



FOSTERING A LIFELONG COMMUNITY

An Age-Friendly PVD Action Plan
City of Providence



AGE-FRIENDLY PVD
MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY

A Letter from the Mayor

Dear Neighbor,

I'm pleased to introduce Providence's Age-Friendly Action Plan, a dynamic document crafted with feedback from our vibrant and engaged community to enhance opportunities and promote inclusivity across all age groups.

As Mayor, I am committed to supporting this initiative and stand ready to collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO), AARP, our local community and communities globally to achieve its goals.

The concept of an Age-Friendly City resonates deeply with our city's values of inclusivity and support for individuals of all ages. It envisions a city where our older adults can age gracefully, with access to the necessary services and resources to thrive while remaining active contributors to our community fabric.

By affiliating with the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, we signal our resolve to foster an environment that promotes healthy aging and champions the dignity and rights of older adults. This commitment underscores our dedication to listening to the needs and aspirations of our aging population and taking concrete actions to address them.

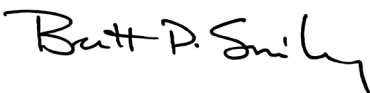
In our pursuit of becoming an Age-Friendly City, we have engaged with residents, community groups and stakeholders to pinpoint areas where improvements are needed and will begin to implement age-friendly policies and programs. From enhancing transportation accessibility to developing age-friendly outdoor spaces and fostering social inclusion, our action plan is designed to directly address the needs of our older citizens.

Building an Age-Friendly City necessitates collaboration, innovation and dedication from all corners. I call upon all residents, businesses and organizations in Providence to join forces with us in this vital mission. Together, we can create a city that truly values and supports its older adult population, enriching the lives of all who call Providence home.

In the coming months and years, you can anticipate updates on our progress and initiatives geared toward realizing our vision of an Age-Friendly Providence. I am enthusiastic about the positive impact we can make together and am eager to collaborate with each of you in achieving our shared aspirations.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to making Providence a city that is not only inclusive and vibrant but also age-friendly, where every resident can thrive.

Sincerely,



Mayor Brett P. Smiley

Acknowledgements

The Age-Friendly Providence Action Plan was developed under the leadership of Mayor Brett P. Smiley and the City of Providence's Department of Senior Services. Analysis of the survey was conducted by Irene Glasser, Ph.D. and her team, William Zywieck, Ph.D., and Jasmine White, MPH candidate. Findings and recommendations were developed by the Age-Friendly PVD Task Force, whose members include:

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- Marcus Mitchell, Volunteer State President, AARP-RI, Task Force Co-Chair
- James Connell, Executive Director, Age-Friendly Rhode Island
- Ana Lia Alcolea-Tassia, Bi-Lingual Outreach Coordinator, The Village Common of RI
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- Carole Finger, City of Providence Older Adult Resident
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- Sophie Worsh-Farnum, Policy Associate, Department of Sustainability, City of Providence
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Other partners for the project include:

- AARP-RI
- Age-Friendly Rhode Island
- Meals on Wheels RI
- The Village Common of RI
- Fox Point Manor
- Martin de Porres Senior Center
- DaVinci Center for Community Progress

City of Providence Departments

- The Mayor's Center for City Services
- Planning and Development
- Parks
- People and Culture
- Recreation
- Public Works
- Communications

We would like to thank and acknowledge all our partners and community members, including those who participated in surveys and focus groups, whose input was invaluable to the development of this plan. Their involvement was crucial in shaping an action plan that reflects a collaborative effort toward meaningful change for the City's aging population.

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Executive Summary

Providence's population is aging. Globally, for the first time in history, there are more people over the age of 64 than under the age of 5. In Rhode Island, by 2030, one in four adults will be over the age of 65. A significant majority of these aging Rhode Islanders will be living in Providence, making up around 15% of the City's population. Additionally, according to community surveys and assessments, the vast majority of older adults wish to age in their communities and in their own homes.

Due to the trend of aging populations around the world, municipal leaders and elected officials must plan for improved outcomes for older adults. To assist with this effort, AARP and the World Health Organization have partnered to create the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The City of Providence is working to become one such community, and the Age-Friendly PVD Action Plan serves as our roadmap for becoming a livable community for older residents.

Becoming an Age-friendly community is an ongoing process that builds upon existing strengths and identifies opportunities across the livable domains identified in the AARP framework. This process focuses resources and promotes actions that will build a community where people of all ages can live, work and play. The Age-friendly PVD Task Force, a group of older residents, city leaders and industry representatives, was initiated to ensure that a collaborative and engaging approach was used in developing the action plan. The Task Force conducted an assessment of Providence's current strengths and resources, as well as the needs of its older adult population, to formulate this action plan.

