



Policy on Family and Seniors

***To Be Citizen of Austin
at Any Age!***

Adopted by the Municipal Council on December 5th 2016

To Be Citizen of Austin at Any Age!

My fellow citizens,

It is with pleasure and pride that I present you with our Policy on family and seniors, *To be Citizen of Austin at Any Age!*

At the outcome of our strategic planning exercise in 2012, the statement “Austin - Preserving our Heritage. Building our Future.” was chosen to embody the collective vision of Austin citizens. Can you see, as I do, a direct link with our seniors and families?

Seniors – the generations that precede us – are our roots. They are persons of experience who bring vital strength to our society and community. They are the heritage to be preserved...and treasured.

Families – the generations of the future – energize our small communities and safeguard their survival. They are the foundation on which to build our future...starting today.

By adopting a policy on family and seniors, the Municipality undertakes to put the reflex “*Think and Act Family and Seniors*” at the core of all concerns. In concrete terms, this means creating the conditions needed to build and maintain a safe, vibrant, responsive community that is attentive to the needs of one and all.

To Be Citizen of Austin at Any Age! is the result of a vast consultation process, and of the deliberations of the Steering Committee appointed by Council to develop the policy. I am very grateful to all Committee members and to our many partners: thank you for your availability, your commitment and your generosity. I truly wanted to see the real needs of our people addressed, and I must say that the final result accurately reflects their expectations.

I invite you to read both the policy and the plan and, as implementation gets under way in 2017, to jump right in and lend a hand, for if our policy is to be brought to life, all Austin citizens must make it *their* endeavour.

Lisette Maillé

The Process

In 2012, our strategic planning exercise had already begun to address several concerns respecting seniors and families.

Thanks to a subsidy granted by the *Secrétariat aux aînés* and the *ministère de la Famille* in 2013, the Municipality began to develop its own policy on family and seniors. A Steering Committee was formed: its members – citizens of different age groups, municipal Council members and the Community Development Officer – worked under the skillful guidance of a Project Leader.

As monthly meetings succeeded one another, the Committee drew a demographic profile of the Municipality, conducted a survey of the population in 2015 and, in 2016, held a public forum to establish priorities. The following pages contain the resulting implementation plan.

Our policy – *To Be Citizen of Austin at Any Age!* – was officially adopted by Council on December 5th 2016. An Executive Committee and a Monitoring Committee will now ensure that the plan is realized over the next three years, with allowances for any adjustment deemed necessary along the way. As always, the population will be invited to provide us with their comments and suggestions.

The Steering Committee

Anne-Marie Boire-Lavigne – citizen, physician, specialist on seniors’ issues, spokesperson for families

Isabelle Couture – municipal Councillor, spokesperson for families since April 2015

Lyse Chartrand – Project support, *Carrefour Action Municipale et Famille*

Jean-Claude Duff – municipal Councillor, spokesperson for seniors

Marc D. Gagnon – ex-Councillor, spokesperson for families until April 2015

France Gauthier – citizen, spokesperson for seniors until October 2015

Paul-Émile Guilbault – citizen, spokesperson for seniors

Isabelle Huet – citizen, community organiser, advisor on seniors’ issues, spokesperson for families

Richard Lapointe – citizen, spokesperson for seniors

Lisette Maillé – Mayor, spokesperson for families

Blanche Paquette – Community Development Officer

Daphnée Poirier – Project Leader

Jean Ranger – municipal Councillor and chair of the Steering Committee, spokesperson for seniors

Portrait of Our Community

- Austin is a rural municipality featuring a truly exceptional natural environment. It is home to vast forests, seven lakes, two large ponds, a peat bog, and parts of the Mt. Orford National Park and Green Mountains natural corridor.
- Because Austin's population is scattered over a vast, 86-km territory, the density of occupation is low.
- The population – approximately 3 500 persons – is concentrated around the lakes and in the village core. Half of them are seasonal residents.
- Formerly a predominantly English-speaking community, Austin is now 84% French-speaking.
- In 2011¹, persons aged 65 years and over accounted for 23% of the population, as compared with 16 % for the province of Quebec. Austin's aging rate is higher than the provincial rate. The gaps are expected to grow in the coming years.
- More than 20%² of persons aged 65 and over live alone and have a disability; several of them have a low income.
- There are few young families in Austin. The ratio of persons aged 19 years and under has decreased, from 17% in 2006 to 13% in 2013.

