



Making Your
Community
Livable
for All Ages:

What's Working!



advocacy | action | answers on aging

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Letter from n4a CEO Sandy Markwood

Ensuring that people can age successfully with dignity and independence is the mission of the nation's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). It is therefore not surprising that over 70 percent of AAAs are engaged in the process of developing Livable Communities for All Ages—communities that address the needs of people over their entire lifespan. It has been our privilege to support our members in this vital work, providing a range of resources and technical assistance that have helped to pave the way for the expansion of these initiatives nationwide.

However, making communities livable for all ages must be a joint endeavor among all sectors of the local community. Local and regional governments must utilize an “age in everything” lens to inform policies and planning in all areas—from housing and transportation to public spaces and social inclusion. Businesses need to focus on reaching and providing services and products to the growing aging market. And the nonprofit and faith-based community needs to work collaboratively to address the issues of aging across the lifespan. To tackle the challenges and opportunities of the rapidly growing number of older Americans—a population that is not only living longer but wants to remain active and engaged—we need to harness the power of longevity and plan infrastructure that encourages and supports productive aging.

We hope this report will spark or deepen your interest in the burgeoning Livable Communities movement. We hope that you will utilize this report as a tool for engaging, energizing and guiding stakeholders throughout the community. Additionally, we hope that it will enable you to effectively participate in and champion initiatives that will further the goal of making your community a great place to grow up and grow old.

Please join with us as we work together to develop and launch programs, policies and initiatives that will make our communities more livable for all.



Sandy Markwood, CEO

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging



Sandy Markwood

Executive Summary

The United States is experiencing a rapid expansion in the number of older adults. Every day, 10,000 people turn 65 as the front end of the baby boomer generation begins to enter their next phase of life. By 2030, when the final boomer has turned 65, older adults will represent nearly 20 percent of the population. Even more significant is the greater longevity many older adults will enjoy, living for decades after officially becoming “seniors.” Indeed, from 1980 to 2010, the centenarian population increased by 65.8 percent, while the total population increased by 36.3 percent. The percentage of those in their 80s and 90s is increasing at even higher rates.¹

With the longevity boom, today’s older adults desire and will likely have a different aging experience than that of their parents and grandparents. Trends indicate that fewer of them will move to traditional retirement communities or age-segregated housing; instead, they wish to remain in the homes or in the communities where they have established roots—to “age in community.”* These older adults intend to continue to be active in their communities. Many will remain in the paid or unpaid workforce, and they expect to be civically engaged and respected for their contributions.

Supporting the growing aging population poses challenges for most American communities—particularly post-World War II suburbs. The majority of older adults live in suburbs that were designed with little regard for the level of connectivity needed to enable older adults and people with disabilities to flourish in their homes and communities. Access to community features such as transportation, recreation, health care and shopping are often lacking, creating barriers to full independence and engagement. The trend in many American communities over the past several decades was to segregate people by age. In addition to segregated functions, we also segregate activities and services by age, i.e., senior housing and senior centers. Communities today are therefore tasked with making adjustments in order to support the physical, social and other needs of dispersed populations who live in situations that may not suit their changing needs as they age.

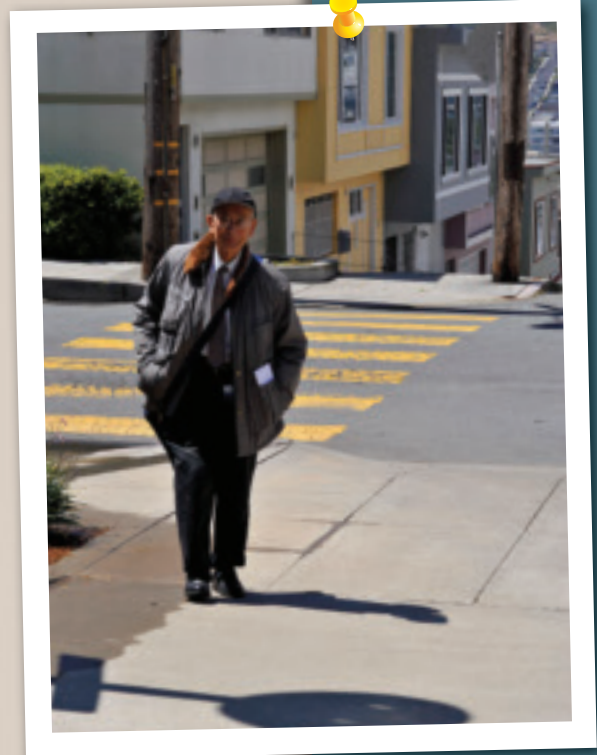
Tasked with the responsibility for planning, coordinating and advocating for aging services at the community level, the Aging Network is in a unique position to integrate individual and community interests in order to facilitate aging in community. The Aging Network is a key partner in community change efforts in our neighborhoods, cities and counties. Indeed, the Older Americans Act (OAA) mandates that they do so, stipulating that Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) will “serve as the advocate and focal point for older individuals within the community by (in cooperation with agencies, organizations, and individuals participating in activities under the [area] plan) monitoring, evaluating and commenting upon all policies, programs, hearings, levies and community actions which will affect older individuals.”² The OAA also places accountability for planning with the AAAs. By promoting Livable Communities, the Aging Network can convene the appropriate representatives from all sectors of the community to lead a comprehensive, integrated community approach to healthy and successful aging.

* This document uses the term “age in community” to refer to community-wide support for residents to age well and thrive, in lieu of the term “age in place,” which is more commonly used but is sometimes more limited to the dwelling unit level.

Most AAAs have already embraced this agenda. As reported in the 2014 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) survey, “Trends and New Directions—Area Agencies on Aging,” more than 70 percent of AAAs have taken steps to develop Livable Communities by meeting with other public entities to address housing, transportation, land use and other key development issues. Much of their work involves establishing cross-sector coalitions and developing projects and plans for Livable Communities that address the needs of citizens across the lifespan.³

Recently, n4a also worked closely with six AAAs and their local partners to advance Livable Community initiatives through the Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC) supported by MetLife Foundation. These communities convened local multi-stakeholder collaboratives that collectively identified priority issues to tackle, determined outcomes and developed action plans in areas including mobility and access, housing, age-friendly businesses and culture change related to how people perceive aging in our society. Brief descriptions of the efforts in these communities and the lessons learned are shared throughout this report.

This document offers an overview of Livable Communities and identifies key strategies that are pivotal to the success of local initiatives that are truly moving the needle on making communities livable for all ages. The report is intended as a resource for local public and private entities and citizen change-makers who want to ensure that their communities are making the right decisions and allocating appropriate resources to improve vital physical and social support infrastructures that meet needs across the lifespan.



Executive Summary

The following “Top Ten List” provides guidance to communities based on key strategies that are successfully advancing efforts to make communities more livable for all ages.

1. Collaborate Across Traditional and Nontraditional Sectors

A local collaborative effort should construct intersections and promote new thinking across sectors, including those that are often not at the table for discussions around aging (e.g., the business, faith-based, minority and young adult communities). Local government is a key partner, emphasizing particular departments (e.g., planning, housing, transportation, health, parks and recreation, public works). By identifying and leveraging community assets across sectors, Livable Community collaboratives generate opportunities for shared solutions while also benefitting from “economies of scope,”⁴ which occur when single solutions benefit multiple issues and populations.

2. Celebrate Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Not only is America’s aging population more multigenerational, it is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. By seeking input from and

engaging the diversity of its residents, a community will better understand the disparate health and wellness challenges faced by a heterogeneous community of older adults. Communities must consider the varying needs and preferences of different racial, ethnic and cultural groups as they seek to create a public realm that works across the lifespan for all of the community’s residents.

3. Build Individual Relationships

Activities do not create results; people create results. Livable Communities advocates need to invest time in building individual relationships with stakeholders in key sectors. They need to empower

sector champions who are willing to leverage their expertise and influence to advance the community’s emerging livability agenda. Fostering these relationships often pays off in improved coordination, innovative partnerships and development of a new cadre of passionate supporters. Indeed, new relationships across sectors often offer the most fruitful ground for breakthroughs and the people building these relationships are often the brightest stars in this work.



4. Honor Your Unique Local Community

The *genius loci*, or “spirit of place,” must inform a local narrative and set of actions that resonate with your particular community. Communities need to prioritize the topics around which there is enthusiasm from those key stakeholders and volunteers who step up to the plate. Though attaining livability entails multiple interrelated issues that need to be addressed and will continue to evolve as circumstances change, local communities of all shapes and sizes can undertake manageable steps to begin making themselves more livable for all ages.

5. Revere Older Adults

Unlike in many other countries, age is not revered in the United States. As a result, older Americans are frequently underappreciated and undervalued. Livability initiatives should seek to change people’s perceptions of their own aging and the way they view aging in the broader community. Older adults and their caregivers represent a valuable but under-tapped resource, as well as an important market segment. Developing this social asset can both meet the needs of older adults and promote local economic growth.



6. Embrace Longevity as an Opportunity

One of the best ways to value older adults, while also reaping the value of their contributions, is to meaningfully engage and leverage this enormous asset for the benefit of the community. A shift in mindset—from simply recruiting volunteers to mobilizing community leaders—will serve the dual purpose of advancing important community objectives while providing older adults with a sense of purpose.

7. Tackle the Social Factors that Determine Community Wellness

While access to health care is essential, many other factors are the primary drivers of people’s health. These include: community safety, family/ social support, environmental quality and the built environment, as well as access to healthy food and physical exercise. By building relationships and partnerships with organizations across community sectors, a Livable Community collaborative can influence policies, plans and programs that affect the social and environmental determinants of health, thus advancing healthy and active aging.

Executive Summary



8. Seize Opportunities to Infuse Age in Everything

Identify planning and budgeting processes into which you can insert the perspectives of older adults. This will both advance older adult livability principles and prevent community decisions that unintentionally create barriers to innovative aging solutions. Invite people participating in relevant community forums to join your collaborative. Look for opportunities to infuse an “age in everything” perspective into community decision-making.

9. Send the Right Messages

Discussing a Livable Community for all ages solely through the lens of aging will not resonate with many of the sectors that a livability initiative seeks to engage, or frequently even with older adults themselves. It is therefore important to create messages that convince different stakeholders it is in their interest to participate in this effort. Messages framing the benefits of engagement should be customized to each sector.

10. Leverage Local Dollars for Livability

The broad, cross-sector work of Livable Communities requires significant coordination, a role that demands dedicated staff time, and a role best undertaken by people with expertise in community organizing. Additionally, a Livable Community collaborative should look beyond government funding by nurturing relationships with potential funders who seek to impact the community and establishing a variety of ways in which different partners can support this work.

“Making Your Community Livable for All Ages: What’s Working!” describes some key strategies for effectively developing Livable Community initiatives. The report draws from the experiences of local communities—those that have taken major steps forward and those that have struggled; all of these communities have learned important lessons along the way. Communities ready to utilize this report’s guidance will be well-positioned to generate local support and partnerships, and to realize incremental successes that will help to make them places where all people can live and age well.

About This Report

Introduction

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) views Livable Communities as pivotal to successful aging in America, which is why it has been a top program and policy priority for more than a decade. With sponsorship from MetLife Foundation, n4a has advanced local efforts to make communities livable for people of all ages through a series of national community surveys, workshops and town hall meetings that engage local leaders in discussions about Livable Communities, presentations and seminal publications. These include *The Maturing of America*⁵ and the n4a-Partners for Livable Communities publication, *A Blueprint for Action*,⁶ which describes some of the primary challenges to local livability and provides step-by-step guidance for focusing community resources on aging-in-community initiatives.

In May 2012, n4a convened 28 community leaders from across the nation in a Livable Communities Leadership Summit. The summit, conducted in collaboration with the Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative which is funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA), brought together representatives from the Aging Network, "citizen-led initiatives" such as senior Villages⁷ and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs),⁸ nonprofit service providers and advocacy organizations to learn from model community collaborations.

From 2013 through 2014, n4a conducted a year-long Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC), intensively working with six communities from across the country: Larimer County, CO; Miami Gardens, FL; Monroe County, NY; Santa Fe, NM; Sedgwick County, KS; and York, PA. The LCC helped the communities establish local, multi-sector collaborative efforts, prioritize objectives and develop work plans to improve the livability of their communities. Through this effort, communities have advanced multi-agency mobility management plans, intergenerational volunteer driver efforts, local advocacy on a variety of livability topics, age-friendly businesses initiatives and more.

This document reflects our next stage of learning, gleaned from the above body of n4a work as well as research and conversations with other community practitioners who have experimented in this arena. This report explains and advocates for approaches that are succeeding in moving the needle on local livability for all ages around the country.

About This Report



Using This Report

This report is for local change agents who want to ensure that everyone can live and age well in their community. To achieve this goal, representatives from all public, private and nonprofit sectors must have a seat at the table. This includes community leaders of all types, representing aging, government, large and small businesses, academic institutions, and charitable/service, faith-based, affinity and neighborhood organizations or groups.

