

AARP LONG ISLAND

**ACTION PLAN
FOR
AGE-FRIENDLY
TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD**

June 2016

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INTRODUCTION

AARP and the Age-Friendly Communities Program

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is affiliated with 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 1,000 communities.

In the U.S., 70 communities from more than a two dozen states have enrolled in the AARP Network, including four on Long Island.

Why is this effort important?

The whole world is rapidly growing older, due to increasing life spans along with declining birth rates. In the U.S. the number of persons aged 65+ is projected to grow 79.0% from 2010 to 2030, increasing from 13% to more than 19% of the total population.

In the Town of North Hempstead, 2010 Census data revealed that one-quarter of the town's roughly 230,000 people are now age 60 or over. Furthermore, North Hempstead's older senior population has been growing even faster—residents age 75-84 increased 40% while those older than 85 increased 60%, according to the last national census.

Population aging will shape local, regional, national and international economies and policymaking unlike any other demographic shift witnessed to date. As people stay healthy and active longer, communities must adapt. A key strategy to facilitate the inclusion of growing numbers of seniors is to make our world more age-friendly: enabling people of all generations to stay engaged in community activities and treating everyone with respect, regardless of age. Age-friendly communities help people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages, provide appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

The goal of creating a vision for such places can be especially daunting in a decentralized suburban area such as the Town of North Hempstead, with its many municipalities that present distinct challenges in serving diverse local populations. These challenges are compounded by fiscal constraints—the high cost of living on Long Island, coupled with the increasing strain on budgets at every level of government. Nevertheless, well-designed, livable communities are critical to our future economic growth, and they make for healthier, happier, and more vital residents — of all ages.

COMMUNITY PROFILE: TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD

The Town of North Hempstead occupies the northwest part of Nassau County, New York, with a land area of 53.6 square miles. One of Nassau's three towns, North Hempstead borders Long Island Sound to the north, Queens County to the west, Hempstead Town to the South and Oyster Bay Town to the east.

The historic area was first settled around 1643 and became part of the Town of Hempstead, but following the Revolutionary War, the Town of North Hempstead split off from the southern part of the town, which had been primarily Tory. North Hempstead became more affluent with the opening of the Long Island Rail Road through to Great Neck, and the inauguration of steamboat service from Manhattan in 1836.

Today, North Hempstead is made up of 30 incorporated villages, including Great Neck Plaza, and 20 unincorporated hamlets. As of the 2010 census, the town had a population of 226,322, (an estimated 227,915 people in 2015) with almost 82,000 housing units. The demographic makeup of the town is almost 73% white; 12.0% Hispanic or Latino; 14.3% Asian; and 5.7% African American. About 25% of the population was age 45 to 64, and 16.6% was 65 years of age or older, but North Hempstead's senior population has been growing rapidly—residents aged 75-84 increased 40% while those older than 85 increased 60%, according to the last national census.

In part because of its proximity to Manhattan as well as Long Island Sound, North Hempstead continues to have many wealthy residents. The median household income is more than \$109,000, according to 2015 estimates. About 3.1% of families and 4.8% of the population were below the poverty line, including 5.4% of those under age 18 and 5.1% of those age 65 or over.

The town is governed by an elected seven-member board, including six council members and the Supervisor. In addition to Supervisor, there are two other town-wide elected positions—Town Clerk and Receiver of Taxes.

North Hempstead is home to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and several large employers, notably in the health-care sector: North Shore LIJ Health System; Winthrop-University Hospital; St. Francis Hospital; Parker Jewish Institute; and ProHEALTH.

AARP'S ROLE IN CREATING AGE-FRIENDLY PLANS

The goal of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program is to provide municipal leaders—whether at the city, county or village level—with guides and tools they can use to create practical age-friendly action plans: assessing current assets and best practices; identifying opportunities for improvement; and formulating short-term and long-term action items.

To enroll in the network a community's leadership must make “the commitment to actively work toward making their town, city, county or neighborhood a great place for people of all ages.” AARP facilitates a community's participation by guiding its representatives through the network's implementation and assessment process. On Long Island four communities have signed up so far:

- **Brookhaven Town** (Enrolled March 14, 2013)
- **Village of Great Neck Plaza** (Enrolled April 19, 2013)
- **Suffolk County** (Enrolled August 23, 2013)
- **North Hempstead Town** (Enrolled November 17, 2014)

The action steps that comprise age-friendly plans are intended to foster not only more sustainable physical environments, but also more effective social services and opportunities for people of all ages. In general, Age-Friendly plans focus on eight “Domains of Livability,” as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO):

1. **Outdoor spaces and buildings**—availability of safe and accessible recreational facilities.
2. **Transportation**—safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation.
3. **Housing**—a wide range of housing options for older residents; the ability to age in place; and other home-modification programs.
4. **Social participation**—access to leisure and cultural activities; opportunities for older residents to participate in social and civic engagement with their peers and younger people.
5. **Respect and social inclusion**—programs to promote ethnic and cultural diversity as well as multigenerational interaction and dialogue.
6. **Civic participation and employment**—the promotion of paid work and volunteer activities for older residents and opportunities to engage in formulation of policies relevant to their lives.
7. **Communication and information**—the promotion of and access to technology to keep older residents connected to their community and friends

and family.

8. **Community support and health services**—access to home-care services, clinics, and programs to promote wellness and active aging.

For a detailed description of features that characterize each domain, see WHO’s “Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities” in the Appendix of Resources.

GENERAL PLANNING TEMPLATE AND TIMETABLE

Communities participating in the Age-Friendly Program are expected to commit to a general template—a three-phase plan, over a period of five years and beyond:

Phase 1 - Planning (Years 1-2)

Conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the community, including the 8 Domains of Livability and other information. Organize stakeholders and establish an advisory committee. Develop and approve a 3-year action plan based on assessment findings; identify indicators to monitor progress.

