



Age-Friendly Cleveland 2025 – 2028

ACTION PLAN



CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Justin M. Bibb

AGING



A Living Document

The Age-Friendly Cleveland Report and Action Plan 2.0 is a living document. Portions of this plan may be updated to reflect available resources and the needs and wants of community members. Resources referenced as “existing efforts” are meant to serve as examples of current programs and initiatives from the City of Cleveland and just a few of its many community partners. Mention of specific programs or services from community partners should not be taken as exclusive recommendation or endorsement by the City of Cleveland.

Language Notes

This report uses “senior” and “older adult” to refer to a person 60 years or older. It also uses the phrases “person with a disability” and “disabled” interchangeably to refer to adults in the Disability community ages 18–59.

Creative Content

All photographs included in this document are property of The City of Cleveland unless otherwise stated.

Questions and Comments

If you have a question about this plan, a comment, or correction for Age-Friendly Cleveland staff, please contact us.

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In 2014, the City of Cleveland became Ohio's first Age-Friendly Community, setting the stage for policies and programs that support residents as they age.

Today, more than 35 cities and counties in Ohio—and over 950 communities nationwide—are part of this growing network.

Through an agreement with the World Health Organization and AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities, Cleveland committed to creating safer streets, accessible public spaces, reliable transportation, affordable housing, and supportive health and social services for older adults and people with disabilities.

Now, ten years later, these residents make up more than one-fifth of Cleveland's population. Ensuring access to resources and meaningful participation in community life is not just a priority—it is a necessity. As Cuyahoga and neighboring counties join the Age-Friendly Network, Northeast Ohio is becoming more responsive as a region to the needs of an aging population.

This action plan is a practical tool to connect city strategies with community action, ensuring older residents continue to live with dignity, independence, and opportunity.

The City of Cleveland is deeply grateful to our older residents. Thank you for the foundation you have created and for your continued role in shaping a city where everyone can thrive.



**Justin M. Bibb, Mayor
City of Cleveland**



Mary McNamara, Director, Department of Aging
with Justin Bibb, Mayor, City of Cleveland and Sonya
Pryor-Jones, Chief, Youth and Family Success

“ We can't afford to lose Cleveland's Seniors to warmer places like Florida or Arizona. We can't change the weather, so we have to ask ourselves, what sets Cleveland apart? I think it's the caliber of programs and services offered within our city. Not only will existing services be enhanced by this collaborative plan, and keep our residents happy, but will, I think, entice people looking for a new place to call home to join the tens of thousands of seniors already aging in place here. ”

**Mary McNamara
Director, Department of Aging**

As the Chief for Youth and Family Success, I see the full spectrum of life, from birth through aging, I see every day how interconnected our experiences are across generations. Our city's commitment to being Age-Friendly isn't just about older adults; it's about ensuring that every Clevelander, at every age and ability, can live with dignity, purpose, and support.

Since becoming Ohio's first Age-Friendly city in 2014, Cleveland has led the way in reimagining what it means to grow older in an urban environment. More than 20% of our population is made up of older adults who call our city home, and we know that designing accessible, inclusive systems isn't just the right thing to do; it's essential to our collective well-being.



Justin Bibb, Mayor, City of Cleveland and Sonya Pryor-Jones, Chief, Youth and Family Success

The Age-Friendly Cleveland Action Plan reflects our vision of a city where all people are valued, respected, and can thrive, knowing their community supports them. This vision aligns with our broader work across City Hall to build a Cleveland that truly listens to its people.

Whether it's transportation, housing, health services, or civic engagement, we are committed to working together to meet residents where they are. This plan is not just a guide—it's a commitment to developing and strengthening intergenerational connections to the community. Whether it's a young child in need of safe play space, a caregiver supporting an aging loved one, or a senior seeking connection and mobility, we are building a Cleveland where everyone belongs. I am proud to support this work and to continue building a city that grows not just older—but stronger, together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonya Pryor-Jones".

Sonya Pryor-Jones,
Chief of Youth and Family Success

“Cleveland residents are hardworking people who deserve a community that reflects the effort they put into it. There are far too many seniors who are isolated, left at home with no connections to the wider community, and we can address that. We have work to do to close the digital divide, and increase workforce training for seniors who need it. As Council President, I hear from Clevelanders every day who need to know that their neighborhoods are safe and a place that they can continue to age. It will be great to watch the Age-Friendly Plan progress, and continue to change the landscape for people of all abilities and ages in the City.”

**Blaine Griffin,
City Council President
Councilman, Ward 6**



Council President, Blaine Griffin with 2024 Senior Day Honoree and Thea Bowman Senior Center Director, BJ Brown

“The people of Cleveland are diverse, and have so much to offer each other. We all need to pull together to make sure no one is being left behind in the name of progress. Disability employment and housing are causes close to my heart, and Age-Friendly can help us ensure that our workplaces and public spaces are accessible and welcoming. When we think about the city, and the robust arts community, and parks, and especially city hall—we should be able to picture them full of every type of person — Young, old, able-bodied, people with differences — all of us together. For nearly 25 years, I’ve served as a Councilman, and I’ve seen the great work that’s been done to move this city forward. I’m excited to see what the next phase of Age-Friendly will do for Cleveland.”

**Kevin Conwell,
Councilman, Ward 9
Chair, Health, Human Services and
the Arts Committee**



Councilman, Kevin Conwell with 2023 Senior Day Honoree, Hattie Holifield



What is Age-Friendly Cleveland?

In 2014, the City of Cleveland became a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and later joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Since becoming the first Age-Friendly city in Ohio, over 35 communities have joined across the state, including Cuyahoga County.

Currently, more than 86,000 seniors call Cleveland home. We, like other Age-Friendly communities, have dedicated ourselves to being a livable city for people of all ages. By creating accessible services and infrastructure that promote the health and safety of its citizens, **Age-Friendly Cleveland works to create a city where people of all ages are valued, respected, and can thrive knowing their community supports them.**

MISSION

Age-Friendly Cleveland works to create a city where all people are valued, respected, and can thrive knowing their community supports them.

VISION

A City of Cleveland that is accessible and inclusive for people of all ages and abilities.



Jane Fumich, former Director of Department of Aging with her granddaughter. Under Jane's leadership, Age-Friendly was explored in 2014.

Age-Friendly Cleveland Highlights

Since implementing the first version of the Age-Friendly Action Plan in 2017, Age-Friendly Cleveland has improved the overall quality of life for Cleveland seniors. By setting goals and tracking the progress laid out in the eight domains, Age-Friendly Cleveland has made our neighborhoods an attractive place to successfully and safely age in place.

The following shares some progress and achievements of Age-Friendly Cleveland's efforts for each of the eight Domains listed in the first version of the plan. Starting at the top, and moving left to right, the original eight Domains included: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information, Community Support and Health Services.

