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Mim Evans

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY | CENTER FOR GOVERNMENTAL STUDIES

Policy Profiles

Vol. 21, No. 1 June 2024

The Emergence of Age-Friendly Thinking in Community Planning

Prepared by **Mim Evans**[1]

Welcome back to NIU's Center for Governmental Studies *Policy Profiles*! Whether you're a returning reader or new to this resource, we're excited to have you join us. After a pause during the pandemic, we're thrilled to announce the relaunch of *Policy Profiles* this year, starting with an issue that delves into the significance of age-friendly community thinking and planning.

Policy Profiles is a gateway to some of the emerging trends, topics, research, and challenges that face governmental decision-makers and civic leaders. Since its beginning days over twenty years ago, *Policy Profiles* has explored topics and highlighted findings from the work of our CGS teams as well as our faculty partners and colleagues across NIU, including partners in the School of Public and Global Affairs. From time to time, CGS partners and affiliates beyond the university have and will continue to contribute to *Policy Profiles* topics as well. Over the years, the subjects and issues that have been examined span a wide spectrum of issues that give shape to the civic and governmental landscape.

For example, contributors have explored economic development trends, public service funding, demographic shifts, rural health, local government structures, changing workforce dynamics, home rule, intergovernmental partnerships, and much, much more. Prior topics and past issues of *Policy Profiles* can be accessed via NIU's Huskie Commons library portal.

Since 2001, offering *Policy Profiles* to our network of governmental leaders, observers, and decision-makers has been a part of CGS' mission and tradition. It's one of the ways we seek to share insights and knowledge with those that we serve and collaborate with. With this issue, we are pleased to resume sharing our insights and observations through this ongoing series. We look forward to future editions where issues and topics that confront governmental leaders and our civic landscape can be explored. We invite you to share your topic suggestions with us by submitting them to Policy_Profiles@niu.edu for consideration in future editions. We invite you to read this relaunch issue and consider the important elements of age-friendly communities and the opportunities that can accompany the changing age demographic across the U.S.

Greg Kuhn, *Editor*

Introduction

The demographic landscape of the United States is undergoing a significant transformation, marked by a projected surge in the population aged 65 and above in the upcoming years. As communities confront the challenges associated with an aging populace, there is a growing need to prioritize age-friendly thinking and planning. This imperative calls for a strategic approach to community planning, emphasizing making daily living easier and improving the quality of life for both older residents and visitors. Recognizing this demographic shift, communities are encouraged to proactively engage in age-friendly planning efforts, shaping environments that acknowledge and accommodate the needs of older individuals.

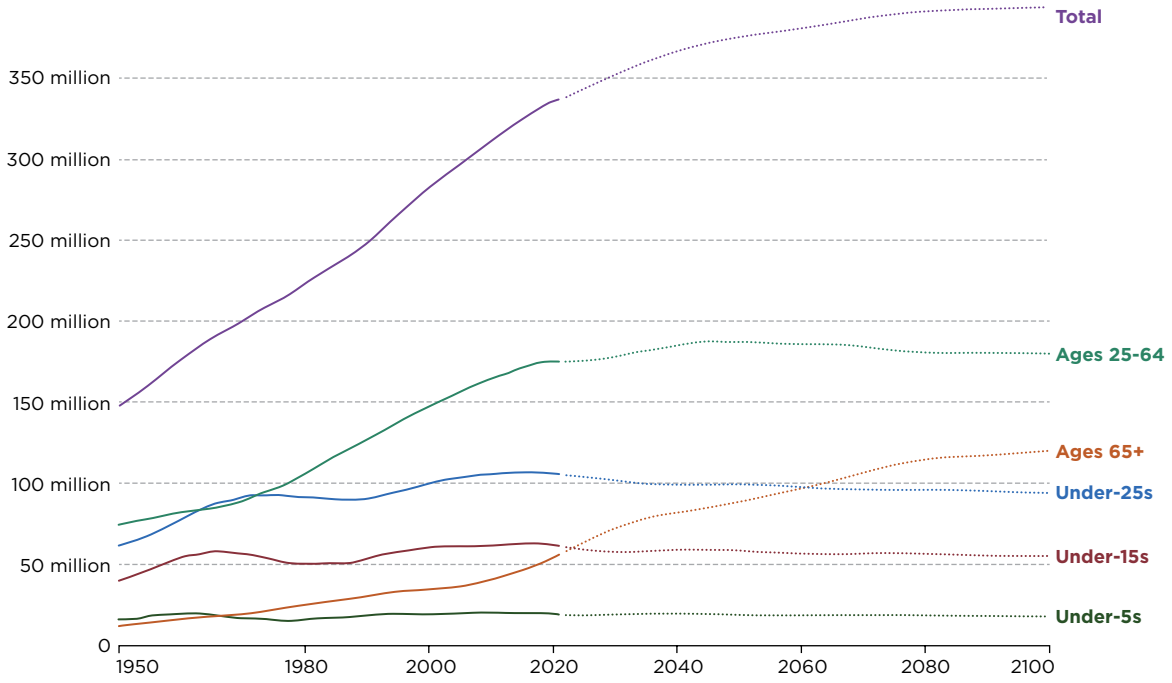
Community Awareness and the Demographics of Age