The report is intended as an engagement tool to energize community members who are taking on or ramping up their Livable Community work. As such, particular sections of the report may be more or less relevant for different readers and are clearly delineated to facilitate the review process.

The early sections of this report provide useful context on the aging population in America and the challenges that communities face in enabling people to age in community. These sections also provide the background for understanding what a Livable Community is and present evolving means for assessing how a particular community is doing. The Snapshot of Livable Communities section outlines the work of six communities that participated in the n4a Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC), including brief profiles of the communities and some highlights from their local livability efforts. The report then presents a "Top Ten List" of key strategies for advancing effective local work to make communities livable for all ages. This section includes both statistical and anecdotal information from the LCC sites and other communities, illustrating the varying experiences with these approaches from around the nation. Finally, a glossary of key terms is included to help define some less familiar concepts, and a detailed list of resources is provided for readers wishing to expand their understanding of particular topics.





The Aging of America

The Aging of America

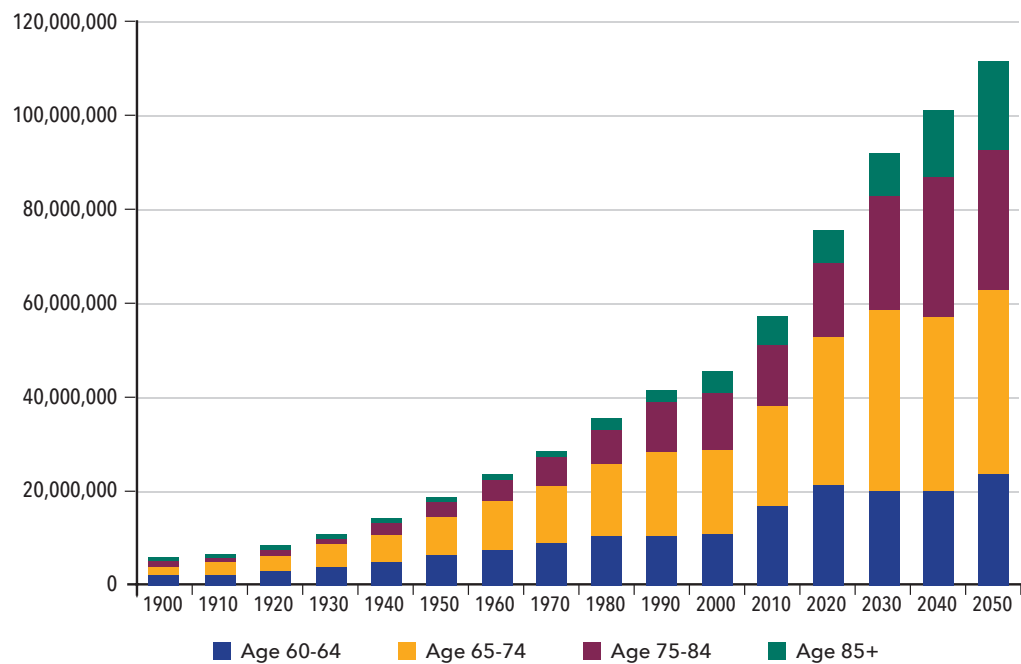
Demographic Projections

By the year 2030, nearly 20 percent of Americans will be age 65 or older, up from 13 percent in 2010. This equates to 73 million people—an increase of 33 million in just two decades. At the same time, increasing longevity is rapidly expanding the oldest subgroup of older Americans; one in sixteen people is currently age 75+, a share that will reach one in eight by 2040. That same year the number of Americans age 80 and older will be more than three times what it was at the turn of the 21st century.



Population 60+ by Age: 1900-2050

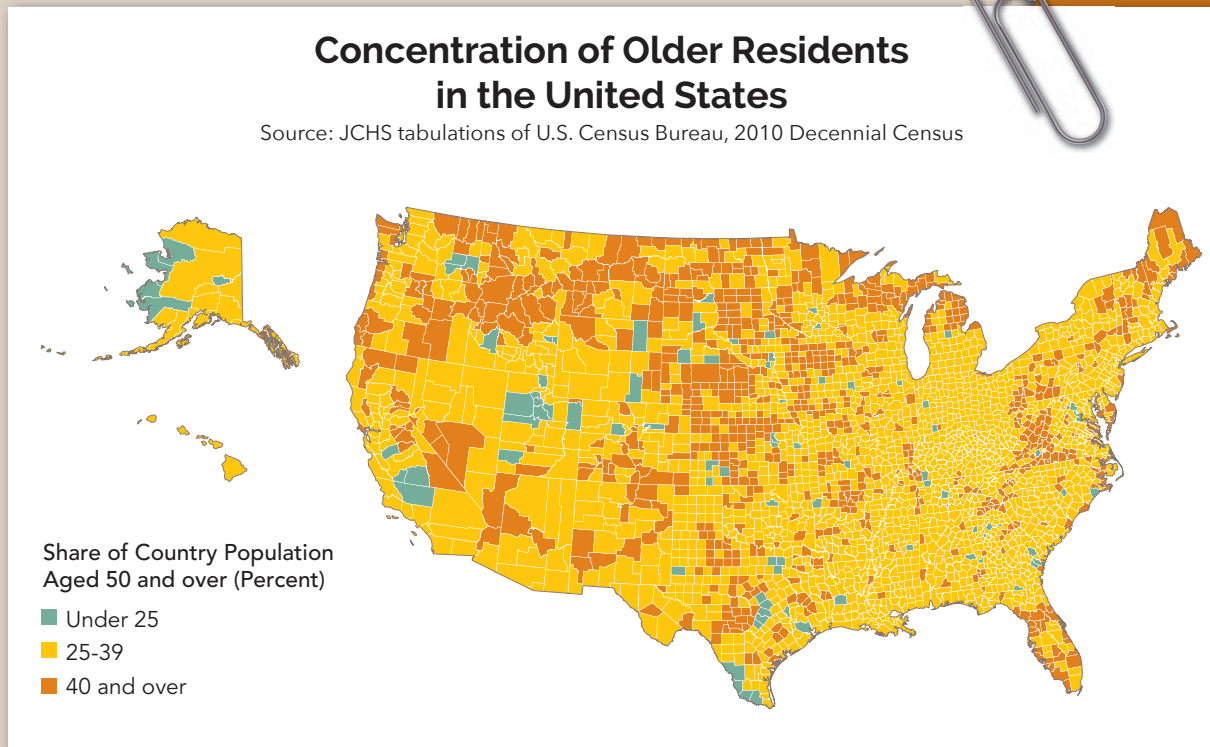
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census



This longevity trend is enjoyed by communities across the country. The number of U.S. counties where older adults (50+) comprise 40 percent or more of the population increased from 5 percent in 1990 to 33 percent by 2010.⁹

Concentration of Older Residents in the United States

Source: JCHS tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census



The Desire and Challenge of Aging in Community*

It has become increasingly clear that people want to age in the places where they have set down roots, developed social networks and feel comfortable with what is familiar. At least 71 percent of people over age 50 and 87 percent of those age 65 and older say they want to age in their home or community for as long as possible.¹⁰

Yet aging in community presents numerous challenges to individuals and the communities they live in. As people age, the prevalence of chronic diseases increases. Additionally, of today's 85-year-olds, more than two-thirds currently have some type of disability. These changes build over time, but many older adults spend decades with functional limitations; approximately 41 percent of Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and older have some kind of functional limitation that affects their ability to live independently.

* This document uses the term "age in community" to refer to community-wide support for residents to age well and thrive, in lieu of the term "age in place," which is more commonly used but is sometimes more limited to the dwelling unit level.

Aging-in-Community as a national strategy not only respects people's wishes but is fiscally responsible as well.

Over 90 percent of individuals with disabilities who are age 65 or older **live in private homes**, and the **costs to Medicaid** of supporting **three older adults** with home and community-based services are roughly the same as caring for **one individual** in a nursing home.¹¹

The Aging of America

While people may be choosing to remain in their homes as they age, the home that they live in was likely selected years ago—perhaps because the community had good schools or a safe environment—and their home or community may no longer be suited to their changing health and mobility needs. Indeed, people often delay contemplating how aging will affect their day-to-day lives until some event—such as developing a physical impairment or losing the ability to drive—forces them to think about it.¹²



Source: Roger K. Lewis, Washington Post, May 23, 2014

It is noteworthy that for some portion of older adults, aging in community may also be a financial reality. In a 2010 survey of 1,600 people age 45 and older, 24 percent expressed a preference to stay in their home or community because they could not afford to move.¹³ Nearly 30 percent of homeowners age 65 and over live in homes built before 1950 that may require more maintenance and are less likely to have been updated, thus presenting financial challenges to maintaining the home and aging in community.¹⁴ The financial resources at many people's disposal plummet as they age, with the income of people age 80 and older less than half that of households led by those who are 50-64 years old.¹⁵ At least one-third of older adults say they are not confident their current home will remain affordable as they age.¹⁶



So What is
a Livable
Community?

So What is a Livable Community?

Efforts to make cities and communities around the country more livable for people as they age have been promoted under numerous titles—Livable Communities, Age/ing-Friendly Cities or Communities, Communities for All Ages, Lifelong Communities and more. These titles are often used interchangeably. Yet while they may suggest different approaches or infer either a more structured or grassroots form of organization, they all share the ultimate goal of making communities great places to grow up and grow old. For the purposes of this report, the term Livable Communities will be used to describe these local efforts.

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging defines a Livable Community as one that enables citizens to thrive across their lifespan. A Livable Community ensures that social supports are in place so that people can age in community. A Livable Community ensures that people have affordable housing choices that are appropriate for their needs at different ages and abilities. A Livable Community enables people to get around by providing transportation options and designing public spaces with ramps, level surfaces and no-step entries to buildings as opposed to stairs. A Livable Community provides basic amenities like a grocer and pharmacy nearby, so that people do not need to get into a car to meet their daily needs. A Livable Community fosters social interaction and community involvement through the creation of intergenerational public spaces and opportunities for engagement. These and other amenities help to maximize the independence and quality of life of older adults, while also enhancing the economic, civic and social vitality of the community. A few of these key principles of Livable Communities are described in greater detail below.

Mobility

At its core, a Livable Community is about ensuring that people can remain connected with the community and its resources and services as they age. Older

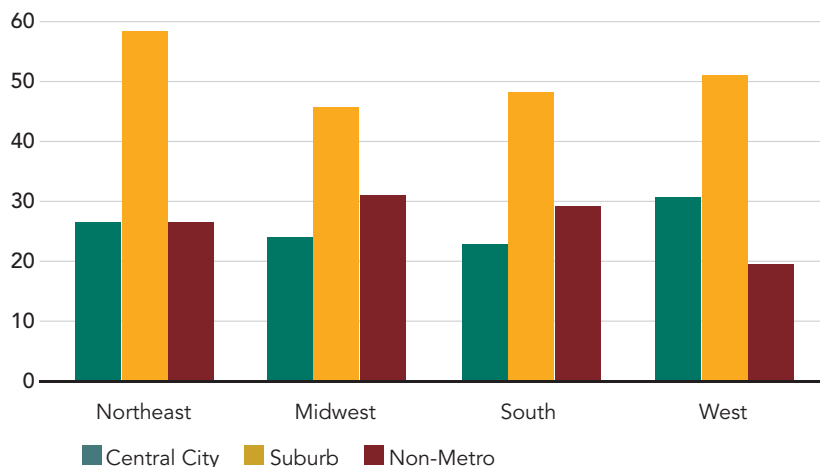
adults often have mobility challenges that profoundly affect their ability to physically engage in the community; while all types of disabilities increase with age, difficulties with mobility are the most common.¹⁷ Even without an acute disability, people need help getting where they want to go since they typically live 10 years beyond their “driving retirement,” the time when people give up their car keys. Additionally, 75 percent of older adults currently live in auto-dependent suburbs,¹⁸ which presents enormous barriers to their ability to access vital services and creates challenges for the communities that must plan for their future needs.



Geographic Division of Older Adults Living in Suburban vs. Central City and Non-Metro Areas

Source: JCHS tabulations of HUD data, 2011

Distribution of Households Aged 50 and Over (Percent)



While the arrival of self-driving cars in the future may eventually remove transportation as a primary obstacle to the independence of older adults who can afford to use them, today transportation is among the most daunting challenges, especially for those without means. With over 270,000 requests for assistance each year, the n4a-administered Eldercare Locator (www.eldercare.gov), a national information and assistance service, consistently receives the most inquiries about transportation. At the neighborhood level, senior Villages around the country report that nearly three-quarters of their neighbor-to-neighbor help requests are for rides to medical appointments, shopping trips or social events.

Community leaders around the country are finding numerous ways of addressing the challenge of mobility for an aging population and making meaningful progress through both small and large-scale initiatives. It is essential that communities provide a range of transportation options that addresses the differing abilities, eligibility for subsidized transportation and preferences of users. Yet often there is little coordination among providers of transportation services, which leaves gaps in service and leads to inefficient use of resources. "Mobility management" is an approach that helps communities "establish coordinated transportation service delivery networks to achieve connectivity for customers and efficiency for taxpayers."¹⁹ Every sector that provides transportation services for older adults, as well as entities that advocate for the needs of older adults, should participate in informing a broad system of mobility management.