Outdoor Spaces
and Buildings



Transportation



Housing



Social Participation



Respect and
Social Inclusion



Civic Participation
and Employment



Communication
and Information



Community Support
and Health Services

Original Age-Friendly Cleveland Domains of Livability logos designed by The Center for Community Solutions

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



- The Trust for Public Land reported that by 2021 a majority of Cleveland residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park or recreation site.¹
- City of Cleveland redeveloped Recreation Centers to become Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers (NRRC) with programming to improve residents' mental and physical health.
- Opened Frederick Douglass NRRC in Ward 1, which provides the area with the highest population of older adults in Cleveland a new center with dedicated senior programming space.

Transportation



- City of Cleveland established a taskforce and subcommittees focused on Older Adults and People with Disabilities to evaluate societal and built environment factors on the occurrence of fatal and serious crashes.
- More than 30 miles of bike lanes were added to City infrastructure.
- City of Cleveland and Bike Cleveland were a 2018 recipient of AARP Community Challenge Grant to provide Age-Friendly bike and share-the-road safety lessons; together they created a program called Silver Spokes.



Housing



- As a result of feedback from residents, the City created a new program to help residents age in place. Age-Friendly Home Investment Program has completed over 415 home repair jobs totaling \$4.2 million for Senior and Disabled Adult occupied homes.
- Passage of City Ordinance 747-2019 by Cleveland City Council required all rental units in the City of Cleveland to be registered and any rental units built before 1978 be inspected for a lead-safe certification.



Social Participation



- IConnect, a program from Neighborhood Centers Association, launched interactive experiences for Older Adults (55+) to combat loneliness and social isolation through digital training and support.
- Summer Senior Walk locations increased across Cleveland neighborhoods.



Respect and Social Inclusion



- Increased Cleveland's Human Rights Campaign score on LGBTQ inclusion from 88 to 100 for 2018 and 2019.
- Coordinated with the city's LGBT Liaison to enhance older and disabled adult services.
- Cleveland Department of Aging hired a Hispanic Liaison to increase outreach to Cleveland's Hispanic population, and now celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month each year by holding an annual Hispanic Senior Day.



Civic Participation and Employment



- Ohio Means Jobs, in partnership with Aging Network Organizations, successfully launched Mature Worker Job Fairs that hosted employers and hundreds of Older Adults looking for gainful employment.
- Mature Workers Task Group convened to create an Employment Resource Guide for jobseekers, 50+.
- Cleveland Department of Aging continued to celebrate older adults who exemplify leadership within their community by honoring them annually at Senior Day.



Communication and Information



- The Department of Aging created a Technology Resource Guide to help seniors and community partners gain access to local resources for their technology needs.
- PCs for People, a national leader in digital inclusion, arrived in Cleveland in 2018, and committed to serving older adults and people from underserved communities through access to technology.
- The Cleveland Public Library launched a mobile hotspot checkout in 2018, available to every Cleveland resident, 18+ with a library card.
- TV20 partnered with the Department of Aging to host Age-Friendly segments, highlighting local organizations and services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities.
- The Aging and Technology Networks convened and maintained a Digital Equity Coalition – Seniors Committee with leadership from the Cleveland Foundation, to address the sizable gap in technology literacy and availability for older adults.



Community Support and Health Services



- Matter of Balance, a fall prevention evidence-based program was presented in Cleveland's NRRCs by Fairhill Partners.
- In December 2020 the Cleveland Division of Fire issued a General Order directing all Division members to make referrals to the Department of Aging when encountering citizens who may require supportive services.
- In the Division of Emergency Medical Service, cadets in training receive education on Aging Network services and referral processes by Department of Aging Staff.
- Department of Aging hired a Utility Liaison to guide citizens through utility-related resources.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic required a collaboration between many City departments, including the Department of Aging. Recognizing the difficulties seniors would have accessing vaccines, City staff brought vaccine clinics into NRRCs.
- Information about available vaccines for COVID-19 was shared with Cleveland Seniors utilizing a mass communication telephone system.

Age-Friendly Cleveland Highlights

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to the Aging and Disability landscape. All over Northeast Ohio, services for older and disabled adults pivoted to disseminate public health information and vaccines to as many community members as possible. Focusing on these life-saving efforts may have delayed the renewal of Cleveland's Age-Friendly Action Plan, but it by no means stopped the city from becoming more Age-Friendly.

As programs and services resumed normal functions in 2022, City officials, neighborhood changemakers, and community leaders implemented many programs and services aimed at creating a more livable, equitable, safe, and accessible Cleveland. Some programs were directly influenced by the first Age-Friendly Plan, while others saw a gap in services or a need in the community and filled it themselves. The following are just a few ways the city has recently moved forward toward an Age-Friendly vision. This nonexhaustive list includes programs from community organizations and the City of Cleveland, and is organized by the eight original Age-Friendly Action Plan Domains of Livability.



Outdoor Spaces, Buildings, and Transportation

Cleveland Moves: In July of 2023, a request for proposals went out from the City of Cleveland to hire a mobility plan consultant. Cleveland Moves, Cleveland's 5-year Multimodal Transportation Plan will guide improvements for pedestrians, bikes, and transit riders. Community outreach for this plan included inviting seniors and people with varying disabilities to provide insight on their mobility experiences throughout the city.

Complete and Green Streets: In June of 2022, Cleveland City Council passed an update to the 2011 Complete & Green Streets ordinance. The program "seeks to incorporate design elements in roadway projects that expand opportunities for travel via modes like walking, biking, and transit and reduce environmental impact within the City of Cleveland."²

Vision Zero: The Cleveland City Planning Commission adopted the Vision Zero Action Plan on September 2, 2022. "The Action Plan includes strategies to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities on our roadways through a clear workplan with prioritized actions that will create a "new normal" for transportation in Cleveland – one that shares responsibility for the elimination of deaths and serious injury on city streets, making it safe for everyone to move through the city whether they are walking, rolling, or in a vehicle."³

The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiative 15-Minute City: Approved in March 2024, the TDM Program works alongside Vision Zero and Form-Based Code. Together, the city based initiatives create safe communities surrounded by essential services that can be reached by a 15-minute walk, bike ride, or transit trip.



Housing

Form Based Code: In July 2024, Cleveland City Planning Commission began using FBC. The goal is an entirely new zoning code that embodies Health, Sustainability and Equity. Also called the LandCode, this project is designed to help protect the integrity of the city's communities while creating safe, walkable, livable neighborhoods. Additionally, Form Based Code will foster diverse housing and transportation options.

Residents First: February 2024 marked the passage of Cleveland's new Residents First legislation. This group of housing laws is, among other things, intended to help renters and the city have more contact with landlords and property agents. All landlords have to designate a local agent that will represent them if they don't live within Cuyahoga or surrounding counties.

A Home for Every Neighbor: February of 2024 saw the launch of A Home for Every Neighbor. This program is designed to provide resources and housing for unsheltered people within the city. As of April 2025, the program has already identified and housed 27 people over the age of 55, and 134 people with a disabling condition experiencing long-term homelessness.

Residential Tax Abatement: Effective January 1, 2024, the Residential Tax Abatement program began granting 100% abatement for Single-Family projects that meet Age-in-Place building criteria. The Developer must submit architectural plans and a completed "Age-In-Place" checklist.