The plan will be implemented in collaboration with other city departments and independent organizations under the leadership of Mayor Brett P. Smiley and guided by the Age-friendly Task Force. The three-year plan will be iterative, with evaluations and community assessments conducted every five years to ensure goals and objectives align with community needs. Thus, through a continuous process of assessments, planning and evaluations, Providence will become more age-friendly over time.

Introduction

The City of Providence endeavors to offer a robust and inclusive support system for older adults which prioritizes their well-being and community involvement. By pooling resources and expertise across various city departments and collaborating with local non-profits, the City strives to address the diverse needs of older residents by building a comprehensive support network and fostering a thriving community for all. Through these strong partnerships, we ensure that older adult residents have access to the information and services they need to have active and healthy lifestyles.

The City provides services focused on older residents' well-being and their engagement in the community. Services include transportation for shopping, social outings and events; wellness fairs, in conjunction with sponsors and local organizations, which present valuable information and resources; and intergenerational programming to promote connections across different age groups. Additionally, we assist older residents with navigating city services, and each year we host Mayor's Day in the City, a city-wide event that celebrates older adults and cultivates a sense of community and engagement.

Background

In March of 2019, the City of Providence signed an agreement with AARP to support its residents through all stages of life by committing to the age-friendly initiative, a national program that promotes city planning through the lens of an aging population. With this commitment, Providence joins a network of communities who are engaging in the work of assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating policies, processes, and programs that support healthy aging for older adult residents. The goal is to create a "livable community", a community that is great for all its residents because it is safe, offers choices in housing and transportation, fosters a sense of belonging for all, and embraces diversity and equity.

The multi-year process initiated with the Age-Friendly Survey, demonstrating a thorough and systematic approach to understanding the areas of strength and identifying areas where there are opportunities for growth within the community. Despite the interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the resumption of the survey in 2022 underscores the City's perseverance and dedication to the initiative.

In 2023, an Age-Friendly PVD Task Force was convened to effectively guide and implement the initiative. The inclusion of key stakeholders, such as the Director of Senior Services, representatives from key City departments, partner agencies and community residents, ensures a comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing the needs of older adults.

The engagement of the Task Force in analyzing survey results and conducting community listening sessions reflects a dedication to gathering diverse perspectives and input from stakeholders. This inclusive approach is essential for developing goals and objectives that are reflective of the community's needs and priorities. Additionally, the Task Force formed workgroups that developed concrete goals and objectives to demonstrate a structured and focused approach to translating findings into actionable plans. By breaking down the process into manageable tasks, the City can effectively prioritize initiatives and allocate resources accordingly.

Overall, the dedication of time and resources to the age-friendly initiative underscores the City's commitment to creating an environment that promotes economic growth, accessibility, and well-being for residents of all ages. By fostering age-friendly features, Providence not only enhances the quality of life for older adults but also creates a more inclusive and vibrant city for all its residents.

Community Profile¹

Situated at the head of Narragansett Bay, Providence, the capital city of Rhode Island, is the third most populous city, and the second largest metropolitan area in New England. As of the 2020 Census, the City has a population of 190,934, with an area of 20.58 square miles, making it a densely populated area. While there are about 25 neighborhoods in Providence, they are often grouped together into 5 general areas: the East Side, the Jewelry District/Downtown, the North End, the South Side, and West End.

Although once noted for its textile manufacturing and machine tool, jewelry and silverware industries, the economy has since shifted to one of service industries, although it still retains some manufacturing activity. Currently, over a third of Providence's economy is based in trade, transportation, utilities and educational and health services. As a capital city, the economy also consists of government services. As of February 2024, the unemployment rate in Providence was 6.8%, higher than the state rate of 5.4%. The median income for an individual is just under \$30,000 and the poverty rate is about 20%.

Providence is home to seven (7) hospitals and seven (7) institutions of higher learning, which have contributed significantly to the newly developing economy: life-sciences and technology-based economies. In fact, Brown University is one of the City's largest employers. Providence is an ethnically and racially diverse community. As of the 2020 Census, 53.1% of the population identifies as white, including a sizable community of white Hispanics, although non-Hispanic whites make up only 33.8% of the population. The City has substantial numbers of residents who are Italian and Irish ancestry which have impacted the community's history and culture. Additionally, there is a sizable Jewish community as well. In 2020, 43.5% of the population identified as Hispanic, with about half of those being of Dominican descent. Indeed, Providence has the fifth largest Dominican population in the country. African-Americans constitute another 16.1% and Asian-Americans constitute 5.6%. Providence also has considerable communities of immigrants from Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as one of the largest Liberian immigrant communities in the country. The City is also home to one of the largest, most active, and growing LGBTQIA+ populations as well. This combination of ethnicities and cultures has significantly impacted the overall culture of Providence, giving it a sense of uniqueness.

