



Age-Friendly Howard County, an initiative started in December 2019, seeks to bring the county in line with hundreds of other communities worldwide who are working to make where they live more livable for everyone. An age-friendly community respects everyone no matter a person's age or stage of life. It is a place that is safe, with usable outdoor spaces, opportunities for work and play, vital human services, accessible ways to get around, and effective ways to disseminate information to residents. An age-friendly community works to ensure that residents have access to health care and social services provided in a respectful manner; employment and volunteer options; adequate sidewalks, bike paths and public transportation; and opportunities to gather, socialize, exercise, and enjoy intergenerational activities. The Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan is nearing completion and an important part of that plan is the action steps that will guide the county through the next 3+ years.

Below is the list of Action Steps developed by eight separate groups of community volunteers, leaders, advocates, professionals and County government staff, totaling more than 120 individuals who met over the course of 16 months. These committed work groups researched and reviewed information and survey results to determine overarching needs in the community related to the eight domains of livability, established by the World Health Organization, to develop an age-friendly community. The domains are Communication and Information; Health and Community Services; Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Respect and Social Inclusion; Housing; Social Participation; Transportation; and Work and Civic Engagement.

Following community input, the action steps will be finalized and incorporated into Howard County's Age-Friendly Action Plan 2021-2024. Implementation of the plan will begin in Fall, 2021. Participation of individuals and groups from across the county will ensure the ongoing success of the plan. To be involved in implementation check the Age-Friendly website: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly

Again, comments should be directed to agefriendly@howardcountymd.gov or to Terri Hansen, Age-Friendly Manager, 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD 21046 by 10pm July 23rd.

Communication and Information

CI 1 Enhance the County website to make it more user friendly, and increase the public's access to available resources

CI 1a: Make Howard County website more user friendly.

- Include icons to direct links for resources within the website
- Include answers to technology specific questions on the County website. FAQs written and presented verbally (with videos, PowerPoints, etc.).

CI 2 Develop guidelines, media kits and communication campaigns to promote positive perceptions of older adults and to increase communication of available resources

CI 2a: Create and implement age-friendly and ADA-accessible print, email and website guidelines for county agencies, businesses, community organizations, faith organizations, the Age-Friendly Howard County website and related listservs.

CI 2b: Develop Age-Friendly social and print media guidelines that define and address ageism in Howard County for government and quasi-government agencies, non-profits, businesses, and faith communities and reflects an unbiased view of aging. The guidelines will also provide alternatives to ageist language.

CI 2c: Create and promote an anti-ageist communication campaign for the Howard County Public Information Office and share with county departments and community partners. This will help the county's outreach to be mindful and purposeful, while creating discourse in the community about the effects of ageism and encourage residents to reframe their concepts of aging.

CI 2d: Develop and continuously update an Age-Friendly information/media kit to include free graphics, print ads, sample social media posts, PSAs and substantive, topical articles. Post the media kit on the Age-Friendly website and publicize its availability to County departments and public information officers (PIOs), media outlets, community partners and other communication professionals to utilize in their print and online formats. Also pursue partnerships with existing media already reaching target audience and non-English speaking and diverse populations.

CI 3 Improve dissemination of information through direct outreach, both electronic and phone

CI 3a: Expand - via an opt-in process – and utilize the Age-Friendly Constant Contact list

to disseminate information via email on a regular basis about age-friendly events, initiative updates, etc. and provide links and publicize through social media and partner agencies.

CI 3b: Utilize phone communications (e.g. phone trees and mass calls or texting) to contact individuals who want to receive information about age-friendly events, initiative updates, but may lack Internet access.

CI 3c: Increase and encourage the use of existing free or low-cost digital media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and podcasts to create easy access to timely and relevant information about programs and services. These platforms do not require an Internet subscription, only cellular service.

CI 4 Increase coordination among programs to ensure consistency of messaging and information sharing

CI 4a Coordinate program plans and communication efforts to reduce duplication among stakeholders with an emphasis on providers of Age-Friendly programs. Increase message consistency and highlight how programs complement and/or build on each other. Emphasize information sharing among providers and create easier ways for providers to share information with their clients. This includes providing information in multiple languages and tools to allow providers to customize the communication.