Phase 2 – Implementation and Evaluation (Years 3-5)

Commit to implementing the approved plan, developing a framework to evaluate priorities as they are accomplished. At the end of five years, a progress report is submitted that outlines the progress against the baseline, using the indicators developed in the action plan.

Phase 3- Continuous Improvements (Year 5 and beyond)

Make continuous improvements, identifying new actions to form the basis for a revised action plan. Organize knowledge exchange opportunities, to share ideas, resources and best practices more effectively among participating age-friendly U.S. communities.

DEVELOPING THE NORTH HEMPSTEAD PLAN

PLANNING: PHASES 1 & 2

CREATION OF PROJECT INDEPENDENCE

In late 2005—almost 10 years before the Town of North Hempstead officially signed on to AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Communities—the town announced what has become a nationally recognized “aging in place” initiative called Project Independence (PI). A program of the town’s Department of Services for the Aging, Project Independence (www.tohprojectindependence.net) was designed to bring together local health care providers, human service agencies, social, educational and recreational programs and local businesses—all collaborating to respond to the needs of seniors seeking support and assistance in order to remain at home with optimal health, safety and emotional well-being.

ORGANIZING STAKEHOLDERS

In the early years, the Town focused the development of Project Independence programs in the northern New Hyde Park area, which had been designated by the New York State Office for the Aging as a Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC). The Town has gradually expanded PI programs and services across six regions, establishing community-center type locations in New Hyde Park, Roslyn, Great Neck, Mineola/Williston Park, Westbury/Carle Place and Port Washington. Each region has an advisory committee and several subcommittees have been established to address particular concerns such as home maintenance and pedestrian safety.

Today, PI offers a broad array of services to 52,000 Town seniors ages 60 and older, including transportation to the supermarket and much reduced transportation rates to doctor’s appointments within the Town of North Hempstead; community-based nursing; social work services; home maintenance; fitness classes and other social opportunities. Town seniors who wish to connect with North Hempstead’s Project Independence can call 311 to access PI programs and services. So far, more than 11,000 seniors have signed on as members of Project Independence.

The multi-service PI initiative involves coordination with many community partners, such as AARP, All Island Transportation, Delux Transportation, EAC, Hofstra University, JASA (Jewish Association for Services to the Aged), Nassau University Medical Center, Northwell (formerly known as North Shore/LIJ Health System), North Shore Child and Family Guidance, Rebuilding Together/LI, The Rehabilitation Institute, Sid Jacobson JCC, Taxi Hispano Express, Virtual Senior Center (Selfhelp/Kimmel Housing Development Foundation), and Winthrop University Hospital.

On February 10, 2015, North Hempstead Supervisor Judi Bosworth officially announced the town's participation in the Age-Friendly Communities Program at a news conference. While North Hempstead officials did not name a formal advisory council at the time, the Project Independence regional advisory committees have effectively been functioning for years as a cohesive group of stakeholders, representing government agencies, businesses, nonprofit organizations and community partners.

REVIEWING BASELINE DATA

In the fall of 2014, AARP released its "State of the 50+ in Long Island, New York" report. Subsequently, AARP completed two "livable community" surveys in 2015: "Making the Town of North Hempstead a Great Place to Live: The 2014 Livable Communities Survey of AARP Members Age 50+ in the Town of North Hempstead, New York"; and "State of the 50+ in Long Island, New York."

Following is a summary of the findings:

➤ **The "State of the 50+ in Long Island, New York"**
(AARP New York, October 2014)

In the spring of 2014, AARP commissioned a telephone survey with almost 3,000 registered 50+ voters across New York State, generating 460 useable surveys on Long Island.

The major findings:

A majority of those surveyed said they would be likely to remain in the state as they age if improvements were made in four areas:

- Housing that is affordable and suitable for older residents (74%)
- Health services and community support (71%)
- Public transportation and alternative services for older or ill residents that is affordable and accessible (65%)
- Employment opportunities for older residents (59%)

Many respondents reported serious concerns about their financial security:

- Over one-quarter (28%) of 50+ Long Island residents are not confident they will ever be able to retire, and over one-third (37%) is just somewhat confident they will ever retire. More
- More than three-quarters (78%) support establishing a plan to help New Yorkers who do not have access to a retirement savings option at work.

- More than six in ten (62%) say their retirement will be delayed for financial reasons.
- Almost half (46%) of 50+ participants are extremely or very concerned about being able to afford utility costs in the coming years and 60% are as concerned about affording property taxes.

(See more detailed survey findings about housing, transportation, employment and caregiving issues in the following section on the Domains of Livability.)

➤ **“Making The Town of North Hempstead a Great Place to Live: The 2014 Livable Communities Survey of AARP Members Age 50+ in Town of North Hempstead, New York”**
(AARP, February 27, 2015)

A mail survey was sent to 1,000 age 50+ AARP members in the fall of 2014, generating a response rate of slightly more than 23% response. Survey participants were asked to identify various factors contributing to “livable communities”—using the eight domains developed by the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Communities program—and to identify needs gaps and priorities for seniors who want to successfully age in place. (See more detailed findings from this survey in the following section the 8 Domains of Livability.)

Key findings:

The top needs gaps between what is important to seniors and what is present in North Hempstead communities fall into four key areas: outdoor spaces and buildings; job opportunities; housing; and community information.