The United States, along with many other post-industrial nations, is experiencing an aging population. For example, the chart below shows the anticipated growth in the U.S. population of individuals aged 65 and above is substantial, and it is expected to rise from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050, marking a 47% increase. Additionally, the proportion of this age group within the overall population is forecasted to climb from 17% to 23%. This demographic shift reflects the aging trend in the U.S., where the median age has risen from 30.0 to 38.9 between 1980 and 2022. A significant portion of states, nearly one-third (17), exhibited a median age surpassing 40 in 2022 [i].

The chart below shows the U.S. population growth from 1950 with a projected population growth to 2100.

[1] The author is a Senior Research Associate at Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies.

Population by age group, United States
Historic estimates from 1950 to 2021, and projected to 2100 based on UN medium-fertility scenario[1].



Data source: United Nations, World Population Prospects (2022)

[1] UN projection scenarios: The UN's World Population Prospects provides a range of projected scenarios of population change. These rely on different assumptions in fertility, mortality and/or migration patterns to explore different demographic futures.

Source: Our World Data

The growth in the aging population is evident in communities, both large and small, across Illinois and the U.S. This increasing demographic cohort is converging with existing community attributes, places and design features that are not quite as age-friendly as they might be or could become. The desire and need to accommodate an ever-growing older population have created a movement to pause, think and plan for age-friendly communities. Demographics, economics, and social impact all factor into why communities are pursuing age-friendly ideas, plans and initiatives.

The data suggests all age groups will experience a decline in their share of the total population, with the notable exception of the 65+ age group.

Planning for an Age-Friendly Community

While many are aware of the statistics showing that the U.S. population is aging, examples of communities actively planning and preparing for this demographic shift are less common. Since aging touches nearly every aspect of our communities, identifying the potential challenges, planning to meet those challenges, and realizing the opportunities are complex undertakings. However, communities that make the effort will find that becoming age-friendly benefits all residents, visitors, and businesses. This *Policy Profile* offers steps and important elements to consider in moving toward becoming an age-friendly community. This profile will help community leaders and civic decision-makers address the following questions:

- What is an age-friendly community?
- Why should our community be age-friendly?
- How do we become an age-friendly community?

What is an Age-Friendly Community?

The term age-friendly does not mention a specific age, and that is not by chance. A community that is age-friendly works well for all ages. However, conversations around the topic of age-friendly are usually directed at what works best for older adults. For the purposes of this *Policy Profile*, an age-friendly community is one that supports all ages including older residents in a way that enables them to age in place comfortably and engage meaningfully with the community as a whole. The following provides a more detailed definition:

Age-friendly environments foster healthy and active aging. They enable older people to age safely in a place that is right for them; be free from poverty; continue to develop personally; and to contribute to their communities while retaining autonomy, health, and dignity. Because older people know best what they need, they are at the centre of any effort to create a more age-friendly world.[ii]

And another definition:

An age-friendly city or community[iii]*...*

- Works to give older people more opportunities to participate in everyday life, age in a healthy way, and live without fear of discrimination or poverty.
- Offers older people the opportunity to grow and develop as an individual while contributing to their community.
- Allows older people to age with dignity and autonomy.
- Promotes healthy aging through policies, services, environments, and structures.

