail, and to the existing sidewalks leading up to Memorial Ave.

Sidewalks in both towns would be made up of concrete, with benches and wayfinding signs spread along them, as well as different street furniture elements such as lights and recycling bins, as seen in (Figures 20 and 21).



- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| ⌘ Russell War Memorial | — Highways | — Greenspace |
| ⌘ The NorthWest Rebellion Memorial | — Roads | — Water |
| ⌘ Proposed Washrooms | — Proposed Sidewalks | |
| ⌘ Potential Public Washrooms | — The Great Loop | |
| ⌘ Existing Heritage Signs | — Existing Sidewalks | |
| ⌘ Proposed Heritage Signs | — The Fitness Loop | |
| | — The Great Trail | |
| | — The Heritage Loop | |
| | — Seniors' Housing | |

Figure 6-18. Open Space Map of Russell

Figure 6-19. Rendering of Manitoba Avenue Sidewalk Proposal in Russell



Figure 6-20. Open Space Map of Binscarth



- | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Proposed Benches | | Proposed Sidewalks |
| | Proposed Washrooms | | Binscarth Loop |
| | Potential Public Washrooms | | Existing Sidewalks |
| | Proposed Heritage Signs | | Train Tracks |
| | Binscarth War Memorial | | Highways |
| | Existing Heritage Signs | | Roads |
| | | | Parkettes |
| | | | Green Space |
| | | | Seniors' Housing |



Figure 6-21. Rendering of 6th Avenue Sidewalk Proposal in Binscarth

Walking Loops

The Great Loop (~78 minute walk):

In Russell, two paved trails are proposed, one on Manitoba Ave. and the other on Bonny Ave. S, passing along the southern side of the Russell Softball Diamond Park. These two 'Great Loops' would connect to the existing Great Trail in order to create one large walking loop of 4.5km. Benches and washrooms would be strategically spread along the loop, as well as a wayfinding system that would incorporate signage similar to those seen in (Figure 22), which were placed in the town of Mount Hope in the USA as part of a community led initiative.



Figure 6-22. Mount Hope Wayfinding System

Binscarth Loop (~76 minute walk):

In Binscarth, a 4.4 km white asphalt walking loop is proposed around the periphery of the town (Figure 23), passing by major buildings and spaces such as the golf course, skating rink, curling club, Binscarth School, and the Binscarth Museum. The walking loop would compliment the proposed sidewalks along Russell St. allowing users to reach the various proposed parkettes situated around the town. Several benches, heritage signs and washrooms would be spread out along the Binscarth Loop.



Figure 6-23. Rendering of Binscarth Walking Loop

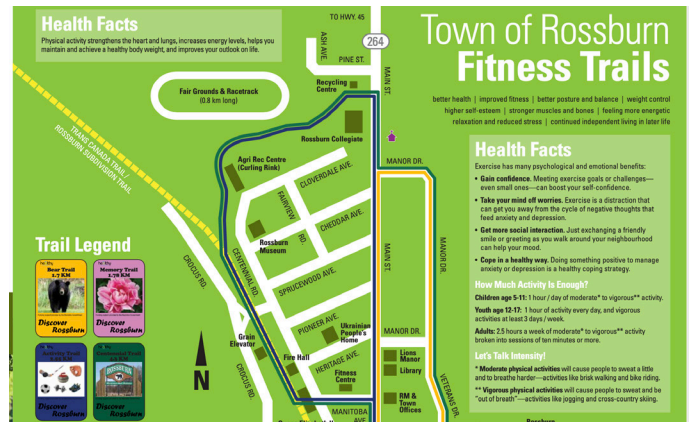
The Fitness Loop (~24 minute walk):

In Russell, a 1.3 km Fitness Loop is proposed around Macdonald Street (Figure 24). The loop would consist of a rubber running-track material painted with different distance markings crossed to assist and encourage physical activities. A selection of outdoor, accessible, fitness equipment is proposed along this loop.

