Chapter 1 – Introduction

Founded in 1871, Birmingham, Alabama literally grew from the ground up. Settlers who came to the area discovered that the three natural elements necessary to make steel (coal, iron ore and limestone) could be found in the soil and mountains of the region. This area is the only place in the world where all of the elements can be found in close proximity. The town was destined to become a hub for industry.

During the last decade of the 19th Century and the first twenty years of the 20th Century, Birmingham grew into a city in the true sense of the word. Infrastructure necessary to have a modern city was added: hotels; banks; newspapers; schools; residential developments; and governmental structure. The first steel was produced in the city on Thanksgiving Day 1899. Steel became the primary commodity which made way for an abundance of jobs in coal mines and manufacturing plants.

Because the city’s economy was driven by the steel industry Birmingham suffered during the Great Depression. Manufacturing plants closed by the scores and the steel industry cooled it’s once blazing furnaces. The City was resurrected by the new demands for steel brought on by World War II and leaders realized that if Birmingham was going to survive they needed to have more economic diversity. In the 1950s new industries, white collar jobs and the health care industry started to evolve. But the loss of manufacturing jobs coupled with the intense racial and economic segregation perpetuated poverty and created pockets of isolation across the City.

In the 1960s Birmingham became a national battlefield between right and wrong, change and status quo, and the city was labeled as the most segregated place in America (Ranked 8th by Huffington post in 2016). The 1963 bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church which resulted in the death of four little girls shined the spotlight on Birmingham and the deep racial divide that existed here and in many other southern cities and towns. The ensuing national outrage over that act and the televised acts of violence committed by police and the Ku Klux Klan contributed to the ultimate desegregation of public facilities in the City and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. One of the byproduct of the changes in the City’s racial and legal changes was “white flight” which resulted in further reduction in tax collections negatively impacting the city’s financial situation.

The population inside Birmingham’s city limits has fallen dramatically, due in large part to “white flight” the surrounding suburbs. By 2010, the city’s formerly most populous ethnic group, non-Hispanic white, had declined from 57.4 percent in 1970 to 21.1 percent. The population which was 340,887 in 1960 decreased to 242,820 in 2000, a loss of about 29 percent. By 2010, Birmingham’s population was 212,237, its lowest since the mid-1920s. The exodus of wealthier white households to the outlying suburbs led to declining property tax collections, public school enrollment and funding, and often left vacant and blighted housing units. The decline in Birmingham’s population with gains in the suburbs mirrors what has happened in many metropolitan areas.
The decline in tax base impacted the City and region’s ability to create services for its residents. These challenges have not gone away, and are reflected in the disproportionate rate of poverty within the City limits. In addition to the city’s challenges, and amid the housing crisis of 2008, the county fell into bankruptcy due to a $3.2 million sewer bond, creating uncertainty for the entire metropolitan region. Despite these seemingly insurmountable challenges, the City of Birmingham has relied on its economic assets to create a base to build from that includes the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the Health Industry, and major private employers including Regions Bank, AT&T, BBVA, steel and iron companies and regional car manufacturing.

The City itself has been a catalyst for using public investment to leverage private investment in downtown. Birmingham leveraged Department of Housing and Urban Development financing tools such as Float Loans, Section 108 Loans, and historic tax credits available at the State level, to improve and restore buildings for municipal use and private investors also began rehabilitating properties within Downtown Birmingham. The availability of financing and tax credits provided developers with the opportunity to meet changing demands of aging populations and young people to create more housing options in walkable communities with amenities.

Mayor William Bell and the Birmingham City Council have made a commitment to work towards making Birmingham a safe place for people of all ages to work, live, and play. They have leveraged funds to create a well-lit system of inner city trails for biking, hiking, and walking. Another shining example of the city’s revitalization is Railroad Park. Opened in 2010, the park’s design embraces the City’s history as a hub for heavy industry and major rail corridor. The park sits between Downtown Birmingham and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, creating a connection between the City’s major anchor institution and the real estate investment happening downtown.

Birmingham’s Vision for the 21st Century as stated in the City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan:

➢ In 2032, the City of Birmingham leads the South as a community of choice and opportunity: diverse, prosperous, sustainable, and beautiful.
➢ People choose the City of Birmingham as a place to live. Our neighborhoods are attractive, walkable, well maintained, and safe. The blighted properties of the past have been transformed into new or renovated housing, greenways and green open spaces, or other community assets. Across the city, there are appealing housing choices for all kinds of households: young singles and couples, families with children, empty nesters, and retirees.
➢ Birmingham has a connected network of walkable urban places. Our compact, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood centers support an enhanced and efficient transit system, and a network of safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle routes links neighborhoods with city destinations.
➢ Birmingham is innovative and prosperous, with a diversified and sustainable economy. Education, innovation and investment have grown the economy
and reduced poverty by creating new economic opportunities. As a community of learning, Birmingham offers excellent educational options for all age levels and interests, creating well-educated citizens and a modern workforce qualified for 21st century jobs. Vacant or underutilized industrial sites are finding new uses that benefit the city and its economy. Because our culture of opportunity supports innovation and creativity, our diversified economy supports entrepreneurial start-ups and creates new jobs, ranging from businesses that emerge from the interdisciplinary research of UAB to our acclaimed food culture and arts scene.

➢ Birmingham is the most sustainable, “greenest” city in the South. The city has become cleaner, healthier, more energy- and resource-efficient, and more attractive as a place to live. We have worked within the city and through regional partnerships to improve air quality, preserve sensitive lands, and protect and enjoy our excellent water resources. Our parks and greenways provide convenient, safe environments for all residents to play and exercise. Everyone has access to our city’s premier health services, healthy food choices, and healthy lifestyles.