Historically, many communities found themselves to be age-friendly without the need for special planning because of prior land use patterns, development techniques or transportation elements. Both small towns and big city neighborhoods were walkable, meaning frequently needed goods and services were nearby. Residents included longtime friends and multiple generations of families. Events were celebrated communally. Values carried on from one generation to the next. Many of these characteristics even existed in rural areas where the lack of walkability and nearby services were compensated for by multigenerational households. Within such a context, an individual felt supported and included regardless of their age. In contrast, few residents in today's communities can walk to work or shop in their communities. Extended families living in the same community are less common, and celebrations, shared experiences and local community identity and values can be more challenging to be commonly shared by many residents. While the causes of these changes can be debated, the situation is evident. A growing proportion of older adults do not live in communities that are as age-friendly as in the past.

This intersection of non-age-friendly environments and the imperative to accommodate a growing aging population emphasizes the necessity to plan for age-friendly communities.



A traditional, walkable neighborhood
Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Newer suburban neighborhoods are often automobile dependent and designed for a single generation.
Source: Rick Brown, A P, Bloomberg.

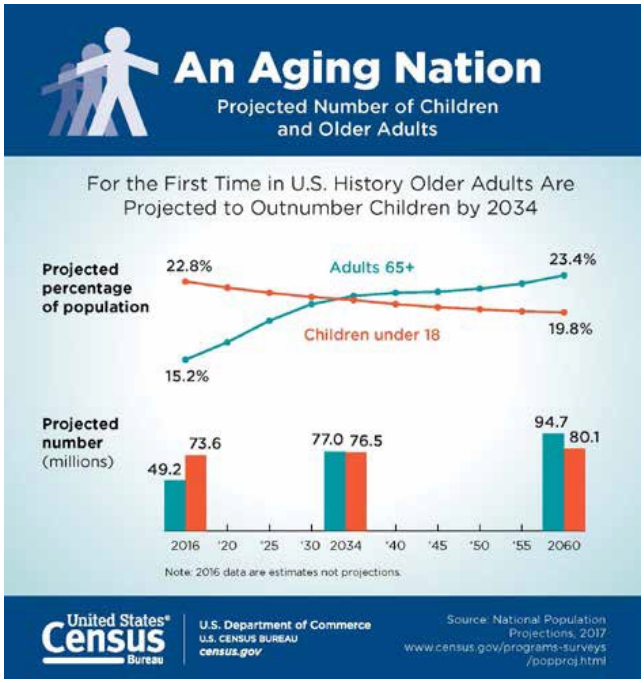
Why be Age-Friendly?

The growing elderly population, combined with the challenges posed by modern communities, magnifies the impact of demographic shifts in the United States and other post-industrial nations. This intersection of non-age-friendly environments and the imperative to accommodate a growing aging population emphasizes the necessity to plan for age-friendly communities. Further exploration of the demographic, economic and social aspects of planning for an aging population is explored in the subsequent sections.

Demographics

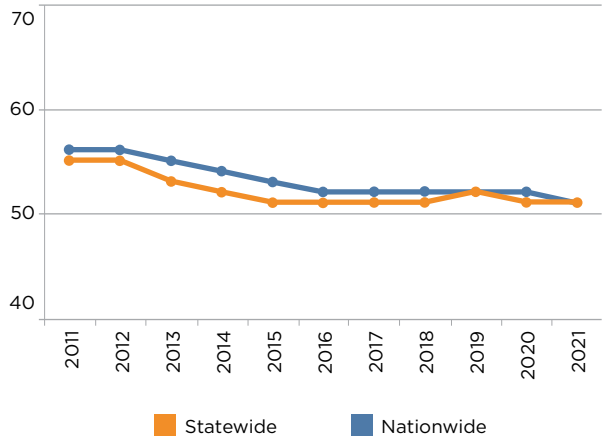
In 2030, for the first time there will be more Americans over age 65 than under age 18. Why is this happening? Two factors are at play. First, people are living longer. When Social Security was first implemented in 1932, the average life expectancy was sixty-two, three years less than the retirement age (65) at that time [iv]. Current estimates are that a person who reaches age 65 will likely also reach age 85, about 20 years past normal retirement age (67) [v]. Our improved healthcare and standard of living are largely responsible for the longer life expectancy. The second factor is that young adults are having fewer babies, reducing the number of people under age 18. Illinois is no exception to these trends and as they play out, its communities will have to adapt to changing needs or become increasingly mismatched with their residents.