Figure 6-24. Left:
Rendering of Fitness
Loop in Russell

Figure 6-25. Right:
Rossburn Fitness Trail
Brochure

The Rossburn Fitness Trails, as seen in Figure 25, are a great example of what could be done to enhance the placemaking aspects of rural trails.



The Heritage Loop (~25 minute walk):

A 1.4 km loop proposed around Memorial Ave. and Main St. in Russell (Figure 26) to create a historic walking tour around the neighbourhood, passing underneath the Memorial Street canopy. Benches and heritage signs are proposed along the loop to highlight different historic landmarks, such as the Russell War Memorial and the Northwest Rebellion Monument, like in Figure 27.

Figure 6-26. Left:
Rendering of Heritage
Loop in Russell

Figure 6-27. Right:
Rendering of Northwest
Rebellion Monument
Plaque Proposal



Parkettes



Temporary parkettes are suggested to create opportunities for community experiences and a sense of place in underutilized spaces. Common elements shared among all proposed parkettes include shaded seating areas, outdoor planters, and layouts which encourage social interaction. In the long term, many of these sites could become permanent installations.

Two sites for parkettes have been identified in Russell:

1. The east edge of the Russell IGA parking lot could be closed to traffic and designated as a pedestrian space using plants and pavement designs, and connect to a secondary seating area at the store's front entrance (Figures 28 and 29).