Mobility management also targets the individual consumer. Many older adults do not know what transportation options are available to them, and even when they live within a 10-minute walk of public transportation, the vast majority rarely, if ever, use it.²⁰ Increasingly, local "travel training" programs have been developed to help seniors understand what transportation services are available, and to provide the education and hands-on training some seniors require in order to feel comfortable using those services. The National Center on Senior Transportation supports numerous communities that are prioritizing individual mobility management.²¹ Some aim to have every employee in the community who comes into contact with older adults incorporate some level of travel training into their work. Other communities help people to develop a "self-directed transportation plan" similar to an advance directive, so that older adults can plan for themselves and prepare for their own mobility needs when driving is no longer an option.

Even if educated about a range of travel options, older adults are sometimes leery of anything other than door-to-door services because streets are often unsafe places for them. The 65-plus age group accounts for approximately 20 percent of pedestrian fatalities, though it comprises only 13 percent of the U.S. population.²² One increasingly popular policy tool that looks comprehensively at safe community mobility is "Complete Streets," which intends to create a paradigm shift away from street design that is focused exclusively on automobiles. These policies direct decision-makers to ensure that streets accommodate all anticipated users, including people walking, bicycling and using public transportation. Since Complete Streets targets the general public, however, it is incumbent upon older adults and their advocates to ensure that these policies expressly address the needs of older road users, including articulating a rationale for why seniors require specific consideration.²³ An aging-focused Complete Streets policy might also include broader community planning guidance such as an emphasis on connecting low-cost, safe, accessible transportation services with neighborhoods and buildings that are home to a significant older population.



A 2008 AARP poll indicated that **47 percent of older adults** (50+) say they **cannot cross their main roads safely** and that **40 percent** say they **do not have adequate sidewalks** in their neighborhoods.²³ Boomers (born 1946-1964) and millennials (born early 1980s-early 2000s) alike identify "safe streets" as their highest priority metro feature.²⁴

So What is a Livable Community?

Housing

Older adults frequently find themselves living in homes that are too large, too remote, too inaccessible, or otherwise no longer suitable as their needs change. In some cases, aging in place home modifications can enable individuals to remain in their homes for many more years. Some local governments require that new homes comply with Universal Design²⁴ and/or Visitability²⁵ standards that enable people with mobility limitations to live safely and comfortably in a home for as long as possible, as well as to accommodate guests with mobility limitations.

In some cases, the “choice” to stay in one’s home may reflect a lack of appropriate and affordable alternative options for people to remain in their communities without having to remain in homes that no longer suit them. Some local authorities are making it easier for older adults to downsize while staying in the community through provisions that encourage smaller, more affordable dwellings.

Other communities are enabling and incentivising the development of new housing types as a part of mixed-use developments or new, more accommodating and even temporary types of housing. For example, the addition of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), sometimes referred to as a “granny flat,” allows a garage or part of a home to be turned into a small housing unit or a detached unit to be built on site, effectively exceeding a traditional zoning allowance. These dwellings enable aging homeowners to have a caregiver or renter live on site, or make it possible for a family to temporarily move an aging relative into their home or onto their property. Authorities are finding that these provisions can simultaneously advance other local interests, such as creating affordable housing, providing enhanced housing options and increasing density in a less controversial way, thus making better use of the existing infrastructures including roads and utilities.

The United States is also witnessing a steady increase in the percentage of older individuals who live alone. Three out of five age-80-plus households consist of a single person and it is estimated that the number of people over age 75 living alone will nearly double from 6.9 million in 2015 to 13.4 million in 2035.²⁶ Isolation ultimately increases the need for assistance to take care of functional needs and home maintenance, and it poses a serious problem for older adults since isolation is directly linked to declining physical and mental health. Increasingly, older adults are seeking shared or co-housing arrangements in order to avoid living alone. In the latter scenario, a group of people create an intentional, supportive community enclave, whereas in shared housing a few older adults simply move in together and share costs and household burdens as well as one another’s company and assistance (i.e., the “Golden Girls” model).

At the same time, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts, the number of Americans living in multigenerational households (at least two adult generations living under the same roof) has nearly doubled since the 1980s.²⁷ Some project that by 2020, 25 percent of Americans will live in multigenerational households, the highest number since the 1940s. Ironically, these increases in multigenerational and shared housing may result in the growth of the average size of households and a need to rethink the design of homes to accommodate what may become an “upsizing” rather than “downsizing” trend. In either case, communities should advocate for changes to restrictive definitions of “family” or other local codes or regulations that may hamper these and other innovative housing approaches that can facilitate aging in community.

Access to Community Amenities and Land Use Planning

While having certain amenities nearby is preferable across the age spectrum, for many older adults who may have greater physical limitations, their proximity to these amenities is more of an imperative. For example, while the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a “food desert” as not having fresh and healthy whole food options within a one-mile radius, some experts narrow the acceptable distance for older adults to only a quarter of a mile. The ability of older adults to access the broader community is also often limited by a “first and last mile” connectivity problem. For those who are ambulatory, every transit trip begins and ends with a walk, so even where adequate public transit systems exist, older adults may have difficulty traversing the mile necessary to access them from their point of origin, and then from a transit stop to their ultimate destination. In interviews conducted by AARP, 4,500 people age 50 and over identified the most common amenities that older adults want to have close by.²⁸

Yet many of our communities have been developed with little consideration for accessible community features such as transportation, recreation, health care and shopping that would enable an aging population or those with disabilities to live independently. In fact, many of the rules and regulations that have traditionally guided community development and service provision—zoning, subdivision ordinances, master land use plans, capital improvement plans—make it more difficult to build communities that are livable for all ages and abilities. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), for example, had to overcome an obstacle to their plan to add park benches and bike racks on sidewalks because existing rules prohibited such uses of the space they termed “auto recovery zones.”

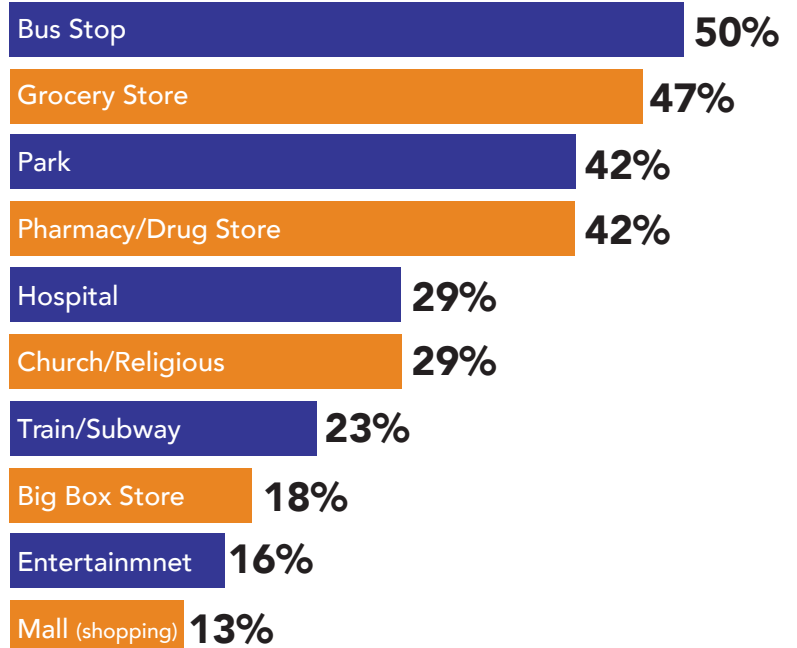
Increasingly, the lifestyle and community preferences of boomers also align with those of millennials. These two key generations are increasingly interested in moving toward more compact living in mixed-use communities, where many amenities are within walking distance and it is easy to find a public realm that works across one’s entire lifespan. Those with sufficient resources will create demand and significantly influence the shape of their communities.

What Community Amenities Do Older Adults Want Close to Home?

Source: AARP Digital Design

We asked older adults what amenities they want close to home. Access to transportation, food, and green space top the list. These are among the many community indicators that we are measuring as part of the Livability Index project. Find out more about our livability research and the development of our index here: www.aarp.org/ppl/liv-com/

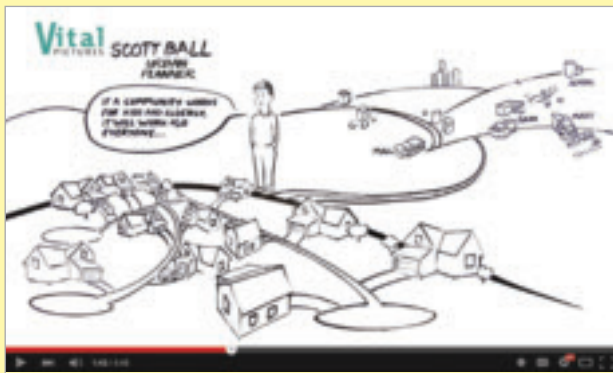
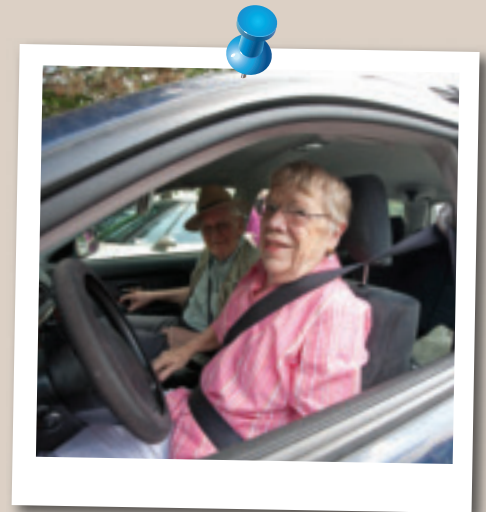
% endorsed within 1 mile or less



So What is a Livable Community?

According to a recent survey by the American Planning Association, 56 percent of millennials and 46 percent of “active boomers” would prefer to live someday in a walkable community, whereas only eight percent of millennials and seven percent of “active boomers” prefer living, if they can afford it, in a suburb that requires driving to most places. Car use was the only mode of transportation they projected to decline, with 86 percent of respondents saying that is their primary form of transportation today versus 71 percent in the future.²⁹

Since most older adults live in the suburbs, however, perhaps the biggest challenge of the next generation will be retrofitting suburban communities. Some change is already happening on this front. For example, suburbs around the nation are eliminating huge surface parking lots known as “underperforming asphalt” and using this land to create mixed-use, walkable communities. They are revitalizing town centers and repurposing big box stores into schools, libraries or community gathering spaces.



A short video called “The Big Idea in 4 Minutes” provides an important introduction to exploring the question of how we will come of age in an Aging America. The video can be found on youtube via Coming of Age in America (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOA1v4-2Fos>).

People who want to make their communities livable across the lifespan should challenge traditional assumptions that drove the development of the physical, service and support infrastructures over the last six decades. Seventy-five percent of Americans today say that they want to live either in an attached unit such as a condo, townhouse or apartment, or in a single-family house on a small lot.³⁰ There is a growing body of anecdotal evidence that an increasing number of cities and towns are seeing the writing on the wall, recognizing the increased market demand, and have begun to adopt land use, zoning and fiscal policies that support the myriad needs of populations of all ages and abilities.

How Do You Know if Your Community is Livable for All Ages?

Policymakers and advocates need tools to measure how livable their communities are in order to make educated decisions as they prepare for a rapidly-aging population. Developing these indicators has proven to be a complicated task, however. A few organizations have undertaken efforts to measure livability using data collection on presumed indicators, preference surveys, multi-method case studies and focus groups.

The **AARP Public Policy Institute's "Livability Index: Great Neighborhoods for All Ages"** measures the quality of life in American communities across multiple areas: housing, transportation, neighborhood characteristics, environment, health, opportunity, and civic and social engagement. The interactive website allows users to compare communities, adjust scores based on personal preferences and learn how to take action to make their communities more livable for people of all ages.³¹

The **Milken Institute's Best Cities for Successful Aging** index rates the capacity of 352 metropolitan areas to enable people to age independently and productively, with security and good health. The methodology uses publicly available data to rank large and small metropolitan areas based on the following broad criteria:

- Safe, affordable and convenient environments
- Health and happiness
- Financial security, including opportunities for work and entrepreneurship
- Living options for mature residents
- Mobility and access to convenient transportation systems
- Beneficial engagement with families and communities and physical, intellectual and cultural enrichment

The **MetLife Mature Market Institute and Stanford University Center on Longevity** developed a list of indicators that can be measured using objective, readily available data as a first step to understanding community-wide influences on livability. In addition to publicly available data, such as median home and rental prices in the area of housing, it supplements this information using data proxies, such as the existence of policy interventions as a gauge of a community's livability (e.g., zoning codes that allow flexible housing arrangements such as accessory dwelling units and home sharing).

The **World Health Organization's (WHO) Age-friendly Cities and Communities**³² program includes the following eight age friendly city domains, with some suggestions of characteristics that can be measured.