In 2034, for the first time there will be more Americans over age 65 than under age 18.



Source: United States Census Bureau.

Birth Rate, Statewide and Nationwide

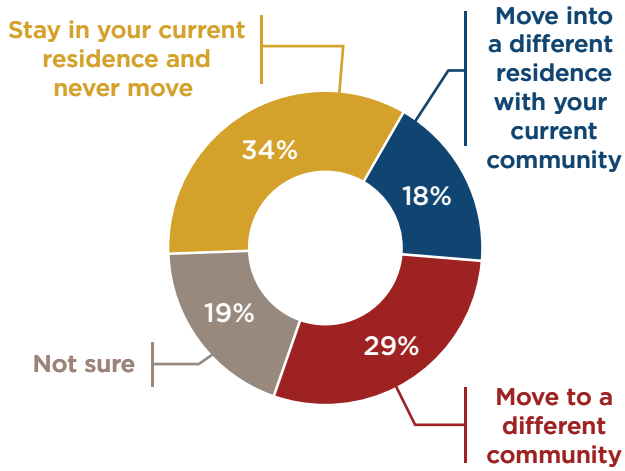


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

In 2021, the AARP conducted a national survey of adults over the age of 18. The findings are useful for understanding the scope of the challenge facing communities.

Most adults of all ages plan to stay in their current community as they get older. This means most communities will experience a growing elderly population. Only a third of adults expect to live in a development specifically for older people. This means that two-thirds of adults expect a typical neighborhood in their community to meet their needs as they age.

Approximately half of adults expect to stay in their home or community as they get older



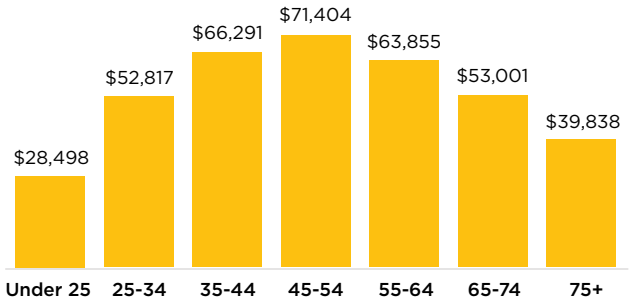
Source: AARP

Economics

The economic impact of older adults is expressed in many ways. Older people own much of the housing in our communities, and thus significantly impact the housing units available to all age groups. According to Fannie Mae, "If household formation and ownership rates remain unchanged from 2022 levels, the change in population levels alone would mean the 60-plus population could approach nearly half of all homeowners in the next decade." If affordable alternate housing options are not available to older people, they will hold onto their existing homes. If options are available, they may sell or vacate their existing homes in favor of something better suited for their current and anticipated needs, thus freeing up larger homes for younger households to occupy. Without this

recycling of housing units, the supply and price of housing for younger households will continue to shrink and increase, accordingly. Expenditures by older consumers, particularly those in the 55-74 age group, exceed those of individuals aged 25-34 and are comparable to those of 35-44 age group. However, there are variations in spending patterns. Older consumers tend to spend less on items they likely already own such as household furnishings, while spending more on entertainment. Notably, a significant portion of spending by the older individuals is allocated towards healthcare.

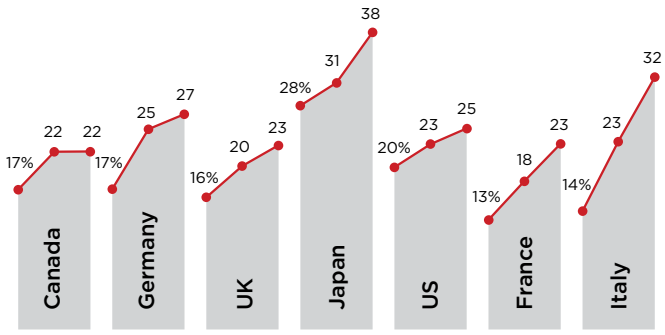
Average Consumer Spending by Age Midwest Census Region, July 2017-June 2018



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2017-2018.