➢ Birmingham’s success is built on local and regional partnerships. We created strong partnerships encompassing citizens, the business community, institutions, nonprofits, and governments to transform Birmingham into the best place to live, work, study, and play in the South.
Chapter 3 – Age Friendly Project Development History

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Age Friendly Cities and Communities Program, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1000 communities.

AARP’s participation in the program advances efforts to help people live easily and comfortably in their homes and communities as they age. AARP’s presence encourages older adults to take more active roles in their communities and have their voices heard. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

Early in 2014, AARP Alabama staff began socializing Age Friendly Communities with partners and collaborating organizations to build energy and consensus around the work. AARP Alabama knew there was a lot of “Age Friendly” activity occurring in the city but that this work was being done by different agencies, often in siloes. AARP Alabama staff met with the Mayor of Birmingham, William Bell, to explain the Age Friendly initiative which he then supported. The Mayor’s office requested that AARP Alabama present the idea to the Birmingham City Council. The Council approved it September 2014 (letters attached). AARP Alabama submitted the City of Birmingham’s application to the Age Friendly Network.

Mayor Bell assigned Senator Linda Coleman-Madison, the City of Birmingham’s ADA Compliance Officer, as the liaison from his office to AARP Alabama. She provided insight to the city government and helped AARP gain access to the neighborhood associations and their leaders.
September 9, 2014

Candi Williams
Interim State Director
AARP Alabama
201 Monroe Street, Suite 1880
Montgomery, AL 36104

Dear Ms. Williams:

On behalf of the City of Birmingham, we are excited to write this letter of support and intent to join AARP and the World Health Organization to become an Age-Friendly Community. Birmingham is committed to making our city friendly to all ages.

Birmingham has always prided itself as a city that utilizes the talents and energy of all its citizens; in particular citizens whose life experiences and maturity can give special insight and guidance to make Birmingham a more livable city.

As a participant in AARP’s Age-Friendly Network of Communities, the City of Birmingham will engage partners such as AARP Alabama, UAB Sustainable Smart Cities Research Center, The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, the Health Action Partnership among others and commit to the following:

- Include the engagement of older adults in a task force to support Age-Friendly Community process
- Develop a baseline assessment of Birmingham’s age-friendliness that considers the Age-Friendly Network’s eight established domains of livability
- Support the development and implementation of a measurable action plan based on the findings of the assessment

The City of Birmingham is devoted to giving its citizens the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives. Thank you for your consideration of our participation and membership in AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Sincerely,

William A. Bell, Sr.

710 NORTH 20TH STREET BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA 35203  (205) 254-2277  FAX  (205) 254-2926
September 9, 2014

Candi Williams
Interim State Director
AARP Alabama
201 Monroe Street, Suite 1880
Montgomery, AL 36104

Dear Ms. Williams:

On behalf of the Birmingham City Council, I am pleased to offer this letter of commitment to create an age-friendly Birmingham. Birmingham recognizes and values the importance of planning for the changing and aging demographics of our communities and is requesting membership into AARP and the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

Birmingham is the largest city in Alabama, rich in diversity, culture and history. Known as a city of civil rights conflict and reconciliation, Birmingham has grown into a city that acknowledges and understands the past while planning and building for a great future. It is our hope that being a part of the Age-Friendly Network of Communities is a part of that future.

As a City Council we will support the development and implementation of plans that build an Age Friendly Community considering the Network's eight established domains of livability. Our goal is to offer our citizens the opportunity to live their best lives in the City of Birmingham.

Thank you for your consideration of our participation and membership in AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Sincerely,

Johnathan F. Austin
President

Johnathan F. Austin, President / Jay Roberson, President Pro-Tem
Valerie A. Abbott / Steven W. Hoyt / Marcus Lundy, Jr. / William Parker
Kimberly Rafferty / Lushunda Roberts-Scales / Sheila Tyson
www.birminghamcitycouncil.org
Chapter 4 – Action Plan Development

The Action Plan in no way encompasses all of the work that is being done in our city but we have endeavored to highlight the projects that will move the Age Friendly work forward. There are many organizations in this community working to improve Birmingham and we see AARP as a convener and collaborator who can assist in communication to rally support from the community. This role was first suggested in the workshop we conducted with community organizations where, during the domain prioritization process it was stated that the best role for AARP was coordination and communication. This role is embraced and figures prominently in the action plan steps listed later in the plan.

When Mayor William A. Bell, Sr. endorsed the Age-Friendly Livable City concept, he asked AARP to work with committees already in existence. There are multiple projects underway in the city and a number of reports and studies are underway. The team made a concerted effort to meet with city officials and community leaders to develop an understanding of the work being done in and by the city.

For the first time in over 50 years, Birmingham completed a Comprehensive Plan with accompanying Framework Plans. Each Framework plan details what is planned for the communities that make up the city. Meetings are currently being held in communities to inform the public of the contents of the plan. The Age-Friendly Livable City plan supports the City to make Birmingham’s vision for the 21st Century a reality.

An Action Plan project team was formed that consisted of the AARP State Director, the Associate State Director – Community Outreach, and a group of volunteers one of which was designated as the project lead.