Providence is governed by a Mayor and a City Council, who serve as the legislative branch of government and consider and pass ordinances. As the capital city, it also houses the RI General Assembly, the Governor and Lt. Governor's offices and the US 6th District Court. In addition to the several Colleges and Universities located here, Providence also has, alongside its public schools, dedicated magnet schools and charter institutions, and a number of private schools at all levels.

Providence has a thriving arts community, featuring renowned institutions like Trinity Repertory Company, the RI Philharmonic Orchestra, and AS220, a non-profit arts center. During summer months, the City hosts events like WATERFIRE, an environmental art installation that is acclaimed around the world, and PVD Fest, a free outdoor festival celebrating the culture of Providence. And it supports programs like Community Music Works, which provides music education to inner-city youth.

Providence boasts a network of 120 diverse and beautiful public parks, offering a variety of recreational activities including city squares, athletic fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, conservation areas, walking/running tracks and trails, historic buildings and grounds, community gardens, boat docks, nontraditional recreation areas (including skateboard features and bike tracks), dog parks, cemeteries, an ice rink. Roger Williams Park serves as the flagship park, showcasing the City's commitment to green spaces and community engagement. Indeed, the City is proud to say that all of its residents live within a 10-minute walking distance to a green space.

Overall, Providence is a dynamic city with a rich history, that celebrates its diverse population, fosters innovation and provides a range of cultural, economic and recreational offerings. It provides ample opportunities for residents and visitors alike to explore its dynamic offerings.

Aging in Providence

Providence's approach to addressing the needs of its aging population reflects a broader trend seen in many parts of the world, as demographics shift towards older age groups. In fact, it is estimated that by 2030, one quarter of Rhode Island residents will be 65 or older², many of them living in Providence. By recognizing the challenges faced by older residents and implementing targeted initiatives, Providence has taken significant steps to ensure that its older citizens can age with dignity and remain active members of the community.

The Administration's investments in transportation infrastructure, such as the addition of new senior busses and support for initiatives like Vision Zero, not only improves mobility for older adults but also enhances overall safety in the City, making it more accessible for people of all ages. RIPTA's senior bus pass and paratransit programs further facilitate travel for older residents, ensuring they can access essential services and participate in social activities.

The addition of affordable housing options specifically designed for older adults is crucial in addressing issues of isolation and poverty among the aging population. These initiatives not only provide safe and comfortable living spaces but also foster a sense of community and belonging.

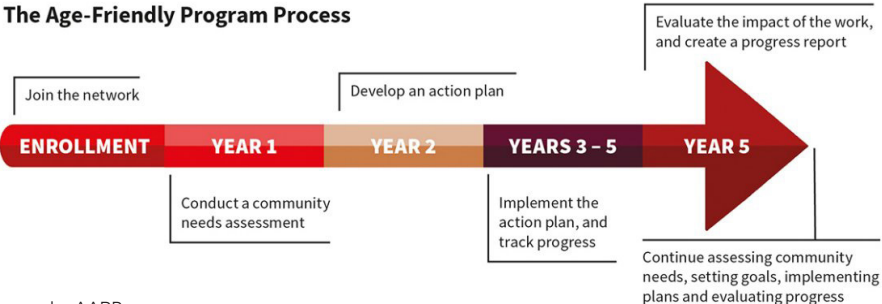
Providence has 8 Senior Centers and programs which serve as important hubs for social interaction, recreation, and access to essential services. These centers play a vital role in combating loneliness and promoting overall well-being among older residents.

Moreover, initiatives like The Point, RI's aging and disability resource center which is operated by the Office of Healthy Aging, provide invaluable assistance and guidance to older adults in navigating healthcare services and accessing community supports. By offering personalized assistance and guidance, such initiatives empower older adults to maintain their independence and quality of life as they age.

This comprehensive approach to supporting Providence's aging population demonstrates a commitment to inclusive urban planning and community development. By prioritizing the needs of older residents and implementing targeted initiatives, the City is laying the groundwork for a more age-friendly and vibrant community for generations to come.

The Process

The Age-Friendly Program Process



The Survey and Community Listening Sessions

In 2020, the Division of Senior Services, in conjunction with AARP, released a comprehensive age-friendly survey to residents aged 45 and over that attempted to determine the areas in which the City is doing well, as well as the opportunities to improve the services we provide. The survey was available online and on paper, and in both English and Spanish.

