



# AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

30

MUNICIPAL  
IMPLEMENTATION  
TOOL #30

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DELAWARE VALLEY  
 **dvrpc**  
REGIONAL  
PLANNING COMMISSION

This brochure is one in a series of Municipal Implementation Tools (MITs) available to local governments and planning partners to assist in implementing the region's long-range plan, *Connections 2045*. Prepared and adopted by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the long-range plan provides a sustainable land use and transportation vision for the region's growth and development through the year 2045. *Connections 2045* establishes five key principles that are essential to realizing a sustainable future:

- Sustain the environment.
- Develop livable communities.
- Expand the economy.
- Create an integrated, multimodal transportation network.
- Advance equity and foster diversity.

Municipal governments have the primary authority and responsibility to implement these policies. The series is designed to introduce local officials and citizens to planning techniques that may be useful in their communities. Each covers a different topic and provides an overview of the use of the tool, the benefits, and best practices from within the Greater Philadelphia region. For additional information about *Connections 2045*, please visit [www.dvrpc.org/Connections2045](http://www.dvrpc.org/Connections2045). To download additional brochures, visit [www.dvrpc.org/MIT](http://www.dvrpc.org/MIT).

Across the world, our population is aging, and life expectancy continues to grow. *Age-friendly* describes places where older adults, defined as anywhere from 50+ to 65+ years of age, can "age actively." *Active* is defined as a physical environment that supports older people and allows them to be independent. Perhaps most importantly, it also refers to a place that enables adults to engage with social, economic, and civic life. Because different groups define older adults starting at different ages, better terms might be *aging-friendly communities*, focusing on the dynamic process of aging; or *livable communities for all ages*, focusing on intergenerational efforts rather than on a specific chronological age.

Communities need to plan for this aging population, but they often are not aware of tangible ways to improve places for aging. This brochure addresses how city and regional planners and policymakers can make cities, suburbs, and rural communities better for aging. Specifically, how can we create better public realms, transportation, and housing to address the demographic imperative of an aging population?



Figure 1: Built in 2014, John C. Anderson Apartments in Center City Philadelphia is the state's first senior housing project specifically catering to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) population. The 56 units provide an affordable option to an aging LGBT cohort. Many from this generation were pioneering activists urging equal rights, although they can still suffer from housing discrimination. Photo Credit: DVRPC.

In the United States, the baby boomers, the largest generation in U.S. history, born between 1946 and 1964, began to turn 65 in 2011, with the last boomers turning 65 in 2029. Today, 40 million people in the United States are aged 65 and older, and this is projected to more than double to 89 million by 2050. Although the *oldest old*, those aged 85 and older, represent only 15 percent of the population aged 65 and older today, their numbers are projected to rise rapidly over the next 40 years. By 2050, the oldest old will number 19 million, over one-fifth of the total population aged 65 and older (Jacobsen et al., 2011).

In the Philadelphia nine-county region, population is forecast to increase by 11 percent between 2010 and 2040, and those over 65 will increase by 58 percent (Morris, 2013). Of the 10 largest cities in the United States, Philadelphia has the largest number of those over the age of 60 (276,000 people; Philadelphia Corporation for Aging [PCA], 2011). This is expected to double by 2035. In many ways, Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia region is getting a preview of what the rest of the nation will eventually face: a demographic imperative to plan better environments for aging populations. This has both benefits and challenges, prompting the emergence of a new field of research on urban aging.

DVRPC's work on aging has included: forecasting population growth and aging cohorts, mapping the locations of seniors as part of the Indicators of Potential Disadvantage analysis, studying *The Aging of the Baby Boomers: Housing Seniors in the Delaware Valley*, recommending *Aging in Place (MIT#12)* actions for municipalities, emphasizing safe senior mobility in the *Regional Safety Action Plan*, and facilitating the *Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan* that funds transportation services for older persons.

Overall, there is growing interest in age-friendly communities in the region, as evidenced by the AARP Philadelphia Livable Communities Network that includes multiple cross-sector partners. Several municipalities have begun age-friendly campaigns, including Philadelphia, West Chester, Swarthmore, Princeton, and East Goshen.