- The top gaps in outdoor spaces and buildings are separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians; neighborhood watch programs; and well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities.
- The top gaps identified in job opportunities: a range of flexible job opportunities for older adults; job training opportunities; and jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- The top gap in housing is affordable home prices for adults of varying income levels; and a home-repair service for low-income and older adults.
- The top gaps in community information are clearly displayed and printed community information with large lettering; information that is delivered in person; and an automated information source that is easy to understand.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

ASSESSING DOMAINS OF LIVABILITY

In October 2015, AARP staff and local volunteers met with officials of the Town of North Hempstead’s Department of Services for the Aging (which administers Project Independence), including Commissioner Kimberly Corcoran-Galante and Deputy Commissioner Rebecca Miller. The group agreed that many elements of an Age-Friendly Action Plan were already incorporated within the initiatives of Project Independence. The next step, then, was to meet with stakeholders from various agencies and regional PI advisory committees to review each Age-Friendly domain and identify three specific areas of analysis:

- Current assets and best practices
- Challenges/barriers and needs gaps
- Opportunities for improvement/new initiatives, including at least one short-term and one long-term action item

Over the next few months of analysis and discussion, the stakeholders agreed that the eight World Health Organization domains should be tailored to address the particular needs and resources of North Hempstead residents. Thus, they combined the Social Participation and Respect/Social Inclusion domains (which seemed to fit together), while eliminating Employment, since the Town is home to several large employers, and offers ready train access to New York City—so there are ample opportunities for employment opportunities. Thus, the revised domains for North Hempstead are:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social Participation/Respect and Social Inclusion
5. Civic Participation
6. Communication and Information
7. Community Support and Health Services

Working with an initial Action Plan template, Town officials clarified and provided substantial details to sections of each domain, including opportunities for action items. In numerous instances, the essential features of age-friendly cities highlighted in the World Health Organization’s checklist have already been achieved by Project Independence and are included below in the domain sections on Assets and Best Practices.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

This domain covers shared physical environments and natural spaces that represent amenities unique to our area. Features include: clean and pleasant public areas; safe and well-maintained green spaces; well-maintained pavements and crossings for pedestrians; separate cycle paths; well-signed buildings; and sufficient public toilets.

In AARP's 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead:

- ✓ 87% said it is extremely or very important to have well-maintained public buildings and facilities that are accessible to people of different physical abilities.
- ✓ 85% said it is important to have sidewalks that are in good condition and accessible for assistive mobility devices.

Assets and Best Practices

Overall, there are many outdoor spaces and public gathering places throughout the Town of North Hempstead. The region offers more than 30 senior centers and clubs and 17 public libraries. Among the town's attractions is the Americana Manhasset, a high-end, open air mall along a stretch of Northern Boulevard known as the "Miracle Mile." Many community members also use restaurants, diners, and church-related facilities; and common areas in housing enclaves for gathering places.

- North Hempstead has some 40 parks and recreational facilities, including the Harbor Links Golf Course; Manorhaven Beach Park and North Hempstead Beach Park; 15 playgrounds; 5 pools; 9 walking trails; and a multi-purpose stadium for soccer, lacrosse, football and concerts. The Town Department of Parks and Recreation also offers a wide array of outdoor recreational activities such as tennis, sailing, kayaking, tennis and paddle tennis, lacrosse, baseball, inline hockey and horseshoes.
- Several villages, including Great Neck and Great Neck Plaza, Port Washington, and Manhasset, have strong traditional downtown areas with Main Street retail stores, restaurants, commercial offices and transit-oriented residential apartments.
- The Town has replaced its outmoded "Golden Age Residence" zoning district with a new "Senior Residence District" that sets minimum standards for both

indoor and outdoor recreational space and for accessibility. There is also up to a 25% density bonus offered to developers for providing affordable units.

- The Town was an early proponent of “complete streets” design concepts and formally adopted a Complete Streets Policy Guide in 2011. Prospect Avenue in New Cassel was completely transformed from a four-lane, high-speed thoroughfare by removing a travel lane in each direction, adding bicycle lanes, corner bulb-outs and pedestrian-scale lighting.

Challenges/Gaps

Although North Hempstead has good parks and downtown areas, it’s not clear whether it has an adequate network of safe pathways, bike trails, or walking paths connecting public spaces. Cars still seem to be needed in most areas.

In AARP’s “State of the 50+ in Long Island, 2014 report, respondents noted several concerns in their communities that are “major or minor problems”:

- Streets that need repair: 86%
- Cars not yielding to pedestrians: 73%
- Public transportation too far away, too limited, or too hard to navigate: 61%
- Traffic lights timed too fast for safe pedestrian crossing: 61%
- Sidewalks too narrow, poorly lit, need repair or don’t exist: 60%

According to the AARP’s 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead, the largest unmet need in the domain of outdoor spaces was for audio-visual pedestrian crossings. While more than 88% of respondents said these features are important, only 58.7% said they are present in their community.

Other than local streets, the majority of transportation facilities and services are operated by state or county agencies. Even traffic signals on Town roadways are out of the Town’s direct control. State transportation agencies are mostly concerned with regional mobility and generally are not supportive of downscaling major arteries, such as Jericho Turnpike or Northern Boulevard, to the standards of a local main street.

Public transportation systems are very expensive to operate because of labor (bus), infrastructure (roadways), or both (rail). Long Island is an especially difficult place in which to run a successful bus service because of the radial street plan and that origin-destination patterns are so diffuse.

With regard to private buildings, the age of the Town’s building stock can be an impediment to providing new amenities. Owners of older buildings are often reluctant to undertake renovation projects for fear of triggering requirements necessary to comply with current codes, particularly with regard to fire sprinklers.

Opportunities

While the Town is unlikely to ever see the creation of whole new communities, there are a few places where obsolete commercial and light industrial properties can be redeveloped. There will be occasional opportunities to create new pocket parks in conjunction with road reconstructions, such as the Swalm Street Park in New Cassel, which was created with the realignment of Prospect Avenue.