Social Participation, Respect, and Inclusion

Park Updates: 2022 through 2024 saw many City of Cleveland Parks receive updates, openings, and new names. A few examples:

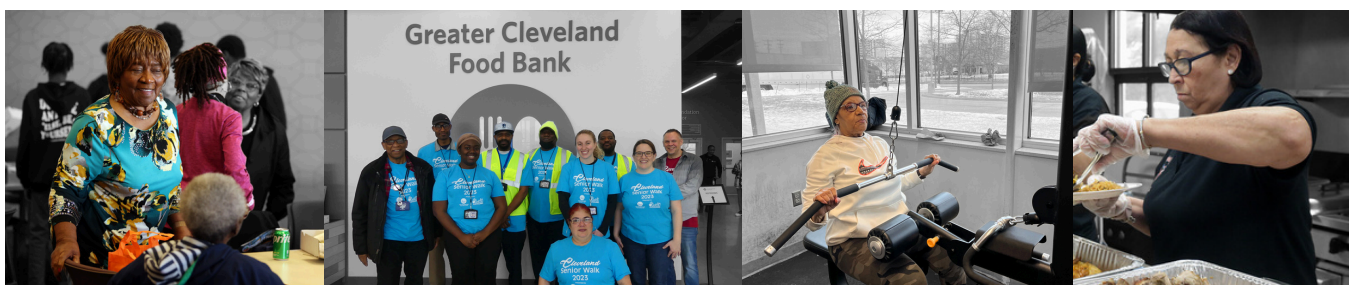
- April 2022 welcomed the opening of **Clark Field's** brand-new park, including age-and-ability-inclusive play equipment, a paved walking loop, pickleball courts, and more. The effort to revitalize the park was led by local senior, Beverly Wurm, as well as Friends of Clark Field and Tremont West Development Corporation.
- **Shirley Chisholm Park** reopened in November 2024 having received its new name as well as brand-new exercise playground equipment that can be used by the community as well as students from Mary M. Bethune School.
- Friends of **Impett Park** worked with Cleveland City Council, City Hall Leadership, and members of the Ward 17 committee to open a new all-abilities playground in the West Park neighborhood in November 2024.

The Hispanic Senior Center: Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland opened a new stand-alone Hispanic Senior Center facility in September 2023.

Trauma-Informed Care Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers:

Program staff provide Trauma-Informed Care in Cleveland's recreation centers and are trained in identifying Toxic Stress, a well known contributor to acquiring a disability later in life, in children and their families. Program staff provide community-based resources and support services. Since 2023, 386 individual seniors have received services.

Greater Cleveland Food Bank's Community Resource Center: In November 2023, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank opened their Community Resource Center. The center hosts more than 15 community organizations that serve a wide range of ages and needs. Senior-only shopping hours are a highlight for many area older adults. Serving tens of thousands of Northeast Ohio citizens, the center has become a one-stop shop for many in the area.



Civic participation and employment:

Greater Cleveland Works: In just the last few years, Ohio Means Jobs, now renamed Greater Cleveland Works, has enrolled more than 6,300 City of Cleveland residents in their programming. 800 of the participants are older adults and people with disabilities. Notable participating employers include:

- AARP
- Amazon
- Case Western Reserve University
- City of Cleveland
- Cleveland Cavaliers
- Cleveland Clinic
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Dynamic Workforce Solutions
- Giant Eagle
- Provide-A-Ride
- Salvation Army
- Shaker Courts Apartments
- University Hospitals

Communication and Information:

Digital C: Digital C is an internet provider deploying affordable connectivity across the city of Cleveland since 2023. All residents are eligible to receive internet service for just \$18 per month, and households with a student in Cleveland's school system can receive internet access for free.

New 311 Non-Emergency Services Website: In September 2024 the City of Cleveland launched its new 311 online complaint tracking system. This system added extra flexibility and reliability to residents receiving city services. Now residents are able to call, or submit an easy to use online form. Those unfamiliar with technology can receive help using the platform at any Cleveland Public Library branch.

Community support and health services:

Livable Cuyahoga: Armed with the knowledge that nearly 30% of Cuyahoga County residents will be over 60 by 2030, Cuyahoga County Senior and Adult Services Division launched Livable Cuyahoga in September 2022. The Roadmap for Livable Cuyahoga, published in March 2024, lays out a plan for creating a community built for all ages to thrive.



Age-Friendly Senior Taskforce Members with Chief Pryor-Jones (left) and Asian Services In Action focus group members (right)

Age-Friendly Community Engagement

The Age-Friendly Cleveland Initiative was due to be renewed in the year 2020. By March of that year, it was clear that the COVID-19 Pandemic would have a profound effect on our oldest and disabled populations. To meet the immediate needs of our citizens, The Department of Aging and its staff pivoted time, attention, and resources to vaccine and resource distribution.

Age-Friendly began a refresh process in 2023 under Mayor Bibb's administration as a key pillar for the Mayor's population health priority.

The Age-Friendly team within the department then dedicated a year and a half to renewing data, surveying citizens, and engaging community stakeholders. Research-gathering included multiple formats of surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews.

**The team engaged nearly 1000 people who live, work, and play in Cleveland.
82% were seniors. This is their plan.**

The Age-Friendly City Hall Taskforce consisted of 35 City employees representing over 20 Divisions and Departments. Representatives began meeting in December 2023 to learn about the initiative, become champions of the Aging and Disability communities, and create new Age-Friendly Strategies. Between December and May, using an Age-Friendly lens, the Taskforce identified ways to create more accessible services and communication for the public.

As a group, the Taskforce completed the following activities to understand and participate in the strategic planning process:

- Evaluation of the 2017 Age-Friendly Cleveland Action Plan
- Compilation of experiences working with older adults and people with disabilities through their own department's services and programs
- Completion of empathy and accessibility training with a focus on serving and understanding older adults and People with Disabilities
- Creation of strategies that will directly impact the Age-Friendliness of Cleveland City Hall

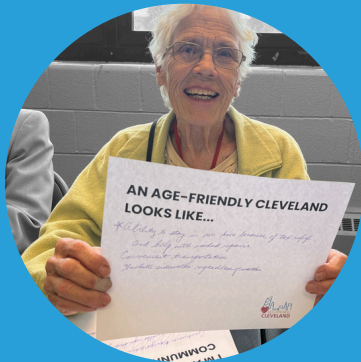


John Petkac, Superintendent, Bureau of Sidewalks, navigates a bumpy sidewalk utilizing a training wheelchair.