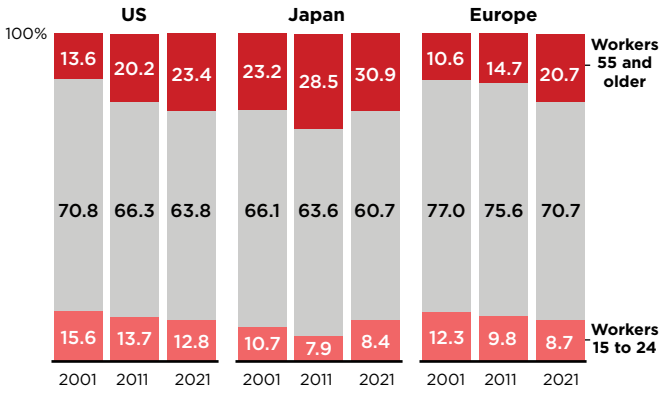
Older workers are an increasingly important part of the workforce in developed countries around the world. One of the reasons this is occurring is because of the decline in the number of younger workers and the increase in the number of older workers, shifting the proportions significantly, as shown in the next two figures.

Share of worker age 55 and older
(2011, 2021, and 2023)



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; OECE; Bain analysis

Distribution of labor force, by location



Note: Data may not total 100% because of rounding
Sources: OECD; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Bain analysis

As communities seek to attract and retain employers, having a ready workforce is a critical factor. Retaining older residents and attracting new ones is a viable way of addressing this need. An age-friendly community is well positioned to compete as the kind of locale that older workers can call home.

Communities can also encourage employers to be flexible in providing work opportunities likely to keep older workers, and indeed workers of all ages, in the community.

Adults of all ages found a range of flexible job opportunities for older adults and jobs adapted to the needs of people with disabilities among their top features

Top 3 Features among 18-49	Top 3 Features among 50+	Top 3 Features among 65+
A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	Policies that ensure equal opportunities for older adults to work for as long as they want or need to regardless of age	Policies that ensure equal opportunities for older adults to work for as long as they want or need to regardless of age
Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn training in a different field of work	Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities
Policies that ensure equal opportunities for older adults to work for as long as they want or need to regaurdless of age	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults

Source: AARP

Additional research has shown that not only do people of different ages want similar things in their community, but they also want things that appeal to generations younger or older than their own.

As the population ages, it makes sense that the percentage of potential visitors to a community or locale who are older will grow. As of 2020, 76% of visitors to Illinois were members of the Baby Boomer population, age 56-74 years [vi]. Older visitors are a valuable market segment. They may have more disposable income to spend on travel and more free time in which to do it. A positive experience as a visitor can lead to a later decision to become a full- or part-time resident. Therefore, not planning for this age group means forgoing significant economic opportunities and potential population growth.

Social Impact and Civic Engagement

Older people shape our communities in many ways. They are formal volunteers at rates comparable to other adult age groups and informally help at higher rates [vii]. With many large expenses behind them, older adults may be able to contribute more monetarily, thus benefiting the community. They are often interested in serving as local officials and on committees, positions many communities find difficult to fill. They can ease the way for their adult children through financial assistance and childcare, an increasingly expensive and scarce commodity. Conversely, the very old may require extra assistance, resulting in demand for services such as healthcare, home maintenance and transportation.

An age-friendly community is good for all ages because often older and younger people want the same things. A survey by the National Association of Realtors asked adults across the country and of all ages what they wanted in their community. The answers were often similar across most age groups as shown in the figure below.

Preferred Home and Community Qualities by Generation

Percent Ranked 1 or 2	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers	Silent/Greatest
Low levels of crime	64	42	55	68	79	85
Walkable to shops and restaurants	35	37	35	30	36	45
A large house	31	39	33	32	25	13
A large yard	27	26	27	31	27	16
High quality public schools	24	28	32	20	17	27
A short commute	20	28	18	20	17	14

Source: National Association of Realtors.

Additional research has shown that not only do people of different ages want similar things in their community, but they also want things that appeal to generations younger or older than their own. For example, both grandparents and parents cite a desire to be near family when choosing where to live[viii]. However, they are reluctant to encourage either a grown child or an older parent to move to their community unless there are services and facilities that are well suited to that age group.

How Do We Become an Age-Friendly Community?