Short-term Action Items:

- Identify areas which may be lacking in open space and recreational amenities.
- Conduct a survey to see what additional programs or facilities are needed.
- The Town can evaluate its existing road network and identify particular locations having deficiencies in amenities for non-motorized travel modes. That may involve adding dedicated bicycle lanes, crosswalks, curb bulb-outs and enhanced signage.
- The Town may also ask state and county traffic departments to consider longer cycle lengths and all-pedestrian phases for traffic signals to increase crossing time.

Long-term Action Item:

- Create a reliable funding source for open space acquisition and improvements similar to the Environmental Legacy Fund, a dedicated bond authorization that was enacted in 2000 but is now fully expended. Continue to update zoning regulations with regard to open space and accessibility.

Transportation

This domain includes choices of transportation that provide mobility, quality of life and independence to all populations. It covers features such as well-maintained roads; reliable, affordable and frequent public transportation; specialized transportation for disabled populations; well-regulated traffic flow; and safe, conveniently located parking.

In AARP’s “State of the 50+ in Long Island, 2014, 65% of those surveyed said they would be likely to remain in the region if public transportation and alternative services for older or ill residents were affordable and accessible.

In AARP’s 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead, 50+ respondents reported that they mostly drive themselves to get around their community:

- ✓ 90% drive; 46% walk; 26% take a taxi; and 19% ride with others to get around.
- ✓ Most believe that it is extremely or very important to have well-maintained streets (92%); easy-to-read traffic signs (91%); and well-lit and safe streets for all users (90%).

Assets and Best Practices

Despite its suburban setting, North Hempstead does not exhibit a low-density, sprawling development pattern typical of many suburbs. It has several compact, walkable communities with traditional downtown business districts. The population density, the large number of railroad stations and the clustering of certain services, particularly medical, makes the provision of public transportation and taxi services more viable than in typical suburbs.

Project Independence Senior Transportation Program

The Town of North Hempstead’s Project Independence Transportation Program for Seniors has been providing taxi transportation services for medical appointments and for food shopping, for about six years. The service is currently transporting over 3,000 rides a month. The Town has secured two large federal grants to fund portions of the overall operations. The current grant will be for \$1 million in federal funding, to utilize over three years.

- Project Independence provides free taxi transportation twice a week to 60+ residents for food shopping at designated centers within North Hempstead. The Town also provides discounted taxi rides for non-emergency medical, dental and treatment appointments within the town, as well as some frequently visited destinations outside the town, seven days a week.
- North Hempstead also offers various “Mobility Management Services,” performed by the PI Senior Mobility Manager. The responsibilities include managing the PI Taxi Transportation program by responding to and resolving all Service Requests for assistance, advising seniors how to navigate the PI Taxi Transportation program, Mobility Management, and

outreach to inform seniors about the programs. Large-print train and bus schedules are provided.

- The Town's 311 Call Center is central for receiving reservations, distribution to taxi companies, relaying service questions, and capturing data. When seniors call the 311 telephone consumer response system, disability data is collected. This is achieved by asking questions regarding their mobility: "Do you use a wheel chair or walker?" "Do you have an aide riding with you?" and "If you use a wheelchair/walker and no aide, can you get in and out of the car independently?" Results are aggregated by TownStat, North Hempstead's Performance Measurement and Management System, on a regular basis. Service is reviewed regularly, with user comments gathered via the 311 consumer response system.

Car, bicycle and pedestrian traffic

- AARP offers several programs for older drivers, including Driver Safety Courses, "Carfit," and "We Need to Talk." AARP safety courses are coordinated by PI, and are hosted in a Town facility. The Town of North Hempstead/PI currently hosts two CarFit events a year at Clinton G. Martin Park.
- Pedestrian Safety. Project Independence has ongoing meetings of the PI Great Neck Pedestrian Safety Sub-Committee to address concerns about crossings, timing of lights, striping, signage and visibility. A majority of the issues raised are in the Village of Great Neck Plaza. Pedestrian Safety issues in other areas of the Town are addressed as they are raised during PI Advisory Committee meetings, outreach, events, etc.
- The PI Senior Mobility Manager presents "Pedestrian Safety and Staying Safe Behind the Wheel" and "Traveling Safe in Ice and Snow," which are all geared toward seniors, encouraging recognition that skills and abilities may have changed, and to address those issues for safe mobility. Presentations are made to senior social groups, houses of worship, senior centers, and senior housing communities.
- The town has an established road network, especially major east-west arteries such as the Long Island Expressway, Northern and Southern State Parkways, Routes 25, 25A and 25B, Sunrise and Montauk Highways. Meadowbrook State Parkway runs south to north through part of the town, and Route 101 is a south-north state route that runs from Flower Hill through downtown Port Washington into Sands Point.

- North Hempstead has passed “Complete Streets” laws in recent years, requiring that roads consider safe accommodation for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users and motorists alike. In particular, Great Neck Plaza has developed several major “traffic calming” initiatives to improve local roads and walkways and make them safer for both pedestrians and motorists.
- The Nassau-Suffolk Bicycle Coalition has created a Bicycling Master Plan, with 10 proposed West to East corridors and 10 proposed North to South routes. Also, the New York State Department of Transportation has created an online Region 10 (Long Island) Bike Route Map, with more than 80 trails—many of them in the Town of North Hempstead.

Public Transportation

Long Island Rail Road: The nation’s busiest commuter rail road serves the town through three branches: The Oyster Bay branch serves the town's vicinity from Mineola to Greenvale; the main line runs through the southern parts of the town from with stations at Merillon Avenue in Garden City Park through Westbury; and the Port Washington branch runs along the northern part of the town and uses stations from Great Neck across the Manhasset Viaduct into Port Washington. Seniors age 65 and over may receive half fare on the rail road except during morning peak times.