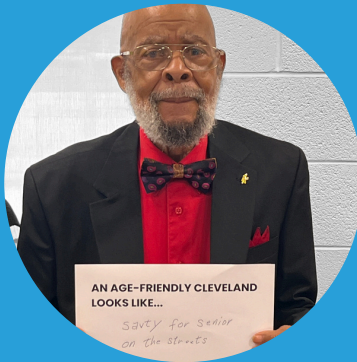


To ensure that community input is always at the center of Age-Friendly planning, older adults were invited to take part in the Cleveland Senior Taskforce. Members of the Taskforce proposed and shaped Action Plan strategies and tactics through:

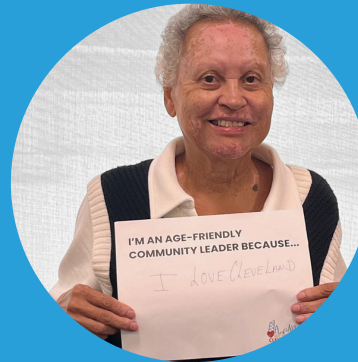
- Interpretation and analysis of survey and focus group data
- Sharing lived experiences as aging citizens of the city
- Sharing why and how they'd chosen to grow older in Cleveland
- Analyzing what the City has to offer them, and what still needs more work



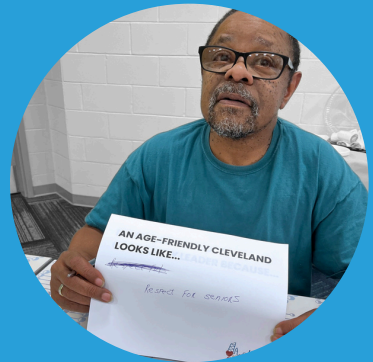
"Ability to stay in my own home because of tax relief, and help with needed repairs. Convenient transportation, walkable sidewalks, regardless of weather" – Phyllis



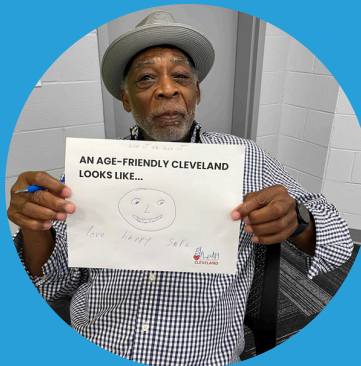
"An Age-Friendly Cleveland looks like safety for seniors on the streets" – Luadrie



"I'm an Age-Friendly community leader because I love Cleveland" – Judy



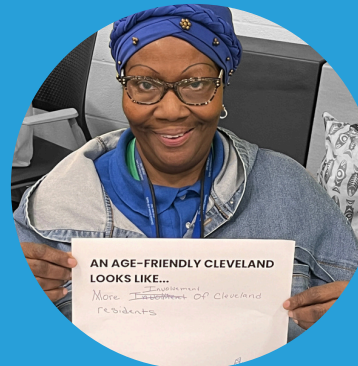
"An Age-Friendly Cleveland looks like respect for seniors" – Stephen



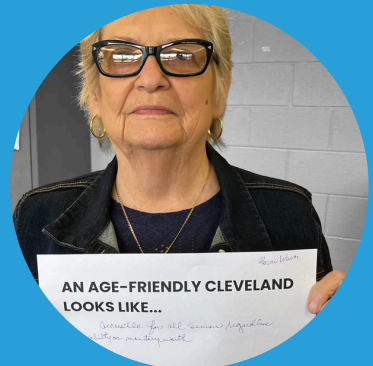
"An Age-Friendly Cleveland looks like: Love, Happy, Safe" – Clifford



"I'm an Age-Friendly community leader because I care about my community." – Diane



"An Age-Friendly Cleveland looks like more involvement of Cleveland residents" – Delores



"An Age-Friendly Cleveland looks like accessible for all seniors; regardless of age, ability, or monetary worth" – Beverly

Age-Friendly team members met with more than 120 Seniors in Focus Groups. Community Partners helped to facilitate these focus groups in comfortable and familiar settings.

Partners:

- Asian Services In Action
- Rose Center for Aging Well at Gunning Park
- The Hispanic Senior Center
- Linking Employment Abilities & Potential
- Rainbow Pioneers Advisory Council
- Thea Bowman Center

Seniors and People with Disabilities were engaged in conversations about their lived experience in Cleveland. Guided by Aging Department Staff, they discussed each of the Domains of Livability and how they apply to their everyday lives. Clevelanders shared what works, and what still needs some work, to make aging in Cleveland an enjoyable and equitable experience.



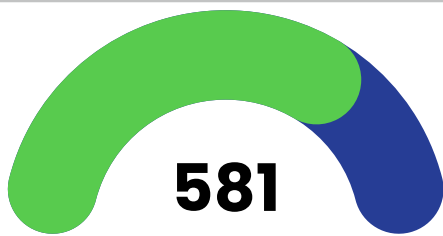
Age-Friendly Focus Groups at Rose Center for Aging Well at Gunning Park and Asian Services In Action

Survey

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The Age-Friendly Cleveland Survey consisted of 45 questions, all of which were optional. The questions were developed with the intention of refreshing data collected by the Center for Community Solutions in 2015 and distributed to more than 1500 Seniors and People with Disabilities across the City of Cleveland. Participants were selected randomly from The Department of Aging's database, handed out in person to program participants, and shared online with residents.

The survey was completed in both English and Spanish on paper and online by 581 residents of Cleveland.



75% Women, 25% Men

Total number of survey respondents and % of reported gender

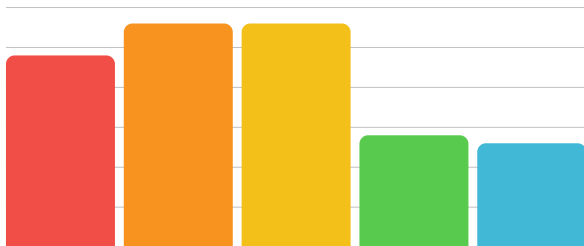
Reported location of respondents

Highest number of responses:

- 1. **Glenville**
- 2. **Collinwood**
- 3. **Old Brooklyn**
- 4. **West Park**



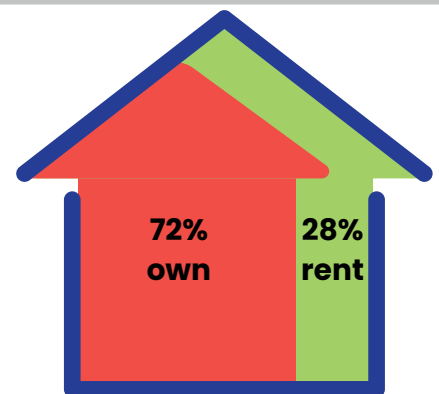
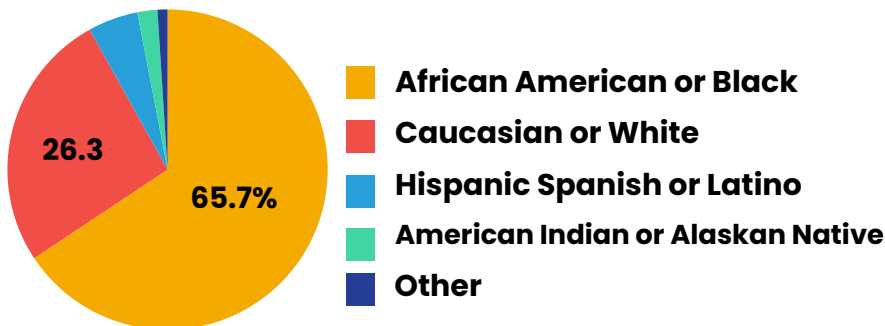
- Age 65
- Age 70
- Age 75
- Age 80
- Age 85