In Austin...

... the family is a community of persons related by blood, marriage or adoption, who share certain values and assume responsibilities with respect to security, affection and education.

... seniors, whether they live alone or in a family setting, belong to the population's oldest age group; while they continue to contribute to social development, they have particular, end-of-life needs.

¹ SAGE Innovation, *Portrait des besoins des aînés de la MRC de Memphrémagog*, Octobre 2015; Observatoire estrien du développement des communautés, Indicateurs démographiques et socioéconomiques, Communauté locale d'Austin, 2014.

² *Idem*.

Our Policy's Defining Values

One of the four strategic areas of focus identified in the 2012 strategic plan was: **Energizing our community**. To achieve this, the following objectives were established:

- A- Promote cohesion within the community
- B- Become a youth-friendly community to achieve a sound intergenerational balance
- C- Provide an environment that fosters the well-being of our seniors
- D- Strengthen our cultural development and sociocultural life

These objectives are reflected in the values that guide our actions and in our resolve to place the **Think and Act Family and Seniors** reflex at the center of our deliberations, first as citizens, but also as municipal council members and employees. The Policy on family and seniors will provide us with the means to achieve our goals, namely by inviting Austin citizens of all ages to get involved.

These values are:

- An open and welcoming intergenerational community where social cohesion between the English and French cultures is encouraged and respect for the natural environment is deep-rooted.
- Citizen engagement in community development and in the management of social and recreational activities, with due regard to the integration of healthy lifestyle habits.
- Mutual assistance and solidarity toward our most vulnerable citizens, to break them out of their isolation and encourage them to live at home, securely and confidently.

Let's talk about active ageing

The concept of active ageing rests upon three fundamental **principles**: increasing the prospects of staying healthy, recognizing the importance of seniors as actors in the development of the community, and fostering a secure living environment.

To uphold these principles while fulfilling the needs and aspirations of young families and promoting a healthy lifestyle, six areas of intervention have been selected.

Areas of Intervention of the Policy

The chosen areas of intervention focus our actions toward the creation of an intergenerational community that is pleasant, safe and respectful of our natural surroundings.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING YOUNG FAMILIES

The Municipality's vibrancy cannot be sustained without the presence of youth. By enticing young families to live, work and play here, we will energize our community and gain the means to achieve a sound intergenerational balance.

TRANSPORTATION

In rural areas more than anywhere else, transportation is an essential factor for autonomy and quality of life. Access to affordable public transportation as a complement to – or replacement of – the automobile would improve the mobility of seniors and young families.

SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Interaction and the creation of bonds beyond those of the family stimulate personal development and enhance the community. An active social life has positive effects on the health of seniors. Activities that bring the whole family together provide venues where bonds may be forged and potentially developed into a mutual assistance network. They also foster a sense of belonging within the community.

RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Recreational and cultural activities contribute to the creation of a pleasant and invigorating place to live, and encourage participants to embrace and maintain a healthy lifestyle. In Austin, these activities must fulfill the needs of citizens from all age groups and neighbourhoods, while staying true to the general resolve to preserve and enhance the Municipality's natural environment and rural charm.

HEALTH, SECURITY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Because our aging population is scattered over a wide territory, health and security are key factors in the quality of life of Austin citizen. Mutual aid and community support will help to maintain those citizens who are most vulnerable at home, but they could also assist isolated young families, thereby strengthening everyone's sense of security.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Linked to social inclusion and involvement – regardless of age or lifestyle – communication and information are used to reach the different clienteles and learn their preferences so that we may better fulfill their respective expectations.

Implementation Plan

Roles of the Municipality:

Leader: Instigates an action or takes responsibility for its execution and management.

Partner: Collaborates with other stakeholders to implement the action.

Facilitator: Contributes resources to assist community organizations.