Bus Systems: North Hempstead is served primarily by Nassau Inter-County Express (NICE) bus routes, in addition to at least two MTA bus routes enter Nassau County from Queens. The Town of North Hempstead Senior Citizen I.D. Card or the Nassau County Senior Citizen Leisure Pass entitles seniors age 60 and over to ride at half fare on NICE buses.

- The Medical and Special Transportation/Able-Ride/Paratransit Program is a curb-to-curb transportation service provided by the NICE bus system for those individuals who are unable to utilize the County's Mass Transit System due to physical, visual or cognitive disabilities. To become enrolled a person must be certified and meet eligibility criteria determined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Some bus transportation is also available from the Town of North Hempstead to senior centers and to social group meetings (such as AARP meetings and Leisure Club) and for Town-sponsored recreational events. There is also transportation provided for some low-income senior housing residents to go shopping and attend events.

- A Transportation Resource Guide, a list of services compiled by the Town, is available to seniors.

Other Private Transportation Options

- There are several assisted living facilities and senior subsidized housing complexes, some of which may provide transportation for residents to outside activities and medical appointments.
- Rides Unlimited of Nassau and Suffolk, a nonprofit organization, provides transportation for persons with mental or developmental disabilities.
- Local taxi companies offer special programs for seniors. For example, Checker Cab provides free transportation for seniors for residents of New Hyde Park and Mineola on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- The American Cancer Society offers free transportation by their volunteers to drive cancer patients for treatments.

Challenges/Gaps

Region is still too dependent on private vehicles

It's difficult to get seniors to give up their cars in suburbia—more than 90% of survey North Hempstead say they mostly drive to get around. Still, in AARP's "State of the 50+ in Long Island, 2014, 65% of those surveyed acknowledged that one of the criteria for remaining in the region was public transportation and alternative services for older or ill residents that were affordable and accessible.

- Traffic congestion remains a problem in many parts of the town, and AARP survey participants acknowledged that one important need was for more affordable parking in high-density commercial and residential areas, particularly for seniors.

Public Transportation has Gaps

- The fixed-route public bus system, NICE, does not cover the entire region; it has gaps and lacks of point-to-point service. Furthermore, recent budget pressures have led Nassau County to cut 10 NICE bus routes along less-

traveled areas.

- LIRR train costs may be prohibitive for many lower-income elderly (senior discounts only apply off-peak). In addition, it is often difficult for senior to get to and from train stations. LIRR parking lots are filled by commuter before 8 a.m., making it more difficult for a senior who does drive to get to the train.

PI Senior Transportation Program Gaps

- **Social Transportation.** While discounted trips for medical and free food shopping are key, there are often requests for discounted “social transportation” to partake in activities of their choosing, such as getting other business done, visiting with friends and family, and frequenting houses of worship.
- **Timeliness of Accessible Transportation.** While Able-Ride exists to serve wheelchair accessible needs, Town residents complain they are often on long detours (e.g., to the South Shore) to pick people up, and long waits for return trips. It has been requested that the Town provide a more localized accessible option for seniors and the disabled that would provide more timely service.
- **Destinations beyond the Town of North Hempstead Line.** While the Town does include several areas just beyond the Town line (NCUMC, Garden City medical offices, Northwell/LIJ campus in Queens), there are requests for smaller medical office locations that are not covered, such as a locations in Little Neck, Glen Cove and the Town of Hempstead.

Affordable Transportation for Home Health Care Workers

- It has been requested that affordable transportation be extended to aides who work for seniors aging in place, for transportation from LIRR or bus stop to residents’ homes.

Opportunities

Age-friendly stakeholders acknowledge that improving affordable transportation options and infrastructure in decentralized suburban regions is a complex and wide-ranging problem—and it usually costs millions to fix. Still, North Hempstead has made substantial progress in addressing transportation needs for senior through its Project Independence programs. Some additional steps can be taken to make incremental progress:

- While state and federal funding programs are increasingly scarce, there are funds available to acquire additional buses or other vehicles for senior transportation, particularly through the federal Transit Administration’s 5307 and 5310 programs. The recently-enacted Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 includes language relieving some of the mandatory standards that require local main streets to be designed as if they were major thoroughfares.

Short-term Action Item:

- Working with local and state officials, commit to a program of fixing sidewalks, changing-out light fixtures and adding/replacing signs.

Long-term Action Item:

- The biggest obstacles to creating separate pathways are limited right-of-way width and the fact that dedicated bike lanes displace on-street parking. While these constraints aren’t going away, the Town can analyze changing mobility needs to see where additional capacity is needed. The Town will continue its partnership with local taxi companies and continue to inform the county of needed enhancements in NICE bus and Able Ride services.

Housing

This domain includes the availability of sufficient, affordable housing, with a range of accessible housing choices for people of all ages, as well as home modification options and providers.

In AARP’s 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead, 50+ AARP members reported:

- ✓ 85% own their home and 65% live in a single-family home.
- ✓ 63% have lived in their community for at least 25 years, 13% have lived there between 15 and 24 years, and another 15% have lived there between 5 and 14 years.
- ✓ 50% say it is extremely or very important to stay in their community, and 90% say it is extremely or very important for them to stay in their home as they age.
- ✓ 59% say they are not very or not at all likely to move outside of their community when they retire and stop working completely.