Average reported ages of respondents



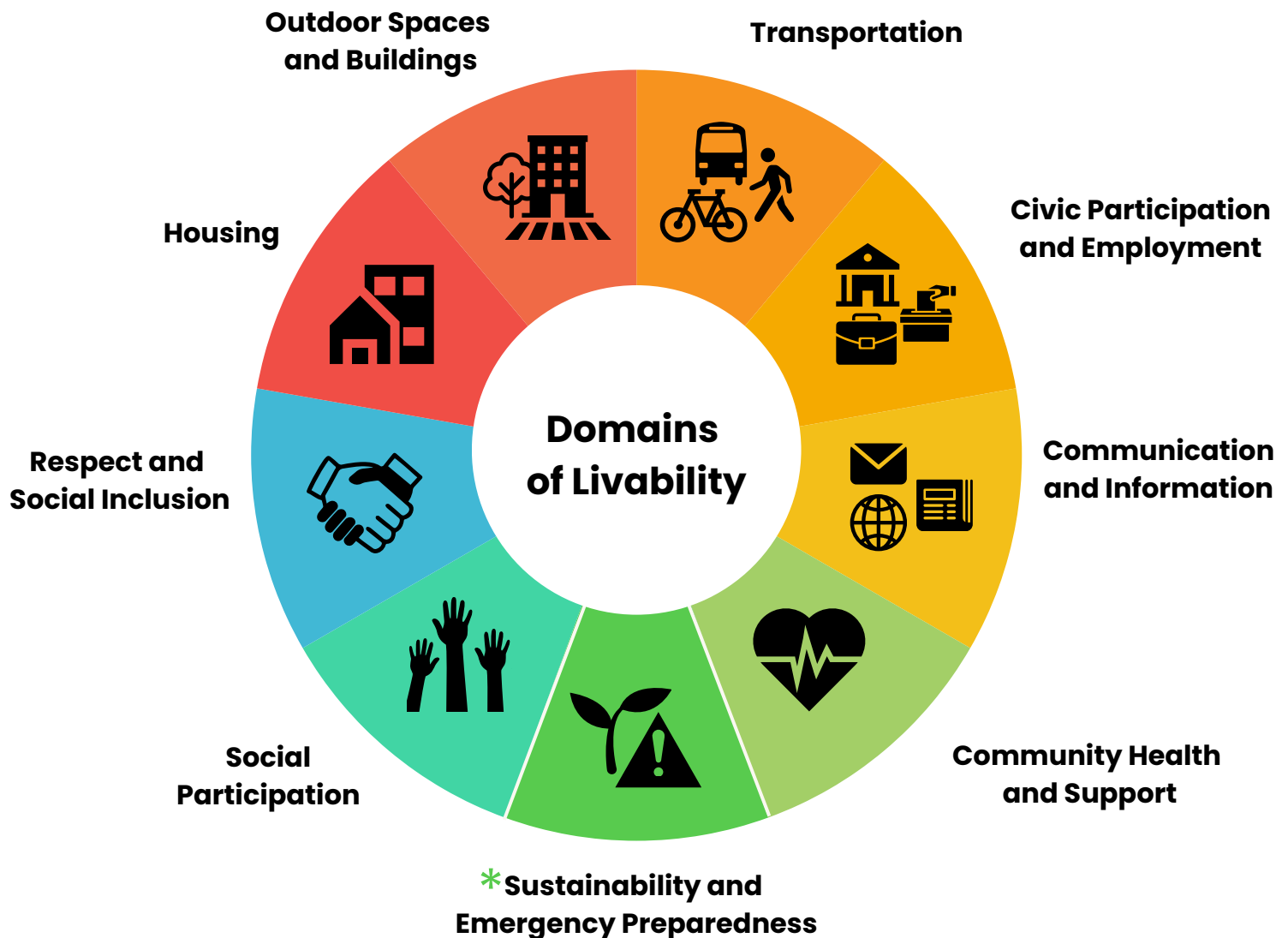
75% report having at least one disability



83% make less than \$30,000 per year

2025–2028

Age-Friendly Domains of Livability



AARP and the WHO have two very similar frameworks with which communities are asked to organize their Age-Friendly work. Both list eight “Domains” and the framework is used by many of the cities, counties, states and countries to become more livable for both older residents and people of all ages.

***The addition of a 9th Domain of Livability, Sustainability and Emergency Preparedness was inspired by the work of Age-Friendly Athens County, Ohio, the George V. Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service at Ohio University and The Ohio State University College of Social Work’s Age-Friendly Innovation Center in Columbus, Ohio. This domain, Sustainability and Emergency Preparedness, will reflect the changing nature of our world, and our citizen’s needs.**



Housing: Affordability, essential services, design, modifications, maintenance, aging in place, community integration, housing options, living environment



Outdoor spaces and buildings: Environment, green spaces and walkways, outdoor seating, pavements, roads, traffic, cycle paths, safety, services, buildings, public toilets



Transportation: Affordability, reliability and frequency, travel destinations, accessible vehicles, specialized services, priority seating, transport drivers, safety and comfort, transport stops and stations, information, community transport, roads, parking



Civic participation and employment: Options of volunteering, employment options, post-retirement training, accessibility, civic participation, valued contributions, entrepreneurship, paid opportunities to work



Communication and information: Offer oral communication, printed information, plain language, automated communication and equipment, broad public access to computers and the internet



Community support and health services: Service accessibility, offer a range of health and community support services, voluntary support, emergency planning and care, coordinated service delivery



Sustainability and Emergency Preparedness: Emergency service availability, snow plowing, access to emergency supplies, recycling and waste management education, access to green and renewable energy sources, home weatherization



Social participation: Accessibility of events and activities, affordability, range of events and activities, facilities and settings, promotion of awareness of activities, addressing isolation, fostering community integration, outreach to those at risk of social isolation



Respect and social inclusion: Respectful and inclusive services, public images of aging, intergenerational and family interactions, public education, community inclusion, economic inclusion



1 *Increase 'walkability' of public right of way in Cleveland*

Having participated in accessibility training, Age-Friendly Cleveland City Hall Taskforce members felt that improvements to public right of way should be among the plan's top priorities. Conditions of sidewalks were also among the top concerns of seniors and people with disabilities in our focus groups. Many participants were concerned about falls and injuries, and some stated they would rather walk in the street than on the sidewalks in their neighborhood.