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings, including access to parks and nature, recreational facilities and programming, and measures of their usage by older adults.
2. Safe and affordable transportation, including a variety of affordable transportation modes, measures of pedestrian safety, the existence of Complete Streets ordinances and car/bicycle-sharing programs.



So What is a Livable Community?

3. A range of affordable and accessible housing options, including housing near transit, universal design ordinances, and the availability of assisted living facilities and naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) or Villages.
4. Social participation, including the number of cultural organizations, institutions, libraries and houses of worship, and the availability of programming and financial support for these.
5. Respect and social inclusion, including multigenerational, ethnic and cross-cultural interactions, caregiver support, rates of older adult isolation and businesses that provide age-friendly amenities such as access to restrooms and sitting areas.
6. Civic participation and employment, including volunteerism, involvement of older adults in relevant policy making and adult learning opportunities.
7. Communication and information, including access to technology that facilitates connections with community, friends and family, and accessible sources of information.
8. Community support and health services, including programs that promote wellness and active aging, proximity of health care facilities and specialized services, access to nutritional food, environmental quality and rates of key physical ailments.

Other general measures cited include community walk scores, proximity to retail stores and other services, cost-of-living and poverty rates, as well as crime rates and the degree of emergency preparedness.³³

No one method alone can measure every aspect of a Livable Community. Every community is distinct and even the subjective preferences of residents in the community should be considered. Therefore, it is important to establish a common understanding among local stakeholders of the key livability characteristics valued in a particular community, so that they can set goals and objectives that meet those standards.





Livable
Communities
for All Ages
Learning
Collaborative
(LCC):
A Snapshot

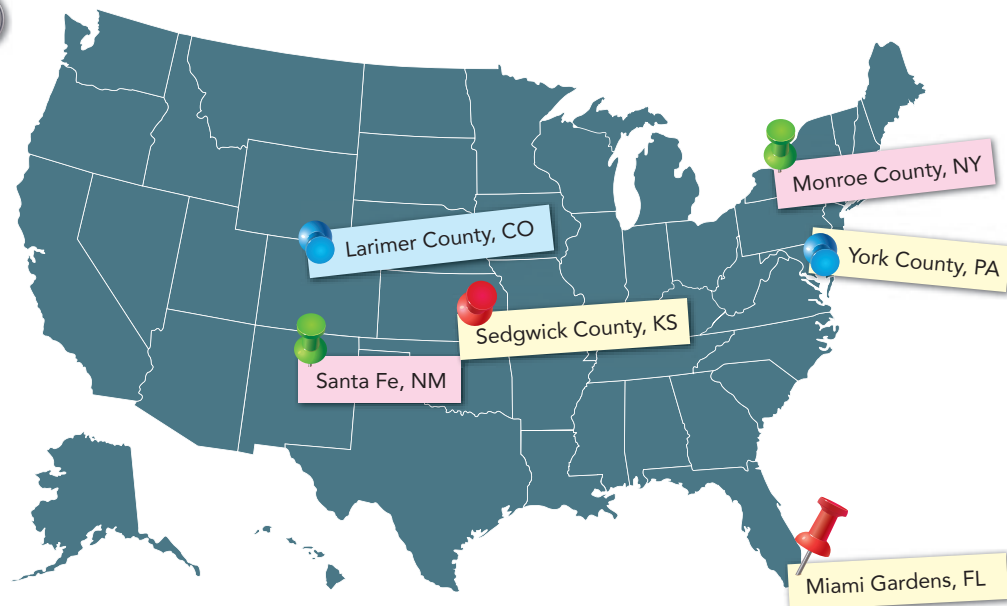
Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC): A Snapshot

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging's (n4a) Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC) consisted of a year-long technical assistance program aimed at helping a diverse group of communities launch livability initiatives. Together, the LCC communities underwent a year of training webinars, networking conference calls, in-community workshops and trainings, individualized technical assistance and a two-and-a-half-day symposium in Washington, DC.

Each of these new local collaborative efforts brought together multiple community stakeholders—beginning with the local AAA, local government and a citizen group and then expanding to numerous other stakeholders, including nearly all of those listed in the first section of this report's Ten Successful Strategies. In each community, these local leaders collectively determined a set of priorities, identified long and short-term outcomes and developed action plans. In most of the communities, groups of older adult volunteers were trained to work effectively in Self-Directed Volunteer Teams (SDVTs) to advance specific short-term projects within these work plans. An important, additional objective was for the local connections that were created to foster deeper, cross-sector learning and relationship-building so that improved coordination and new collaborations would continue over time.

The following profiles provide snapshots of the communities engaged in the national collaborative, the goals they established for themselves and some preliminary accomplishments as they move toward achieving these long-term goals. Further details, anecdotes and lessons learned from their work are shared throughout the Ten Successful Strategies sections of this report.

Geographic Distribution of Six Featured Communities



Larimer County, CO: LCC Community Profile Demographics

Population: 316,000

Age: 14% of population is age 65-plus

Racial/ethnic: White non-Hispanic/Latino-83.8%; Hispanic/Latino-11%; two or more races-2%; American Indian and Alaska Native-2%; Asian-2%; African American-1%

Of interest: Larimer County covers 2,596 square miles with most of the population concentrated in the Fort Collins-Loveland metropolitan area.

Goals

The Larimer County Collaborative, the Partnership for Age Friendly Communities (PAFC), is addressing four priorities:

- Mobility and access to key services and quality of life opportunities
- Positively affecting the attitudes, values and behaviors of residents toward aging
- Optimizing emotional, physical and spiritual health
- Ensuring a large variety of appropriate housing options



Larimer County Workshop Graphic

Select Accomplishments

The Partnership for Age Friendly Communities has established a viable organizational structure to support its work, including training five Self-Directed Volunteer Teams (SDVTs) of older adults to lead concrete projects that advance its objectives. One SDVT convened a nonpartisan candidate forum prior to the November 2014 election. By educating numerous candidates for county commissioner and state representatives from local districts about aging issues in the county, the team was able to raise the profile of aging on the political agenda in their community, enabling them to engage elected officials and increase their accountability on aging issues. Other team projects include: a “Try Transit” campaign to generate awareness of and comfort with public transit; a monthly newspaper series consisting of personal stories written by local seniors and aimed at promoting a positive approach to growing older; and a survey/review of creative housing options adopted by other communities.

Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC): A Snapshot

City of Miami Gardens, FL: LCC Community Profile Demographics

Population: 111,000

Age: 11% of population is age 65-plus

Racial/ethnic: Black (African American and Caribbean American)-76%; Hispanic/Latino-22%; White non-Hispanic/Latino-3%; two or more races-2%

Of interest: Incorporated in 2003, the city is the largest predominantly African-American municipality in Florida.

Goals

- Create a sustainable home repair/maintenance program for a significant number of older adults who are aging in place, yet whose fixed incomes prevent them from properly maintaining their homes so they are safe and healthy to occupy.
- Create an age-friendly business initiative that recognizes businesses that make a commitment to practices that respect and encourage older customers.

Select Accomplishments

The Miami Gardens initiative engaged a number of community members and local business owners who are normally not involved in the development of solutions to community problems. The Collaborative included the local Geriatric Education Center which worked to provide age sensitivity training to city employees. Recommendations for each of the two initiatives were developed and presented to the city's Elderly Affairs Advisory Committee for later presentation to the city. The city recently received a 5-year Healthy Community grant from the Health Foundation of South Florida which is

also attempting to launch a county-wide Age-Friendly initiative, and there may be opportunities to incorporate these recommendations into their work and to secure program funding from one or both of them.



Miami Gardens Workshop

Monroe County, NY: LCC Community Profile

Demographics

Population: 750,000

Age: 15% of population is age 65-plus

Racial/ethnic: White non-Hispanic/Latino-72%; African American-16%; Hispanic/Latino-8%; Asian-4%; two or more races-2%

Of interest: Rochester, the County seat, is the third largest city in New York State, after New York City and Buffalo.

Goals

The Monroe County Livable Community Collaborative developed three long-term goals:

- Greater mobility independence through a well-coordinated system for providing transportation options
- Increased volunteer support for the mobility options of older adults
- New and infill developments will prioritize and integrate aging considerations into future planning, zoning and policymaking

Select Accomplishments

The Monroe County Collaborative brought together private and public transportation and human services providers to create a sustainable mobility management model built to meet the needs of people age 60 and over and people with disabilities. A consortium of agencies serving disabled and older adults developed a plan to pilot ride-sharing and joint scheduling, as well as routing of vehicles owned and operated by multiple agencies. Over \$240,000 in private funds was raised to test this model; partners believe that long-term sustainability will be achieved through savings in operating costs. Another effort by the Collaborative is designing a sustainable volunteer transportation program with the Rochester Institute of Technology. Students receive college credits for learning about older adults and their needs through classroom discussion. The students also commit to providing a number of volunteer driver hours, enabling the older and younger generations to interact and learn more about one another.



Monroe County Workshop

Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC): A Snapshot

York County, PA: LCC Community Profile Demographics

Population: 439,000

Age: 15.5% of population is age 65-plus

Racial/ethnic: White non-Hispanic/Latino-85%; African American-6%; Hispanic/Latino-6%

Of interest: The City of York (44,000) has a median age of 32.2 and a significantly larger minority population than the rest of the County (28% African American and 28.5% Hispanic/Latino).

Goals

- Increase number of people living in York County indicating they have a positive attitude about older adults and their own aging
- Increase number of communities, public events, programs, services and businesses adopting an “age in everything” perspective
- Decrease number of barriers to aging well
- Improve ranking in the Milken Institute’s Best Cities for Successful Aging report

Select Accomplishments

The “Embracing Aging” initiative engaged the community in a dialogue that resulted in a blueprint for action and a structure for optimizing the effectiveness of their work. To obtain a baseline for their first goal, they conducted an assessment of the public’s current attitudes about aging; the findings are helping to shape their messaging. They created a communications strategy, involving the use of social media channels and traditional media outreach aimed at raising awareness about ageism and influencing public perceptions of aging. Utilizing a Self-Directed Volunteer Team (SDVT) of older adults, they developed training that targeted employees of York County businesses. In addition to building awareness

of the impact on older adults when negative stereotypes and stigmas are present, the training helps employees appreciate the value and unique qualities of older adults and the crucial role they play in building vibrant communities. Members of York County’s Embracing Aging initiative met with City of York administrators to introduce the concept of an “age in everything” lens, drafted an “age-friendly designation” program for businesses and created a York County Community Foundation funding strategy which recently granted almost \$100,000 to programs and services that help advance their Embracing Aging goals.



“Embracing Aging” graphic

City of Santa Fe, NM: LCC Community Profile Demographics

Population: 83,000

Age: 18% of population is age 65-plus

Racial/ethnic: Hispanic/Latino-49%; White non-Hispanic/Latino-46%; two or more races-4%; American Indian and Alaskan Native-2%; Asian/Pacific Islander-1%; African American-1%

Of interest: The median age in the city is 44 (compared with 37 nationally). Annually, deaths continue to rise due to the older population, and county-wide, the number of births has fallen rapidly since their peak in 2007; consequently there is a significant decline in local growth that is due to “natural increase.”

Goals

Make the community one in which residents from a variety of cultures can age in community with:

- Appropriate resources
- Opportunities for participation and growth
- Affordable lifestyles
- A safe environment

Select Accomplishments

The Santa Fe Collaborative set out to ensure that the priorities of a culturally diverse group of aging residents are understood by, and reflected in, the city’s policies and programs. They developed a toolkit to guide neighborhood conversations that elicit what each distinct cultural community perceives as its needs, as well as the assets available to help make their particular neighborhood livable for all age residents. The Collaborative has worked with the current city administration on aging-friendly issues and will use the findings from the neighborhood conversations to engage the new city administration/transition team and community leaders.



Santa Fe Workshop

Livable Communities for All Ages Learning Collaborative (LCC): A Snapshot

Sedgwick County, KS: LCC Community Profile Demographics

Population: 509,000

Age: 12% of population is age 65-plus

Racial/ethnic: White non-Hispanic/Latino-69%; Hispanic/Latino-14%; African American-10%; Asian-4%; two or more races-4%; American Indian/Alaska Native-1%

Of interest: Wichita, with a population of 387,000, is by far the largest city in the county and state; the second-largest city in the county (Derby) has a population of only 22,200.

Goals

- Promote older adults' independence through transportation and mobility education
- Promote walking and biking through "Complete Streets"

Select Accomplishments

The Sedgwick County Collaborative has advocated for Complete Streets policies, including a safer walking and bicycling environment and more pathways in the city. They obtained city approval to fund bicycle enhancement projects that will create several bicycle lanes and boulevards throughout the city and developed a white paper to present to the City Manager and other officials. The Collaborative hosted, and has been asked to host additional, community-wide mobility fairs that both enhance safe driving by seniors and educate participants about public transit and other mobility alternatives. They are also planning a candidate forum in advance of an upcoming local election to generate political awareness of, and a commitment to, aging issues.