CI 4b Create and utilize coordinated communication channels (online communication boards and/or regular roundtable discussions) among communications professionals from county government agencies, community groups, non-profit and for-profit businesses, to share Age-Friendly information and coordinate clear and consistent messaging to end-users in the community.

CI 5 Publicize and support a newly created Age-Friendly Ambassador program

CI 5a Publicize and support the newly-created Ambassador outreach liaison program (as recommended/developed by other workgroups) and create a training component to educate ambassadors and residents about Age-Friendly programs and services in the County (digital or in-person). The Ambassador outreach creates a two-way dialogue between organizations/community groups and residents.

CI 6 Expand and publicize the availability of free Internet access in identified areas of need

CI 6a: Advocate to expand free access to the Internet in places such as subsidized and moderate-income housing, and other complexes serving older adults and persons with disabilities. This also includes publicizing that government buildings offer free Internet access.

CI 7 Develop programs to provide technology devices (new or donated), access to information for those without Internet, and technology education and training

CI 7a: Enhance and publicize technology education and training programs that use virtual and in-person methods to improve technology skills among older adults, adults with disabilities, non-English speaking, and culturally diverse older adults. Employ intergenerational practices, partnerships, and internships with local schools, colleges, cultural, and religious organizations.

CI 7b: Form a committee to create a system capable of redistributing technology devices that are donated, reused, and/or refurbished throughout the county. These devices should be free or discounted to low-income older adults and persons with disabilities.

CI 7c: Improve outreach to all older adults regarding technology training opportunities throughout the County. Create and distribute printed technology resources lists for older adults via publications, refrigerator magnets and door hangers. Alert adults of resources to assist with day-to-day routines by using virtual assistant technology. For example, individuals may:

- Learn to use technology to set up appointments on calendar
- Set reminders for medications
- Secure household with technology
- Make a grocery list
- Use notes feature to make lists

CI 7d: Enhance usage of technology

- Provide devices and Internet access to those without
- Provide instruction to increase usage
- Create a coalition of organizations that are already doing these kinds of programs to share ideas and reduce duplication

CI 8: Identify funding to increase communication modalities using input from credible messengers.

Health and Community Resources

HC 1 Expand access to information, a website where residents can directly search for all services and programs in the County, including more information on housing options

HC 1a: Upgrade Howard County Office on Aging and Independence's website and Resource Guide (online and hardcopy versions) for easier search capabilities for Howard

County residents doing their own research. The Resource Guide must include all non-profits in the county and their services. The hard copy Resource Guide must add a matrix of organizations and services. The online Guide's search function must display the services matrix as the first result when searching for a term that is a service in the matrix.

HC 1b: OAI must create a lookup table of OAI standard terms and definitions with common synonyms or phrases the public often uses. This lookup will be available on the OAI website.

HC 1c: Maryland Access Point's (MAP) searchable database must be modified/updated to include all the county non-profits and their services.

HC 1d: Increase information and services available to residents and their families about nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Howard County, including whom to contact with complaints.

HC 1e: Explore viability of collaboration with existing organizations in providing a one-stop, web-based listing of age-friendly activities (e.g. utilize Age Friendly, Visit Howard County, ACS, COGS website or another platform) or create a new one.

HC 2 Develop mechanism to ensure accountability and promote collaboration between service providers

HC 2a: Create a coordinating council made up of county agencies, nonprofit and voluntary organizations, overseen by an authority to maintain accountability and engagement of participants, establishing coordination processes, formalized workplans, MOU's and evaluation

HC 3 Analyze the range of services available in the County, including gap analysis (need vs. availability)

HC 3a: Analyze the resources catalogued for consumers, the full range of prevention, treatment and palliative services currently available for target audience impact and their current capacity and limits, including geographic reach, language, disability. Expand upon, or scale up, existing services as appropriate to meet the needs in identified gaps.

HC 3b: Foster aging in place by having available home health services better known, objectively evaluated, and more affordable.