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), the City of Philadelphia's area agency on aging, began Age-Friendly Philadelphia in 2009, focusing on seven different policy areas, including parks, transit, flexible housing, walkability, social capital, fresh food access, and next-generation education. The City of Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Aging (MCOA) published a strategic plan in 2011 that listed 12 priorities and five goals for creating an Age-Friendly Philadelphia. This led the Commission to formally undertake the World Health Organization (WHO) Assessment in 2013, evaluating the city through the eight domains. The city scored highly on amount of green space, diversity of public transit options, housing choices, and the nonprofit network serving seniors. The biggest areas for improvement included accessible housing, home maintenance programs, road safety, clean environments (including air quality), and low uptake of health services offered. MCOA found that the city needed better data to assess civic participation, communication and information, and community and health services.

On the neighborhood scale, the Ralston Center, a local service provider for older adults, began their Age-Friendly West Philadelphia initiative in 2015. It is a collaborative partnership of local and citywide stakeholders to create age-friendly changes in West Philadelphia. Their early endeavors include: Age-Friendly Places, which creates intergenerational opportunities by piloting ways in which public parks and spaces can be safer and more inviting for people of all ages, and by removing barriers that prevent older West Philadelphians from using neighborhood amenities; Age-Friendly Resource Network, which seeks to increase older West Philadelphians' access to existing resources and alleviate social isolation through paired volunteer relationships, one-on-one navigational assistance, and a dedicated help line; and Food & Company, which improves older West Philadelphians' access to fresh food, nutritional resources, and opportunities for social connection through communal cooking and individual assistance with food access.

WHO created the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) in 2010, as the first major global policy response to aging in cities. GNAFCC's mission is to connect cities with the common vision to make their communities great places to grow old in. The Network provides members with information and mutual support, while communities themselves focus on action at the local level.

AARP is the institutional affiliate of WHO's GNAFCC, and began their own Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012, targeting some of the environmental, economic, and social factors that influence the well-being of older adults living in the United States. AARP works through their state offices to identify communities for membership in the WHO Global Network. Participation in the AARP program enrolls communities in the WHO program. AARP's process is similar to the four-step WHO process: (1) establish mechanisms to involve older people; (2) develop a baseline assessment of age-friendliness across eight domains; (3) develop a three-year citywide (or countywide) action plan based on assessment findings (linking the plan across municipal or county departments); and (4) identify indicators to monitor progress against the plan. At the end of five years, AARP will renew a community's membership following a positive assessment of the progress of the plan and submission of a revised action plan.



Figure 2: West Chester, Pennsylvania, a designated Classic Town of Greater Philadelphia, joined the AARP Network in May 2016, and produced an action plan that lays out activities that promote greater awareness and understanding of older people in the community. Photo Credit: Bob Kelly.

There are eight domains that WHO and AARP suggest a community use to assess their age-friendliness (WHO, 2007). A community is not limited to these domains, and it may add others. For example, Washington, DC, added two others they found important after talking to older adults: elder abuse and emergency preparedness.

- 1) **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, also called Public Realm:** Outdoor environments have a major impact on older people's mobility and independence. Features to assess include sidewalks and crosswalks, quality of pavements, access to green space, security, cleanliness, seating, public toilets, and age-friendly buildings.
- 2) **Transportation:** The ability to get around and maintain one's connections to the world affects health and well-being in older age. Features to assess include transit availability, affordability, reliability and frequency, travel destinations, age-friendly vehicles, specialized services for older people, priority seating and passenger courtesy, transit drivers, safety and comfort, transit stops and stations, taxis, community transport, information, driving conditions, courtesy towards older drivers, and parking, among others.

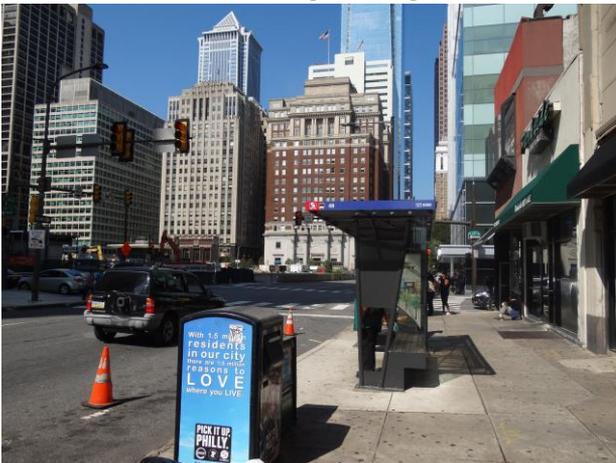


Figure 3: The City of Philadelphia recently installed many new bus shelters with seating and signage to make taking transit more comfortable and easier to navigate. Photo Credit: DVRPC.