Sedgwick County Workshop




What's Working:
Ten Successful
Strategies for
Advancing
Livability for
All Ages in Your
Community

#1 Collaborate Across Traditional and Nontraditional Sectors



The Santa Fe Collaborative indicated that the diversity of organizations and backgrounds of participants in the room resulted in many discoveries, noting that **“needs other than those we originally expected to serve as the focus of our efforts began to surface and were ultimately prioritized.”**



Larimer County Collaborative: “It has helped that the Steering Committee membership was already broad-based and so it was not seen as the project of one self-interested entity.... **The diversity of our Steering Committee** provided a broader base of resources and expertise, but it also **gave us enough credibility and connections** to attract participants from a broader range of community sectors.”

Collaboration across sectors is the critical foundation for successful Livable Communities work. Through collaboration, partners develop a better understanding of one another’s approaches and strengths; reduce confusion, redundancy and competition; and heighten awareness of available options. The aim is to build bridges across sectors and generate opportunities for shared solutions and efficiencies. The process promotes economies of scope (single solutions that benefit multiple issues and populations), a factor of particular significance in times of fiscal constraint. A successful collaboration will also identify and build upon assets already present within the community, such as existing programs, physical facilities, human resources and funding streams, and it will generate opportunities to advance livability by working across sectors in new and creative ways.

Making your community livable, therefore, requires the development of a shared vision and plan through collaboration across multiple sectors, including:

- Aging Network organizations and aging services providers
- Older adult community members and their caregivers
- Local government, including elected officials and departments
- Public health agencies, hospitals, medical community
- Social services providers
- Faith-based institutions
- Local businesses, chambers of commerce and business service organizations
- Disability advocates and providers
- Housing professionals, realtors and home-builders
- Neighborhood citizen groups such as Villages and civic associations
- Community planners and urban designers
- Transportation agencies and providers
- Community development and economic development corporations
- Children’s and youth organizations and schools
- Universities, colleges and other thought leaders
- Young adult networks
- Local foundations and other philanthropies
- Public safety, first responders, emergency medical services
- Workforce development agencies and organizations
- Nonprofits and affinity groups in related fields, such as smart growth, affordable housing, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and more

Noteworthy Sectors

Among the LCC communities, the greatest representation was from the Aging Network, local planners, transportation professionals, businesses, faith-based groups, social services agencies, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions. A few sectors warrant particular attention.

- **Local government** must be a fully committed partner. The local authorities regulate and can shape many aspects of the built environment and an age-in-everything agenda must permeate city/county decision-making, services and practices. As articulated in *A Blueprint for Action: Developing a Livable Community for All Ages*, it is ideal to secure a commitment from the mayor or county executive; this will facilitate the engagement of all departments and ensure that outcomes will be fully institutionalized within the policies and operations of local government. If this is not feasible at a given time, ingraining the Livable Community mantra and approach within key departments—one at a time if necessary—is an important secondary approach.
- **Police, firefighters and emergency medical services** are a sector of the community that comes into frequent contact with older adults. Recognizing this, some firehouses have developed creative programs to strengthen their interactions with older residents. When emergency workers in a Satellite Beach, Florida fire department noticed that a large proportion of their hospital trips entailed transporting older adults who had fallen in and around their homes, they developed a plan to address the root causes of the falls. During quieter on-duty and some off-duty times, they installed lower-level lighting, grab bars and ramps, and removed physical obstacles, reducing falls by 50 percent over two years. Firefighters in Delaware, Ohio partnered with the Council for Older Adults to serve the needs of seniors who frequently rely on the fire department for assistance with non-emergency issues. They created a unique service coordinator position to work with first responders in order to connect seniors with more appropriate community resources.
- **Young adults** can bring a host of benefits to this work. As noted in an earlier profile, the Rochester Livable Community Collaborative worked with Rochester Institute of Technology staff and students to design a sustainable volunteer transportation model, which included college credits for volunteer hours and classroom discussions about older adults and aging. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's GenPhilly is a network of emerging professionals who are engaging with older adults in their professional and personal lives. They have sponsored events such as an aging and disability Hack-a-thon, where older adults and people with disabilities provide input on the development of new concepts or products that can simplify life for people with certain physical limitations.
- **Faith-based organizations** are critical partners because of the role they play in bringing people together, particularly in non-white and ethnic communities. A recent AARP survey found that African Americans age 50 and over establish connections at church far more than any other group—67 percent, as compared with 41 percent for whites, 40 percent for Hispanics/Latinos and thirty-five percent for Asians.³⁴



#1 Collaborate Across Traditional and Nontraditional Sectors

Caregivers are also key to the success of a Livable Community. Most of the caregiving for older adults is provided informally by family members, friends and neighbors. Approximately 87 percent of Americans who need long-term services and supports receive them from informal, or unpaid, caregivers, who assist them with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs).³⁵ Therefore, it is crucial to identify these individual caregivers and collaborate with their support groups or advocates.



Instrumental Activities of Daily Living Provided by Informal Caregivers



Every sector has a unique role to play and many local organizations are already doing much to make communities more livable in distinct ways. Ideally, an aging-friendly perspective should be integrated into, and inform the work of, every sector and building a Livable Community should not be a special interest or stand-alone initiative or program.

Yet true collaboration is not easy. As Atlantic Philanthropies learned through their Community Experience Partnership, working together to strategically navigate and manage community change requires more than merely dividing up tasks. Rather, “partnering must be embraced as a discipline for sharing ownership.” Every partner must have a community perspective, such that both the founders and the funders of the initiative are able to cede authority to the collaborative itself. It requires setting aside turf issues, ensuring that all partners are culturally sensitive, being open to compromising on priorities and putting oneself in uncomfortable spaces for the good of the community.

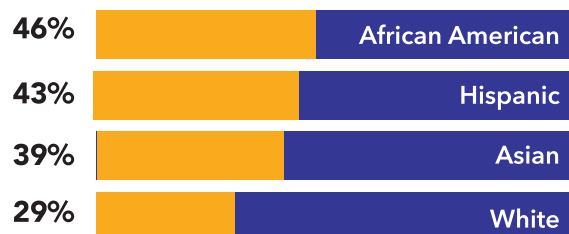
#2 Celebrate Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Not only is America aging, but it is also rapidly becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Today, while 80 percent of Americans over age 65 are white, 50 percent of Americans under age five are non-white. By 2030, the older adult population will already include much greater diversity, with minorities comprising 30 percent of the population between ages 65-79. These trends make clear that we have work to do in order to ensure that decisions made by community leaders are appropriately considering the different cultural preferences of all of those who live in the community.

Hearing the voices from different cultural groups around a Livable Community collaborative table will illuminate the cultural assets as well as the unique sensitivities and needs of each group. Minority populations in the community often have the least access to the community's resources and consequently suffer disproportionate negative effects on their health and well-being. For example, due to the fact that a larger share of minority households are low-income and/or rent their homes, housing cost burdens are disproportionately high among this population. As the minority share of the population grows, this disparity suggests that more and more older adults will be "housing-cost burdened."³⁷

Cost Burdened Older Households

Severely housing cost-burdened households **age 50 and over** in the bottom bracket spend **43 percent less on food** and those **age 80 and over** spend **59 percent less on health care** than the same demographic living in affordable housing.



Also noteworthy is how the family living situations of individuals age 65 and over vary by race and ethnicity. Among Asians and Hispanics age 80 and older, more than a third live in other family members' households, far more than whites or African Americans do as they age.³⁸ As our population of older adults continues to diversify, there may be an increased demand for multigenerational housing. Local communities can find myriad ways to meet this demand, while also addressing the important related issues of isolation and mobility, and taking advantage of the benefits of intergenerational engagement.

A recent American Planning Association survey found that 43 percent of respondents age 21-65 say diversity in people and generations is an important component of a successful community.³⁶

#2 Celebrate Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Howard County, MD recently completed a Master Planning process to define a preferred future for older adults in the county. One of six emerging priorities is to “Promote the **physical, emotional and financial well-being of caregivers** as well as those for whom they care.”

Finally, when we discuss housing for older adults, we also need to discuss equity issues for those community members who provide professional care for older adults, and who are disproportionately racial minorities. These paid caregivers struggle with such issues as access to affordable housing near their clients and a lack of transportation options. These challenges drive high rates of turnover and the resulting shortage in the professional caregiver workforce. Because boomers had fewer children than previous generations, the estimated availability of family caregivers when boomers reach the high-risk years of 80 and over indicates a sharp decline—a ratio of 7 to 1 in 2010, 4 to 1 in 2030 and 3 to 1 in 2050.³⁹ Therefore, it is critical that we address equity issues for caregivers in order to ensure that the quality of life for these professional caregivers and consequently the quality of care for older adults are not compromised.

The face of America is changing. Therefore, when reaching out to collaborate with various sectors throughout the community, it is critical to ensure that the entire community, in all its diversity, is represented at the table and that issues of concern to minority communities are appropriately considered. In endeavoring to be truly inclusive, an important lesson to keep in mind is that many Livable Community efforts have had difficulty recruiting significant participation among racial/ethnic minority communities. To reach equity goals, an expert in creating partnerships among community development corporations and senior centers in low income neighborhoods recommends:

“You need to take the message out to the groups you want to reach instead of asking and expecting them to come to you.”

– Dr. Allen Glicksman
Director of Research and Evaluation
Philadelphia Corporation for Aging



#3 Build Individual Relationships

One key to effective collaboration is remembering that a community collaborative is comprised of individuals and that individual relationships take time to build. This is particularly true across racial/ethnic groups or across professional sectors, where jargon is often a barrier.

According to Maureen Cavaiola of the Village At Home Chesapeake, "Strategic alliances are relationship-driven and take time to develop...between two and five years!"

It is critical to identify champions in different sectors and to reach out to them to build relationships. Champions should be community members who have significant influence or insights and who are willing to leverage their social influence and contacts to advance the Livable Community outcomes that emerge through the collaborative's work.

Indeed, often the greatest rewards in collaborative work are the unexpected opportunities that arise from these carefully built relationships. With increased mutual understanding across sectors and deepening individual relationships, better coordination and new initiatives are an inevitable outcome.

Relationship building is not always simple or easy, however. Reaching across the aisle to leaders in other sectors of the community takes many people outside their comfort zones, but it also comes with many rewards. It requires us to do some homework to learn about another sector of the community's particular interests and to understand terminology that may be unfamiliar.

A participant in the Santa Fe Collaborative said that "Through the LCC process, I have become a better listener. Most importantly I have come to appreciate everybody's story."

The Atlanta Regional Commission's Kathryn Lawler compares this courtship to a first date. With numerous tools at our disposal, nobody goes on a first date anymore without first "checking out" the person's Facebook page and other social media accounts. Before setting up a meeting with a key stakeholder or potential partner, first learn about the industry and the person you are targeting; go to their website, check out their mission, and see who is on their board.



Larimer County found that "Convincing busy people with established ideas and agendas that it is worth spending their time reexamining priority issues and exploring new ways of addressing them is a significant challenge. To overcome this challenge, the Steering Committee **assigned individual committee members to work one-on-one with stakeholders** with whom they had a relationship. Once we achieved their support, we recruited them to **help convince others who were the most reluctant to participate.**"

#3 Build Individual Relationships

As a result of conversations during the Santa Fe LCC, there is a separate effort underway to advocate for the city to **eliminate impact and permit fees and minimize permitting hurdles for guest houses/ accessory dwelling units** in the city.

When someone influential in an important sector does not seem to “get” the aging connection, Kate Clark of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging suggests inviting them to speak about seniors at a public presentation, so that it forces them to step out of their traditional interest perspective and think in a different way.

“When they see the audience’s reaction and support, they become aging advocates!”

Kate also recommends serving on boards of key organizations outside the Aging Network, as well as inviting their representatives to serve on the AAA or other aging organization’s board or advisory council.

Finally, it is critical to find appropriate roles and specific tasks for newly recruited partners and to obtain their commitment to seeing these to fruition. Two lessons about building people power from the field of organizing are relevant to these objectives.

First, in order to engage people and keep them involved, the “ask” must be aimed at both their heads—*how* to do the work through research, analysis, strategic planning—and at their hearts—understanding *why* people are motivated to do the work. According to Marshall Ganz of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the New Organizing Institute, storytelling is an important practice of leadership and organizing is the act of telling stories. Stories engage people’s emotions and remind them of their core values, which can then move them toward a call-to-action.

Second, the theory of organizing says never leave empty-handed. The person doing the outreach must ask each individual to take a specific action, not only advancing the agenda but establishing that person’s commitment to the process. Absent agreement, it is important to set a date for the person to decide, or a date for the organizer to call back. Always leave the conversation open-ended and follow through. Nothing impresses people more than a timely follow-up because so few people actually do it.

In a Livable Community collaborative, you must constantly engage in relationship-building. It is important to embrace this as a vital area of focus, because ultimately, activities do not create results; people create results.



#4 Honor Your Unique Local Community

Define Community

The definition of “community” will vary by geography, population and culture. Community collaboratives must define for themselves the geographic boundaries within which they will work. This definition of community should consider parameters such as demographics, history, governance, politics, geography, opportunities and community interest.