HC 4 Develop a program of trained individuals to provide health advocacy (e.g., Senior Health Coaches) and informal outreach

HC 4a: Mobilize voluntary, informal outreach to isolated, culturally diverse and differently-abled individuals by providing stipend positions for volunteers from hard-to-reach communities (Program example is Grannies on Benches). Provide training and credentialing for peer outreach workers

HC 4b: Identify community-specific individuals who can serve as Senior Health Coaches to provide advocacy and follow-up with older adults through health care needs.

HC 4c: Navigation: Identify and promote community navigators to assess staff resources to meet demand for enrollment assistance in health and community services; and organize or enhance resources to meet demand.

HC 4d: Offer county health department and/or community-based “navigator” services to persons discharged from Howard Co. General Hospital for 3 months after discharge.

HC 5 Expand home and community-based services (e.g., chronic disease self-management, caregiver supports)

HC 5a: Improve diabetes management in older adults, especially via efforts targeted at minority groups.

HC 5b: Develop a “hotline,” including some evening and weekend hours, and website to provide Howard County-specific answers and support for family caregivers.

HC 6 Investigate and promote innovative models of affordable respite care

HC 6a: Develop innovative models of affordable respite care inside and outside the home, in addition to affordable, multi-level programs to meet the individual needs for in-home personal care.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

OSB 1 Improve existing practices in outdoor spaces and buildings, including universal design, outdoor exercise equipment, enhanced security, and improved walkability

OSB 1a: Ensure universal design concepts are used for existing and future buildings and parks

OSB 1b: Develop criteria necessary to obtain an Age-Friendly Certification for outdoor spaces (parks, trails, etc.) and buildings.

OSB 1c: Initiate, develop, install and evaluate a pilot project of outdoor exercise equipment designed to help older adults stay mobile, healthy and physically active in their community.

OSB 1d: Develop increased outreach strategies with local law enforcement to maintain and enhance the safety and security measures at local parks, recreational facilities, and other open spaces and buildings located throughout Howard County (to include, but not limited to, increased police presence, structural improvements, etc.).

OSB 1e: Increase the walkability in County parks and access to outdoor spaces and buildings.

OSB 2 Increase knowledge and awareness of public about outdoor spaces in the County

OSB 2a: Enhance the existing Age-Friendly Howard County webpage to include assessments and certifications of usable parks, trails, buildings and links to agencies, organizations and entities who oversee parks, trails and buildings.

OSB 2b: Develop and publicize an awareness campaign to promote the County's Age-Friendly outdoor spaces and buildings.

OSB 2c: Establish an Age-Friendly Ambassador program to focus on Outdoor Spaces and Building projects, audits, and community outreach.

OSB 3 Promote donation programs for less well-known parks

OSB 3a: Promote donation programs (e.g. 'donate a bench', 'water fountain') for less well-known *parks*.

Respect and Social Inclusion

RSI 1 Expand, and promote, intergenerational activities

RSI 1a: Provide age-friendly inter-generational opportunities for interaction with others through exercise programs, volunteering, and social events to bridge generations, dispel ageist myths and pre-conceptions while addressing loneliness and isolation.

RSI 1b: Expand partnerships (including public-private partnerships) to increase targeted and inclusive inter-generational activities, and to help mobilize additional resources for strengthening intergenerational programs. Implement a mobilization and marketing strategy to attract and prepare volunteers and stakeholders to engage in inter-generational activities.

RSI 1c: Conduct training for volunteers and host organizations to build their technical capacity to expand and improve purposeful inter-generational engagement activities. Activities would include the following:

RSI 1d: Expand awareness of and contributions to Age-Friendly Initiative in Howard County Public Schools (Elementary, Middle and High Schools)

RSI 2 Analyze and document the impact and value of intergenerational activities on all residents

RSI 2a: Document impact of intergenerational programs on all generations conducted through

Housing

H 1 Enhance the capacity for individuals to remain safe and independent in the community through universal design in construction

H 2 Enhance planning for older adults (e.g., Comprehensive Housing Plan, include needs of older adults in general plan)

H 2a: Create an Older Adult Housing Plan that includes:

- An analysis of current and planned future housing for older adults
- An analysis of health requirements in housing for older adults
- Coordination with and taking advantage of planning by the Health Department and Howard County General Hospital
- Identification of options to increase older adult housing based on identified gaps