Assets and Best Practices

Strong residential real estate market

- Rising home values, with highly regarded school systems. The median home value for North Hempstead was \$633,555 in 2015 (compared to the median home sale of \$430,000 for Nassau County overall in November 2015, according to the Multiple Listing Service of Long Island).
- Large stock of single-family homes; almost 82,000 total housing units in North Hempstead, 73.2% owner-occupied, 21.7% renter-occupied in 2015. Participants in AARP's 2014 Livability Survey for North Hempstead reported a 85% home ownership rate, compared to a 63.7% national rate. There is significant equity in existing homes; many seniors are savers and may have a substantial "nest egg" for retirement.
- Varied types of local communities and neighborhoods, many with historic downtowns that are benefitting from "smart growth" initiatives to create walkable communities and revitalize downtown transit-oriented development for both seniors and young couples.
- North Hempstead Town has partnered with the Community Development Agency and Long Island Housing Partnership which yielded 15 newly constructed 2-bedroom homes offered in a lottery.

Senior housing options

The Town of North Hempstead includes two senior developments, Magnolia Gardens and Manhasset Valley, for low- and moderate-income residents, plus the North Hempstead Housing Authority is building two more facilities.

- There are at least seven senior rental facilities for low- and middle-income residents in North Hempstead, one high-end independent living facility and 5 condominium complexes.
- In 2014, the North Hempstead Town Board amended the zoning code to encourage greater development of affordable housing for seniors by lowering age limitations and lot sizes for housing developments benefitting from federal and state tax credits.

Project Independence Programs

Project Independence works with several organizations that may be able to assist you. Rebuilding Together/LI provides volunteers to do minor household repairs. There are also government grant programs available for those who need accessibility improvements in order to remain at home. Both programs have income eligibility requirements. Call Project Independence at 311 or 869-6311.

Growing awareness of universal design

In AARP’s 2014 “State of the 50+ in Long Island” report, three-quarters of those surveyed support area-wide legislation that would require new homes built for low-income residents with county or state funds to use universal design standards—features that allow living and work spaces to be accessible and usable by everyone, including people of all ages and people with disabilities. Examples in private homes include no-step entrances, 36-inch doorways, a bedroom or room to convert into a bedroom on the main floor and a full bath on the main floor.

Towns such as Brookhaven, Southampton and Suffolk County have passed legislation provide incentives to developers and (some requirements for new homes with public funding) to use “visitability” construction standards. Visitability refers to a design criterion that affords all persons basic access to residential buildings. Access features to visitable homes include a zero-step entrance, accessible hallways, and bathrooms with doors wide enough for a wheelchair user to enter. Such features can help a resident adapt in his/her home should the resident's needs change due to disability, age, or reduced mobility.

- In 2012, AARP teamed with Vision Long Island to create the Inclusive Design Long Island initiative, designed to increase the amount and quality of barrier-free multigenerational housing in Nassau and Suffolk counties. AARP also offers consumers several free publications with practical information about universal design and visitability, including: “The AARP Home Fit Guide,” “Increasing Home Access: Designing for Visitability”

Challenges/Gaps

Barriers to aging in place in suburbia

AARP surveys cited in this report point out that there are significant concerns that make it difficult for seniors to successfully age in place across Long Island. Among the issues cited were the high cost of property taxes, utilities and services; and the challenges and expense of making modifications to enable them to age in place. The age of the housing stock in North Hempstead is also an important impediment. In addition, as

driving becomes more difficult, many seniors lack transportation from their single-family suburban homes to needed services.

Addressing community/civic opposition

- Community opposition has played a significant role in limiting housing opportunities, with push-backs from various groups asserting that denser housing is not a “fit with the character of the area.” Civic groups in many communities have historically resisted new, higher-density development and rentals with a “not-in-my-backyard” attitude. This resistance has created a somewhat vicious cycle, leading to longer, more thorough, but drawn-out review processes. Added to already high land acquisition and construction costs, the densities needed to “break even” are usually much higher than the zoning code will allow or surrounding communities are willing to accept. And yet, affordable housing is a critical need for the aging, as well as younger generations who are leaving Long Island.

AARP 2014 “State of the 50+ in Long Island survey:

- ✓ 60% are as concerned about affording property taxes.
- ✓ 46% of participants are extremely or very concerned about being able to afford utility costs in the coming years
- ✓ 76% say the lack of affordable housing in their community is a major or minor problem

AARP’s 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead:

The most important housing issues are having affordable home repair contractors (90%); well-maintained homes and properties (89%); seasonal maintenance services (74%), and homes that are equipped with wider doorways, grab bars in bathrooms, and first floor bedrooms and bathrooms (68%).

The top home modifications AARP members say they would need to make in order to age in place are:

- ✓ 37% note bathroom modifications such as installing grab bars, handrails, high toilet seats or non-slip tile.
- ✓ 33% say installing a medical emergency response system that notifies others in case of emergency.

Lack of affordable downsizing alternatives

- While North Hempstead has taken steps in recent years to increase the supply of affordable housing for seniors, residents in both AARP livability

surveys said that affordable home prices for adults of varying income levels is still the largest unmet housing need. Many seniors also need a higher level of services & amenities than first-time home buyers and the walkability offered by downtown living.

Opportunities

Redeveloping current properties

Demand for alternative housing types is rising as demand for retail and office space has leveled off or dropped. While there is virtually no vacant land available, there are developed commercial and light industrial sites available for adaptive re-use.

- New congregate housing being built in North Hempstead should meet higher standards of accessibility, since retrofitting is more costly.
- Create better connections from existing housing to social services.

Short-term Action Items:

- Expand and promote the Town’s Residential Repair programs that provide elderly residents with low-cost services for small repairs and maintenance tasks in their current homes, as well as needed “universal design” fixes, particularly bathroom modifications and the installation of emergency response systems.
- Continue to work with the Town Housing Authority, Community Development Agency and private developers to identify available sites and remove unnecessary regulatory obstacles. And continue relationships with organizations such as the Long Island Housing Partnership.
- Maintain an inventory of properties that may become available for redevelopment.