It may seem daunting to turn a community into one that is livable in a comprehensive way, but remember to do so is a work in progress. It may take years and, actually, is a process that will never end but continue to evolve as needs change. The important thing is to just get started. Communities of all shapes and sizes—a small, rural township, a suburban bedroom community, an incorporated city or a large county—can take incremental steps to make them more livable for all ages. The beauty of this work is that if it is done right—through relationship-building with influential people in sectors in and outside of the Aging Network—it will both generate actions now and continue to catalyze improvements in the future.

“We have had organizations ask us to talk to various target groups about our work. Planners for an annual fall event called Bridging the Gap, which brings together providers of senior services in Larimer County, have invited us to leverage that forum to talk about our mission and progress. The Aspen Club, a seniors program sponsored by the University of Colorado Health System, is encouraging us to hold a program next spring as part of their education series.”


-Larimer County LCC

Genius Loci

In his writings, 18th century English poet Alexander Pope laid the foundation for a concept called genius loci, or “spirit of place.” This widely accepted principle of landscape architecture—that landscape design should *always* be adapted to the context in which it is located—also underpins livability work. Every community has historic, cultural, topographic, aspirational or other unique attributes that serve as a connecting glue for community members. A Livable Community initiative should adopt a narrative that resonates with the local community—in form and function, and even in name.



While Age Friendly New York City is a city-wide effort, among its successful innovations was delineating **Aging Improvement Districts** where older adults in specific neighborhoods are brought together with the leaders and resources of local businesses, nonprofit organizations, city officials, cultural, educational and religious institutions to strategically determine **no and low-cost age-friendly improvements for their specific neighborhoods.**



The Santa Fe LCC emphasizes **tapping the gifts of their rich and varied cultures** to help residents of each neighborhood thrive as they age in community.

In York, PA, the emphasis on **changing the cultural perception around aging** is reflected in the initiative’s title: “Embracing Aging.” Larimer County, CO’s “Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities” emphasizes the **broad community of stakeholders** that are championing the work.

#4 Honor Your Unique Local Community

Choose the Right Place to Start

Beyond the spirit of place, Livable Community work must be grounded in the issues that most resonate with a wide spectrum of the community's stakeholders. There are numerous needs assessment methodologies that can be used to ascertain residents' specific priorities for making a community livable for all ages. This is a key step, lest the discussion take place merely at an aspirational level. Of equal importance, a needs assessment will also help to identify and tap the assets that exist in the community. These include both positive examples of livability to highlight and build upon, as well as human, organizational, opportunity and other resources that represent valuable community assets.

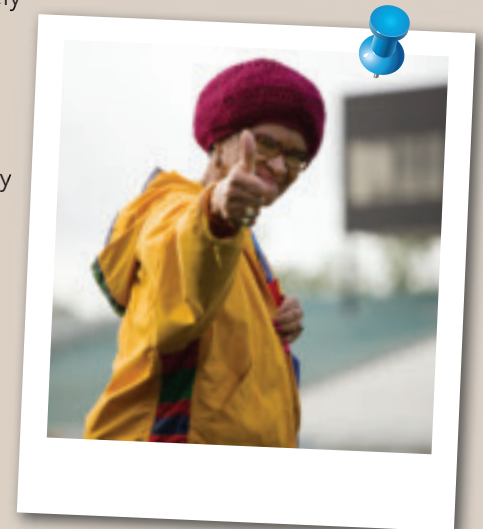
Ultimately, initial community conversations with stakeholders will identify the areas in which there is enthusiasm, and this is a good indicator of where to begin. In an initiative that is largely driven by the volunteers who step to the plate, it is advisable to prioritize activities where there is energy and where these stakeholders perceive the most exciting opportunities.

Local "Best Practices"

There are numerous Livable Community initiatives around the nation. Due to limited resources and the desire not to reinvent the wheel, communities constantly seek best practices in every area of livability. While learning about practices that have proven successful in other places is extremely valuable, caution must be exercised when approaching the use of a "best practice."

First, replicate is not the same as reproduce. A replicable best practice is one to learn from and, in some cases, to identify elements that may apply in the context of your own community. Questions to consider include: Does it meet the needs of your specific local audience? While addressing a similar issue, does it provide the outcomes you seek? Is it well-aligned with the staff, structure and philosophy of your organization? Can you reallocate or tap existing resources or leverage strategic partnerships in order to support the model?

It is also important not to overlook "economies of scope," or a single solution or set of actions that benefits multiple issues and populations. Since best practices are often confined to one domain of livability, such as transportation or housing, this singular focus should not impede a community's ability to recognize opportunities for attaining multiple objectives. A broader frame for the outcomes that a community seeks will enable them to take advantage of economies of scope, creating both greater impact and economic efficiencies using limited funds. For this reason, collaboration may be the least costly way to advance improvements in the community.



#5 Revere Older Adults

Our society needs to undergo a radical shift in the way that it often perceives aging and older adults. American culture values youth over the wisdom of aging. Unlike in many other cultures, Americans do not revere elder-hood. Older adults are often taken advantage of or marginalized.

“I was a CEO when I left work on Friday and was then treated with suspicion and apathy when I showed up to help as a community volunteer on Monday.”

—Anonymous retiree

Thus, when engaging a community in advancing livability, it is important to keep in mind that collaborative participants may be community leaders but they are, first and foremost, individual community members. Therefore, the conversation should start from a personal place, imbuing the work with personal meaning and providing insights that are critical to informing it. In other words, the discussion should not be undertaken in third person, as if the collaborative is planning for “those older adults” but rather incorporate every participant’s personal perspectives as well. In an initiative whose success relies on partnerships with stakeholders community-wide and on individuals with different levels of expertise and stature, this personal sharing may also serve as an equalizer among participants.



Messages about aging should reflect both changes in the way Americans are transitioning through life stages and how communities embrace these changes through their design, function and provision of services. Empowering older adults through their contributions to the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Livable Community will ensure that older adult expertise informs the entire process. Older adults should be the primary ambassadors for a new public discourse about aging and instrumental in the development of a new frame for how we look at aging in America.

One LCC community reported that for its 100 day celebration, an elementary school instructed students to dress as 100-year-old (i.e., frail) people, not only reinforcing ageism but squandering an opportunity to present an alternative lens on aging.

The LCC in York, PA has taken public perceptions of aging very seriously. Though “Culture Change” began as one of five working group topics—along with community engagement, health and wellness, housing and transportation—they realized early on that the **culture change outcomes needed to filter through and frame all of their work.** As a result, these culture change outcomes became the guiding principles for the entire “Embracing Aging” initiative.

#5 Revere Older Adults



The York Embracing Aging initiative conducted a professional research assessment of the **public's attitudes toward older adults and aging**, which will identify focus areas for their culture change work in the community and provide a baseline against which they can measure progress. Selected data from this research includes:

- 47% of older respondents (60+) said they are often or sometimes **treated with less courtesy**, compared to 30% of younger respondents (18-39) and 23% of middle-aged respondents (40-59).
- Although attitudes toward older adults were positive, younger adults were significantly less positive toward older adults than were other older adults. Younger adults held significantly higher levels of **prescriptive ageist views** (i.e., how older adults ought to behave and what their role in, and contribution to, society are) than middle-aged adults (40-59).
- Middle-aged adults reported less prescriptive ageism than either younger or older adults, perhaps suggesting that the **boomer generation is redefining what it means to age**.
- **Better quality** (i.e., more positive) **contacts with older adults** versus quantity of contact was associated with more positive attitudes toward older adults and less prescriptive ageist views among all ages sampled (even after taking into account individual views about one's own aging).

Furthermore, lower levels of intergenerational contact have been linked to more negative attitudes about older adults and aging.⁴⁰ A dearth of shared facilities or public spaces where multiple generations can formally and informally interact has resulted in young Americans having little exposure to examples of positive aging. Prior to the explosion of the suburbs in the 1950s, communities were places where people of all ages lived, worked, studied and played together. Today, we have fostered age-segregated housing, separate centers of learning and community centers, as well as community design features that create barriers to people of all ages coming together. A Livable Community initiative that emphasizes opportunities for different generations to regularly interact, can have a secondary benefit of addressing ageism.

“While many communities are multigenerational, this is not the same as intergenerational, where there is an intentional desire to make sure that the generations are mixing it up.”

—Donna Butts, Executive Director, Generations United

Measuring Culture Change

It is unclear how to begin measuring this change in the way older adults are perceived because these perceptions can be very subjective. Initial ideas include measuring workplace discrimination incidents, conducting longitudinal perception surveys and qualitative analyses of the tone toward older adults in news coverage. Though values such as social inclusion may be difficult to measure, we must make these values explicit in order to guide the dramatic cultural shift that is suggested.

Proving the Value of Older Adults

Communities benefit from the engagement of their older populations as “wise elders” and mentors; as sources of a community's historic memory and humorous anecdotes; as active volunteers; and in numerous other ways. The Demand Institute reports that households age 65 and over interact with neighbors more than any other age group, and in so doing, add vibrancy to their neighborhoods.

But for certain sectors of the community, their financial bottom line *is* the bottom line. In other words, many stakeholders will be moved to action only when shown that it is in their economic interest to invest in changes that make their communities more livable for people as they age.

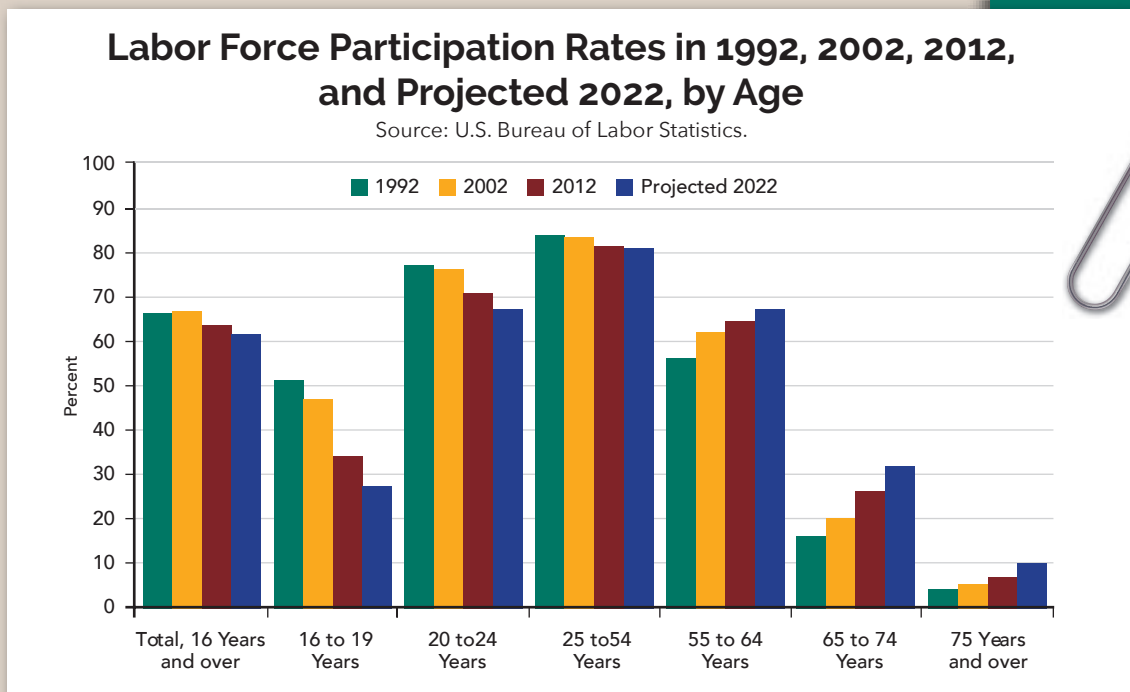
For those who require an economic rationale to make the work of Livable Communities a priority, the data is clear. Boomers hold 80 percent of the country's net personal wealth; indeed, if the age 50 and over population were an economy, it would be the third largest in the world, right after the U.S. and China.⁴¹ Boomers currently control 70 percent of consumer spending in the U.S., and older adult shoppers outspent younger shoppers by one trillion dollars in 2010, with grandparents spending \$27.5 billion annually on grandchildren.⁴²

An aging population also fuels the growth of industries including health care, home retrofitting, and technology businesses that support healthy aging. Older adults and their caregivers represent an under-recognized market segment. If older adults could not participate in the community, for whatever reason, there would likely be a significant impact on the local economy. Developing this market can serve the dual purpose of meeting the needs of older adults and promoting local economic growth.

Typically, local governments wish to attract younger people as part of their economic growth strategy, yet older adults are increasingly a critical part of a region's economic competitiveness. The Atlanta Regional Commission projected the regional economic impacts from an aging population in Metropolitan Atlanta and concluded that there should be an emphasis on attracting and retaining older adults. When comparing the economic impacts of new retirees to the area versus the same number of residents age 18-64, they found:

- New age-65-and-over retirees would add \$40 billion more in personal income and \$7.8 billion in additional GDP to the 20-county economy.
- New age-18-64 residents would add \$4 billion more in personal income and \$2.6 billion in additional GDP to the 20-county economy during the same period (2015-2040).⁴³

Additionally, as older adults remain in the paid workforce for a longer time, the local economy increasingly benefits from this skilled labor force.