Ambassador: Represents the interests of its population before governmental authorities and community organizations, as well as with shops, businesses and individuals.

In its different roles, the Municipality shall be called upon to interact on different levels with local, regional or national bodies, to implement the actions set out in the plan. Here is a preliminary list of these bodies; others shall be added along the way.

- Action Memphré Ouest (AMO)
- Associations (citizens, lakes)
- Magog Library
- Boomers de Memphrémagog
- Centre d'action bénévole de Magog
- Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l'Estrie - Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke (CIUSS CHUS)
- Local committees (culture, recreation, heritage)
- Coopérative de santé Eastman and private clinics
- Coopérative de solidarité de services à domicile Memphrémagog
- Fédération québécoise des municipalités du Québec (FQM)
- L'APPUI for caregivers
- Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Occupation du territoire (MAMOT)
- Ministère des transports, de la Mobilité durable et de l'Électrification des transports (MTMDET)
- Memphremagog MRC
- PersonnAide
- Memphremagog intermunicipal police department
- Ressources Relais Memphrémagog
- Sentiers de l'Estrie
- Sépaq (Parc national du Mont Orford)
- Table de concertation des aînés Memphrémagog
- Tourisme Cantons de l'Est
- Transport des Alentours
- Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ)
- Vallée Missisquoi Nord

Legend:

- S** Action specifically addressing the needs of seniors
- F** Action specifically addressing the needs of families
- H** Action to bolster the development of a healthy lifestyle

AREA OF INTERVENTION 1: ATTRACTING AND RETAINING YOUNG FAMILIES

Observation: There are few young families in Austin and their number is declining.

Main objective: Develop incentives to attract and retain young families to ensure the Municipality's vitality.

Specific objectives	Actions	Role of the Municipality	2017	2018	2019
Implement: a) societal incentives	1.1 Encourage the various initiatives linked to stay-in-school programs and the rights of children. F	Leader	X	X	X
	b) housing incentives	1.2 Define strategies to encourage the construction of affordable housing units. F	Leader		X
	1.3 Determine incentives that can be implemented. F	Leader		X	
c) service-related incentives	1.4 Improve the marketing of our recreational and tourist attractions (lakes, mountains, outdoor sports). F	Leader		X	
	1.5 Improve the Day Camp (accessibility, facilities, etc.) F	Leader	X	X	X
	1.6 Support the creation of daycare services. F	Ambassador	X	X	X
d) employment incentives	1.7 Facilitate the realization of projects submitted under the MRC's <i>Land Bank</i> and <i>Plan for the Development of the Agricultural Zone</i> (PDZA) programs. F	Facilitator	X	X	X
	1.8 Foster commercial development. F	Leader	X	X	X
	1.9 Promote teleworking by means of access to high speed internet throughout the territory. F	Ambassador	X	X	X

AREA OF INTERVENTION 2: TRANSPORTATION

Observation: For persons who do not have a car or driver’s permit, or those who have only limited access to a car, the problem of mobility is a daily one. Existing public transportation services fail to address all the needs.

Main objective: Facilitate mobility for families and seniors, both in and out of the Municipality.

Specific objectives	Actions	Role of the Municipality	2017	2018	2019
Participate in the promotion of public transportation and in the development of new sustainable mobility options	2.1 Publicize the public transportation services available in the territory. S F	Facilitator	X	X	X
	2.2 Explore the possibility of developing or organising a carpooling initiative (Austin-Magog and Austin-Sherbrooke). S F	Partner		X	
	2.3 Promote new options for sustainable mobility (e.g., collective taxi). S F	Ambassador	X	X	X
Foster active transportation by improving road safety for pedestrians and cyclists	2.4 Develop a program to promote road sharing, with emphasis on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. S F H	Leader	X		
	2.5 Lobby in favour of reducing speed limits on some of the main roads. S F H	Ambassador	X	X	X

AREA OF INTERVENTION 3: SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Observation: Social involvement plays an important role in the health of citizens and in fostering their sense of belonging to the community. In Austin, cultural and recreational activities encourage citizens to get involved socially.