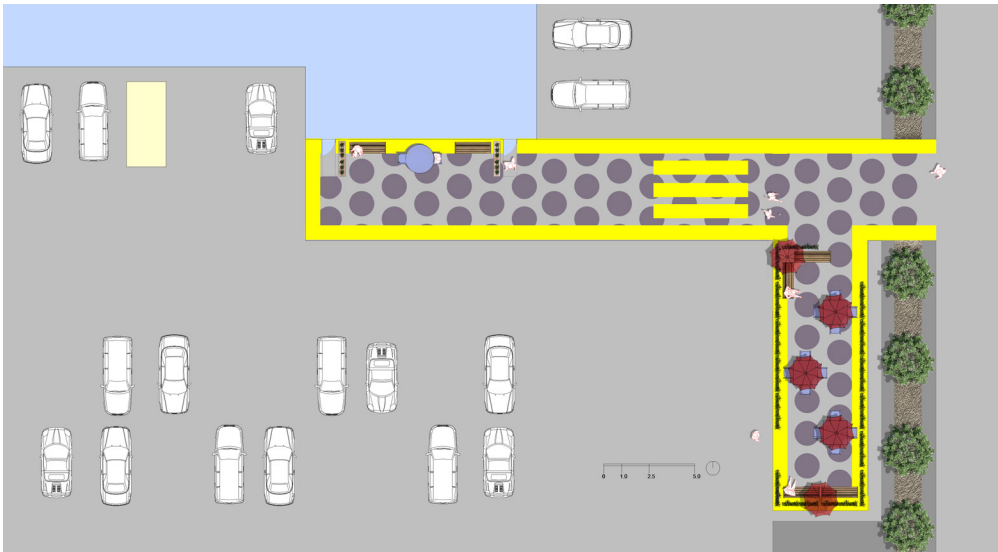


Figure 6-28. Site Plan of Russell IGA Parkette

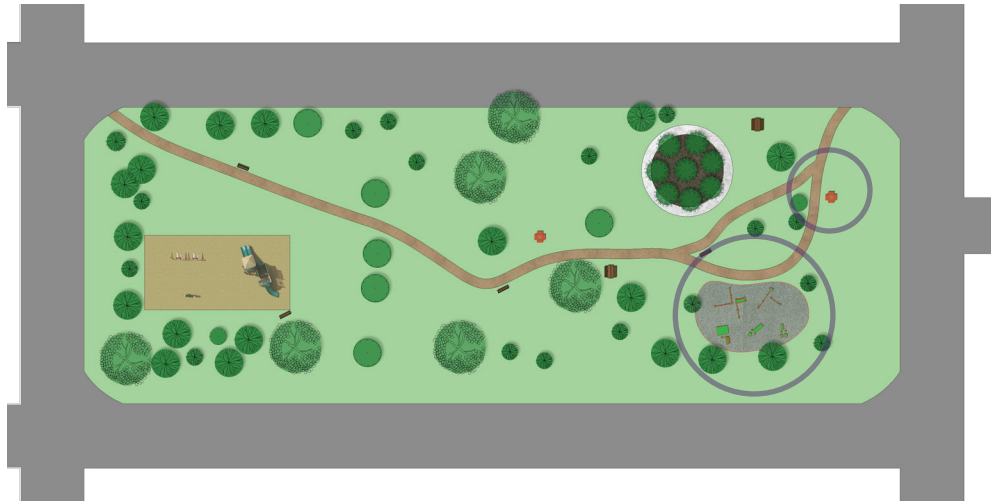


Figure 6-29. Rendering of Russell IGA Parkette

2. The Russell Seniors Park has the potential to be improved by installing recreational amenities, and activity-oriented seating arrangements like chess tables (Figure 30).



Figure 6-30. Site Plan of Russell Seniors Park with Chess Table and Fitness Equipment



In Binscarth, three potential spaces for parkettes have been identified:

1. The greenspace to the southeast of the Binscarth Museum (Figure 31)
2. The wooded area to the southwest of the Binscarth Library (Figure 32)
3. The grass section beside Arbuckle's restaurant (Figure 33)

Additionally, parkette principles could be applied to the current volunteer park to make the space more engaging for residents of all ages (Figure 34)

Figure 6-31. Top Left: Rendering of Binscarth Museum Parkette

Figure 6-32. Top Right: Rendering of Binscarth Library Parkette

Figure 6-33. Bottom Left: Rendering of Arbuckles Parkette

Figure 6-34. Bottom Right: Rendering of Volunteer Park



Accessibility Interventions

Adding temporary portable ramps to public buildings, similar to the StopGap program in Toronto (StopGap, n.d.), can help make them universally accessible (Figure 35). These can be replaced with permanent installations as funding becomes available.



The Age Friendly Committee emphasized the importance of making the Binscarth Pool accessible, as it is a major recreational site for the community. Funding from government grants or nonprofit organizations such as JumpStart could be used to create a pool ramp similar to the one added to Sergeant Tommy Prince Place in Winnipeg (Figure 36) (Bridgman Collaborative, 2010).



Figure 6-35. Left:
StopGap Ramp

Figure 6-36. Right:
Sergeant Tommy Prince
Place (Winnipeg)
Accessible Pool
Precedent.

In addition, following the comprehensive *Accessible Design for the Built Environment* guideline published by the Canadian Standards Association for all aspects of the built environment, whether that be new buildings or renovations will ensure accessibility for seniors in the communities.

BARRIERS

Some limitations to the open space proposals relate to land use and property ownership of the proposed locations of the parkettes as well as the walking loops. In certain cases, the municipality may be required to negotiate with third parties and property owners to reach agreements for public use of privately held lands. Other challenges relate to acquiring the funding needed to construct the proposed loops along with their added accessories, making sure that concerns about safety are addressed.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Existing Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Active social participation and social support are significantly connected to overall health and well-being (WHO, 2007). “Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community, as well as with the family, allows older people to continue to exercise their competence, to enjoy respect and esteem, and to maintain or establish supportive and caring relationships” (WHO, 2007, p. 38). The ability for seniors to participate in events can depend on not only the amount offered, but also the accessibility of such events, and being informed about what is available to them (WHO, 2007).

Both Russell and Binscarth have a strong sense of community and many opportunities for social participation for their resident seniors as stated by community members. Some social amenities include but are not limited to; the Binscarth Curling Rink, golf courses, swimming pools, drop-in/leisure centres, the Binscarth Hall, the Binscarth museum, libraries, restaurants, the Russell Memorial Multiplex, and walking trails. Specific types of activities that can be held are musical jam sessions, bingo nights, fall suppers, dance classes, intergenerational year-end teas, billiards, crib, luncheons and much more. Seniors can find out about opportunities for engagement through social media, the local newspaper, bulletin board postings and word-of-mouth. The local newspaper; The Russell Banner is a rarity for rural towns and is appreciated by the community members.