Distribution of the survey was negatively impacted by the pandemic and subsequent closure of many public spaces, so in the fall of 2021, with the reopening of public spaces, the Department of Senior Services took a targeted approach to securing completed surveys by creating opportunities to meet with older adults at senior centers, high-rise residences and other public spaces for the express purpose of completing surveys.

The surveys were analyzed by Irene Glasser, Ph.D. and her team from Brown University. Dr. Glasser is a trained anthropologist with an extensive background in research and writing who has analyzed other such surveys and has consulted with the Newport Partnership for Families Age-Friendly Newport on the action plan developed for the City of Newport.

Almost 400 surveys were completed and analyzed with varying results. Respondents were overwhelmingly white (76.9%), educated (68.16%) non-Hispanic (88.2%) females (70.9%), with the average being a 68-year-old married woman from the East Side, having a college education and a median income of around \$50,000. The survey questioned respondent's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their communities, services, safety and opportunities to work, volunteer and engage.

The Age-Friendly Task Force also conducted four community listening sessions. There were about 25 residents who participated. The listening sessions asked four questions:

1. What do you love about Providence/your community?
2. What is needed, now and in the future, for you to remain in your community?
3. What would add to the quality of life in your community?
4. What are your suggestions for renaming the Department of Senior Services?

Results of the listening sessions showed participants were concerned about safety, affordable housing, getting rides to and from appointments, better and more inclusive communication around programs and services available to older adults, walkability in the city, assistance/companion programs for older adults, more opportunities for engagement in the community and with younger people and food and housing insecurity. One surprising result was the number of older adults who said that they felt the term "seniors" was a respectful acknowledgement of their life's journey, and a badge of honor signifying their experience, wisdom and contributions to society.

The Age-Friendly PVD Task Force

Involving older adults in the planning process was crucial to creating an action plan that truly reflects and meets their needs. The Age-Friendly PVD (AFPVD) Task Force, hereafter referred to as the “Task Force,” was convened specifically for this purpose, ensuring that older adult voices are central in shaping age-friendly communities that are responsive to the aging population. This exemplifies the participatory approach to planning.

Also, by including representatives from key municipal departments and community partners who work closely with aging populations, the Task Force ensures that a comprehensive and collaborative approach was used to develop the action plan. This approach recognizes the importance of input from various stakeholders and sectors of society to address the diverse needs of aging and older adults.

The use of tools such as the Age-Friendly PVD survey and community listening sessions enhances community engagement and allows for the identification of specific areas that require improvement. Together these instruments provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of older adults living in the community. This approach informed the action plan and helps to develop specific and targeted strategies.

Overall, the involvement of older adults in the action planning process not only ensured that their voices are heard, but also promoted a sense of ownership of the plan and empowerment for the residents it is meant to impact. This in turn, allows for a more inclusive and responsive environment that will enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Age-Friendly PVD Task Force is to thoughtfully and significantly improve the quality of life and well-being of older adults, so they can age with grace and dignity.

OUR VISION

We envision a city where community and municipal leaders work together to create a space where older adults feel safe, valued, and respected.

WHAT WE VALUE

1. We value giving older adults the tools to advocate for themselves.
2. We value community supports that allow older adults to age in a place of their choice.
3. We value the inclusion of older residents in all aspects of the community.
4. We value independence, autonomy, dignity and respect for older residents of Providence.

Livable Communities and the Domains of Livability

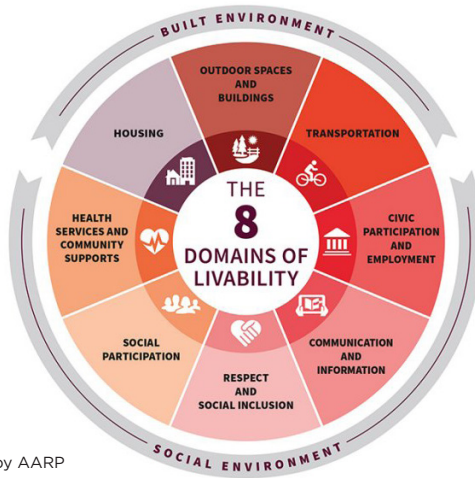


Image by AARP

The age-friendly paradigm, championed by organizations like AARP, offers a holistic approach to city planning that benefits people of all ages. Recognizing municipalities as members of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities provides a framework for continuous assessment and improvement, enabling leaders to address the needs of an aging population while enhancing the overall livability of cities.