Main objective: Enhance existing social and recreative activities and promote the creation of inter-generational gatherings to stimulate the social and recreational life of our citizens.

Specific objectives	Actions	Role of the Municipality	2017	2018	2019
Build on <i>Austin en fête!</i> and other events to encourage social involvement	3.1 Organise activities that will spark, in each citizen, a sense of belonging to the Municipality. S F	Leader	X	X	X
	3.2 Boost publicity in the community whenever an event draws near (e.g., posters, banners). S F	Leader	X	X	X
	3.3 Ask owners' associations to appoint persons charged with mobilizing participation. A F	Leader	X	X	X
	3.4 Support and acknowledge volunteer efforts in the organization of community events. S F H	Leader	X	X	X
Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of our seniors for the benefit of the entire community	3.5 Collaborate in the creation of socio-professional mentoring projects, with seniors mentoring new residents. S F	Facilitator		X	
	3.6 Encourage citizens to participate actively in discussions on the Municipality's development. S F	Leader	X	X	X

AREA OF INTERVENTION 4: RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Observation: Austin citizens respond in different ways to the cultural and recreational activities offered by the Municipality, depending on the age group or neighbourhood to which they belong.

Main objective: Provide each group of citizens with activities and cultural/recreational facilities that contribute to their fulfillment, enhance their creativity and encourage the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle, and do so while paying due regard to the rural character of our settings.

Specific objectives	Actions	Role of the Municipality	2017	2018	2019
Step up the promulgation of information on cultural and recreational activities	4.1 Diversify promotional means. S F H	Leader	X	X	X
	4.2 Diversify the means of publicizing the Municipality's reimbursement programs (e.g., Magog sports and library surcharges for non-residents). F H	Leader	X	X	X
Support the organisation of social activities in the Municipality	4.3 Help promote social activities in the different neighbourhoods. S F H	Facilitator	X	X	X
	4.4 Organise activities that make better use of existing infrastructures (e.g., <i>pétanque</i> court, Fireflies' theater). S F H	Leader	X	X	X
Diversify the range of recreational activities offered to families and seniors	4.5 Study how playground equipment might be adapted to the needs of families and seniors. S F H	Leader			X
	4.6 Undertake steps to create public accesses for swimming. S F H	Leader		X	
Promote physical activity in natural surroundings	4.7 Help develop new trails for walking, biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. S F H	Facilitator	X	X	X
	4.8 Help develop new access points to existing walking trails. S F H	Partner		X	

AREA OF INTERVENTION 5: HEALTH, SECURITY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Observation: Despite the variety of health and social services available, citizens and their caregivers would like to have access to more local services, adjusted to account for the rural setting.

Main objective: Offer to those in need a better access to healthcare services, and provide them with a safe environment with the help and support of the community.

Specific objectives	Actions	Role of the Municipality	2017	2018	2019
Facilitate access to healthcare services	5.1 Promote available healthcare services (in both languages), especially to the more vulnerable citizens. S F	Facilitator	X	X	X
	5.2 Approach partners about dispensing certain healthcare services locally (e.g., vaccines, delivery of medicines, home care). S F	Ambassador	X	X	X
Help citizens live in our community for as long as possible	5.3 Promote the home assistance services available on the territory (e.g., Meals on Wheels, escort/driving service, housekeeping). S	Facilitator	X	X	X
	5.4 Take steps to establish a local, mutual aid network. S F	Leader		X	X
	5.5 Assess the housing needs of seniors. S	Leader		X	X
Strengthen the sense of security	5.6 Publicize the PAIR program to beneficiaries and caregivers. S	Facilitator	X	X	X
	5.7 Distribute a guide on public security. S F	Leader		X	X
	5.8 Raise the awareness of citizens and municipal employees with respect to elderly abuse. S	Facilitator	X	X	X
Assist vulnerable citizens	5.9 Use a variety of means to identify vulnerable persons and determine their needs. S F	Leader	X	X	X
	5.10 Develop a plan to reach vulnerable persons quickly in an emergency. S F	Leader	X		

AREA OF INTERVENTION 6: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Observation: Despite the various means of communication used by the Municipality, some of the services on offer are not widely known.