#6 Embrace Longevity as an Opportunity

“Older adults are to the 21st century what women were to the 20th century—the largest pool of underutilized talent.”

– Unknown source

Increasingly, communities are recognizing that they are sitting on a pot of gold: the vast human asset base that the retiring baby boomer population represents. In addition to living longer, people now turning 65 are practicing far healthier lifestyles than any prior generation. Boomers also have more education and training and, overall, are wealthier than any previous generation at that age. Additionally, they express a high level of interest in giving back to their communities; 60 percent of boomers say it is important that their efforts in retirement benefit the community and those in need.⁴⁴ This vibrant population represents a wellspring of potential, but this potential often remains undervalued and underutilized.

One of the best ways to tap this enormous human capital is to meaningfully engage boomers for the benefit of the community. Because of the tremendous amount of talent and expertise embodied by this generation, a shift in mindset has begun: from simply recruiting volunteers to one of mobilizing leaders. A study by the National Council on Aging found an 8:1 ratio on Return on Investment (ROI) for the value of work accomplished by professional and leadership-level volunteers age 55 and over relative to the organizational resources needed to effectively utilize those volunteers.⁴⁵

Beyond the value to the community from tapping this vast human capital, there are two significant indirect benefits to approaching older adults primarily as assets. First, when older adults undertake meaningful community involvement, they develop relationships that make it easier for them to reach out to the community when they later need assistance. Senior Villages have found that older adults are more prone to ask for help if they first participate in the social fabric of the community by being the ones who provide help to others.

As Gail Kohn, Washington, DC's Age Friendly City Coordinator and the founder of the Capitol Hill Village, says, “Volunteering to help neighbors makes asking for help easier afterward.” Another major value of reciprocity among neighbors, according to Maureen Cavaiola from At Home Chesapeake Village, is that it “allows for a community that creates abundance, not scarcity.”

The Age-Friendly New York City Local Business Initiative engages older adults to reach out to small businesses that they frequent and recruit them to make age-friendly improvements. They **put the power in the hands of older adults** by providing them with training and a resource guide so that they can **help local businesses make low and no-cost changes** that enable all residents to enjoy access to their goods and services.

The second indirect benefit of engaging older adults as volunteers in the community and publicly acknowledging their contributions is that the community-at-large may begin to perceive aging and older adulthood in a more positive light. Every sector of the community—all of whom benefit from older adults as workers, volunteers or clients—should foster a culture that perceives longevity as an opportunity rather than a crisis.

Self-Directed Volunteer Teams

Increasingly, the Aging Network is realizing that older adults prefer “skills-based volunteering,” or using their talents and experience in ways that can meaningfully benefit the community. The Aging Network’s Volunteer Resource Center, administered by n4a, has developed and refined a methodology for Aging Network organizations to effectively tap the value of older adults by working in Self-Directed Volunteer Teams (SDVTs) that are empowered to take responsibility for discrete projects and effectively expand an organization’s staff capacity to advance important objectives.⁴⁶

Research shows that there are typically five components of any team’s success: it is comprised of diverse people; has a clear purpose; has a workable and stable size and structure with clear boundaries; establishes clear roles and works interdependently; and has explicit expectations and ground rules for how the team will work together.⁴⁷



The Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities (PAFC) in Larimer County, CO had **tremendous success with the SDVT model.**

They said, “The SDVTs already in place will finish their projects and new ones will continue to be formed as new initiatives are identified. Already, one of the SDVTs is considering a subsequent event . . . , signaling their interest in being more than a short-term action team.” Some of the PAFC Steering Committee plans are to:

- Publicize the work and effectiveness of SDVTs with the intention of **encouraging other community nonprofits** to consider incorporating the model.
- Develop an SDVT recruitment and training program and **hire a paid volunteer coordinator** to make it happen.
- Develop a broad-based marketing campaign.

#7 Tackle the Social Factors that Determine Community Wellness

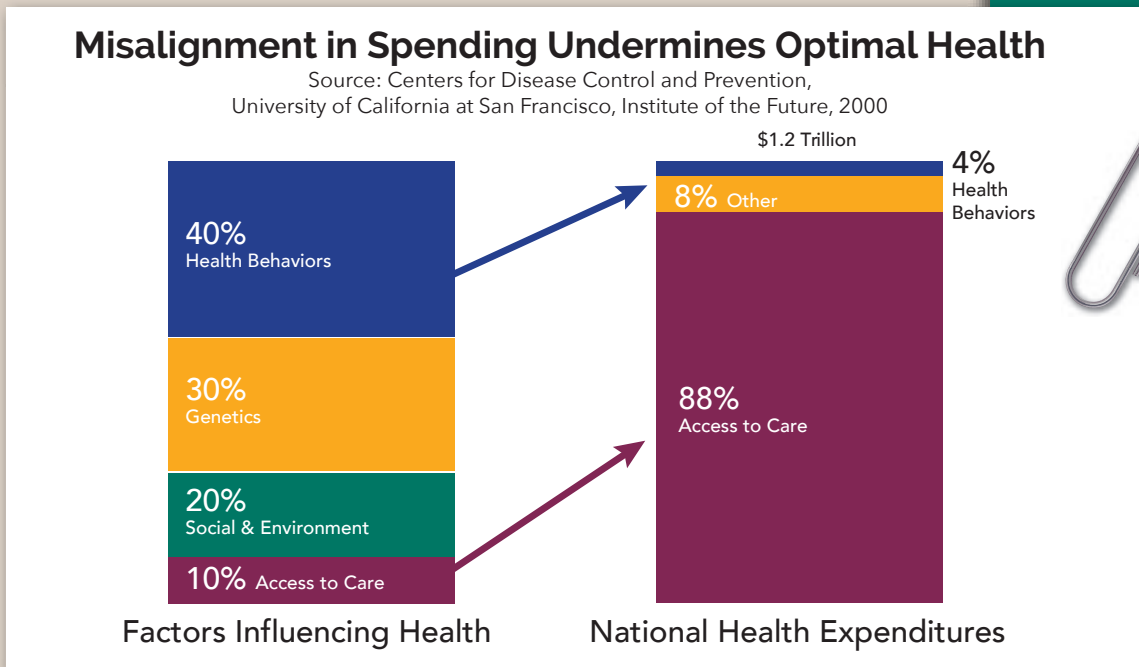
Optimizing healthy aging is a key approach to preventing entry into the formal health care system. Accomplishing this requires an understanding of the social factors that contribute to, or detract from, the health of individuals and communities. These social determinants of health include socioeconomic status, adequate transportation, appropriate housing, access to services, discrimination by social grouping—race, gender or class—and social or environmental stressors.⁴⁸

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings, which rate the health of communities, use a composite health factors score to reflect the social determinants of health; it is comprised of social and economic factors (40 percent), health behaviors (30 percent), clinical care (20 percent) and physical environment (10 percent).⁴⁹

For older adults, the built environment plays a significant role in determining health and well-being. For example, the leading cause of injury and injury-related deaths among adults age 65 and over is falls; they account for 68 percent of older adult hospitalizations. Since nearly half of these falls take place outside the home they can be addressed through community design and maintenance.⁵⁰ Injuries from falls often reduce mobility and independence, and the decrease in physical activity, post-injury, raises the likelihood of other falls. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that the direct medical costs of falls in 2013 were \$34 billion.⁵¹

While these combined social factors comprise a large percentage of what determines people’s health, our national health expenditures do not reflect the significance of these social determinants of health.

Professor Emerita
Kate Lorig from
the Department of
Medicine at Stanford
University says that
we should emphasize
"maximizing health and
quality of life for the
99 percent of the time
when we live outside the
health care system."



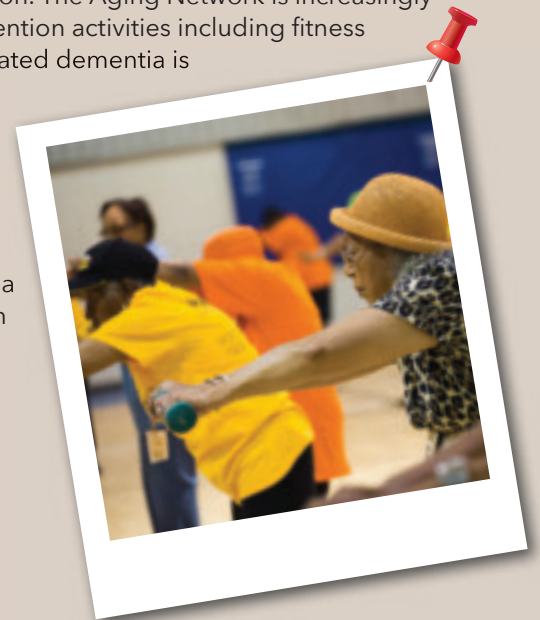
#7 Tackle the Social Factors that Determine Community Wellness



The medical establishment increasingly recognizes that health is not merely the absence of disease and that a comprehensive, proactive perspective on health and wellness can prevent significant medical treatment costs down the road. An example is the National Prevention Strategy (NPS), a part of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). The NPS is essentially an intergovernmentally derived roadmap to better health and wellness, which recognizes the public health roles of all stakeholders in the community, including government entities, businesses and nonprofits, as well as families and individuals.⁵²

Local organizations are increasingly establishing valuable roles for themselves in relation to the health care system. The One Call Club in Knoxville, TN brought local partners together to conduct health impact assessments and measured the impact that this neighbor-helping-neighbor model had on hospital readmissions and emergency room visits. Capitol Hill Village in Washington, DC has established preferred provider agreements with physicians who conduct house calls and with pharmacies that deliver. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging comprehensively examined the intersection of the NPS and the work of Aging Network organizations. They developed a guidebook that uses the NPS as a springboard to both build aging issues into the broader public health agenda and to inspire organizations that support older adults to align with this public health strategy.⁵³ A new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention toolkit for public health professionals and urban planners highlights the importance of new frameworks for these two disciplines to work together; the PCA guidebook illustrates how the Aging Network is also central to this collaboration.⁵⁴

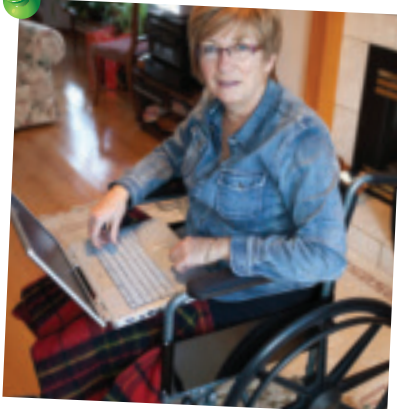
Another area of health that the community-at-large has a role in addressing is the mental health of the aging population. The Aging Network is increasingly advocating for brain health through prevention activities including fitness and nutrition. Alzheimer's disease and related dementia is a growing public health crisis, with one in nine people over age 65 suffering from one of these diseases. Since 70 percent of people with dementia continue to live in the community, it is imperative that we create informed, safe and respectful communities in which those with dementia and other often age-related mental health conditions are supported.



#8 Seize Opportunities to Infuse Age in Everything

In order to advance a Livable Community for all ages approach to local policies and programs, champions must be flexible in responding to new opportunities, such as new laws or fresh ways to shape messaging or harness grassroots energy. Sometimes even what is initially perceived as a local crisis can even be used as a spark for change. A broad cross-sector collaboration characterized by the ongoing development of individual relationships, will, as a matter-of-course, reveal local opportunities in which to infuse the age-in-everything perspective and make it mission critical to all the involved entities.

In its new Aging in Community Policy Guide, the American Planning Association directs all its chapters and divisions to “support an ‘age in everything’ approach to planning.”



Opportunities to infuse age in everything may present themselves in the form of planning processes, existing and new programs or developments/redevelopments that are discussed publicly, so it is critical to stay abreast of such opportunities. For example, local zoning code revisions, a comprehensive planning process or the creation of a regional transportation or pedestrian plan have built into their processes opportunities for public input and even community seats at the planning table. Citizens can influence the design of a Request for Proposals for government contracts for such projects as the creation of bus shelters. People can work to secure age-friendly public enhancements from proposed new

developments. They can advocate for Universal Design or Visitability standards in new housing. Since there is a 60 percent chance that in the average 120-year lifetime of a house someone with a disability will live there, it makes sense to build with that in mind.⁵⁵ Homes and communities that are designed to accommodate aging are good for everyone; in the case of a visitable home, this includes not just people in wheelchairs but people carrying babies and people delivering large home appliances. It is critical that input from people who understand the needs of older adults inform all of these community decision-making processes.

The Larimer County, CO flood in September 2013 was perceived by the LCC partners as an opportunity to infuse an aging perspective into community conversations about planning and rebuilding following the destruction of roads and bridges.