- 3) **Housing:** Housing affects quality of life, and poor housing is linked to chronic disease. Factors to evaluate include affordability, essential services, design, modifications, maintenance, community integration, housing options, and living environment.
- 4) **Social Participation:** Participating in leisure, social, spiritual, and cultural activities in the community allows older people to maintain and create new relationships. Features to assess include the accessibility, awareness, affordability, and range of events and activities; facilities and settings; and efforts to address isolation and integrate communities across generations and cultures.



**Figure 4:** Frieda Cafe, located in Center City Philadelphia, is an intergenerational café, where generations can reconnect through meeting, eating, drinking, learning and creating. It is staffed by a multigenerational team, and offers regular workshops, clubs, classes, and group dinners. Photo Credit: DVRPC.

- 5) **Respect and Social Inclusion:** Negative attitudes about seniors are often widespread and accepted, and can reinforce inequality. Features to assess include respectful and inclusive services, public images of aging, intergenerational and family interactions, public education, community inclusion, and economic inclusion.
- 6) **Civic Participation and Employment:** An age-friendly community provides options for older people to continue to

contribute to their communities, through paid employment, volunteer work, and the political process. Factors to consider include employment and volunteer options, training, accessibility, support for civic participation, valued contributions, and entrepreneurship.

- 7) **Communication and Information:** Older people rely on information that is readily accessible, and failure to access such information can contribute to social isolation. Factors include widespread distribution, oral and printed communication, plain language, automated communication, and computer and internet access.



Figure 5: Not all older adults are comfortable using smartphones, but there are special older adult apps, classes, and easier-to-use smartphone models available. Nevertheless, providing information to older adults in a variety of formats is important. For example, transportation network companies, like Uber and Lyft, continue to seek out ways to connect older adults to their services, sometimes through a regular phone rather than online or through a smartphone.

- 8) **Community Support and Health Services:** Health and support services are important to maintaining independence and being able to age in place. Factors include services offered (including home care and residential facilities), service accessibility, voluntary support, and emergency planning and care.

Individuals and groups can use the following WHO checklist as a first step in assessing their towns. Communities are encouraged to ask older adults to describe how the checklist matches their own experiences of the community's positive characteristics and barriers.

#### Outdoor Spaces and Buildings:

- Public areas are clean and pleasant.
- Green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well maintained and safe.



Figure 6: Walk Age-Friendly Mantua, part of Age-Friendly West Philadelphia, led community members on a walk of the Mantua neighborhood to assess areas for improvement (cracked sidewalks, inadequate street lighting, and unmarked crosswalks). They also identified locations for benches and wayfinding signs. Photo Credit: Ralston Center.

- Pavements are well maintained, free of obstructions, and reserved for pedestrians.
- Pavements are nonslip, are wide enough for wheelchairs, and have dropped curbs to road level.
- Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number and safe for people with different levels and types of disability, with nonslip markings, visual and audio cues, and adequate crossing times.
- Drivers give way to pedestrians at intersections and pedestrian crossings.

- Cycle paths are separate from pavements and other pedestrian walkways.
- Outdoor safety is promoted by good street lighting, police patrols, and community education.
- Services are situated together and are accessible.
- Special customer service arrangements are provided, such as separate queues or service counters for older people.
- Buildings are well signed outside and inside, with sufficient seating and toilets, accessible elevators, ramps, railings and stairs, and nonslip floors.
- Public toilets are sufficient in number, clean, well maintained and accessible.



Figure 7: Signage directs passersby to public restrooms at Philadelphia's City Hall. Available restrooms can make the difference between being able to confidently go out and having to stay home. Photo Credit: DVRPC.

#### Transportation:

- Public transportation costs are consistent, clearly displayed, and affordable.
- Public transportation is reliable and frequent, including at night and on weekends and holidays.
- All city areas and services are accessible by public transport, with good connections and well-marked routes and vehicles.
- Vehicles are clean, well maintained, accessible, not overcrowded, and have priority seating that is respected.

- Specialized transportation is available for disabled people.
- Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.
- Transport stops and stations are conveniently located, accessible, safe, clean, well lit and well marked, with adequate seating and shelter.



**Figure 8: Media, Pennsylvania, a designated Classic Town of Greater Philadelphia, offers several transit options, including regional rail, trolley, and bus. An upcoming modernization of SEPTA's trolley fleet will replace the existing trolleys that have stairs with low-floor Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible vehicles making boarding and alighting easier for every age and ability. Photo Credit: James Templeton.**

- Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules, and special needs facilities.
- A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.
- Taxis are accessible and affordable, and drivers are courteous and helpful.
- Roads are well maintained, with covered drains and good lighting.
- Traffic flow is well regulated.
- Roadways are free of obstructions that block drivers' vision.