According to survey results, walking is the third most popular mode of transportation with 18.5% of respondents choosing walking as one of their main modes of transportation. This contrasts with 2016 survey results which listed taking public transportation as the third most popular at the time, getting 14.6% of the responses while walking received just 12.4%. This increase in walking paired with 2024 survey results that boast 66% of respondents having sidewalks that are in good and safe condition in their neighborhood (an improvement from 2016's 60%) shows progress on a city-wide level. However, the cost of repairing sidewalks was brought up in almost every focus group as a prohibitive expense that few knew how to address within City channels.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased usage of 50/50 Sidewalk Repair Program and other accessibility and repair programs by older adults and people with disabilities
- Reduction of reports of inaccessible sidewalks to 311
- Increased number of accessible crossings and sidewalks





Increase 'walkability' of public right of way in Cleveland



Tactics

A. Promote available resources to residents for sidewalk repair such as the 50/50 Sidewalk Repair program⁴ through community partners

B. Include sidewalks in scope of work with road rehabilitation projects utilizing Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines⁵, and Universal Design Standards with oversight from a designated accessibility body

C. Define and publicize sidewalk safety and usability standards and map sidewalk conditions utilizing the Open Data Portal and 311, allowing for crowdsourced real-time information

D. Explore options for an increase in funding for pivotal programs such as the 50/50 Sidewalk Repair program, targeting funding that expands access for older adults and people with disabilities

E. Develop a sidewalk repair program aimed toward older adults and people with disabilities who cannot afford 50% of the repair costs

Supported by existing efforts:

- 311
- Non-Compliant Sidewalk Repair Program
- Complete and Green Streets Cleveland
- Vision Zero
- 15-Minute City





2 *Increase accessible and affordable housing options for disabled and older adults*

Consistently, 90% of seniors across the country want to grow older in their homes, rather than relocating to an assisted-living or retirement facility, a process called “aging in place.”⁶

Through the first Age-Friendly survey, reports found 94% of older adults expressed a desire to remain in their homes. This claim was strongly supported by focus group participants in 2024. In Cleveland, according to U.S. Census data compiled by the Center for Community Solutions, about 58% of older adults own their homes.⁷ This population was over-represented in 2024 Age-Friendly Survey data, in which approximately 72% of survey takers were homeowners.

The ability to age in place is dependent on factors including affordability, accessibility, and the ability to complete repairs. Replies to Age-Friendly surveys found 58% knew how to find home repair programs in 2016 and by 2024 only 52% knew local resources. This decrease requires immediate action, to not only create additional sources of home-repair funding, but to set up strong and lasting infrastructure for local home repair resources.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased or maintained rate of seniors aging in place in Cleveland
- Increased access to home repair dollars for people with middle-to low-income
- Decreased instance of home violations for senior and disabled homeowners





Increase accessible and affordable housing options for disabled and older adults

Tactics

- A. Publish an 'Aging in Place Guide' for homeowners and housing developers that promotes Age-Friendly residences, upgrades, and housing typologies, and guides to obtaining commonly needed home modifications.
- Assemble a diverse taskforce of housing and age-related department representatives to create the guide and identify distribution opportunities
 - Incorporate use of the guide into the development scorecard as requirements or "points" earning criteria
 - Partner with relevant departments, local community development corporations, and senior centers to distribute the guide to the aging population
 - Train public facing employees in use of the guide
- B. Create an expedited permitting service for those seeking health-related home modifications and educational resources for applicants on how and when to apply for permits
- C. Partner with local organizations to identify and maintain a list of trustworthy repair and maintenance services.
- D. Identify funding sources for minor home repair projects that are unaffordable for seniors and people with disabilities with low to middle income.
- E. Promote home maintenance classes that teach seniors how to increase the longevity of their home's life
- F. Create a quick response program to provide low-cost entry ramps to improve home accessibility

Supported by existing efforts:

- The LANDCODE – Cleveland's Form-Based Code
- Tax Abatement Program – Aging in Place Criteria



3 *Increase access to transportation through options education and advocacy*

Dabney Conwell, the Director of the Rose Centers for Aging Well and Vice President of Benjamin Rose, when asked during an interview what seniors need in order to age in place successfully replied “Transportation, transportation, transportation.” Transportation is a vital part of social infrastructure, necessary to be included in events, hold jobs, and attend appointments. An overwhelming number of seniors in Cleveland rely on cars to get around town. 57% of 2024 survey respondents indicated that they drive themselves, followed by being driven by someone else at 31%. Driving requires having sharp sight, focus and reflexes to be safe, and is a temporary skill as bodies naturally age. Additionally, the cost for owning and operating a car has skyrocketed to an estimated \$8,331 in 2023 from \$5,742 variable cost in 2017 according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics.⁸ US Census data tells us 40% of adults over the age of 60 in Cleveland are living below 150% of the federal poverty line, making that \$8,000 figure unsustainable.⁷

Greater Cleveland Rapid Transit Authority reported in their September 2023 Ridership Report that Paratransit ridership increased by 11% from September 2022.⁹ Since 2017 more than 4,000 older adults have signed up for Senior Transportation Connection (STC) through the Department of Aging. STC is a free to low-cost service for riders operating in Cleveland and surrounding communities, its popularity illustrates the need and desire for transportation as a public service. The full cost of STC is absorbed by local municipalities.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased number of seniors and people with disabilities utilizing public and shared transit options
- Decreased number of seniors who are homebound or experiencing negative impacts of isolation due to lack of transit options





Increase access to transportation through options, education, and advocacy

Tactics

- A. Create and promote an Age-Friendly Transportation Guide that covers transportation options, use, and cost
- B. Promote transportation options utilizing local media outlets
- C. Promote travel training services and other programs designed to teach people of all ages and abilities to utilize public transportation
- D. Promote shared mobility alternatives to public and or car-based transit
- E. Provide driver's safety and education opportunities for older adults and their family members

Supported by existing efforts:

- Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Travel Training
- Senior Transportation Connection
- Cleveland Moves
- Vision Zero

Seniors ride bicycles on the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath: Scranton Flats





4

Prepare for extreme weather emergencies by creating infrastructure for the impacts of Climate Change

Inspired by the efforts of Athens County and the Ohio State University College of Social Work Age-Friendly Innovation Center, Age-Friendly Cleveland staff added a new domain to guide work around climate resilience and sustainability in Cleveland's Aging network. This decision was quickly validated by both survey responses, and a devastating weather event in the summer of 2024. Survey responses included 38% of seniors and disabled adults who felt unprepared for a weather related emergency. Then, on August 6th, 2024, five tornadoes touched down in Northeast Ohio causing massive power outages, with some households losing power for up to a week. The city saw citizens who were unable to charge necessities beyond communication devices, like power wheelchairs and oxygen tanks.

This shift to more extreme weather in the region is felt strongly by Cleveland's disabled and older residents. Older adults shared in conversation that they are interested in preparing themselves and their homes for weather events, and a new climate reality. Some also shared that they were unsure of where to start.