At the core of this framework are the **DOMAINS OF LIVABILITY**, which encompass eight main categories of age-friendly features. Together, the domains provide standards for assessment that can guide municipalities and help identify areas for improvement.

What are the domains of livability:

- **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings:** Accessible parks, sidewalks, and public buildings that promote physical activity and social interaction.
- **Transportation:** Safe and convenient transportation options, including public transit, sidewalks, bike infrastructure and services for those with mobility challenges.
- **Housing:** Affordable, accessible, and diverse housing options that meet the needs of residents across the lifespan.
- **Social Participation:** Opportunities for residents to engage in social activities, community events and civic participation.
- **Respect and Social Inclusion:** Cultivating an inclusive and welcoming community that respects diversity and promotes social cohesion.
- **Civic Participation and Employment:** Access to employment opportunities, volunteerism and engagement in community decision-making processes.
- **Communication and Information:** Accessible information and communication channels that keep residents informed about community resources, services and events.
- **Community and Health Services:** Access to healthcare services, long-term care, social services, and community programs that support health and well-being.

By focusing on the domains, communities can systematically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, which then informs the process and creates action plans that are tailored to the specific needs of the particular community. This organizing structure empowers leaders and stakeholders to prioritize initiatives that enhance livability for residents of all ages and fosters inclusive and thriving environments.

The Domains of Livability recognize the interconnected nature of community features. The interrelationships of the domains mean that improvements in one area will often positively impact other areas. For example, enhancing transportation options will directly impact social participation and access to health services and community supports.

In essence, these domains provide a comprehensive framework for city planning that promotes age-friendly communities while simultaneously improving overall livability for all residents. By leveraging the framework, municipal leaders can effectively address the evolving needs of the community and create communities that are great for residents of all ages.

In reaction to the many weather-related crises in recent history, and in light of the lessons learned from the pandemic, AARP has integrated Disaster Resilience into the framework of the domains. This underscores the evolving nature of community planning. Recognizing the importance of preparedness has prompted municipal and community leaders to assess their community's ability to withstand and recover from disasters.

By including Disaster Resilience into the Domains of Livability, AARP gives communities a means to holistically plan for disaster survival and recovery. It reflects a proactive approach to addressing not just the physical infrastructure, but also the social support networks, access to essential services and the importance of collaboration among stakeholders including government agencies, community organizations, businesses, and residents in building resilient communities.

DOMAIN: HOUSING

Housing is important for people of all ages but for aging and older adults, finding housing that is affordable and safe is paramount. In many communities, especially post-pandemic, the search for housing is difficult. Additionally, the home modifications that may be necessary to remain in their own homes can be expensive, especially for people who are adjusting to a fixed income. An age-friendly community is one with zoning allowances and home services that support older adults remaining in their own home. In fact, in Providence, according to the survey³, the majority of older adults wish to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

GOAL: To ensure equitable, affordable, and safe options for housing are available for all older adults and to amplify aging and older adult needs wherever housing policies are being formulated.

Objectives:

1. Identify important work groups, task forces and initiatives where housing choice is being discussed and housing policies are being formulated and ensure there is adequate representation for aging and older adults.
2. Identify programs and funding streams that can assist with necessary home modifications and make the information available to older adults on our website and in our resources guide.
3. To provide ongoing advocacy for housing policies that support safe, equitable, and affordable housing options for aging and older adults.

DOMAIN: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation systems that are safe, and accessible are integral to an age-friendly community. Options should include walking, riding a bike, public transportation such as buses, driving a car and ridesharing. In an age-friendly community sidewalks and streets should be safe, and older drivers need clear lane markings, lighting and signage. In an age-friendly community, older adults are encouraged to use transit systems and there are opportunities for older adults to be educated and become familiar and comfortable with transit use.

According to the survey, while most respondents still own and drive a car, a significant portion walk, are driven by someone else or they use public transportation. In addition, while ratings for the transit system were mostly good, special transportation services for people with disabilities and older adults were not. In community listening sessions, many older adults also were not satisfied with bus stop locations, or that transportation that is adequate, timely, and safe.

GOAL: To ensure accessibility of public transportation for all residents, especially those with mobility issues. To enhance the safety of older adults who are accessing public transit or pedestrian walkways.