H 2b: Implement a specific older adult housing analysis in the HoCo by Design project that includes:

- The findings from the Older Adult Housing Plan in HWAiC001
- An analysis of current and planned future housing
- Coordination with and taking advantage of planning by the Health Department and Howard County General Hospital
- The recommendations from the Age Friendly Housing Workgroup

H 3 Expand access to information about housing options and choices, including nursing homes and assisted living facilities

H3a: Create an older adult housing coordination, education, and information program that has the following elements:

- Expands available training to public about housing choices to create consistent and widespread information throughout the county
- Creates an expanded assessment and referral program supporting Senior choices of facilities
- Creates an information hub with enhanced web site and access to scope of services and quality ratings
- Develops a community peer sharing program supporting senior selection of facilities

H 4 Create advisory body to oversee housing related issues, including on-going improvements and gaps and resources for providers of congregate housing

H4a: Develops provider coordination and cooperation programs which allows practitioners to identify gaps, improve practices, and provide support around gap areas. A model is the Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC).

H 4b: Creation of coordination and sharing program between aging in place program stakeholders. Create program similar to LHIC (local health improvement coalition-county wide private/public program)

H 5 Expand support for communities that want to develop “village models”

H5a: Develop a program to support villages and to encourage the establishment of additional villages, particularly in neighborhoods that are not well connected to services. Potential model is “village model” (as established in Boston, 2001).

H 6 Modify covenants and zoning regulations to enhance and facilitate Aging in Place

H 6a: Permit compatible age-restricted housing of a similar density to the underlying multifamily zone: examples, CAC & TOD.

H 6b: Require age-restricted housing be near amenities like shopping and with good traffic control and signage.

H 6c: Make New Town requirements consistent with zones outside, as with group homes for up to 16; provide for conditional uses in New Town.

H 6d: Review covenants that prevent age-friendly housing and ban such covenants.

H 6e: Review consistency in requirements for Moderate Income Housing Units (MIHU) in all zoning categories that allow attached dwellings or multi-family dwellings.

H 6f: Allow nursing homes and assisted living facilities in (institutional) overlay and New Town zones

H 6g: Support in-law suites/Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by

- Creating a by-right regulatory approval of in-law suites and ADUs
- Creating a Howard County ADU facilitation program similar to Montgomery County, MD, and other counties around the country may be used as examples.

H 6h: Emphasize and reinforce commitment to maintaining established communities' character.

H 7 Advocate for changes in state funding formulas as it relates to construction and funding of subsidized housing

H7a: Recruit Howard County's state legislators to have the state change funding formulas for subsidized older adult apartment housing to enable more projects.

H 8 Establish and maintain consistent guidance about housing and zoning requirements within and across County departments

H 9 Expand financial supports in the form of tax credits and rent subsidies to older adults

H 9a: Expand housing related financial flexibility by

- Promoting government programs and validated home equity and reverse mortgage information sources.
- Expanding Older Adult tax credits. Improve access to information, streamline application procedures, review eligibility criteria, and improve participation in these programs.
- Develop and fund specific programs for low income Older Adult renters in the form of rental assistance or grants.

H 10 Expand, and promote, existing services within OAI to facilitate Aging in Place (AIP)

H 10a: Promote Aging in Place/Same Home Programs to include:

- Expansion of current Office on Aging and Independence webpage to a hub model including community-wide resources on aging in place/aging in community
- An increase in promotion and use of existing aging-in-place services

H 10b: Improve access to home safety assessment for older adults.

- Expansion of Office on Aging and Independence home visit occupational therapy assessment services to the broader community
- Expansion of training and assistance around fall prevention and home modification
- An increase in promotion and use of existing aging-in-place services

H 11 Develop program that offers advice to homeowners on how to make modifications to facilitate Aging in Place (AIP)

H11a: Reduce barriers to home modification to include:

- Development of a home modification advisory program providing coordination between assessment, construction, counseling & education.
- Maintain an inventory of vetted home construction vendors
- Promote self-help training options on home modification assessments and available tools
- Streamline process for Livable Homes Tax Credit

H 12 Develop consistent permitting requirements across all jurisdictions within the County, that remove barriers to home modifications that facilitate Aging in Place (AIP)