- Traffic signs and intersections are visible and well placed.
- Driver education and refresher courses are promoted for all drivers.
- Parking and drop-off areas are safe, sufficient in number, and conveniently located.
- Priority parking and drop-off spots for people with special needs are available and respected.

### Housing:

- Sufficient, affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to services and the rest of the community.
- Sufficient and affordable home maintenance and support services are available.
- Housing is well constructed and provides safe and comfortable shelter from the weather.
- Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways.
- Home modification options and supplies are available and affordable, and providers understand the needs of older people.
- Public and commercial rental housing is clean, well maintained and safe.
- Sufficient and affordable housing for frail and disabled older people, with appropriate services, is provided locally.



Figure 9: GG Green is a rehabilitation of the historic Woodbury, NJ Opera House into affordable senior apartments. In 2013, RPM Development Group converted the downtown building into 52 one-bedroom and 3 two-bedroom apartments, and 7,000 square feet of ground floor retail. It meets the LEED for Homes standard. Photo Credit: Graham Communications.

**Social Participation:**

- Venues for events and activities are conveniently located, accessible, well lit and easily reached by public transport.
- Events are held at times convenient for older people.
- Activities and events can be attended alone or with a companion.
- Activities and attractions are affordable, with no hidden or additional participation costs.
- Good information about activities and events is provided, including details about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for older people.
- A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of older people.
- Gatherings including older people are held in various local community spots, such as recreation centers, schools, libraries, community centers, and parks.
- There is consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation.

**Respect and Social Inclusion:**

- Older people are regularly consulted by public, voluntary, and commercial services on how to serve them better.
- Services and products to suit varying needs and preferences are provided by public and commercial services.
- Service staff are courteous and helpful.
- Older people are visible in the media, and are depicted positively and without stereotyping.
- Communitywide settings, activities, and events attract all generations by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences.
- Older people are specifically included in community activities for “families.”
- Schools provide opportunities to learn about aging and older people, and involve older people in school activities.
- Older people are recognized by the community for their past, as well as their present, contributions.
- Older people who are less well-off have good access to public, voluntary, and private services.



Figure 10: All ages gather for a concert at a Bristol, Pennsylvania riverfront park. Parks, public spaces, and events should be planned for all ages. Photo Credit: Dave McGlynn.

#### Civic Participation and Employment:

- A range of flexible options for older volunteers is available, with training, recognition, guidance, and compensation for personal costs.
- The qualities of older employees are well promoted.
- A range of flexible and appropriately paid opportunities for older people to work is promoted.
- Discrimination on the basis of age alone is forbidden in the hiring, retention, promotion, and training of employees.
- Workplaces are adapted to meet the needs of disabled people.
- Self-employment options for older people are promoted and supported.
- Training in post-retirement options is provided for older workers.
- Decision-making bodies in public, private, and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership of older people.

**Communication and Information:**

- A basic, effective communication system reaches community residents of all ages. Regular and widespread distribution of information is assured and a coordinated, centralized access is provided.
- Regular information and broadcasts of interest to older people are offered.
- Oral communication accessible to older people is promoted.
- People at risk of social isolation get one-to-one information from trusted individuals.
- Public and commercial services provide friendly, person-to-person service on request.
- Printed information—including official forms, television captions and text on visual displays—has large lettering and the main ideas are shown by clear headings and boldfaced type.
- Printed and spoken communication uses simple, familiar words in short, straightforward sentences.
- Telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time.
- Electronic equipment, such as cell phones, radios, televisions, and bank and ticket machines, has large buttons and big lettering.
- There is wide public access to computers and the Internet, at no or minimal charge, in public places, such as government offices, community centers, and libraries.

**Community and Health Services:**

- An adequate range of health and community support services is offered for promoting, maintaining, and restoring health.
- Home care services include health and personal care and housekeeping.
- Health and social services are conveniently located and accessible by all means of transport.
- Residential care facilities and designated older people's housing are located close to services and the rest of the community.

- Health and community service facilities are safely constructed and fully accessible.
- Clear and accessible information is provided about health and social services for older people.
- Delivery of services is coordinated and administratively simple.
- All staff are respectful, helpful, and trained to serve older people.
- Economic barriers impeding access to health and community support services are minimized.
- Voluntary services by people of all ages are encouraged and supported.
- There are sufficient and accessible burial sites.
- Community emergency planning takes into account the vulnerabilities and capacities of older people.