The Action Plan was developed based on:

- A day long design session was conducted with a work group comprised of leading community organizations; The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, United Way of Central Alabama, the city liaison, AARP, and Senior Citizen groups. The goal of the meeting was to assess the domains identified by AARP and the World Health Organization to determine which fit our city and to prioritize them in order of importance based on community needs. The participants discussed each domain, defined, and prioritized them. A report from
that meeting is included in Appendix A. Seven domains were decided on and are listed in the order deemed most relevant to Birmingham:

1. Transportation
2. Housing
3. Outdoor spaces and building
5. Civic Participation
6. Communication and Information
7. Health Services

- Safety and security concerns are woven throughout the domains along with issues of equity and poverty which are part of the make-up of Birmingham. While all of the domains are important to citizens of Birmingham, the level of importance varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. Shape Birmingham has developed a neighborhood report card that they have piloted in 20 of the 99 neighborhoods in the city. In the Shape Birmingham Report it states: “Residents reported that blight was the most pressing issue affecting neighborhood-level health. Residents ranked crime as the second most pressing issue, and like stakeholders, they ranked transportation as the third pressing issue. Trash and sanitation, and access to grocers rounded out the top five.”

- An in-depth survey was completed by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham. The goal of the Advantage Initiative Survey “benchmarks our community’s effectiveness in meeting the needs of our senior population with regard to aging in place.” This survey encompassed the metro region including Birmingham and the results from it were from a demographic that did not match the demographics of the City of Birmingham in that they were over 50% white while the population of the city is 73% black.

- The Action Plan Project Team decided to develop a survey based on the AARP Livable Communities Survey and to gather information from the citizens of the City of Birmingham. Surveys were distributed at community events, at neighborhood meetings, and by email. Survey Monkey was used for online access. All the data was put into Survey Monkey. We had 110 responses. See the analysis in Appendix B.

- Members of the project team met with the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB), a group comprised of 23 community presidents representing the 99 neighborhood associations. The liaison from the Mayor’s Office spoke with them and we asked them to complete a short survey about what they considered the most important issues facing their neighborhoods. In addition, we were invited to attend several neighborhood meetings where we presented the project and asked for feedback.
In those meetings we got the feedback that mirrored our earlier findings; people wanted to stay in their neighborhoods but they wanted:

- blight removed,
- to feel safe in their homes/neighborhoods, and
- reliable transportation options

As a means of uncovering and discovering the multitude of projects being implemented in the city, and to further understand the Comprehensive Plan, meetings were held with the following city departments; Planning, Community Development, the ADA office as well as with the Regional Planning Commission (RPC). This group is responsible for developing Framework plans that divide the overall Comprehensive Plan into nine regions within the city. AARP is assisting RPC efforts by notifying our members about upcoming Framework meetings in their communities and providing refreshments as a means to entice people to attend.

Shape Birmingham is another project that is underway that will provide a report card for each of the 99 neighborhoods in the city. The data is collected from a variety of sources and a tool developed by HUD, the Healthy Communities Assessment Tool (HCAT), is being utilized. The plan is that the data can be used by city planners, neighborhood associations and other organizations to prioritize project development, write grants, etc. After the City of Birmingham’s Comprehensive Plan is implemented, it will be possible to ascertain if the areas that got low grades saw improvement. Social determinants of health were used as the areas to grade, many of which are closely aligned to the AARP domains. There are 20 neighborhoods which have been “graded”. These neighborhoods are the ones that comprised the existing framework plans. AARP Alabama is assisting this effort by again communicating with residents in the neighborhoods and providing refreshments for meetings.

AARP Alabama also partners with the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) in the development and implementation of the agency’s Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). This is a five year plan which is in the third year. Three strategic issues were identified, goals set, and annual status update meetings with community partners. In the annual meetings for each initiative, interested community partners provide updates and the plan, which is considered a living document is changed to reflect the new information. Optimizing the Built Environment, Transportation System, and Safety, Promoting Healthy Lifestyles are two of the initiatives.

A major initiative that is currently underway in Birmingham is updating the transportation system. There are two parts to this work, one is the Rapid Transit system that includes a shuttle from the airport to the city and the other is a revamping of the city transit system. Discussions with the consultants
responsible for the new city transit system were held and we attended the public information meetings to both hear the plans and to provide feedback. This information is included in the Action Plan. Feedback about this project has been gathered through presentations at local AARP Chapters, community meetings such as the Health Action Priority groups and other events. All of these helped us determine how to best support the efforts of the City of Birmingham and community organizations in our chosen role of coordination and communication. We have been asked to train riders on the new routes and how to use the route timing app.
Chapter 5 How the Action Plan Can Be Used

Vision - The Comprehensive Plan developed by the City of Birmingham is an important tool designed to help Birmingham move forward as a city that takes all of its citizens needs into account and provides a welcoming, invigorating place to live. The Age Friendly Action Plan is designed to augment and reinforce the Comprehensive Plan. We plan to work closely with city officials as the plan is implemented.

This Action Plan is intended to be used as an advocacy tool. The goal is to foster age-friendly physical, social, and service environments that improve life for people of all ages and abilities. It has been decided that the most relevant role for AARP Alabama is to provide communication to bring citizens information about what is happening in our city and work to ensure the voice of the citizens are heard. This role is supported by all of the information we have gathered during our research.

This is an agenda for action. It will continue to evolve as Birmingham works to implement its Comprehensive Plan and as the influx of people moving back into the city embrace it and make it their own. It is hoped the action items will lead organizations and individuals young, old and in between to work together to implement not only these items but others as well, that will contribute to creating a community that is inviting to all ages.
Transportation

Vision:
As the population ages they need access to affordable transportation that is reliable and accessible to all. The optimal solution would be to offer door to door service to those who need it.