Desired Outcomes

- Decreased utilization of emergency services during extreme weather events
- Increase the overall opinion of confidence in senior's own preparedness for weather emergencies





Prepare for extreme weather emergencies by creating infrastructure for the impacts of Climate Change



Tactics

- A. Implement a coordinated effort to provide low-cost or free service where older adults are “matched” with paid or volunteer crews who will provide snow removal assistance
- B. Invest in emergency preparedness education options by partnering with Public Safety and local organizations to prepare people with disabilities and older adults for extreme weather
- C. Improve communication infrastructure to ensure access to emergency information distribution to older and disabled adults
- D. Coordinate with local hospitals to set up wellness check stations and medical equipment charging
- E. Increase local accessible transit options to transport disabled and Older adults to emergency weather and health centers

Supported by existing efforts:

- Sustainable Cleveland
- Interdepartmental Equity Team
- Senior Initiative



5 *Increase personal safety and prevention of violent crimes in neighborhoods*

The first Age-Friendly Cleveland Community Needs Assessment found that safety was one of the top concerns among older and disabled Cleveland residents. Vacant homes and properties were a large concern, one now being addressed by Cleveland's February 2024 3106 Ordinance that requires vacant property registration.¹⁰ Violent crime was also brought up frequently. It seems, regardless of the improvements made, the general opinion of Cleveland's older and disabled adults is that their neighborhood could always be more safe. 2024 Age-Friendly Survey results found 64% of seniors would rate their neighborhood as "fair" or "poor" when asked if it is safe from crime.

In focus groups, participants lamented the loss of a remembered neighborhood watch group, block parties, and knowing their local safety officers. Many asserted that if the infrastructure existed, they would feel comfortable leading the charge to recreate these community-based violence prevention strategies.



Desired Outcomes

- Increased sense of personal safety in community space for people of all age groups and reduced intergenerational fear
- Decreased rate of speeding and traffic-related deaths
- Increased rate in positive opinions of senior-occupied neighborhoods
- increased knowledge of City Safety and Violence Prevention tactics and investments





Increase personal safety and prevention of violent crimes in neighborhoods

Tactics

- A. Increase funding to block clubs and neighborhood groups that promote violence prevention strategies
- B. Create infrastructure for supporting “Neighborhood Watch” groups, run by volunteers within their own communities
- C. Implement education campaigns about reporting suspected crimes or incidences anonymously and without repercussions
- D. Create and promote personal safety and wellness class options for seniors within community centers and local organizations
- E. Promote traffic and driver safety initiatives to reduce speeding and crashes involving older adults
- F. Educate Northeast Ohio aging and disability networks about violence prevention resources

Supported by existing efforts:

- Cleveland Thrive
- Safe Strong Senior Program
- Raising Investment in Safety for Everyone
- Cleveland Moves
- Vision Zero
- Neighborhood Safety Fund

The first graduates of the Safe Strong Seniors program from the Department of Aging





6 *Increase intergenerational interactions and relationship building*

Routinely, in focus group and Senior Task Force conversations, Age-Friendly staff heard these generalizations about Cleveland's youth: "All they want to do is play on their video games. In my day, we got up and left the house, you wouldn't see us until the streetlights came on," and, "we gotta stop these young kids from shooting each other up." These statements were usually met with nods of agreement from the rest of the group. To generalize any age group as only disinterested and violent is unfair, but seemed like consensus among Cleveland's older adults when they thought about the youth. During an interview with Social Support Specialists stationed in Cleveland's Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers (NRRCs), however, it was revealed that the programming interests between our youngest and oldest residents overlap significantly. Both groups expressed interest in finding new volunteering opportunities to work with the other, and interest in skill sharing, playing sports, cooking, and participating in the arts. These overlaps in priorities make an interesting case for creating more spaces where generations can interact and care for one another.

Luckily, some infrastructure for intergenerational interaction already exists throughout the city, from library programming to Intergenerational Lunches hosted by Third Space Action Lab. It seems the willingness of older adults and youth to participate in this kind of programming, and increasing its availability, remains the challenge.

"It's so beneficial because people want to feel like they have a reason to live and part of it is they have something to give." said Dr. Michael Baston, Tri-C President, during a stakeholder interview, when asked about volunteering and having space available for older adults to take part in everyday community activities. Increasing visibility of older adults in public spaces through volunteer opportunities could help reduce this cross-generational divide and increase engagement by people of all ages.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased attendance by seniors at community events for all ages
- Increased sense of community between generations in community spaces
- Greater opportunities to share culture and history for seniors with their neighbors
- Senior and youth driven intergenerational programming in city spaces





Increase intergenerational interactions and relationship building

Tactics

- A. Create and distribute an intergenerational survey with the purpose of developing opportunities for socialization and community building
- B. Create infrastructure to promote senior attendance at community events
- C. Designate a city park as an intergenerational “grandparent’s park” with associated play, rest and safety features
- D. Build a volunteer network of seniors to be present in City spaces, and within community hubs
- E. Identify funding options for intergenerational companionship programming
- F. Promote community-based grandparent education and resource classes

Supported by existing efforts:

- Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers
- Mayor’s Office of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunity for Youth and Young Adults
- Youth Narrative Change Framework and training
- Municipal Cabinet for Children and Youth





7 *Reduce community-based risk factors for chronic disease and disability*

Community stakeholders made it clear in interviews: to live longer, older adults and people with disabilities need access to fresh food, congregate meals, and health education. Summer of 2024 saw the addition of a Health and Wellness Project Coordinator to the Cleveland Department of Aging. This role has increased communications between Aging and Recreation departments, and increased senior-focused programming. Before the Health and Wellness position existed, seniors and people with disabilities were often going back and forth between the two departments trying to get the programming they wanted.

The City isn't the only institution looking for this connection between wellness and the aging population. The John A. Hartford Foundation created the Age-Friendly Health Systems Initiative. This initiative follows the 4Ms: what Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility. This set of practices functions similarly to Age-Friendly Community Domains and asks health systems to filter all they do through the 4Ms.¹¹

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation, a 2023 advisory from the U.S. Surgeon General, reports that the highest prevalence of social isolation is among older adults. The report also includes a figure outlining the health risks associated with lacking social connection, likening it to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.¹² This aligns well with older adult requests in focus groups for more social inclusion.

Desired Outcomes

- Decreased rates of older adults using tobacco products
- Increased number of local health systems engaging with an Age-Friendly framework
- Increased rate of seniors receiving health positive benefits from consuming fresh food





Reduce community-based risk factors for chronic disease and disability.

Tactics

- A. Encourage local healthcare systems to adopt Age-Friendly practices and frameworks for their organizations
- B. Increase relevant health-related communications through public service announcements, direct phone calls, and common health topic discussions with vulnerable populations
- C. Increase equitable access to fresh and local food
- D. Support efforts to decrease tobacco use among older adults
- E. Identify opportunities for creating social connections at community events and increase older adult and disabled population participation
- F. Increase access to community resources and feelings of social connectedness through digital education

Supported by existing efforts:

- The Greater Cleveland Food Bank
- Local Food Systems Programming coordinated by Cleveland Health
- Cleveland Health Department's Mobile Health Fleet
- CodeRed
- Smoking Cessation Programs
- Age-Friendly Health Systems
- Tobacco Sale and Smoke Shop Ordinances





8

Promote economic wellness for older and disabled adults through education and service availability

When Age-Friendly Staff interviewed Mrs. Williams, a 102-year-old resident of Cleveland for more than 80 years, we asked what she'd like to see the city do to make Cleveland a better place to live for seniors. She said, "Find some way to give us some more money! What else?" US Census data tells us 40% of adults over the age of 60 in Cleveland are living below 150% of the federal poverty line.⁷ Survey data told us that 48% of seniors in Cleveland are receiving Social Security as their main form of income, and 83% of respondents reported their household living on less than \$30,000 a year. Additionally, 36% of senior and disabled households report living on less than \$20,000 a year, and 18% on less than \$10,000. Conversations with seniors found rising costs of housing, transportation, healthcare, and groceries have citizens worried about how they'll survive on their fixed incomes long-term.