#8 Seize Opportunities to Infuse Age in Everything

While looking for advocacy opportunities, it is also important to be aware of decisions that may have unintended consequences or present obstacles to the development of innovative solutions to challenges. One community, concerned that college students living together were making noise and driving down real estate value, passed a “Three Unrelated” rule, stipulating that a homeowner could only house two additional people who were not relatives; the rule effectively limited shared-housing options for older adults and other members of the community.

When trying to infuse age in everything into local decision-making, here are a few key advocacy tools to keep in mind:

- Leverage reliable information and data as the basis for your advocacy.
- Educate elected officials and their staff about critical issues and what they can do to help.
- Engage and empower older adults as grassroots advocates by designating them as spokespersons and equipping them with messaging and advocacy guidance.
- Recognize elected officials who have supported Livable Community work by including them in outreach efforts, which also serves to acquaint them with the issues and your organization and will make them more receptive to requests in the future.
- Develop strong working relationships with local legislative staff and become their “go to” source for information.

The Larimer County LCC reported that the biggest outcome from their October 2014 Candidate Forum was that it **encouraged candidates to focus on aging and other issues that were new to many of them.** Candidates were given questions in advance, making it necessary for them to learn about the issues and engage in conversations on topics of importance to older adults.



#9 Send the Right Messages

A Livable Community is an extremely broad concept, so the development of strategic messaging is essential to the success of any program. Framing Livable Communities exclusively through the lens of older adults may not resonate with many of the sectors and stakeholders that you seek to engage. It is therefore important to frame issues and approaches from the perspective of each individual sector. In other words, what's in it for them?

Here are some examples of messaging approaches for engaging different sectors in Livable Community efforts:

Local Government: The nonprofit and private sectors provide numerous services that enable people to age in community, as do individuals—family and friends—who provide approximately 80 percent of the caregiving needed by older adults. At the same time, as the entity that controls the built environment, local government has the opportunity to create a more accessible and livable physical infrastructure.

Key Message for local government: Partner with leadership in the local community to maximize the effective use of formal and informal community resources; they are fundamental to the long-term ability of your community to meet the needs of an aging society without dramatically increasing the role of the local government.

Business Community: Livability investments in the community will benefit the bottom lines of local businesses. Even modest community improvements can help older people live longer in their homes, get to and from commercial centers, and remain active consumers and workers. Businesses can be seen as leaders in the community by promoting flexible work policies and creatively addressing the issue of absenteeism as employees increasingly are called upon as family caregivers.

Key Message for business community: Turn silver into gold. Your leadership in the community will strengthen your stature because issues associated with aging likely affect the majority of your consumers and employees.

Local Funders: Livable Community initiatives are about integrating a wide range of community improvements, including those that many funders are already supporting, such as education, transportation, affordable housing, health, cultural life, children and family as well as aging services. Indeed, this work to make the community more livable may decrease some of the need for direct-service funds.

Key Message for local funders: Community foundations are particularly well-suited to gathering stakeholders from across the community whose work will be enhanced through this collaboration. A Livable Community collaborative can bring the community together for maximum community impact and more effective use of resources.

#9 Send the Right Messages



The following are a few key strategies for effective messaging:⁵⁶

People need to know AND care in order to act: Find your most powerful local stories, back them up with data and ask credible/influential messengers within the community to convey them.

Use empowering language: While making the case for need, do not use language that disempowers the community (e.g., silver tsunami, age wave) and detracts from the positive opportunities and contributions of older adults as productive community assets. People respond overwhelmingly to positive messages that make them feel good and hopeful.

Make data relevant: It is incumbent upon you to translate the data into scenarios that are compelling to each sector or stakeholder, in order to create urgency for action.

Message consistently: It is important to keep all the stakeholders and participants as well as the community-at-large apprised of progress.

Use elevator speeches: The limited time or attention spans of most people means there is a limited window for gaining their attention. Create and practice thirty-second speeches that: a) state the problem (what is the community issue that needs to be solved?); b) articulate impact (what change do you want to bring about?); and c) request an action (what steps do you want the listener to take?).

#10 Leverage Local Dollars for Livability

Uses of Funding

Most funding for Livable Community work is dedicated to individual programs or projects, but communities have found that this is not the best approach for creating sustainable systems change. The ultimate goal is for Livable Community principles to be integrated into the mindset and inform the ongoing work of all community sectors. Yet a comprehensive approach such as this requires catalyzing, convening and coordinating, and this demands that someone take charge.

“It is important to identify a key staff member to coordinate the initiative and to fund that position. There is a lot of planning and coordination that needs to take place in order to pull together a successful model and dedicated funding is imperative for success.”

— Rochester LCC

Responsibility must be taken by a lead organization—or a partnership among organizations—that is willing to dedicate some (largely paid) staff time to catalyzing and sustaining this endeavor for at least the first few years. The York County Community Foundation hired a full-time person to manage their “Embracing Aging” initiative. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging dedicated a part of two existing staff members’ time to Age-Friendly Philadelphia. Once the Rochester effort developed momentum and the LCC realized the need for dedicated staff, the Rochester Area Community Foundation decided to fund a part-time coordinator.

It is also critical to choose the right person to do this critical coordination work, or as one LCC workshop volunteer said, “You must get the right people on the bus and in the right seats.” The primary skillset that the coordinator needs is community organizing—knowing how to identify the right people, build relationships, generate partnerships and elicit commitments.

When dedicated staff time for coordination cannot be found, Grantmakers in Aging CEO John Feather has demonstrated that a small amount of money and other incentives, used strategically, can go a long way to creating momentum that can be built upon. Through the Livable Communities Collaborative, MetLife Foundation supported n4a in providing direct technical assistance to the field, as opposed to grant monies, which catalyzed new and ongoing Livable Community collaborative efforts in some communities, as described earlier in this report.

An example of much broader systems change is the decision by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC—the regional Council of Governments where the AAA is situated) to shift the way that it approaches all of its work. Advocates successfully argued that addressing aging should no longer be considered merely one part of the ARC’s work but must be centralized in the mission and operations of the entire organization. As a result, all departmental plans and program work are now aligned toward “Lifelong Communities.” Even in this best practice example, ongoing funding was not made available early on and the first few years of work

In the 2008 survey, *Toward An Age-Friendly New York City*, the New York Academy of Medicine found that benches for resting were “very important” for the well-being of older New Yorkers, and that the **lack of places in which to sit was the main reason older people did not walk for exercise.** Age Friendly NYC has since established CityBench, a program that enables City residents to request a bench at a particular location based on a set of requirements.⁵⁷

Prize competitions are an increasingly popular means of **incentivizing the development of solutions to social problems.**

The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging offered small sums of prize money to bring young technology enthusiasts together with older adults in a Hack-a-thon, which resulted in innovative technology-based approaches for overcoming some physical limitations associated with aging.

#10 Leverage Local Dollars for Livability

were funded by a series of independent grants that enabled progress on different fronts. Yet even if grants were secured for different focus areas, it was always consistent with an overarching framework that reflected a clear set of priorities. As this example illustrates, even under an incremental initiative approach, livability interventions should be part of an overall strategy, with clearly demarcated outcomes that the interventions seek to attain and by which they can be evaluated.

Sources of Funding

Most Aging Network organizations are accustomed to securing government funding for many of the services they provide. Other traditional sources of support, such as private philanthropy from foundations and corporations, require a fundamentally different approach.⁵⁸ Though most philanthropy is local, most local foundations do not explicitly fund aging issues. Indeed, funders often assume that the government funds most of the needs of the aging population, which means that organizations advancing Livable Communities must make the case for their support.

Funders such as community foundations are prime targets because they award a wide variety of grants with a focus on impacting their local community. Marie Beason, Director of Professional Development and Special Initiatives with the Indiana Philanthropy Alliance, recommends demonstrating to the community foundation that they are already funding aging issues through their grants to programs that provide support in a range of areas, including hunger and housing, advancing physical and mental health and promoting social and civic engagement.

Besides providing grants, local funders can play myriad roles, including: convening diverse stakeholders and supporting partnerships and networks; researching issues and educating the community and its leaders; catalyzing new initiatives; providing space for meetings and events; and other in-kind services. Community foundations served as the conveners in Atlantic Philanthropy's Community Experience Partnership (CEP) noting, "Community foundation work often applies new strategies across a wide range of issues, and it is a community foundation practice to leverage new resources—funding and human capital—to address community issues." In other words, organizations seeking their support should not merely ask for money, but also view potential funders as partners in working toward common goals while tapping whatever means of support that they and their allies can provide.



#10 Leverage Local Dollars for Livability

Finally, funders are likely to require cost-benefit metrics, so it is important to demonstrate how programs such as social and volunteer-based interventions and addressing social determinants of health will lead to a decrease in the need for direct-service funds. The types of resources measured should be expanded to include the abundance of social capital and not only financial resources. The evaluation process should be built in from the beginning, including metrics that define success and clearly illustrate the value of the work.

It is also important to note that other sectors such as the local government have the capacity to redirect existing resources to support some of this critical work. For example, as a key partner in the collaborative, local government officials and department representatives should recognize cost-effective opportunities to work cross-programmatically to advance the objectives of the initiative.

Ultimately, finding the funds to support and sustain the ongoing work of a Livable Community is about creatively leveraging local resources.

As ARC's Kathryn Lawler says, "Getting other people to spend their money differently IS our long-term strategy for sustaining this work."



Endnotes

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- 3 "Trends and New Directions: Area Agencies on Aging Survey," National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), 2014.
- 4 Economies of scope are efficiencies wrought by variety, not volume (as opposed to "economies of scale").
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- 16 Rodney, Brooks and Nedwick, "Preserving Affordability and Access in Livable Communities," AARP PPI, 2009.
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- 19 Mobility Management Strategies, United We Ride, 2013.
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- 21 The National Center on Senior Transportation provides technical assistance and support to help communities to increase transportation options for older adults and enhance their ability to live more independently within their communities throughout the United States., <http://seniortransportation.net/>.
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- 24 Universal Design is a set of architecture guidelines for products and environments that can be usable by all people, to the extent possible. Major components include: single-floor residence; no-step entry; 32" minimum doorways; maneuverability throughout the home; and reinforced bathroom walls (for installing grab bars).
- 25 Visitability is an advocacy movement that encourages homes to be "visitiable" to someone with mobility challenges. Key features include a bathroom, kitchen and other day-to-day amenities on the first floor, and other features of Universal Design. Some cities have enacted mandatory Visitability ordinances and others encourage or incentivize voluntary visitability construction.
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- Lead with values that resonate for people
 - Acknowledge the need in a concrete and vivid way
 - Spend the bulk of the message talking about your solutions
 - Leave them with clear action that they can take
- A free practical toolkit is available at: <http://hub.nhc.org/toolkit/messaging-framing>
- 57 New York City DOT CityBench program, accessed March 26, 2015.
- 58 The Foundation Center (general, <http://www.foundationcenter.org/>) and Grantmakers in Aging (specific to aging, <http://www.giaging.org/>) have good online resources for grant seekers to identify a variety of funding sources and understand the distinctions among them.

Appendices

Glossary of Key Terms

Age in community: A community-wide lens for examining what changes and enhancements must be made in order for people to thrive within a community throughout their lifespan.

Aging Network: The Administration on Aging (AoA)'s National Aging Network includes 56 State Units on Aging (SUAs), over 600 Area Agencies on Aging, over 200 Tribal organizations, and 2 Native Hawaiian organizations that are awarded funds for nutrition, supportive home and community-based services, and a variety of health, abuse prevention, caregiver support and other programs throughout the country.

Baby boomers: Americans born between 1946 and 1964.

Livable Community: One that enables people to age well and to thrive while remaining in their homes or communities and connected to their communities for as long as possible.

Millennials: Americans born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s.

NORC: A Naturally Occurring Retirement Community is a community that was not originally designed for seniors, but evolved naturally as adult residents aged in place and now has a large proportion of residents who are older adults.

SDVT: A Self-Directed Volunteer Team is a multi-skilled group of volunteers who share responsibilities for addressing a challenge or opportunity in their community. The methodology, developed by the SDV Network, was adapted for older adults in collaboration with the Aging Network Volunteer Collaborative, and was used in targeted ways by n4a to address issues of livability in a number of communities.

Universal Design (UD): A set of architecture guidelines for products and environments that can be usable by all people, to the extent possible. Major components include: single-floor residence; no-step entry; 32" minimum doorways; maneuverability throughout the home; and reinforced bathroom walls (for installing grab bars).

Villages: Neighbor-helping-neighbor models for enabling residents to age in their communities. Currently, more than 150 Villages are operating across the U.S., in Australia and the Netherlands, with over a 120 additional Villages in development.

Visitability: Sometimes called "Basic Home Access" or "Inclusive Home Design," Visitability is a campaign for meaningful policy to accommodate guests with mobility limitations, requiring a few essential features in every new home:

- At least one zero-step entrance into the home
- Interior doors, including bathrooms, with 32 inches or more of clear passage space
- At least a half bath (preferably a full bath) on the main floor

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n4a Mission

To build the capacity of our members so they can better help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible.



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