Background: America’s aging population is growing at a faster rate than any other U.S. population group. Studies confirm that as people age, isolation becomes a growing problem, and access and mobility needs become increasingly critical. For older Americans and others with mobility impairment, affordable, reliable transportation options are essential. Public transportation in various forms can be part of the solution by providing:

- The ability to live independently
- Access to medical and social services
- Contact with the outside world such as shopping and visiting friends
- The feeling of belonging to the community; church, community and senior centers, events, volunteering

Transportation consistently was cited as both a critical need for the city and as problematic. There is still a misconception within city departments and among the populace that the automobile needs to be the focus of transportation solutions. The bus routes have not been changed for many years. Currently riders must go downtown in order to catch buses to other areas of the city resulting in long rides for many. The majority of the bus stops are not covered, are not accessible for those with mobility issues and do not have lights. Other modes of transportation such as bikes, walking, and wheelchairs are not well accommodated.

Another issue for seniors and those with mobility issues is the “first-and last-mile problem”: the extra time and hassle commuters face when they’re going from home to a transit station and then from the station at the other end of the trip to a final destination. There are many neighborhoods in Birmingham that do not have well maintained sidewalks which imperils citizens when they have to walk to a bus stop.

ClasTran operates a reservation service in Birmingham for those who lack mobility. It operates during weekdays from 7 to 5, rides are $8.00 round trip. ClasTran provides subsidized rides for:
- People who are 60+ traveling in Jefferson, Shelby & Walker Counties
- People who are eligible for paratransit under the Americans with Disabilities Act
- People who reside in and travel to or from rural Jefferson or Shelby Counties
Understanding how enhanced mobility is one of the most basic needs of America’s older individuals and the car is not the only travel option is a requirement for leadership to embrace in planning for Age-Friendly communities.

Birmingham is engaged in updating its outdated transportation system. There are many concerted efforts underway:

1. A rapid transit plan is being developed that includes shuttles to and from the airport, express lanes for the buses traveling on a main artery through the city from Woodlawn (east Birmingham) to the Crossplex (west Birmingham). Plans are also being made to develop an express route for the city center.
2. The proposed addition to the current transit system would provide people working in the city’s center with the means to go to lunch or meetings without having to use their vehicles during the day.
3. The City wide transportation system is under revision. There will be three centers across the city so riders can transfer without having to go downtown. Planners are working to facilitate access to schools, medical facilities, and other amenities as well as trying to address the bus stops and their access.
4. Birmingham’s Comprehensive Plan includes moving forward with the Complete Streets Policy that was previously passed by the Birmingham Planning Commission.
5. Phase I of a Master Sidewalk Plan was completed and Phase II of the Sidewalk Plan that pertains to ADA compliance will be completed in 2018.

Door to door service is not being addressed at this time.

**Action Item – Develop a communications plan about the transportation efforts:** The plans underway will require both financial and overt support from public officials which is more easily accomplished when the public understands and works with public officials.

Collaborating Organizations: City of Birmingham, University of Alabama Birmingham, Lakeshore Foundation, Regional Planning Commission, Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA), REV Birmingham, Strada Professional Services, United Way of Central Alabama

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<th>Activities</th>
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<th>By When</th>
<th>Resources &amp; Support</th>
<th>Metrics/Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a communications plan about public transit efforts.</td>
<td>BJCTA</td>
<td>Three months before the plans are put into effect and</td>
<td>AARP Alabama to help train riders on the new routes and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A finely honed communication plan will be developed with clear</td>
<td>Strada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public meetings will have at least 75 people in attendance</td>
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responsibility for its administration and delivery mechanisms. Communication experts state that a message has to be delivered at least seven times for it to be truly heard.

Messages to be developed include but are not limited to:
- The disruption of the bus service; dates and times
- Maps of the new routes
- Information about transfers
- Cost
- New equipment and technology

ongoing as needed

AARP AL will inform and will leverage media channels to promote information to members, partners, and social media followers.

United Way 211

**Action Item – Develop a plan to develop regional funding for public transit**

Currently transit is funded by each city. Birmingham provides the service and surrounding cities pay for riders in their cities who use the service. If the city does not pay, citizens in that city do not have access to public transportation. This has resulted in riders in at least two cities, Midfield and Fairfield, having to make their way to the city boundary to catch the bus. A number of these communities are home to many who rely on public transportation.

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<tr>
<td>Establish an advocacy process to help develop the political will to influence state lawmakers to change funding.</td>
<td>BJCTA Regional Planning Commission (RPC)</td>
<td>End of May 2018</td>
<td>Collaborative effort led by AARP Advocacy Team</td>
<td>Form Group Do Advocacy Training</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mobilize team before next legislative session</td>
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**Action Item – Develop an Advocacy Plan to promulgate the acceptance of a Complete Streets Plan:** The Planning Commission approved a Complete Streets Resolution in 2014 but it was never brought before the City Council. In order for this to move forward
it is necessary to have City Council pass an ordinance to have Complete Streets be part of planning for streets and sidewalks.

Collaborating Organizations: City of Birmingham, University of Alabama Birmingham, Lakeshore Foundation, Regional Planning Commission, Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA), REV Birmingham, Strada, American Heart Association, Fresh Water Land Trust

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<tr>
<td>Support the group comprised of Complete Streets advocates, organizations interested in mobility issues, such as Lakeshore Foundation, schools, UAB, Senior adult advocates, corporations located in the city, and members of the City Planning staff.</td>
<td>Built Environment Health Action Priority Group</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Collaborative effort led by Chair of the Priority Group</td>
<td>Group is formed and goal(s) are set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a project plan on gaining acceptance and methods to get City Council approval of the ordinance.</td>
<td>Advocacy Group</td>
<td>Oct. 2017</td>
<td>Priority Group Chair</td>
<td>Plan is accepted by the advocacy group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinance is presented to the Birmingham City Council</td>
<td>Members of the advocacy group</td>
<td>Dec. 2017</td>
<td>Priority Group and advocates</td>
<td>Ordinance is passed</td>
</tr>
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Housing

Vision:

*All residents of the City of Birmingham have access to safe, age-friendly, affordable housing in neighborhoods that offer a good quality of life in order to age in place.*

The Birmingham Housing and Neighborhood Study was published in December 2014. This study states; “As the former iron capital of the world, the City of Birmingham remains an economic engine for the State of Alabama. Good jobs in the iron and steel industry paved a path to the middle class for many of the city residents, and the disappearance of these jobs severely impacted the city’s economy. With many iron and steel jobs moving out of the city and country, the wealth created through manufacturing that had bolstered the Birmingham economy and created investment in the city’s neighborhoods declined.
The loss of manufacturing jobs, along with racial and economic segregation, perpetuated poverty and created pockets of isolation across the city. Even residents who had accumulated wealth through homeownership, found their neighborhoods losing services and residents due to job loss, racial tensions, and white flight to surrounding communities. The decline in population led to increased vacant land and abandoned properties throughout the city, and the decline in tax base impacted the city and region’s ability to create services for its residents. These challenges have not gone away, and are reflected in the high amount of vacant land and abandoned properties throughout the city, as well as the disproportionate rate of poverty within the city limits. In addition to the city’s challenges, and amid the housing crisis of 2008, in 2008 Jefferson County fell into bankruptcy due to a $3.2 million sewer bond, at the time it was the largest municipal bankruptcy in history, creating uncertainty for the entire metropolitan region.

**Background:** Birmingham is comprised of 99 neighborhoods many of them were once small towns. Each of these neighborhoods has a President and other officers and each holds neighborhood meetings. As in many others cities, some neighborhoods are more viable than others. These neighborhoods are combined into 23 communities and the Community Action Board (CAB), made up of Neighborhood Presidents, meets monthly in the City Council chambers. Housing needs and issues vary from community to community.

The City of Birmingham’s Community Development Department commissioned the first in-depth assessment of housing and neighborhoods. The goal of the assessment was to provide the information needed to make data-driven decisions based on current demographics, a picture of the current housing market, and an honest look at the challenges facing low income and minority populations within the City.

There are housing challenges for seniors in Birmingham. According to information in a 2013 HUD publication, “Aging in Place: Facilitating Choice and Independence: Evidence Matters”, nearly 8,000 elderly households face high housing costs.

The elderly population of Birmingham represents 13% of the total population. Of all households, 8% have a householder over the age of 65. Of these, 97% are elderly people living alone. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, the share of elderly population will greatly increase and demand for senior housing and services will become greater. Birmingham seniors will increasingly look for affordable opportunities to remain in their homes as they age for as long as possible.

There are plans in place to address making Birmingham a livable age-friendly city. In his 2014 State of the City Address, Mayor William A. Bell, Sr. presented his vision for blight reduction and streamlined city services, including code enforcement and demolition in the City of Birmingham. This vision, more formally known as the RISE initiative, is a multifaceted neighborhood stabilization strategy under the coordination of the Office of Community Development. The acronym finds its origin in the initiative’s focus areas:
Removing Blight
Increasing Values
Strengthening Neighborhoods, and
Empowering Residents

In a meeting with the City of Birmingham Development Department, the Director spoke of the work being done to remove abandoned houses. The project took some time to get started due to legal questions and is still moving slowly because each property has to go through the legal system individually instead of in groups. The City is working to try and change that so that they can move faster. This is very important to people living in neighborhoods affected by blight.

The "9-N-9" initiative is a component of the city of Birmingham’s overall RISE Initiative and will consist of neighborhood commercial development, such as neighborhood grocery stores, healthcare providers, utility payment centers and other ancillary services that fill the needs of the immediate neighborhood. This project will be executed by the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development and is scheduled to take place in several phases: acquisition, financing, marketing and implementation.

Acquisition - The city will identify properties throughout its nine council districts for development.

Financing - The lending initiative will be led by the city with an initial allocation of $4.5 million in assets and infrastructure. According to the city of Birmingham, Regions Bank will match the funding of $4.5 million from a dedicated loan source, and the bank will also contribute an additional $14 million for economic development opportunities.

Marketing - Commercial sites for potential economic development will be marketed with help from economic development agencies.

Implementation - The Mayor’s Office of Economic Development and the Community Development Department will work in conjunction with developers in implementing strategies for communities.

The Birmingham Land Bank Authority emerged out of the City’s Comprehensive Planning Process which stressed the need for a tool to deal with extensive blight, vacancy, and tax delinquent properties across Birmingham. With nearly 15,700 tax delinquent properties, the City of Birmingham qualified and the City Council passed a resolution to establish the Birmingham Land Bank Authority in 2014.

Roughly 60% of all housing units in the City are 30 or more years old. Of Birmingham’s 111,090 housing units, 88,971 were occupied in 2012, amounting to a 20% vacancy rate.

Of the nearly 420,000 occupied housing units in the Birmingham MSA, nearly 30,000, or
6.4% have severe or moderate physical problems. These problems include deficiencies in plumbing, heating, electrical, or general upkeep (leaky roof, pest control, peeling paint, etc.). Due to the number of older homes many need repairs as well as retrofits that include elements such as wider doorways, ramps, accessible bathroom facilities and first floor bedrooms.

**Action Item – Augment existing repair services with neighborhood based services**

The City of Birmingham offers home repairs services to those who qualify financially but there is a very long waiting list for services and some wait for several years for help. Faith based organizations such as Christian Service Mission also do repairs but all of the services do not begin to fill the need. Existing services could provide a model for the plan.