H 12a: Reduce regulatory barriers preventing widespread home modifications specifically designed for aging in place by

- Developing coordinated and consistent policies impacting both the inside and the outside of the house
- Creating consistent policies across Howard County government, Columbia Association and Home Ownership Associations that supports home modifications that support aging in place and promote safe home modifications (e.g. ramps, no-step entrances, both inside and outside the house.
- Creating by-right regulatory approval of home modifications to promote safe aging in place in spaces such as, but not limited to, Level 1- basement, sun rooms, and garages. Allow cooking facilities.
- Creating by-right regulatory approval of home modifications. Level 2- home additions and split homes with external access for renters of family.

H 13 Modify regulations to facilitate home sharing (program where unrelated adults can share housing with older adults)

H13a: Support home sharing for both financial viability and to lessen isolation by

- Creating a Howard County government facilitation program and/or allowing existing programs such as Silvernest.
- Modifying regulations to allow older adults to home share without going through commercial licensing procedures through the Dept of Licensing and Inspection.

H 14 Provide financial literacy education to older adults

H 14a: Expanding training and consulting on financial aspects of housing.

Social Participation

SP 1 Develop, and promote, Age-Friendly Ambassador program to promote social participation

SP 1a: Ambassadors will undergo initial screening/vetting, orientation, and must be prepared to provide a commitment to the program that includes but is not limited to ongoing training, identifying and addressing community issues and networking with other ambassadors.

SP 1b: Develop an infrastructure (to include but not be limited to website, social media, telephone) to allow community members to request contact with an ambassador

SP 1c: Make an efficient and easy system for accessing information on community activities and needs available to ambassadors.

SP 1d: Develop evaluation program to measure effectiveness of Age-Friendly Ambassadors' activities.

SP 2 Expand range and types of activities through 50+ Centers, including activities outside of the physical centers

SP 2: Seniors Centers Without Walls.

SP 3 Enhance outreach to community so that people are aware of what is available, as well as learn what the public wants

SP 3a:

- Advocate for a coordinated and resourced integrative marketing program to overcome the negative perceptions of activities held in 50+ Centers.
- Recommend that extra agency marketing resources be committed to support wider dissemination of the breadth of activities available to the community.
- Expand linkages to include businesses and non-profit organizations, for recommendations to implement activities that best reach a broad and inclusive community.

SP 3b: Building Connections:

- Broaden current opportunities for inclusive social connection with special attention paid to underserved communities.
- Engage the Commission on Aging in advocacy and marketing efforts to promote programs and initiatives for inclusive community involvement.

- Consider enlisting the COA for the ongoing task of reporting or recommending needs of the older adult community that could be addressed, specifically at the 50+ centers (for the purpose of this recommendation).

SP 4 Create mechanism to enhance the public's ability to provide input to 50+ Center activities

SP 4: Communication:

Create a structure to foster two-way communication that provides opportunities for users to suggest activities and offer feedback on programming.

Transportation

T 1 Implement Howard County Complete Streets Policy to ensure safer mobility and access to community services

T1: Implement Howard County Complete Streets Policy to ensure safer mobility and access to community services, increase investment in areas with underserved populations, including older adults, and encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.

T1a: Complete Design Manual Updates by fall 2021 and promulgate new Development Regulations in support of new Design Manual elements by summer 2022.

T1b: Implement Transportation Improvement Prioritization (TIPS)

T1c: Implement a more inclusive Community Engagement Process (CEP) to advance age-friendly transportation projects.

T 2 Prioritize and Implement elements of Pedestrian and Bicycle Masterplans

T2: Prioritize and implement elements of pedestrian and bicycle master plans (WalkHoward and BikeHoward) that address either increased walking/bicycling access to schools or increased access by older adults to services

T 2a: Develop a scheduled funding and implementation plan for pedestrian and bicycle master plan improvements

T 2b: Identify high priority transit locations (supermarkets, employment, health care and service centers) where transit ridership on the fixed-routes by older adults and persons with disabilities will increase with improved access.

T 2c: Implement a user-friendly wayfinding system that will make pathways and long-distance pedestrian and bike routes more accessible.