Objectives:

1. To provide ongoing outreach and training workshops that assist older adults with securing bus passes, educate them on public transportation options, and helps them become comfortable with utilizing public transit.
2. To provide training workshops to raise awareness of transportation options.
3. To advocate for representation of older adult needs on the Green and Complete Streets advisory council.
4. To develop in collaboration with partners at the local, state and national level, a safety campaign to increase the awareness of drivers and pedestrians to reduce the risk of accidents.
5. To promote the adoption of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure that includes older adults in the design and makes walking safer for older adults using walk audits to identify issues in each neighborhood.
6. To encourage older drivers to take safe driving courses.
7. To collaborate with other non-profit organizations and agencies to maximize transportation options for older adults, especially group outings.
8. To utilize the Age-Friendly Task Force to engage older adults in the resolution of transportation issues.

DOMAIN: BUILDINGS AND OUTDOOR SPACES

An age-friendly community will have places for people of all ages to gather and buildings that are comfortable and accessible to all. It will include seating and shade for older adults and those with mobility and other issues. In Providence, there are 122 parks and green spaces. The Parks Department has been diligently working to ensure that all residents have access to these spaces. However, survey respondents regularly rated outdoor spaces and buildings as “fair or poor” due to lack of accessible bathroom facilities and having enough benches/seating in public areas. Given the age of the facilities, it is recommended that the City focus on improving accessibility features.

GOAL: To ensure that all outdoor spaces and public buildings are accessible and welcoming for older adults

Objectives:

Universal Design is a concept where products and environments are designed to be usable by all people, without needing adaptations or specialized design.

1. To develop an Age-friendly business/building designation to identify businesses and buildings where bathrooms are accessible and there are areas to rest in partnership with ongoing efforts from local and state organizations. To ensure that all park revitalization efforts include age-friendly components and design.
2. To promote the use of the Universal Design Guidelines⁴ in new building designs.
3. To connect older adult residents to the organizations like Southside Community Land Trust, and similar partners, for access to sustainable gardens and fresh produce, opportunities for community engagement, and involvement

DOMAIN: HEALTH SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

It is inevitable that at some point in our lives, everyone will need some kind of assistance or support. Older and aging adults especially have a need due to health and physical decline over time. An Age-Friendly community provides a variety of services that offer assistance and care that helps older adults age-in-place, with dignity and respect. Although Providence has a number of such programs, according to the survey and to feedback from the community listening sessions they are a well-kept secret. In fact, around 30% of respondents said they were “not sure” about home repair resources, seasonal maintenance services, and neighborhood watch associations.

GOAL: To enhance the visibility of programs and services that provide support to older adults and initiate planning for programs to meet unserved needs.

Objectives:

1. To publish the Senior Resource Guide, highlighting up-to-date information on programs and services available to assist older adults with various needs.
2. To develop a program with a local, state or national partner to assist older adults with basic maintenance and/or chores so they can remain in their homes.
3. To host one social event each year that brings together community providers and older adults in a low-pressure environment.

DOMAIN: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

The ways in which information is shared are as crucial to residents as the messages. Age-friendly communities recognize that it is important to communicate in a variety of languages, using an assortment of media, and with the necessary supports for those with impaired vision and hearing. In addition, age-friendly communities recognize that many older adults are not technologically advanced, may not have internet access and may not own a smart phone. In fact, over 50% of survey respondents said they get most of their community information from family and friends, while more than 60% felt there was a lack of information available in different languages and to those who were homebound or have difficulty leaving their homes. Also, over 50% cited the lack of one central source for information as problematic.

GOAL: To develop one clear all-encompassing access point of information for older adults; To ensure information is communicated in a variety of ways, in many languages and with supports for hearing and sight impaired residents.

Objectives:

1. To review and redesign the Providence Senior Services website to make it more user-friendly, by improving font size and text to make it easier to read, make it more accessible in many languages, and add supports for hearing and sight impaired individuals.
2. To explore other media platforms to utilize in disseminating information to all residents.
3. To provide technology education and assistance to older adults to support them to use modern technology in their daily lives.



DOMAIN: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Everyone wants to feel valued, respected and included. Often, ageism can undermine older adults' ability to feel a part of their own community. Reframing the common perceptions and misconceptions around aging becomes vital to helping older residents feel like an integral part of the community. Socialization can also positively impact older adults' relationship to the community by allowing for familiarity with other parts, where such familiarity generates feelings of belonging.

GOAL: To reframe the community's perception of aging to challenge ageism, focus on abilities, and highlight the positive experience of aging.

Objective:

1. To utilize reframing science to create a media campaign to change the messaging about aging, change the way we talk about aging and advocate for the use of language as a tool to reframe how the community views aging. This would be done in collaboration with local, state and national partners.