Collaborating Organizations: City of Birmingham, Habitat for Humanity, YWCA, Christian Service Mission, Alethia House, HUD, Housing Trust Fund, and a variety of faith based organizations, Human-Community Services and Economic Development

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<td>Communicate to the CAB about how the Neighborhood Associations can establish methods to inform residents about available resource to do repairs and prepare homes so residents can age in place.</td>
<td>AARP, City of Birmingham Community Relations Officers (CRO)</td>
<td>Jan 2018</td>
<td>Home Fit Guide, Christian Services Mission, City of Birmingham Community Housing and Development</td>
<td>Meeting set and held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet regularly with the City Development Department to offer assistance and support bringing information about areas of interest such as Complete Streets, the Sidewalk Assessment, the Park Assessment, etc. to reinforce the need for consideration of all people taking into account mobility issues, innovative flexible housing complex design, etc.</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Health Action Priority Groups</td>
<td>Meetings occur according to an established schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Action Item – Advance Opportunities for Aging in Place:** Birmingham is a city of neighborhoods, each with their own geographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Opportunities to age in place should be available in each of Birmingham’s neighborhoods to provide choices for older adults as well as to foster healthy, connected neighborhoods.

Based on CHAS data, Birmingham has a much higher rate of cost burden, with 41% of households paying too much for housing and 21.3% paying more than half their income for housing. This indicates that despite Birmingham’s relative affordability, there are concentrations of very low and extremely low income households who face extreme challenges in finding decent, affordable housing.

**Collaborating Organizations:** City of Birmingham, Habitat for Humanity, YWCA, Christian Service Mission, Alethia House, HUD, Housing Trust Fund, and a variety of faith based organizations, Human-Community Services and Economic Development

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support the efforts of the City of Birmingham to ensure that public housing has green spaces within a 10 minute walk.</td>
<td>YMCA Go Outside, Hands on Birmingham, City of Birmingham Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Parks RX Community Volunteers</td>
<td>Green space is included in public housing development designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with neighborhood Associations and the city to find ways to support revitalization without displacement of vulnerable older adults (and their supportive networks) in Birmingham neighborhoods.</td>
<td>AARP lead, CAB, CRO</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>AARP mailing list, Home Fit Social Media platforms</td>
<td>At least two methods that support revitalization and minimize displacement that all parties agree to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote resources that currently exist in the community</td>
<td>City Newsletter</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Four community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Vision:
A whole community effort creates a welcoming and safe environment so that all can enjoy the outdoor spaces within the City of Birmingham.

Background: The City of Birmingham has over 3,500 acres of park land for public use owned and managed by the City and other groups. This gives the city approximately 17 acres of park land per 1,000 persons which puts Birmingham slightly below the median of 20.3 acres. A significant portion of the parks inventory can be found in two major nature parks, Ruffner Mountain and Red Mountain. While these are wonderful resources, they do not provide many residents with community and neighborhood parks. Urban park activists emphasize accessibility – parks within a 10 minute walk. In addition, the neighborhood parks have not been well maintained due to lack of funding and the infrastructure to support them. A recent assessment of the parks has been completed though the report has not been released, a commitment has been made by several civic groups to sponsor service days for park maintenance.
Many neighborhoods, especially in the most poverty stricken ones, lack safe, clean places for families and seniors to use for recreational purposes. Some neighborhoods are beset with violence which results in residents being afraid to go to parks, walk on the street, or even let their children play outside.

The FBI's annual crime report for 2015 included the following figures for Birmingham:

- Murder and non-negligent manslaughter: 79 (37.2/100,000), up 33.9% from 59 in 2014
- Rape (revised definition): 159 (74.9/100,000)
- Robbery: 1,114 (524.8/100,000)
- Aggravated assault: 2,355 (1,109/100,000)
- Violent crimes (total): 3,707 (1,746/100,000)
- Burglary: 3,146
- Larceny: 8,838
- Auto theft: 1,515
- Property crimes (total): 13,499
Although the FBI specifically discourages using UCR data to rank cities, the website "24/7 Wall St." ranked Birmingham as the United States' 3rd most dangerous city based on the reported violent crime rate of 1,746 per 100,000 residents.

Many Birmingham neighborhoods are largely populated by those living in poverty. These are also the neighborhoods with the most minorities primarily black, are food deserts, and where there is limited public transportation.

**Action Item** – Establish communication process to inform Birmingham residents about events in the parks and set up transportation for residents of all ages and abilities to attend. Events such as free Yoga, walking groups, concerts, and other activities will be communicated.

Collaborating Agencies: YMCA, Jefferson County Health Department, United Way 211 Service, Physician Rx, City of Birmingham ADA Office and Department of Parks and Recreation, Community Foundation

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicate the existence of the Parks and Repository on current park inventory.</td>
<td>AARP Communication outlets, Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH), City of Birmingham Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Jefferson County Health Department Sites, Physicians who access the Parks RX program</td>
<td>AARP completes two Convio messages by June 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess mobility issues in all parks and develop a list of the most accessible for all levels of mobility.</td>
<td>City of Birmingham ADA</td>
<td>End of 2018</td>
<td>YMCA, JCDH</td>
<td>List is completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate the progress of the current city lighting upgrade project</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>All lighting in the city is upgraded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support crime reduction activities such as Neighborhood watch, community policing, promoting attendance at neighborhood associations

CAB
City of Birmingham Police Department

CRO
Faith-based organizations

Ongoing
City of Birmingham Faith-based organizations Jefferson County Health Department Community Agencies

The Health Action Partnership is a collaborative of many organizations with the goal of improving the social determinants that comprise health. One of the Priority Groups is Built Environment. This group actively works with city departments such as the Planning Department, Traffic Engineering, ADA, and other pertinent departments addressing issues such as the Trail infrastructure, Complete Streets, parks, sidewalks.