**Figure 11: Morris Hall Meadows in Lawrenceville, NJ, is the region's first elder-centered GREEN HOUSE® nursing home. Consisting of six homes with ten private bed and bath suites, each home offers elders more decision-making authority, privacy, and comfort than traditional nursing homes. Elders control their own daily routines and rhythms for waking, sleeping, meals, self-care and alone time. Each home features an open kitchen, great room, outdoor access, and common dining table. These smaller-scale homes are designed to fit within existing communities. Photo Credit: DVRPC.**

**Land Use Policies:** Has your municipality adopted the following land use policies?

- Comprehensive/Master Plans: Does your comprehensive or master plan mention the demographics of aging in your community? Does it forecast how the current population will age in the next 10 to 25 years? Does it discuss or assess age-friendly readiness? Does the plan have an explicit goal to make your city or town age-friendly? By having specific language in the comprehensive or master plan, this gives legal support to zoning or land development ordinances that include age-friendly features.
- Zoning and Subdivision and Land Use Ordinances (SALDO): Does your zoning and SALDO allow for, or at least not expressly prohibit, the following age-friendly features?
  - Accessory dwelling units: Allows small secondary units built on single-family lots, either as accessory apartments or as separate unattached dwelling units. DVRPC has mapped which municipalities in our region allow accessory dwelling units: [www.dvrpc.org/SmartGrowth/Maps/pdf/ADU.pdf](http://www.dvrpc.org/SmartGrowth/Maps/pdf/ADU.pdf)
  - Shared housing: Allows unrelated people to share a house.
  - Adult day care centers: Allows adult day care centers, which are designed for older adults who can no longer manage independently or who are isolated, to receive social and health-related services, and to give caregivers daytime breaks.
  - Long-term care facilities: Allows long-term care, including nursing homes, assisted living, and continuing care retirement communities.
  - Lower parking requirements for senior housing: Allows for flexibility in parking requirements for senior housing, acknowledging that seniors often own fewer cars because of smaller households or having given up personal automobiles. Makes senior housing more financially feasible since parking requirements can drive up the cost of housing.

- **Visitability:** Requires that the housing unit should have a zero-step entrance, wider hallways, and at least a half-bath on entrance floor. Municipalities could require this for all newly built or significantly renovated housing, and/or for public, private, or all housing, or for some percentage of housing units in new developments.
- **Sidewalk requirement in SALDO:** Requires the provision of sidewalks and sidewalk connectivity in land development projects.
- **Home-based offices:** Allows for home-based offices, so seniors and retirees can remain independent and productive as they age in place.

**Transportation Policies:** Has your municipality, transportation, or transit agency adopted the following policies or practices?

- Complete Streets:** Policy or resolution designed to enable safe access for all users, including walkers, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- Lower Speed Limit Zones:** Lower speed limits in certain areas to calm traffic and improve the safety of everyone.
- Accessible Transit:** Efforts to make all transit stations and vehicles accessible, as well as programs offered to seniors such as transit instruction (how to ride transit).
- Free or Low-Cost Transit Passes for Older Adults:** Enables greater mobility and independence for seniors by eliminating the cost burden of transit and increasing its ease of use.
- Wayfinding and Legible Signage:** Signage system that orients the user to his or her location and can assist in choosing a route. Age-friendly features can include larger, more legible fonts; identification of wheelchair-accessible routes and topography; and location of public toilets.
- Senior Pedestrian Zones:** Designated zones near senior amenities or where many seniors live that could include enhanced crosswalks, longer pedestrian crossing times, crossing flags, or other features to improve senior pedestrian safety.
- Programs for Older Cyclists:** Educational or training programs for older cyclists to become more confident on a bicycle.

**Public Realm Policies:** Does your municipality have the following?

- ❑ **Bus Shelters:** Bus shelters provide protection from weather, and as a fixed structure, and legibility to the transit system.
- ❑ **Benches:** Providing places to sit allows an older person greater freedom to go out confidently, enabled by a place to rest or socialize along the way.
- ❑ **Public Toilets:** Public toilets, whether provided by the municipality or through a partnership with area businesses, are an important resource for older people to be able to navigate their environments. Maps of locations of toilets are also a useful resource for all ages.
- ❑ **Senior Playgrounds:** Playgrounds exclusively for older adults that offer low-impact equipment to promote balance and flexibility, as well as to socialize, get outdoors, and have fun.



**Figure 12:** This senior playground, in Hyde Park, London, is part of a worldwide trend to encourage more exercise outdoors for all ages. It enables older adults to be visible and to challenge stereotypes about aging. Photo Credit: DVRPC.