DOMAIN: CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND WORK

After a lifetime of work, many older adults look forward to retirement. However, many more would like to utilize their skills and experiences in their community, many need to work past "retirement age" in order to support themselves, and some older adults choose to volunteer in order to keep busy. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, Americans over 75 are the fastest-growing age group in the workforce, more than quadrupling in size since 1964. An age-friendly community is one that ensures that older adults have opportunities to continue working or to volunteer in their community, and that they are aware of those opportunities. For Age-Friendly Survey respondents in Providence, at least half were not aware of opportunities to continue to work in the community and at least 30% were not aware of volunteer opportunities.

GOAL: To increase awareness of opportunities to work or volunteer in the communities.

Objectives:

1. To identify and highlight the various opportunities to work and/or volunteer in the community on the Senior Services website, and within the Senior Resource Guide.
2. To connect agencies and organizations that assist older adults to secure work and/or volunteer opportunities with older adults who are searching for these resources.

DOMAIN: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Social participation is the ways in which individuals interact with society. Loneliness and isolation can be debilitating regardless of age. However, for many older adults, finding safe, affordable and fun activities to participate in can be hard. Age-friendly communities ensure that older residents have opportunities that include inter-generational programming and connect them to the wider community.

GOAL: To provide ample opportunities for older adults to connect with others in the community through safe, fun and affordable activities.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore opportunities to develop intergenerational programs.
2. To provide chances for older adults to participate in fun, social activities.

DOMAIN: DISASTER RESILIENCE

In light of the pandemic and the many natural disasters in recent history, this “quasi-domain” has been added into the Livable Communities framework as a ninth area of concern. Disaster resilience measures a community’s ability to withstand and recover from disasters, and it is imperative that communities consider the many factors and specific needs of the aging and older adult populations when engaging in disaster preparation planning. In Providence, there is a great need for resilience programs that are inclusive of the whole diverse community. For example, although the City has a modest population of 180,000 residents, during the workday that number increases to over 500,000 people⁵. Also, although 11%⁶ of the City’s population are older adults, 36% of these seniors live alone.⁷

Taking into consideration factors such as the need for additional assistance and resources due to limited mobility, medical requirements, and cognitive impairment makes this domain especially pertinent to Providence’s disaster preparedness. Other factors to consider include social isolation, challenging communication, and unique needs which will impact that population’s safety and well-being. Age-friendly communities must prioritize these needs when planning for resilience and recovery, in order to better protect aging and older adults during a disaster.

GOAL: To ensure that aging and older adults are prepared to withstand disasters by empowering them to take proactive measures to protect themselves and encouraging communities to include the specific needs of aging and older adults in disaster resilience plans.

Objectives:

1. To assist community emergency planners to prioritize the specific needs of aging and older adults when developing community resilience plans.
2. To conduct emergency preparedness workshops for aging and older adults.
3. To distribute emergency kits specifically created for aging and older adults.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The Age-Friendly Task Force, which was convened to assist the City with developing an action plan will be integral in the implementation and evaluation phase of the plan. The Task Force will continue to meet and function as an advisory group for the City and, in conjunction with Senior Services will lead and oversee the implementation of the plan. Additionally, this group will be tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of the plan, and reporting back to the Administration and AARP, the successes of and challenges to the plan. It will be incumbent upon this group to identify implementation priorities, develop strategies to implement the plan and engage stakeholders to assist with spreading awareness and implementation of the plan. Specific recommendations include:

1. Distribute the plan widely to City leaders, department directors, Council members, civic, social and faith organizations; to solicit their input and build awareness on the role they can play in the implementation efforts.
2. Prepare and submit comprehensive reports to AARP, municipal leaders, and the community at-large on the successes and challenges faced when implementing the plan.
3. Ensuring that strategies and deliverables meet the timeline outlined in the plan.
4. Ensuring that aging and older adult voices and perspectives direct and inform evaluation of the plan.

THE PLAN/S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

The following chart is an abstract of the domain objectives showing the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound actions that are planned in order to meet the objectives outlined and the goals aspired to within this action plan. It also assigns responsibilities to specific departments and agencies expected to achieve these actions.

Domain	Action	Responsible Person (s)	Date by
Transportation	Provide at least 6 trainings on RIPTA services per year	Senior Services /RIPTA	2025
	Develop a pedestrian-driver safety campaign	Age-Friendly PVD Task Force/ Vision Zero Advisory Board	2025
	Sign-up 50 drivers for Safe driving courses	Age-Friendly PVD Task Force	50/year for 3 years
	Assemble a Transportation Advisory Group	Senior Services /Mayor's Office	2024
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Develop an age-friendly business/ building designation program	Age-Friendly PVD Task Force	2026
	Audit and evaluate outdoor public spaces for age-friendly features and walkability	Senior Services with Great Streets coalition, City department representatives from Parks and Public Property	2026
	Work with the Southside Community Land Trust to connect older adults to opportunities for sustainable community gardening	Senior Services/Southside Community Land Trust	2024
Health Services & Community Supports	Publish the Senior Resource Guide	Senior Services/ the Communications Department	Every 4 years starting in 2024.