**Action Item – Support work of the Built Environment Priority Group**

Collaborating Agencies: United Way, UAB, Jefferson County Health Equity Collaborative, Complete Streets, Jefferson County Health Department,

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make presentations to the City Council advocating acceptance of such issues as Complete Streets, sidewalk improvement.</td>
<td>Members of the Health Action Partnership</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>All Health Action members</td>
<td>Presentation to City Council occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for improvements to the city’s sidewalk inventory to facilitate a more active lifestyle.</td>
<td>All Health Action members</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>All Health Action members ADA</td>
<td>Two Advocacy efforts are completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with communications about issues to inform the populace.</td>
<td>All Health Action members</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>The constituency of each group in the</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Railroad Park and the Rotary Trail are two recent additions to the City. Both offer residents opportunities to enjoy the beauty of the city center. Both sites require most people to have transportation because they are located in the center of the city. A portion of the funds garnered from a 2012 TIGER grant supported the design of two walking and biking trails, the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System a regional system of walking and biking trails.

*Action Item – Put a process in place to facilitate residents being able to access Railroad Park and other outdoor amenities.*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confer with CAB about how to develop plans that Neighborhood Associations can use to engage faith based and other organizations to provide transportation to events in Birmingham parks.</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>CSM, City of Birmingham Parks and Recreation, Members of the faith based community</td>
<td>At least two meetings are held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote use of the parks through a variety of communication avenues.</td>
<td>AARP Communication outlets, Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH), Neighborhood Associations</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Jefferson County Health Department Sites, Physicians who prescribe the Parks RX program, YMCA</td>
<td>AARP completes two Convio* messages by June 2018</td>
</tr>
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*Convio - an AARP communication tool*
Social Participation, Respect, and Inclusion

Vision:
Real opportunities to integrate aging residents into activities and neighborhoods in a meaningful way are identified and promoted.

Background: Middle-aged and older adults are often isolated and ignored in the United States and Birmingham is no exception. According to the National Council on Aging, one in six seniors living alone in the United States faces physical, cultural, and/or geographical barriers that isolate them from their peers and communities.

This isolation can prevent them from receiving benefits and services that can improve their economic security and their ability to live healthy, independent lives.

It is critical to identify Older citizens have many talents to offer. We need to provide avenues for volunteering and networking through outreach and social activities at multi-age groups and older age groups.

Action Item – Reduce Social Isolation among Older Adults: Social isolation and disengagement from social interaction can be harmful to people of any age, but older adults and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of isolation.

Collaborating Agencies: Faith-based organizations, Positive Maturity, UAB, City of Birmingham, United Way of Central Alabama, Center for Aging

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<tr>
<td>Educate 50+ on the organizations that provide services and opportunities that are available to them.</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Faith based community</td>
<td>Develop a process to collect information on activities</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Develop a method to disseminate information from a central site</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood Associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radio Stations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate faith based and community organizations about the effects of isolation among</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Council of Aging</td>
<td></td>
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older adults.

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<tr>
<th>Encourage participation in the Neighborhood meetings by helping Neighborhood Officials develop effective communication plans.</th>
<th>AARP CRO</th>
<th>May 2018</th>
<th>City of Birmingham CAB CRO</th>
<th>Communicate information regarding the time, date, and location of all the 99 neighborhood meetings to all residents of Birmingham</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine the best way to let citizens know about the monthly newsletter that the City of Birmingham puts out; i.e., post in the Library, publicize the web site.</td>
<td>CAB CRO AARP</td>
<td>Feb 2018</td>
<td>City of Birmingham CAB AARP</td>
<td>Avenues of communication are established and used at least once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action Item – Advance Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion**

Jefferson County is one of 25 areas that have an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Collaborative whose mission is to promote equity in Birmingham and the county. The team is trained to deliver intense training on diversity, inclusion and equity and has been charged with identifying organizations who will promote these values.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Support the work of the Health Action Partnership Health Equity Priority Group and the Jefferson County Collaborative for Health Equity (JCHE) Team.</td>
<td>Executive Council of the JCHE</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Health Action Partnership organizations</td>
<td>First Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training event is held by the end of 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and share best practices for improving inclusive access at public meetings (e.g., captioning) in the planning process; including wise use of social media avenues – Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.</td>
<td>Lakeshore City of Birmingham ADA AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Agencies in Birmingham that use a variety of methods to promote their agendas</td>
<td>At least two meetings with the responsible agencies to develop messaging around best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action Item – Support Neighborhood-Based Efforts for Older Adults: Birmingham is a city of neighborhoods with volunteer neighborhood associations who sponsor a myriad of meetings and events.

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<tr>
<td>Educate neighborhood associations on the value of including people of various generations, cultures, and abilities.</td>
<td>CRO AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Set a meeting with the CAB as soon as the new officers are named – by July of 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Civic Participation, Communication and Information

Vision:

*Civic participation is increased by communicating neighborhood/city plans and activities as well as provide information about local community and health services.*

**Background:** In order for Birmingham to achieve its goal to be a healthy, thriving city, it is necessary for citizens to engage in volunteer and civic activities. Older adults represent one of the few types of resources that are increasing, and it is important to both consult elders during citywide processes and encourage older and younger people alike to work together toward the end of improving the city’s health and sustainability. Opportunities for civic engagement and volunteering are needed if Birmingham is to become a place that fosters a high quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.

Many citizens serve in the city through faith based organizations. This service encompasses a plethora of needs from feeding the homeless to disaster recovery.