Social participation is strong in both Russell and Binscarth and only has a few areas that could benefit from improvement measures.

For many events and opportunities for engagement, listings are posted on Facebook which can be challenging for those not online. Not all seniors are comfortable or knowledgeable

about some technology devices or related apps, thus creating a digital divide between those that are savvy.

In addition, Internet speeds in both Russell and Binscarth are below optimal, creating an added barrier to participating in online social engagement. Websites are not designed in an age-friendly manner, making accessing them difficult for seniors.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

Social Spaces

- Add parkettes throughout both towns, along trails and in existing greenspaces; include activities, seating, and greenery to increase social engagement.



Signage and Communication

- Install more outdoor bulletin boards to increase social awareness of events/opportunities for engagement (Figures 37 and 38).
- Ensure bulletin boards are at an accessible height and



Figure 6-37. Left:
Map of Bulletin Board
Locations in Binscarth.

Figure 6-38. Right:
Map of Bulletin Board
Locations in Russell

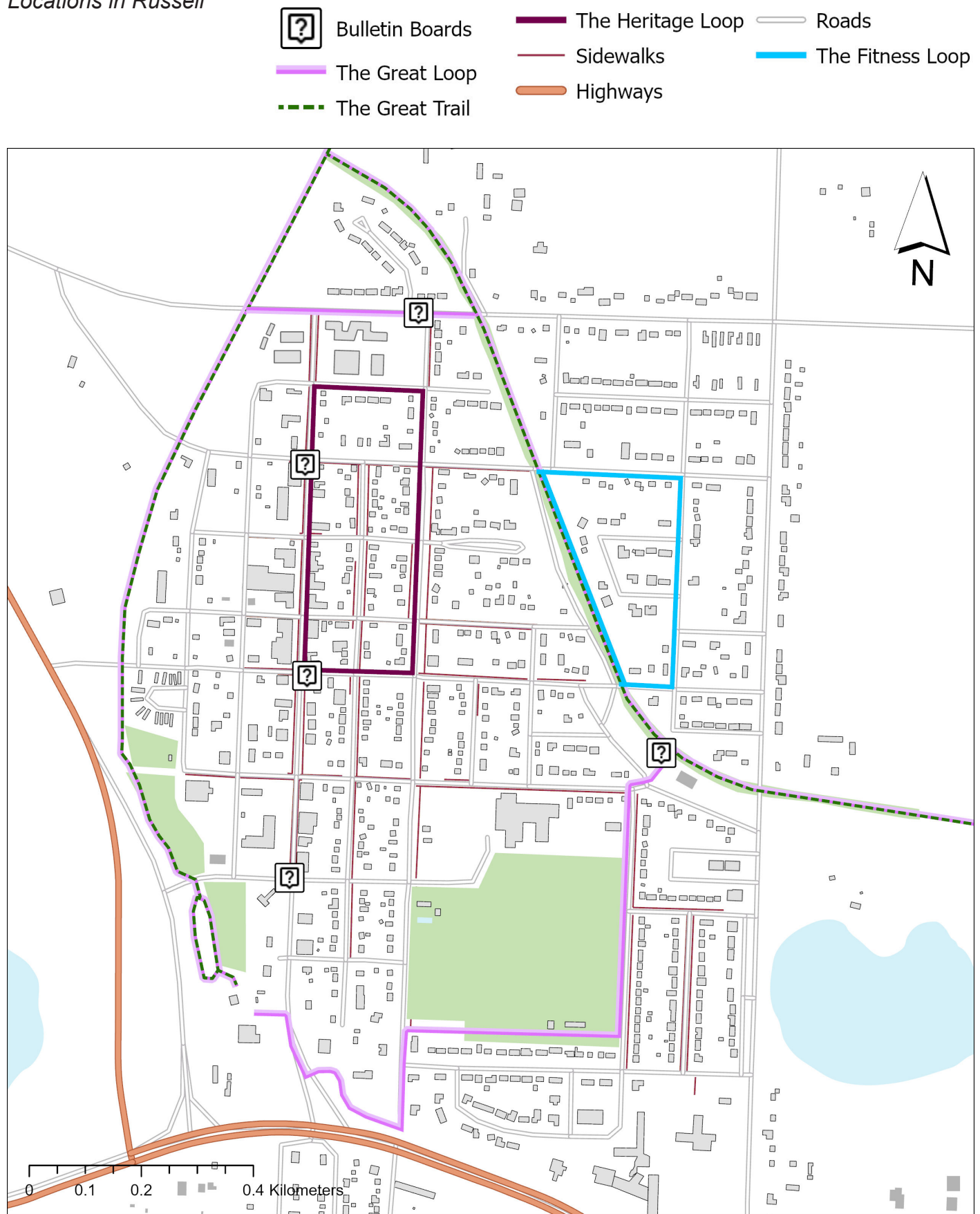




Figure 6-39. Bulletin Board Intervention at Russell Leisure Centre.

covered to protect from weather and notices being removed without permission (Figures 39 and 40).

Technology Support

- Increase technology classes in Russell and Binscarth to allow seniors opportunities to improve their knowledge and comfortability with devices and programs. Classes could be taught by youth and on a volunteer-basis. This would limit potential need for funding and encourage intergenerational engagement (Figure 41).



Figure 6-40. Left: Rendering of Accessible Bulletin Board.



Figure 6-41. Right: Younger Adult Teaching Senior in a Technology Class.

- Encourage, and provide guidance for local websites to design their websites according to age-friendly guidelines to ensure ease of access for seniors utilizing the websites (Figure 42).

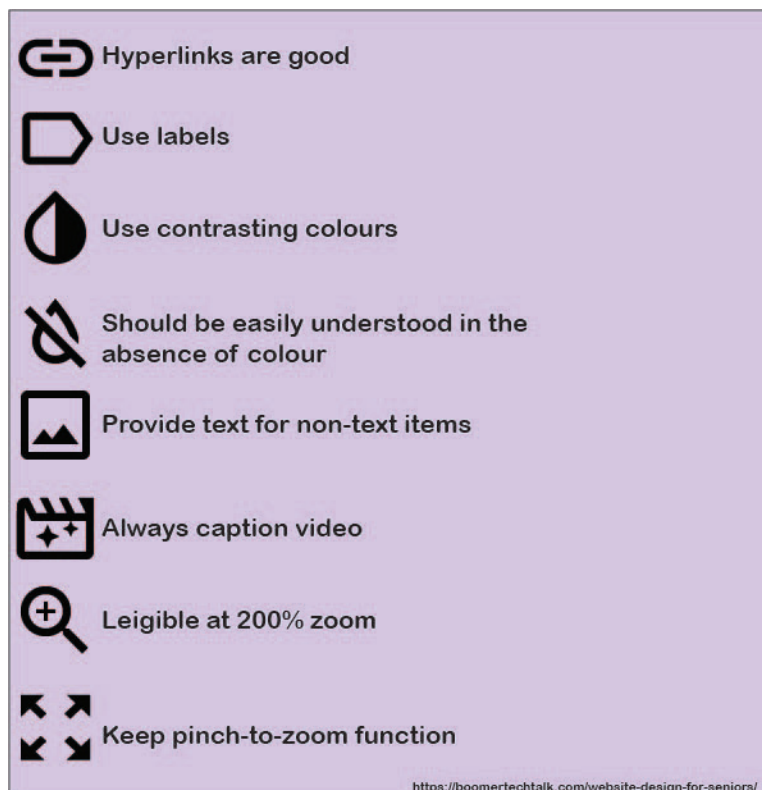


Figure 6-42. Left: Web Accessibility Graphic.

