AARP Real Possibilities

Livable Communities
Great Places for All Ages™

AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Tool Kit

Step 1: Getting Started

Learn how your community can join the network
The Tool Kit

An age-friendly community is livable for people of all ages. — Getty

Learn how a town, city or county can join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities:
Introduction
1. Getting Started
2. Planning
3. Implementation
4. Evaluation
5. Connecting
Learn more about the age-friendly network and see the member list

Cities, towns and other localities in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program commit to improving their age-friendliness and submit to a rigorous membership assessment cycle.

Communities interested in joining the network are encouraged to contact their state AARP office. AARP state offices also work to identify cities, towns and counties AARP believes can commit to a continual cycle of improvement in the eight domains the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified as influencing the health and quality of life of older adults.

THE 8 DOMAINS OF LIVABILITY
The domains are listed and detailed below:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social participation
5. Respect and social inclusion
6. Civic participation and employment
7. Communication and information
8. Community support and health services
- **8 Domains Slideshow**
- **8 Domains World Health Organization Checklist**
- **8 Domains Case Studies**
- **8 Domains Resources**
  WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION RESOURCES
- **World Health Organization Guide to Age-Friendly Cities (PDF)**

- **AgeFriendlyWorld.org**
  Indicators in the WHO domains that also reflect the social impact objectives of AARP include:

- Increasing awareness about what the age 50+ population needs in order to maintain active, healthy and productive lives where they live

- Fostering dialogue, knowledge and actions that support the development of age-friendly communities across the United States

Being an age-friendly community requires a commitment to a cycle of continuous improvements. The "Getting Started" phase of the program typically lasts one or two years.

INITIATING THE EFFORT
1. Obtain the political commitment of the community's elected officials
This includes acquiring a written pledge by the community executive (the mayor, county commissioner, etc.) to commit to a continual cycle of improvement. This letter, along with a membership application, should be sent to the community's AARP state office or the AARP representative the community has been working with. AARP will then advise the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

* To download the application and read examples of these letters and other expressions of commitment, see **Preparing the Membership Materials**

2. Organize stakeholders
A successful age-friendly initiative is based on broad collaboration. An ideal group of stakeholders would include representation from non-profit organizations, businesses, government agencies and community partners and, of course age-50+ residents.
For suggestions about whom to include, see:
* **List of Potential Stakeholders to Engage in Age-Friendly Community Efforts**
  For examples of successful engagements, see the AARP presentations

* **Engaging Stakeholders: City of Des Moines: Creating Great Places for All Ages (PDF)**

3. Conduct assessments to identify needs
AARP has developed a survey that can be adapted by communities to help assess available resources and what residents view as important for successfully aging in place. The survey is designed to capture information consistent with the eight domains of a livable community as identified by the **World Health Organization.**
* **AARP Survey of Community Residents Ages 50 and Older**

4. Establish an advisory committee that includes older adults
AARP state office staff members and volunteers can can help.
The ultimate goal of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is to increase the number of communities that support healthy aging, which will thereby improve the health, well-being, satisfaction and quality of life for older Americans. In an age-friendly community, policies, services, settings and structures support and enable people remain active as they age. This is achieved by:

* Recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older people

* Anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences

* Respecting the decisions and lifestyle choices of age 50+ people

* Protecting and supporting older adults who are the most vulnerable

* Promoting the inclusion and contributions of older adults in all aspects of community life
  And, because active aging is a life-long process, an age-friendly community is not just "elder-friendly." Rather, an age-friendly community is friendly for people of all ages.

* **Evaluating Your Age-Friendly Community Program: A Step-by-Step Guide**
  Use this resource when you're identifying indicators in your action plan

SUSTAINING
* **Guiding Principles for the Sustainability of Age-Friendly Community Efforts**
  Learn how to maintain ongoing success