The need for better communication about City plans and activities as well as information about local community and health services was cited numerous times as information was gathered about developing an Age-Friendly Birmingham. This is critical to the success of the plan and to the success of the City.
Communication and access to information in today’s society can be challenging. People of different ages have varying levels of comfort, ability to use, and access to the various types of media that are used. Although communicating exclusively through digital formats is increasingly common, print media or telephone calls are preferred or required by many older adults. It is important to provide information in a range of ways that are easy to find, improve online resources and formatting (e.g., create websites that are age friendly), utilize existing organizations such as neighborhood associations to disseminate information and opportunities for engagement and activities, and provide educational opportunities for learning new technologies and media.

Action Item – Improve communications with all citizens of Birmingham with emphasis on older adults.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 211 service is active but needs to be promoted.</td>
<td>United Way</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Community Organizations</td>
<td>A timeline for education and outreach is developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A format for organizations to communicate their services and changes to their services to the 211 service</td>
<td>United Way</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Community Organizations</td>
<td>Format is established and accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make public aware of 1-800-Age Line</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Social Media platforms</td>
<td>Develop messaging to continuously promote this service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Action Item- Foster Meaningful Involvement of Older Adults in Citywide Processes: Citizen Participation resulting in better solutions but meaningful involvement of many of Birmingham’s different communities has been lacking. New approaches are needed to engage older adults in a manner that utilizes their skills, experience, and wisdom, especially those whose voices are rarely heard; older adults of color and those living in poverty. Central to the age-friendly Birmingham effort is the involvement of older adults in policymaking, often referred to as the “Nothing about them without them” approach.
Collaborating Agencies: Human-Community Services and Economic Development, Positive Maturity, United Way Agency on Aging of Jefferson County, Faith based organizations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convene volunteer and service organizations, groups, neighborhood leaders, and individuals who have been advocating for an age-friendly Birmingham to strategize about ways to increase the involvement of older adults in civic affairs and policy making especially those in traditionally underrepresented groups.</td>
<td>AARP Neighborhood Associations CAB</td>
<td>See Metrics Email Data Base Community Partners Current AARP Chapters</td>
<td>Develop list of pertinent organizations by March 2018 Hold meeting by March 2018 Publish plans from meeting by March 2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine means to best reach older adults including those who may not have technology skills or access so that they can be informed of meetings and policy relevant to them. (Problem expressed by a number of community based organizations)</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>July 2018 Community Organizations</td>
<td>Establish a list of communication outlets Develop a means to measure response rate to methods</td>
<td></td>
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*Action Item – Optimize the Skills and the “Renewable Resource” of older Adults:* Older adults may become frustrated when attempting to find meaningful engagement opportunities.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and share best practices for engaging older adults in the work of the nonprofit sector.</td>
<td>Hands on Birmingham Positive Maturity AARP Chapter members</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>AARP Chapter members</td>
<td>Set up a meeting with the three organizations to develop a means to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educate the public on the web-based portal that identifies community-wide opportunities for engaging older adults in civic work and provides an orientation to the sector.

| AARP | Hands on Birmingham | Ongoing Meetings held by September Plan is developed by January 2018 | Hands on Tech | Three meetings are held to inform Chapter members about the existing web site Plan is developed to disseminate information to such organizations as the Neighborhood Associations |

### Community and Health Services

**Vision:**

*Disrupt aging through improved communications about the value of proactive use of health services and preventive measures to both older adults and agencies.*

**Background:** Health Services are particularly important for older adults due both to normal aging processes and to disease-related challenges that often occur later in life. Birmingham has a wealth of excellent medical services and facilities however the transit system makes it difficult for many who lack transportation to easily access medical facilities. The number of older adults who use emergency services for care continues to be problematic.

*Action Item – Increase the awareness about the value of Home-Based Services and train First Responders and Hospital Staff on their use:* For example support the growth of the Birmingham Fire and Rescue has one paramedic who works with those who frequently use emergency services, visiting them in their homes and helping with education about medications and wound care, etc.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for more of these</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Data from</td>
<td>At least one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
types of services which would reduce the number of
emergency calls especially for
older adults.

| City of
Birmingham
Fire
Department | Have meeting
by end of next
legislative
session May
2018 | existing
programs | meeting
with elected
officials |

**Action Item** – *Include activities for people of all ages and abilities when planning events in such venues as Railroad Park and issue invitations to older adults to participate:* Event planners need to take into consideration a wide variety of ages, abilities, and cultures when planning events to ensure the events are diverse and inclusive. Guidelines would be helpful to be given them when they contract with the City of Birmingham for use of the city parks.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop inclusive, age-friendly, ADA toolkit for event planners to use.</td>
<td>City of Birmingham ADA Birmingham Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>July 2018</td>
<td>Built Environment Priority group Lakeshore</td>
<td>Guidelines are developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action Item** – *Integrate active aging as a fundamental aspect into the City of Birmingham Economic Development and Community Development plans:* The concept of active-aging is a fundamental component of age-friendly communities. Active aging results from a variety of physical, social, psychological, physiological, and economic factors, as well as experiences accumulated throughout the life course. (Cited from World Health Organization (2012). 2012 – Active Aging: Good health adds life to years.) Older and younger Birmingham residents alike should understand how these factors influence how we age.

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<th>By When</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish regular meetings with the Directors of Economic Development and the Community Development departments to advocate for the 50+ population in their plans.</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>Staff and volunteers</td>
<td>Schedule of meetings is established and adhered to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Responsible Party</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>Communication Channels</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote and educate citizens about the plans developed by these departments.</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Social Media, Tele-townhalls, Other media outlets</td>
<td>At least two mass distribution of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the Jefferson County Department of Health Community Health Improvement Plan</td>
<td>AARP</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
<td>Social Media and other media outlets</td>
<td>Dissemination of plan goals and information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>