- ❑ **Age-Friendly Businesses:** Municipal program that helps businesses attract, engage, and retain older adults as customers by considering the age-friendly features of the business. Low- and no-cost changes include improving access, such as places to rest and putting products within reach; to improving the overall experience, like minimizing excessive music or noise, providing well-lit displays, offering

home delivery, and training staff on how to assist those with vision, hearing, or cognitive issues.

- Aging Improvement Districts: Concept being tested in three New York City neighborhoods, to improve those neighborhoods for seniors at low or no cost, based on input from local older adults and partnerships between businesses, nonprofits, city agencies, and area institutions. Age-Friendly West Philadelphia is a similar neighborhood initiative.

**Housing Policies:** Does your municipality have the following policies, programs, or types of housing available?

- Visitability/Universal Design: Requirements or incentives to build new (or adapt existing) housing to make the home adaptable to changing needs. Universal design in housing far exceeds the minimum specifications of legislated barrier-free and accessible mandates. It applies the principles of universal design to all spaces, features, and aspects of houses and creates homes that are usable by and marketable to people of all ages and abilities. Some features are adjustable to meet needs that change as family members age yet allow the home to remain marketable on the open real estate market. When done well, it is invisible.



**Figure 13:** Universal design would ensure that homes would not need to have costly adaptations to make them accessible, such as this wheelchair ramp addition. Photo Credit: DVRPC.

- Cohousing: Intentional communities created and managed by their residents, with private homes but shared activities and facilities such as outdoor space, guest rooms, a communal kitchen, and meeting spaces. Several are in development in the region, including Altair Ecovillage in East Vincent Township, although the process can be lengthy.
- Cottage housing: Grouping of small, single-family dwelling units clustered around a common area and developed with a coherent plan for the entire site. They often have shared amenities, can be less expensive than single-family homes, and are an attractive option for seniors.
- Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities Supportive Services Program: Model for aging in place that provides supportive services, such as health care, social work, and social activities, to naturally occurring retirement communities, which are often market-rate apartment buildings predominantly occupied by seniors.
- Villages: Grassroots membership organizations that coordinate access to affordable services and social support for older adults through vetted providers, often members themselves, to enable seniors to remain in their homes and communities. Examples in the region include East Falls Village, Northwest Village Network (Northwest Philadelphia), Penn's Village (Center City Philadelphia), and Community Without Walls (Princeton).
- Grandfamilies Housing: Model of senior housing that allows grandparent caregivers to live with grandchildren and not violate rules of age-restricted senior housing. They combine features of senior housing with on-site services such as after-school education, youth activities, and case management.



Figure 15: *Age-friendly* refers to a place that enables adults to engage with the social, economic, and civic life of a community. More emphasis is now being placed on the importance and value of intergenerational housing.

**Involvement:** Does your municipality involve older adults in making planning decisions?

- ❑ Older Persons Forum: Established group that meets on a regular basis to review issues of aging in the community, along with overall development of the community.
- ❑ Using Older Adults as Co-Researchers: Older people are often invaluable connectors to other older adults in their community and could assist with surveys or participatory research.



Figure 17: Community members of all ages attend the Haddon Heights, New Jersey Historical Society's dedication of a historic water fountain. Photo Credit: Ken Funkhouser.

A similar yet distinct movement has arisen around creating dementia-friendly communities, led by Dementia-Friendly America (DFA), a cross-sector, national effort to equip all community sectors to support those with dementia and their caregivers and families. According to DFA, a dementia-friendly community is “informed, safe and respectful of individuals with dementia and their families, provides supportive options, and fosters quality of life.” It is one that prevents unnecessary dependence and stress for those with dementia and their caregivers. Nearly 60 percent of people with dementia live in their own communities, and one in seven live alone, creating an urgent need for communities to support people with dementia and their caregivers.

Emerging research on dementia-friendliness offers very specific design interventions. Several researchers have developed checklists for creating dementia-friendly outdoor environments. These offer preliminary guidance to designers on how style is less important than clarity in function and use. Dementia research shows that those with dementia:

- will go out for undemanding tasks like walking, shopping, and sending mail;
- will only use transit or cars with a companion;
- are less aware of physical and social dangers;
- experience anxiety and confusion in crowded or complex places and find loud noises startling;
- cannot always interpret clues for entrances or uses of a building; and
- use landmarks rather than maps or written directions to orient themselves.