Main objective: Use means of communication that promote information flow, and messages that are easily understood by the various audiences.

Specific objectives	Actions	Role of the Municipality	2017	2018	2019
Establish means of communication that are complementary to the existing ones	6.1 Assess the relevance of distributing a refrigerator magnet featuring information (telephone numbers for municipal services, for Hydro-Québec, etc.) S	Leader	X		
	6.2 Distribute a welcome package to new residents. S F	Leader	X	X	X
Align communication tools to the different audiences	6.3 Update the Municipality's website. S F	Leader	X	X	X
	6.4 Use simple words and larger fonts to communicate with seniors and visually impaired persons. S	Leader		X	

Implementation

An **Executive Committee** will ensure that the actions planned for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 are carried out. Composed of the Mayor, the municipal Councillor responsible for the Policy and the Community Development Officer, this committee will:

- monitor progress on the basis of expected results, ensure that both municipal employees and the various partner agencies are fulfilling their roles, and ascertain that the proposed milestones and deadlines are respected;
- make any adjustment deemed necessary, taking feasibility and citizen suggestions into account;
- produce periodic progress reports for review by the Monitoring Committee and by Council;
- publicize completed actions.

The **Monitoring Committee** will be composed of the following persons:

- Blanche Paquette, Community Development Officer and committee leader
- Lisette Maillé, Mayor, spokesperson for families
- Jean-Claude Duff, municipal Councillor, spokesperson for seniors
- Isabelle Couture, municipal Councillor, spokesperson for families
- Jean Ranger, municipal Councillor, spokesperson for seniors
- Anne-Marie Boire-Lavigne, citizen, physician, specialist on seniors' issues, spokesperson for families
- Isabelle Huet, citizen, community organizer, advisor on seniors' issues, spokesperson for families
- Paul-Émile Guilbault, citizen, spokesperson for seniors
- Rowan Smith, citizen, midwife, spokesperson for families

The Monitoring Committee will meet quarterly to review the Executive Committee's progress reports and to make any recommendation deemed useful for implementing the different actions listed in the plan.

Conclusion

Through their contribution and mobilization, the citizens of Austin, the members of Council and the municipal staff have already started to breathe life into the Policy. Now it is up to each and everyone of us to make it our own and get involved. In this way, we shall achieve the objectives and improve our living environment for the benefit of families and seniors...so that all may be Citizen of Austin at Any Age!

Acknowledgements

- The Municipality extends its most sincere thanks to:
 - The members of the Steering Committee for their extraordinary work and dedication;
 - The citizens of Austin who participated in the consultations, and the babysitters (Emmanuelle and Anika) who looked after our children during the public forum;
 - Mrs. Lyse Chartrand of *Carrefour Action Municipale et Famille* for her counsel;
 - All the persons who readily gave their support to the Steering Committee during the process;
 - The *Secrétariat aux aînés* and the *ministère de la Famille* for their financial support.

References

- Direction de la santé publique de l’Estrie, 2015.
- Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2015.
- Observatoire estrien du développement des communautés, *Indicateurs démographiques et socioéconomiques, Communauté locale d’Austin, 2014.*
- SAGE Innovation, *Portrait des besoins des aînés de la MRC de Memphrémagog, Octobre 2015.*
- Service d’organisation communautaire, CIUSSS de l’Estrie-CHUS Memphrémagog.
- Statistique Canada, *Profil du recensement, Résultats pour le Canton d’Orford, 2011.*

Useful links

Austin Cultural Policy

<http://www.municipalite.austin.qc.ca/fr/politique-culturelle/> (in French only)

Austin Strategic Plan

<http://www.municipalite.austin.qc.ca/en/strategic-planning/>

Policy on Family and Seniors

<http://www.municipalite.austin.qc.ca/>

True of Nature, True of Heart

The Municipality of Austin is committed to safeguarding the security and quality of life of its citizens, fostering their sense of belonging and protecting their environment, culture and heritage, and to do so by delivering optimized services that are consistent with sustainable development principles.