Sense of Place as a Framework

The expression "there is no there there" is sometimes used to describe a generic community, perhaps comprised of cookie cutter subdivisions and big box stores with one town running into another, or urban neighborhoods with generic apartment buildings and chain stores. These communities have no sense of place and little appeal.

In contrast, there are places people like to be. In these communities, you know when you have arrived. It is unique, has a clear identity, a definite boundary and is lively. These are communities with a sense of place.



York, PA honors its past and aspires to a thoughtful future through public art and historic buildings while its wide sidewalks allow for a leisurely stroll with friends.
(Photo Credit: Explore York)

If a community or neighborhood with a sense of place is where people want to be, to live or visit, what exactly do these places have that others do not? Three factors are critical to creating a sense of place:

1. **The community has a physical presence:** The community has clear boundaries. The boundary might be an undeveloped area, or a different land use, or a barrier such as a major road or river. The community has a unique built environment or landscape that differentiates it from other areas. The area is manageable in size.

2. **The community reflects resident values:** What the residents think is important can be observed in the community. This might be local history, customs, or aspirations. These can be seen in public art, the names of streets and buildings, the presence of houses of worship, etc.

3. **The characteristics of the community encourage resident engagement:** It is easy for people to interact with each other and with the businesses and institutions present in the community.

These same elements that create a sense of place provide a framework for planning an age-friendly community. How each element relates to the age-friendly framework is discussed below.

1. **Physical Presence:** Age-friendly physical presence includes accessibility (an older person can get there), mobility (an older person can move around the location), comfort (an older person can stay awhile and utilize the location as intended). In the photo at right, the sidewalk is wide and easily navigated, there is a choice of places to sit, parking is close and both shade and sun are possible.



2. **Reflects Values:** An age-friendly location includes the values of older residents. This might be public art in a style and topic of interest, the presence of businesses catering to the interests of older residents, and organizations/institutions that serve older residents such as the library at right.



3. **Encourage Engagement:** Engagement can be casual such as park benches, wide sidewalks that allow for conversation, and coffee shops and cafes. Engagement also can be programmed such as planned activities and community events like the car show shown on the right.



While sense of place is largely created through the tangible elements of a community, it can enable the presence of the intangible elements that are important to older residents such as healthcare and financial institutions by making space for them and creating an environment where an individual can easily access them.

Top Important Community Features
(% Extremely/Very Important)



Source: AARP

Critical aspects of health and independence are based on environmental features. By following principles of Universal Design, defined as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design[ix]", older adults can continue to live independently and navigate their communities comfortably. By thinking of public safety as more than crime prevention, spaces can be made safer for adults by incorporating features that lessen falls, a major factor leading to poor health outcomes for older adults.

While residents are the primary focus of age-friendly planning, older visitors should also be part of the discussion. The needs and desires of older visitors can be divided into the same sense of place categories discussed for residents. Therefore, planning for an age-friendly community for older residents results in an age-friendly place to visit as well, with a few extra efforts aimed directly at out-of-town visitors.

Older visitors, while generally healthier than previous generations, still may have concerns that younger people are less likely to have. These include whether they can reach your location if they no longer drive under some conditions (i.e., after dark, in the snow), how long the walk is from one attraction to another, and whether businesses and venues are accessible. These concerns can be grouped under the physical presence category of an age-friendly sense of place. Making potential older visitors aware of the age-friendly physical characteristics of your community in marketing material can encourage them to visit. After the older visitor has arrived, ensure that signage clearly answers their questions regarding ease of getting around and how to stay comfortably. Older visitors may be less time constrained than younger visitors and therefore capable of extending their stay and spending more money. Therefore, it is important for communities to have marketing, resources, information centers etc., readily available, and accessible to make sure older visitors are informed of the suitable accommodations and entertainment opportunities that meet their needs.

Additionally, it is crucial to demonstrate that the older visitors are welcome by highlighting attractions and activities reflecting their interests. Businesses should be welcoming to older people. The older visitor should see people like themselves in marketing materials. In other words, the older visitor should see their values reflected in the community they are visiting, as described in the values principle of sense of place.

"Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

It is also worth exploring strategies that will enable your visitors to enjoy interacting with the people they are traveling with by providing settings where they can relax and linger, such as outdoor seating areas, quiet and well-lit restaurants, and wide and illuminated pathways suitable for daytime or evening strolling. Visitors will also want to interact with the businesses, attractions, and events in your community. Clear physical signage may make this easier rather than relying on phone apps. These principles fall under the engagement category of age-friendly sense of place.

Incorporating Age-Friendly Concepts into Community Planning

Planning for an age-friendly community can happen in one or both of the following ways:

- Prepare an age-friendly plan.
- Incorporate age-friendly principles into other planning efforts.

Further details on each approach are outlined next.

An Age-Friendly Plan

Preparing a designated age-friendly plan has several advantages.

- It brings all aspects of age-friendly planning together. This makes it easier to coordinate and understand how the different aspects are intertwined.
- The age-friendly plan provides a single point of reference for all municipal departments and other involved organizations. The plan can guide other planning efforts, providing basic principles and a starting point for thinking about the specific role of each government unit or organization.
- An age-friendly plan provides a long-term road map for achieving an age-friendly community, increasing the chances of success over time.

AARP provides a tool for a quick look at where a community rates on an age-friendly scale.

It can be found at:
https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/

Preparing an age-friendly plan involves several steps as outlined below.

1. **Assess how age-friendly the community is now:** Planning for the future is easier if you know where you are now. While input from the task force and community described below will help establish the current level of age-friendly, many elements can be objectively evaluated before then. These include gathering demographic data, inventorying existing services, programs, and facilities, and assembling a list of key public and private sector stakeholders.
    a. AARP provides a tool for a quick look at where a community rates on an age-friendly scale. It can be found at: https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/
2. **Assemble a Task Force:** Because the needs of older residents touch on the interests of many different agencies, organizations, businesses, and interest groups, it is important to have broad input throughout the planning process. A task force assembled specifically for this effort can provide such input. Task force members also can encourage the participation of their constituencies, as described next.
3. **Community Participation:** Residents should have the opportunity to express their desires. A survey of all residents is the most comprehensive way to gather residents' thoughts. Residents of all ages should be included because the interests of younger people can be coordinated with those of

older people, and the thoughts of younger people regarding their older family members are important. Additional participation opportunities that could be offered include a website for online comments, focus groups and public meetings. Organizations, businesses, and others can encourage the people they serve to participate in outreach efforts. It is worth noting that when choosing to conduct a survey, it is vital to determine its nature—whether it aims for statistical significance, seeks to capture input from just those interested in the topic, or looks for more depth like focus group input. All are geared toward gathering useful citizen opinions. These types of surveys differ, with interested citizen surveys collecting 'pulse' views, while statistically significant surveys use rigorous methods to ensure representative data and able to draw generalizable conclusions from their results.

Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies assisted the City of Woodstock in preparing its award-winning Age-Friendly Livable Community Action Plan.

The plan is a useful example and can be viewed at:

https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/ctrgovernment-reports/33/.

4. **Preparing the Plan:** The process to complete the plan typically involves working with the task force to develop a vision, goals, and objectives. Whenever possible, objectives should be short, measurable, achievable, and time sensitive (SMART). It is helpful to organize the goals into major categories. These categories can vary from one community to another, but a potential list that encompasses all aspects of an age-friendly community is shown below:
    a. Housing
    b. Facilities
    c. Services
    d. Activities

5. **Implementation:** An implementation plan including responsibilities, timelines and specific projects will make the age-friendly plan easier to carry out. The implementation plan can include strategies to achieve objectives, resources that can help, who is responsible and who might be potential partners. Actions should be prioritized with timelines developed.

6. **Metrics to measure success:** Developing metrics has the advantage of forcing objectives to be measurable while also establishing a way to track progress. Metrics should measure outcomes rather than outputs. Outputs are whether an activity was completed, possibly in a quantifiable way. For example, developing a specific number of miles of new walking paths is an output. It could also indicate the community's walkability, with walking paths designed to enhance connectivity, enabling older residents to easily access essential goods and services. However, an outcome for the same project would be a metric showing how many seniors are using the paths in line with a hypothetical goal of providing ways for seniors to improve their mobility.

7. Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies assisted the City of Woodstock in preparing its award-winning Age-Friendly Livable Community Action Plan. The plan is a useful example and can be viewed at: https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/ctrgovernment-reports/33/.