Therefore, environments should be familiar, legible, accessible, distinctive, comfortable, and safe. For urban planners, this indicates that change is best if it is incremental and slow, to maintain local character and familiarity.

Key design features for new neighborhoods to be dementia friendly, and design features for retrofitting existing neighborhoods, have also been developed. There is a nice crossover with new urbanism and neo-traditional town building (and, in general, good urban planning)

with some of the criteria. Familiarity can be achieved through buildings being designed to reflect their uses. Legibility can be achieved through small block sizes; a hierarchy of street types, including shopping and residential streets; obvious entrances to buildings; and landmarks and environmental cues. Accessibility is increased through the mixing of land uses. Distinctiveness can be achieved through varied architecture and urban form that reflects local character, and features at junctions, such as street trees or furniture. Comfort can be enabled through frequent public seating, and safety through frequent pedestrian crossings with audible and visual cues.

Ten design components that architects and developers should consider for dementia-friendly housing include:

- (1) generous space standards and flexible layouts;
- (2) maximizing natural light through placement, size, and detail of windows;
- (3) building layouts that provide large balconies or patios, but avoid internal corridors that can be confusing; also, do not design apartments that only have windows on one side;
- (4) homes adaptable to new technology;
- (5) layouts that promote circulation areas for social interaction;
- (6) multipurpose space for a range of activities;
- (7) designing homes to be part of the street;
- (8) energy efficiency and sufficient insulation;
- (9) adequate storage; and
- (10) shared sidewalks and paths that give priority to pedestrians

Presently, most assisted-living developments are not designed specifically for dementia, but that is changing. New models do not segregate elders but combine the best features of senior housing with an interaction between residents and the community.

Age-friendliness could build on the political support and exposure that dementia-friendliness brings and could catalyze useful partnerships between the aging and health communities.

**AARP's Livable Communities:** [www.aarp.org/livable-communities](http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities)

Includes information and inspiration for local leaders interested in age-friendly communities, such as livability fact sheets, interviews, slide shows, posters, member list, e-newsletter, and numerous tool kits. The Livability Index is a web-based tool that scores neighborhoods and communities across the United States for the services and amenities that impact livability the most. Users can search the index by address, ZIP Code, or community to find an overall livability score, as well as a score for each of seven major livability categories: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity.

**American Planning Association's *Aging in Community Policy Guide* (2014) and *Talking Points* (2017):**

[www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/agingincommunity.htm](http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/agingincommunity.htm)

This policy guide urges the planning community to develop comprehensive multigenerational approaches and mobilize resources to enhance the quality of the life of the United States's aging population. It calls for policies that ensure a range of affordable and accessible housing options are available for older adults and access to quality transportation options. It advocates for land use and zoning tools to create welcoming communities for older adults, such as zoning that allows mixed-use development (for co-location of facilities), transit-oriented development, accessible accessory dwelling units, cottage housing, and other creative housing designs. It recognizes the importance of independent and assisted-living communities and recommends that communities prohibit too many exactions on them. It also recommends zoning that allows child and elder care in residential settings, and that allows older adults and caregivers to reside together.

**American Planning Association Pennsylvania (APAPA) Chapter's Healthy Communities Task Force:** [www.planningpa.org](http://www.planningpa.org)

The Task Force, and the Healthy Aging Working Group within it, combines the expertise of health and planning professionals statewide to advise APA PA on actions to better facilitate projects on common areas of interest. It aims to increase awareness of the link between planning and health and provide resources to health and planning professionals.

**Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs):** were established under the Older Americans Act in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans aged 60 and over in every local community. By providing a range of options that allow older adults to choose the home and community-based services and living arrangements that suit them best, AAAs make it possible for older adults to “age in place” in their homes and communities. Services funded and available through a local AAA may include information and assistance, outreach, case management, telephone reassurance, legal assistance, education, transportation (including escorted transportation), visiting nurses, respite care, hospice care, adult day care, caregiver support, and congregate and home-delivered meals.