Long-term Action Items:

- Create a community land bank to assist with acquisitions for affordable housing.

- Revise the business district zoning regulations to allow mixed-use buildings in more places.
- Perhaps reintroduce Town regulation to allow accessory apartments within current housing stock—after building a community coalition to support the idea that was opposed years ago.

Social Participation/ Respect & Social Inclusion

This domain includes opportunities for engagement and inclusion in a variety of affordable, conveniently located and accessible activities outside the home. In addition, older people should be specifically included in community-wide interests and be regularly consulted by public and commercial services on how to serve them better.

In AARP's 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead:

- ✓ 88% say they interact with friends and neighbors in their community several times a week or more.
- ✓ 83% say it is extremely or very important to have activities that are affordable for all residents, while 82% say having activities that offer senior discounts is important.
- ✓ 75% say having activities that are accurately and widely publicized is important, while 73% say it is important to have activities that involve both older and younger people available in their community.

Assets and Best Practices

North Hempstead offers numerous organizations and outlets that help stimulate social interaction among seniors:

- More than 32 senior clubs and centers
- 17 public libraries
- Sid Jacobson Jewish Community Center in Roslyn
- More than 100 religious institutions
- Dozens of continuing education of self-improvement classes at senior centers, libraries, schools, local organizations, faith communities, community colleges and colleges

- The Gold Coast International Film Festival hosts film screenings and special events all year round, including a renowned seven-day festival hosted by the Gold Coast Arts Center.
- Project Independence helps direct seniors to programs provided by the Town of North Hempstead, the senior centers and the great many service agencies that work in local communities.
- North Hempstead's Department of Services for the Aging-Project Independence offers many programs and activities year round: Within the Town's 7 PI regions are satellite offices where PI-Advisory Committees meet monthly, Help/Health chats are presented, fitness classes including Tai Chi, Yoga and Zumba are held. Blood pressure and other health screenings are provided, Flu shots and access to Community Nursing and Social Work are provided.
- North Hempstead's Department of Community Services offers many programs year round: "Funday Mondays" at North Hempstead Beach Park in the summer, in addition to cultural, seasonal and holiday festivities the rest of the year.
- Many assisted living and social model adult day care facilities provide social activities for seniors who participate in these programs.

Challenges/Gaps

- Social, point-to-point transportation is often a challenge for seniors, especially those with mobility issues. Project Independence offers free or discounted taxi transportation for medical appointments and food shopping, but generally not for social interaction purposes. Bus transportation is available to senior centers and Town-sponsored recreational events.
- Due to budgetary constraints, some local staffs of agencies and organizations may be often stretched to capacity to meet demand for community-based social activities and events.
- All but medical transportation is free to PI members in the Town. Although people want social programs, but are often living on fixed incomes and want them for free.

Opportunities

- Continue to work with senior centers, community centers and libraries reinvent themselves and broaden activities and programs to address the needs of a broader swath of older adults.

- Continue to improve transportation options to enable more seniors to attend social events.
- Collaborate with senior communities to inform residents about available social programs.
- Encourage seniors to utilize the Town’s 311 call center and/or the Town’s website to discover all the happenings for seniors in the Town.
- Project Independence outreach is always available: senior groups, events, cultural programs, one-on-one interaction.

Short-term Action Items:

- Promote activities that offer senior discounts, since more than 80% of respondents in AARP surveys in both North Hempstead and Great Neck Plaza noted that it is extremely or very important to have activities that are affordable for all residents.
- Continue to promote all services and programs to residents. Encourage PI members to spread the word to their circles, such as local neighbors and friends in need.

Long-term Action Items:

- As Project Independence entered its 11th year in 2016, increase PI membership, discover new partnerships and find funding appropriate for maintenance and growth of PI.
- Explore multiple ways to expand publicity of social activities through government agencies and nonprofit organizations, such as: senior centers/YMCAs; town and village agency websites; faith-based institutions; Long Island Council of Churches; organizational newsletters; and the AARP Long Island website.

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Civic Participation

This domain addresses involvement in a broad range of volunteer and civic activities that foster a high quality of life, as well as participation in decision-making bodies that facilitate membership of older people in volunteer organizations. Among most local observers, civic participation is considered one of our core strengths across Long Island, with many opportunities for volunteerism.

In AARP’s survey of age 50+ members in North Hempstead, 66% said having opportunities for older adults to become decision-makers is important.

Assets and Best Practices

- North Hempstead communities offer seven civic associations, where older adults can participate in decision-making that affects local quality-of-life issues.
- Project Independence offers volunteer opportunities for seniors to work in the community, including friendly visits, checking in on homebound seniors by phone, assistance with office work at Project Independence locations, helping to staff events and other activities. Many of organizations that partner with Project Independence also need volunteers.
- The Long Island Volunteer Center is a regional center designated to promote volunteer services; there are also a multitude of non-paying options offered at local hospitals, schools, nursing homes, arts organizations, museums, religious institutions, senior and community centers, veterans homes, and New York State parks.

Besides the AARP Volunteer program, additional opportunities for North Hempstead seniors to volunteer their services in the region include:

- **R.S.V.P. (Retired Senior And Volunteer Programs)**—Opportunities for retired persons aged 55 years and over to serve on a regular basis as volunteers through the Nassau County Department of Senior Citizen Affairs in such areas as non-profit hospitals and nursing homes, institutions for the handicapped, schools, libraries, county offices, Head Start Programs, day care centers, and visits to homebound.
- **Social Service Volunteers of Nassau County**—Volunteers work in partnership with the Nassau County Department of Social Services to provide assistance for families and children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

- **The Family and Children's Association**—Offers opportunities for volunteers in a variety of social work programs.
- **Foster Grandparents**—Enables low-income senior citizens age 60 and over to assist children with special needs in hospitals and day care centers.
- **SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)**—Retired business executives provide free consultation on financial, marketing and managerial problems for new or existing businesses.