Domain	Action	Responsible Person (s)	Date by
Respect & Social Inclusion	Develop and implement a media campaign to reframe public perceptions on aging	Age-Friendly RI/ Age-Friendly PVD Task Force	2026
Disaster Preparedness	Host 5 workshops on preparing for disasters with one being dedicated to Resident Services Coordination	Senior Services/PEMA & AARP	5 per year for 3 years
	Disseminate 50 disaster preparedness kits every year to older adults	Senior Services/Providence Emergency Management Agency & AARP	50 per year
Domain	Action	Responsible Person (s)	Date by
	Develop and implement a volunteer assistance program for basic seasonal home maintenance	Senior Services/representatives from the Recreation Department & the Department of Public Works/External Organizations	2025
	Plan an annual event that provides opportunities for engagement with key community providers	Age-Friendly PVD Task Force	2025
Communication & Information	Redesign Senior Services website in accordance with recommendations	Senior Services/IT	2025
	Create volunteer position(s) to provide technology assistance office hours at gathering places for older adults	Senior Services /IT/ External Organizations	2025
	Develop and implement technology education program	Senior Services	2025
Social Participation	Host 4 coffee hours a year to bring together emergency personnel and older adults at various older adult gathering places	Senior Services / Age-Friendly PVD Task Force/PEMA	4 per year for 3 years

ENDNOTES

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4. Section508.gov, Government Services Administration, Universal Design and Accessibility, <https://www.section508.gov/develop/universal-design/>
5. Providence, RI | Data USA. (n.d.). Data USA. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/providence-ri/#:~:text=Poverty%20%26%20Diversity&text=21.3%25%20of%20the%20population%20for,the%20national%20average%20of%2012.5%25.>
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Glossary of Age-Friendly Terms According to the World health Organization (WHO) and AARP

Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC): Cities and communities that are adapting their structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

Age-Friendly Health Systems: Health systems that are designed to meet the needs of older adults, ensuring their care is safe, effective, and tailored to their preferences.

Ageism: Discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice against people based on their age.

Community Engagement: The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.

Health Promotion: The process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. For older adults, this includes activities and interventions that support active aging.

Inclusive Design: Designing products, services, and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Lifelong Learning: The ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional development, particularly important in maintaining cognitive health and social engagement in older adults.

Public Spaces: Areas such as parks, sidewalks, and community centers that are open and accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Age-friendly public spaces are safe, clean, and provide opportunities for social interaction and physical activity.

Resilience: The ability of older adults to cope with, adapt to, and recover from stress, challenges, and adverse situations.

Social Inclusion: Ensuring that all individuals have opportunities to participate fully in social, economic, and cultural life, with particular attention to the needs and contributions of older adults.

Social Isolation: A lack of social connections or interactions, which can negatively impact the mental and physical health of older adults.

Universal Design: The design of buildings, products, or environments to make them accessible to all people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is an Age-Friendly Action Plan?

An Age-Friendly Action Plan is a strategic framework designed to make communities more inclusive, accessible and supportive for older adults. It focuses on improving various aspects of community life, such as housing, transportation, social participation, health services and civic engagement, to enhance the quality of life for seniors.

2. Why is an Age-Friendly Action Plan important?

As populations age, it becomes crucial to ensure that communities can support the needs of older adults. An Age-Friendly Action Plan helps address the unique challenges faced by seniors, promoting their independence, well-being, and active participation in society.

3. Who is involved in developing an Age-Friendly Action Plan?

Developing an Age-Friendly Action Plan typically involves collaboration between local governments, community organizations, healthcare providers, businesses, and residents, including older adults. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders ensures that the plan is comprehensive and addresses diverse needs.

4. How is the success of an Age-Friendly Action Plan measured?

Success can be measured through various indicators such as increased accessibility, improved health outcomes, higher rates of social participation among seniors, and positive feedback from older adults. Regular evaluations and updates to the plan ensure that it remains effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

5. What are some challenges in creating and implementing an Age-Friendly Action Plan?

Challenges may include limited funding, resistance to change, lack of awareness, and coordinating among diverse stakeholders. Overcoming these challenges requires strong leadership, community engagement, and continuous advocacy.