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging

[www.buckscounty.org/government/HumanServices/AAA](http://www.buckscounty.org/government/HumanServices/AAA)

Chester County Department of Aging Services

[www.chesco.org/135/Aging](http://www.chesco.org/135/Aging)

Delaware County Office of Services for the Aging [www.delcosa.org](http://www.delcosa.org)

Montgomery County Aging & Adult Services Office

[www.montcopa.org/148/Aging-Adult-Services](http://www.montcopa.org/148/Aging-Adult-Services)

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) [www.pcacares.org](http://www.pcacares.org)

Burlington County Office on Aging [www.co.burlington.nj.us/434/Aging](http://www.co.burlington.nj.us/434/Aging)

Camden County Division of Senior Citizen and Disabled Citizen

Services [www.camdencounty.com/service/senior-disabled-services](http://www.camdencounty.com/service/senior-disabled-services)

Gloucester County Division of Senior Services

[www.co.gloucester.nj.us/depts/h/hedss/senservices](http://www.co.gloucester.nj.us/depts/h/hedss/senservices)

Mercer County Office on Aging

[www.mercercounty.org/departments/human-services/aging-disability-resource-connection/office-on-aging](http://www.mercercounty.org/departments/human-services/aging-disability-resource-connection/office-on-aging)

**Dementia Friendly America (DFA):** [www.dfamerica.org](http://www.dfamerica.org)

DFA seeks to educate Americans about dementia, equip business owners and first responders to recognize and assist those with memory loss, and empower people with Alzheimer’s and dementia to engage independently and safely in community life for as long as possible.

**DVRPC's *Equity Through Access Map Toolkit* (2017):**

[www.dvrpc.org/eta](http://www.dvrpc.org/eta)

This interactive, web-based tool demonstrates concentrations of need and opportunity, as well as disparities in access to essential health services like hospitals, health clinics, recreational spaces, senior centers, and more in the Greater Philadelphia region. Users can view layers representing different datasets, including distributions of vulnerable populations (including seniors), the locations of essential services, and areas where transit access is low. These three variables were combined to create the Priority Score map, which visualizes areas where new public transit connections could be made, changed, or improved to bridge access gaps in the future.

**DVRPC's web page on aging: [www.dvrpc.org/Aging](http://www.dvrpc.org/Aging)**

Includes resources such as population forecasts; environmental justice maps; research reports; partnerships; and websites for local, regional, national, and international age-friendly efforts.

**Generations United: [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)**

Generations United is a family research nonprofit and advocacy group that works to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through intergenerational collaborations, public policies, and programs. Its Intergenerational Center provides toolkits, manuals, articles, and videos, on intergenerational relationships.

**Grantmakers in Aging: [www.giaging.org](http://www.giaging.org)**

Membership organization of philanthropies dedicated to improving the experience of aging. A current multiyear initiative is "Creating a Sustainable Network for the Rural Aging Movement."

**Leading Age: [www.leadingage.org](http://www.leadingage.org)**

Leading Age is a national nonprofit membership organization made up of over 6,000 members and partners representing aging services. Their focus is on education, advocacy, and applied research.

**Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging:**

[aging.milkeninstitute.org](http://aging.milkeninstitute.org)

The institute seeks to strengthen societies by promoting healthy, productive, and purposeful aging. Provides resources and

publications on how the future of aging is challenging conventional wisdom.

**New Jersey Future's *Creating Places To Age in New Jersey* (2014):** [www.njfuture.org/research-publications/research-reports/places-to-age-nj](http://www.njfuture.org/research-publications/research-reports/places-to-age-nj)

There is a significant mismatch in New Jersey between where large numbers of older residents live and which municipalities are most prepared, from a land use perspective, to accommodate them. This report presents a methodology for characterizing municipalities' "aging-friendliness" based on four features of their land use patterns: the number of destinations per square mile; the presence of a mixed-use downtown; the existence of a well-connected local street network, allowing for walking and more direct access to destinations; and access to public transportation, particularly local buses, enabling greater mobility for those who do not drive.

**Next Avenue:** [www.nextavenue.org](http://www.nextavenue.org)

Next Avenue is a national public-media journalism service providing news, advice, information, and stories targeting people over the age of 50.

**Penn State Extension Program:**

[aeese.psu.edu/extension/intergenerational](http://aeese.psu.edu/extension/intergenerational)

Program provides training and resources for organizations in Pennsylvania and beyond to establish intergenerational programs. Of particular interest are activities and curricula designed to engage youth and older adults in constructive dialogue about their community and issues of community development.

**Village to Village Network (VtV):** <http://vtvnetwork.org>

VtV was created to support senior villages and the village movement. It helps community members build villages by connecting them to resources, funders, education, and expertise.

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The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is dedicated to uniting the region's elected officials, planning professionals and the public with a common vision of making a great region even greater. Shaping the way we live, work and play, DVRPC builds consensus on improving transportation, promoting smart growth, protecting the environment and enhancing the economy. We serve a diverse region of nine counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer in New Jersey. DVRPC is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Greater Philadelphia Region – leading the way to a better future.

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