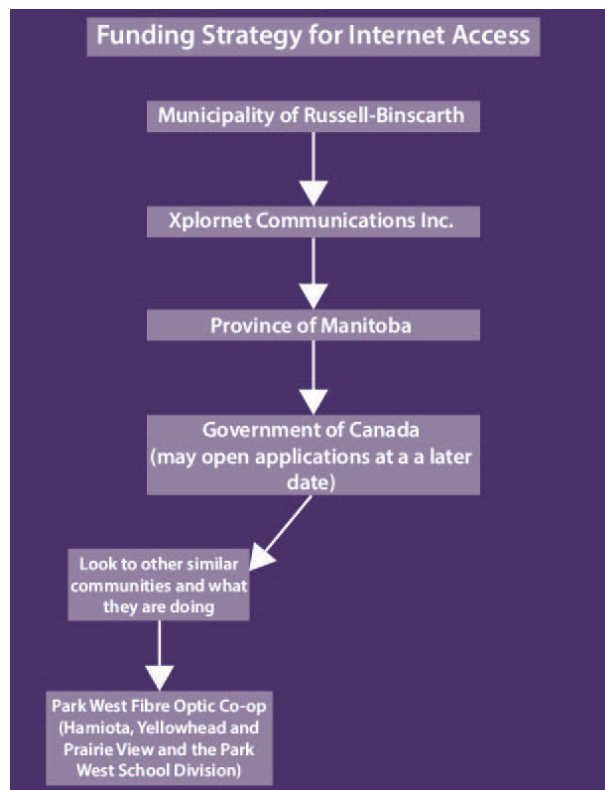


Figure 6-43. Right: Funding Strategy Graphic

- Improve Internet speeds in both Russell and Binscarth, particularly wireless speeds from their current to the Government of Canada recommended 50 Mbps/10 Mbps.
- Establish a funding strategy for improving Internet speeds (Figure 43).

BARRIERS

Establishing funding is the most significant barrier to successfully implementing these proposed suggestions. Investing in improving Internet speeds in the municipality would require the most substantial funding likely from multiple sources. Unfortunately, the federal government's Universal Broadband Fund and Connect to Innovate program opportunities have closed for applications, which would have been likely a significant contributor to this.

An alternate solution to this is to look at the Park West Fibre Optic Co-op which includes the municipalities of Hamiota, Yellowhead and Prairie View and the Park West School Division (Future Cities, n.d.). These entities came together and created a co-op to establish their own fibre optic Internet

in their area of Manitoba after having no success with levels of government (Future Cities, n.d.). This is a viable option but would require extensive planning and collaboration from all interested stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

After researching the municipality and speaking with residents on the Age-Friendly Committee, it is clear that seniors view Russell and Binscarth as desirable places to live, with opportunities to age-in-place or reside in assisted living facilities. Built areas in both communities possess a noticeable sense of place, while residents also enjoy the use of open and recreational spaces throughout the seasons, with walking trails, parks and green spaces in or near the towns. However, opportunities exist to further enhance walkability and activate underutilized spaces in both Russell and Binscarth.

The Age-Friendly Committee noted that the primary modes of transportation in both communities are personal vehicles or walking, while also depending on friends, family members, or the handi-van service for rides if they are unable to drive themselves. A simple public transit route in Russell could help provide seniors with a reliable transportation alternative. Increasing transportation will also increase amenity access to residents who are aging-in-place throughout Russell.

To increase affordable and accessible housing options in both communities, proposals include developing multi-family housing stock in available lots throughout town. In addition, members of the Age-Friendly Committee noted the strong sense of community and social participation in both Russell and Binscarth. Addressing the current digital divide by improving internet access and establishing more technology classes will help ensure seniors can remain actively engaged in all forms of social participation. In addition, improving upon other communication opportunities will continue to encourage seniors to socially

engage. It is important to ensure these opportunities are accessible by seniors; this refers to bulletin boards, the Russell Banner, and local websites.

While both towns are loved by their residents, we have noted areas for improvement in all previously-identified categories of the WHO *Age-Friendly Guidelines* (housing, transportation, open spaces and social participation). The aim for the proposed suggestions is to improve accessibility for senior residents, create more opportunities for social engagement, encourage active living and aging-in-place and to increase walkability.

Figure 6-44. *Russell Arches*



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