Desired Outcomes

- Increased percentage of seniors living with more than one source of retirement income
- Increased opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities to be paid for their work without the risk of losing their benefits.
- An increase in older adults seeking and utilizing loan and grant programs to preserve family homes.



Promote economic wellness for older and disabled adults through education and service availability

Tactics

- A. Provide additional estate planning services for older adults to preserve family assets
- B. Increase 0% interest loan and grant availability for home repair and bill payment
- C. Provide stipends to disabled and older adult volunteers to provide additional income without losing benefits
- D. Promote streamlined processes to assist caregivers in receiving compensation from state sources
- E. Engage mid-career adults with retirement planning education opportunities and tools
- F. Advocate for state and federal-level policy change to support economic wellness of older adults and people with disabilities

Supported by existing efforts:

- Departments of Community and Economic Development
- Economic Security Program
- Cuyahoga County Great Estates Program
- Benjamin Rose Financial Wellness Programs
- Cuyahoga County Jobs and Family Services



9 *Support inclusive, Age-Friendly customer service and communication throughout all City operations*

City Hall Taskforce members relayed stories of working with older adults and people with disabilities, and wishing they'd done some kind of training beforehand to better assist them and understand their unique needs. After completing Empathy and Accessibility training, 100% of Taskforce members felt they were better prepared to provide services to older adults and people with disabilities.

When interviewed, MetroHealth and Cuyahoga Community College leadership emphasized the importance of having Older Adults and People with Disabilities on staff and in volunteer positions throughout their organizations. This representation helped community members feel more at home and comfortable with the services provided.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased accessibility of city services in-person, over the phone, and online
- Increased number of older adults and people with disabilities participating in city services and programming
- Increased sense of competency when working with older and disabled populations among city employees





Support inclusive, Age-Friendly customer service and communication throughout all City operations

Tactics

- A. Train all City employees to treat older adults and people with disabilities with empathy and dignity, utilizing local disability and aging resources
- B. Consult with local disability and language resources to create an Age-Friendly document guide and accessible versions of all public facing documents and forms, including web-based platforms
- C. Create a fully accessible customer service kiosk within city hall for in-person permit and applications assistance for Older Adults and People with Disabilities and people whose primary language is not English
- D. Create an Age-Friendly City Hall ambassadors volunteer group to assist visitors with navigating City Hall

Supported by existing efforts:

- 311
- BizLibrary, the City's online training system
- LanguageLine Translation and Interpretation Services





10

Improve and expand supportive services for city employees with caregiving responsibilities

According to the Pew Research Center, nearly a quarter of Americans in their 40's are part of the "sandwich generation," meaning they are a caregiver to both a child and an aging parent. Across the U.S. more than 37 million people in the workforce are providing some kind of unpaid eldercare.¹³

Cleveland is no exception to the direct care workforce shortage, a growing issue that will impact the workforce as Baby Boomers continue to age.¹⁴

Beyond working collaboratively with organizations and agencies dedicated to improving the outlook on direct care, City Hall Taskforce members felt it was time to start supporting aging families from within their workplace. This strategy and following tactics attempt to set an example of modernizing how the workplace interacts with and supports a changing family life.

Desired Outcomes

- Provide an example of modern workforce policies to include the aging population of Northeast Ohio
- Increased retention of employees with caregiving responsibilities
- Increased sense of wellbeing for City workers





Improve and expand supportive services for city employees with caregiving responsibilities

Tactics

- A. Create and distribute a needs assessment survey with a goal of understanding the caregiving responsibilities of city employees
- B. Identify opportunities for employee conversations on the realities and tolls of caregiving through affinity or support groups
- C. Explore flexible support options to employees that meet modern workplace standards and align with stated employee needs
- D. Create and launch an information campaign about existing options for employees like FMLA and timesharing

Supported by existing efforts:

- Comprehensive Paid Parental Leave
- City of Cleveland Wellness Works!
- City of Cleveland AllOne Health





11

Create a permanent infrastructure for continuing Age-Friendly interdepartmental work within Cleveland City Hall

As a member of the Coalition of Age-Friendly Communities of Ohio (CAFCO), Age-Friendly Cleveland has benefited from the wisdom of a 35+ member state-wide network addressing Ohio's unique aging needs. Maintaining relationships with CAFCO, the AARP Network of Livable Communities (including Livable Cuyahoga) and the World Health Organization is pivotal to staying atop the ever-changing aging landscape. Support for this effort will undoubtedly come from within Cleveland City Hall.

As Cleveland's population ages, City services will evolve to meet resident's needs. Age-Friendly Cleveland City Hall Taskforce members felt that in order to continue the momentum toward providing universally accessible resources, they would need to form a permanent collaborative body. Working interdepartmentally in this way will increase communication efforts, not just within City Hall, but with the 30% of survey respondents who reported that they did not know how to reach City Hall.

Desired Outcomes

- Development of strong leaders supporting accessibility and aging inclusion within City Hall.
- Increased number of Disabled and Older Adults working within City Hall.
- Improvement of services cross-departmentally for seniors and people with disabilities





Create a permanent infrastructure for continuing Age-Friendly interdepartmental work within Cleveland City Hall



Tactics

A. Identify existing planning and approval committees that would be improved by an Age-Friendly lens and champion participants, and create a nominee process to those committees.

B. Identify opportunities for Older Adult and Disability inclusion in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access efforts throughout the City including hiring and procurement

C. Identify an Age-Friendly Champion within each City department to be a liaison for the Age-Friendly initiative.

Supported by existing efforts:

- Sustainable Cleveland
- City Hall Americans with Disabilities Committee
- Interdepartmental Equity Taskforce
- Senior Initiative

Acknowledgements

Community Stakeholders

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Dr. Doug Beach, Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging
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SamElla Williams, Cleveland Senior

Community Coalitions and Initiatives

Accessible Cuyahoga
 Coalition of Age-Friendly Communities of Ohio
 Division of Senior and Adult Services Advisory Board
 Livable Cuyahoga
 Northeast Ohio Coalition of Disability Organizations

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Organizations

Asian Services on Aging
 Benjamin Rose
 Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland
 LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland
 Linking Employment Abilities and Potential
 Thea Bowman Center
 ThirdSpace Action Lab

City of Cleveland

City of Cleveland Leadership

City of Cleveland Staff

Cleveland City Council

800+ Seniors who provided their input and guidance

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Stay in touch!

Stay up to date with Age-Friendly Cleveland progress by
visiting: www.clevelandohio.gov/city-hall/departments/aging/age-friendly-city-initiative

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CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Justin M. Bibb

AGING