T 2d: Ensure County Capital and Developer projects adhere to recommendations made by Complete Streets Implementation Team through Community Engagement Plan

T 3 Maintain and Expand affordable transit options and/or alternatives to underserved areas/corridors with densities and populations that will benefit from access to transit

T3a: Seek federal, statewide (grants) and/or regional funding solutions (legislation) in order to support implementation of at least 50 percent of the service recommended by the 2018 Transit Development Plan

T3b: Improve older adult and persons with disabilities' access to and understanding of technology to access services virtually (e.g. telemedicine) thereby reducing physical trips.

T3c: Increase RTA ridership to and from public middle and high schools served by the RTA System

T 4 Develop and provide transportation training (e.g., transit scheduling, payment)

T4a: Partner with older adult organizations and communities in order to train and educate transit patrons to utilize new apps for transit scheduling, payment and bus route status.

T 5 Promote driver education and vehicle maintenance support for older adults (e.g., CARFIT)

T 5a: Promote driver education and vehicle maintenance support for older adults to ensure continued safe operation of automobiles and help identify safety concerns using programs such as CARFIT.

T 6 Develop and provide education related to physical and psychology process of transitioning away from driving

T 6a: Promote education to families and Older Adults about the physical and psychological process of transitioning from driving.

T 7 Promote, and fund, alternative transportation options to supplement traditional fixed route transit, paratransit and single occupancy vehicle trips

T 7a: Improve access to mobility service sharing companies (e.g., Lyft or Uber and GoGo Grandparent) to expand usage and explore financial incentives to help fund transportation for older adults and economically disadvantaged populations.

T 7b: Promote Neighbor Ride, as a transportation provider and a volunteer opportunity and increase collaboration with community-based organizations with access to underutilized vehicles.

T 7c: Issue new procurement for supplemental paratransit services contract with taxi and/or ride sharing companies.

T 7d: Ensure that HC Maryland Access Point (Call Center) staff and other information providers (faith communities & other non-profits) are trained and up to date on all of the transportation options available to older adults

T 8 Develop workgroup to explore alternatives to transportation (e.g., good and services delivered directly to people, virtual socialization)

T 8a: Alternative Service Delivery - consider when things can be brought to people rather than transporting people to places for things

T 9 Implement Strategic Roadway Safety Plan for roadway elements to create a safe and well-designed transportation system for older drivers

Work and Civic Engagement

WCE 1 Develop an expanded and centralized (one stop) engagement / volunteer center

WCE 1: Create a centralized engagement/ Volunteer Center

Create “one stop shopping” for all volunteer, engagement, pro-bono, gig activities.

- Provide leadership and cooperation with state, local and national volunteering programs
- Provide leadership on volunteer issues in community planning and budget.

WCE 1a: Continue Columbia Association Volunteer Center-like activities with expanded scope and services

WCE 1b: Expand scope of the previous engagement/volunteer center: Consolidated opportunity register- “one stop shopping”

WCE 1c: Expand scope of previous engagement/volunteer center: Engagement opportunities- community support - person to person volunteering.

WCE 1e: Expanded scope of previous engagement/volunteer center would include:
Engagement opportunities- paid gig work

WCE 1f: Expand scope of previous engagement/volunteer center: Engagement
opportunities- expand or join government sponsored assistance programs

WCE 2 Develop and promote a Time Bank system (i.e., swapping time and skills)

WCE 2a: Create or Reinvent a Time Bank. *Time Banking* is a mode of exchange that lets
people swap time and skill instead of money.

- Expand non-profit staff sharing project. Current projects include: FIRN, Neighbor Ride, Hopeworks. Pilot funded by CARE Act.
- Reinvent or replace Columbia Association Timebank (inactive since March 2020)

WCE 3 Develop a program to provide education on best practices in volunteer management

WCE 3a: Create a training, peer-support structure, volunteer network, “community of
practice” for volunteers and nonprofit managers

- Build capacity of individuals and groups.
- Develop training program
- Provide updates, share resources
- Provide assistance and training / mentoring support for each other
- Sharing network uses collaboration technology and communication tools.

WCE 4 Develop a Howard County Encore Initiative (i.e., gig work with social impact for highly
skilled professionals in retirement)