Incorporating Age-Friendly Principles into other Plans

Incorporating age-friendly planning into other planning efforts is also effective and the narrower focus of the other plans may result in more specific recommendations and actions. Examples of how age-friendly concepts can be included in other plans follow.

Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Comprehensive land use plans guide the physical growth of the community, touching on all land uses including housing, public spaces, open space, commercial, industrial, and institutional. The plan recommends the location for different uses and how much space will be allocated to each. An age-friendly comprehensive plan includes many elements that relate to older adults. These considerations include the location of housing spaces desired by seniors, the transportation infrastructure facilitating movement within the community by various means, access to open space and recreation opportunities, and the concentration of shopping areas. The overall arrangement of these elements should take into consideration the needs of older residents, ensuring convenient access from housing to retail, recreation, institutions, and more.

Downtown Plan: Downtown plans often consider sense of place as a high priority. These plans can address sense of place in a general way but should also consider the elements of sense of place as they relate to age-friendly planning. The ability to reach a location, move about and be comfortable, seeing one's values reflected downtown, and visiting downtown as a place to meet friends and family or attend an event are elements that can be incorporated into downtown plans.

Special Facilities Plans: Plans for public facilities such as parks and recreation or the library can also be age-friendly. In addition to considering the characteristics of the facilities themselves and how they meet the needs of older residents, the plans should also consider where the facilities are located and how older residents will access them.

AARP developed a program to encourage age-friendly communities. The program provides resources for communities and sets out a process for becoming an AARP Age-Friendly designated community. More information can be found at: https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/.

Conclusion

Older adults are increasingly driving the well-being of our communities. Not only are they increasing in numbers as they live longer, healthier lives, they are proportionately a larger part of the population as younger households decline in number and have fewer children. Older residents can hold the key to recycling housing, retaining an attractive workforce, supporting local businesses, and providing the volunteer efforts that make our communities work. Older visitors can support the local economy with their spending and may become residents themselves. However, for older adults to be able to provide all that they can to the community, the community must also consider their needs. By becoming age-friendly communities, we become better communities for all residents.

The rise of an age-friendly perspective in community planning reflects a proactive approach to address the shifting demographic landscape, notably the anticipated surge in the population aged 65 and older. As the United States and other industrialized nations grapple with this demographic transition, the importance of emphasizing age-friendly environments grows more evident. The journey towards age-friendly communities begins with a deep understanding of demographic trends and the recognition of the unique needs and challenges faced by older individuals. The demographic data underscores the necessity for communities to adapt and accommodate the changing population dynamics, fostering environments that enable healthy, active aging while promoting autonomy, dignity, and social engagement.

The concept of age-friendly communities transcends mere physical infrastructure; it embodies a holistic approach that integrates housing, transportation, healthcare, social services, and community engagement. Central to this approach is the recognition that age-friendly planning benefits individuals of all ages, fostering inclusivity, social cohesion, and economic vitality. Effective age-friendly planning requires a multidimensional strategy that engages stakeholders across various sectors. By fostering community awareness and participation, local leaders can harness the collective wisdom and resources necessary to create environments that promote the well-being of older residents. Furthermore, incorporating age-friendly principles into broader planning frameworks, such as comprehensive land use plans and downtown revitalization efforts, enhances the sustainability and resilience of communities for generations to come.

In conclusion, the rise of age-friendly thinking and planning presents a transformative opportunity to reimagine the design and experience of communities. By embracing the principles of age-friendly planning, environments can be created that not only cater to the needs of older adults but also cultivate a sense of belonging, connection, and vitality for individuals of all ages. Ultimately, the pursuit of age-friendly communities signifies a commitment towards a more equitable, resilient, and vibrant future for all.

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About the Author



Miriam "Mim" Evans, M.S.
Senior Research Associate

Mim Evans, Senior Research Associate at the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies, has made significant contributions to capacity building in numerous communities since 2013. Her expertise lies in economic development and urban planning for communities ranging from rural villages to mid-sized cities as well as county and regional planning. She specializes in downtown revitalization, housing initiatives, and strategic planning for tourism and outdoor recreation-based growth. Notably, Mim has garnered recognition for her impactful work with aging communities.

View additional information about Mim's work and expertise.

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Center for Governmental Studies
Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development

148 N. Third Street
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