Challenges/Gaps

- For people with disabilities and the aging, it's more difficult to participate in civic activities because of transportation accessibility. In AARP's survey of age 50+ members in North Hempstead, 69% said it is extremely or very important to have transportation to and from volunteer activities for those residents who need it, and 60% said having an easy-to-navigate website that shows local volunteer activities is important. Similarly, In AARP's survey of age 50+ members in Great Neck Plaza 70% said it is extremely or very important to have transportation to and from volunteer activities for those residents who need it, and 61% said having an easy-to-navigate website that shows local volunteer activities is important.
- Many traditional volunteer and service organizations, such as Rotary Clubs, are losing members and need to think of different ways to engage their communities and make use of new technologies.

Opportunities

Short-term Action Item:

- Partner with the Project Independence and Long Island Volunteer Center in aggregating and disseminating a comprehensive guide of volunteer needs and opportunities throughout North Hempstead.

Long-term Action Item:

- Work with the Project Independence Senior Transportation Program, as well as transportation experts and officials from multiple organizations to devise effective strategies to expand affordable means of transportation for volunteers.

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Communication and Information

This domain covers access to and distribution of information to community residents of all ages, including diverse media platforms such as printed information, TV, radio, websites and social media. Public services also should be provided through selective in-person venues, as well as print and electronic media.

In AARP's 2014 Livable Communities survey of 50+ North Hempstead residents:

- ✓ 87% said they would turn to family, friends, or neighbors for community information on older adult services, while 72% would contact local community centers.
- ✓ 79% said it is important to have community information available in one central source.
- ✓ 72% said it is extremely or very important to have free access to computers and the Internet in places like the library, senior centers or government buildings in their community.

Assets and Best Practices

- Project Independence offers many services, including social work and nursing services; transportation, social and recreational programs, light home maintenance, educational programs, veteran services and volunteer opportunities. Through the 311 Call Center, PI social workers and nurses are able to provide information and referral services that reach out to its partners in the Town of North Hempstead and across Long Island to meet the needs or solve the problems of older residents. Among the areas of assistance: information about and access to benefits such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicare Supplemental Insurance, Medicaid, Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC), Home Energy Assistance Programs (HEAP), food stamps and senior citizen real property tax exemptions (STAR), and many more.
- The key to the PI mission is communications and outreach. The Department of Services for the Aging works closely with all departments in the Town. DOSA/PI works with the Communications Department of the Town for support with local media for publicizing. DOSA/PI focuses on outreach, the DOSA-website, the Pioneer Newsletters, monthly email newsletters, the *Project Independence and You* radio show, and Community/Public relations. Outreach to our residents 60 and over is implemented in a variety ways.

Traditional print publications (and their websites) and local television news stations remain useful vehicles for informing the public, particularly seniors:

- The Pioneer Newsletter was originally established for the NORC in 2006 and now reaches all Town residents 60 and over. It is mailed out 3 times a year. This newsletter features current information affecting the lives of seniors and advise how to live safely in their own homes. The Pioneer is a team effort including a newsletter committee made up of senior town residents, an editor, printers, mailing-house, etc.
- The Project Independence Email Newsletter is sent out monthly to seniors, caregivers and professionals to promote upcoming programs that month.
- *Project Independence and You* Radio Show. Project Independence partnered with LIU Post for its own radio show, called *Project Independence and You*, which airs every Friday from 10am-12pm on WCWP 88.1FM (wcpw.org). *Project Independence and You* started in 2011, and is in its fifth year. The program's mission is to inform and entertain our age 60-plus audience in the listening area which includes northern and central Nassau County. Past guests have included elected officials, medical experts, mental health experts, heads of senior centers, comedians, and experts from varying fields. The show receives one of the biggest "bumps" of the week on the station's website. Due to this success, the LIU Post Radio Station has daily senior talk radio programming. Past episodes are archived on the Project Independence website at www.tonhprojectindependence.net. The PI radio show is also involved in the Veteran's Oral History Project. Veterans' stories are recorded and archived for future generations. Interviews air on the show and are also archived in the LIU Post B Davis Schwartz library and on the PI website. If the veteran can't get to the studio, PI staff will come and record the interview at the veteran's house. Each week a different PI member co-hosts the radio show. There is also a committee of volunteers who help identify guests and topics of interest.
- Monthly Calendar of Events. Project Independence members receive a calendar of PI events and programs each month.
- Newsday, regional daily paper, including the Act 2 Sunday section and weekly calendars
- 6 community weekly newspapers in North Hempstead Town
- High-end local magazines, including Gold Coast, Manhasset, Port Washington and Great Neck Magazines
- Long Island Patch and Long Island Press (online magazine and community news websites)
- 50+ Lifestyles monthly newspaper
- Well Beyond 50 magazine/website
- Cable News 12, Verizon Fios1 news programs
- North Hempstead Town TV (Cablevision Channels 18 and 63; Verizon Channel 46)
- Public Access Television (Cablevision Channel 20; Verizon Channel 37)
- Telecare: Catholic educational television on Cablevision and Verizon Fios TV

Increasingly, online resources are becoming the mainstream vehicle for communication with the public, including websites, online publications and newsletters and social media. Examples:

- The DOSA/PI website contains information regarding programs and services and important contact information and links all designed and targeted for the Town Senior 60 and over as the user. Electronic copies of the PIONEER newsletter are archived on the website as well.
- DOSA/Project Independence has partnered with Virtual Health, Inc. to provide PI members and caregivers a way to access PI programs and services from a website designed to work with the 311 Call Center. With Virtual Health, seniors and caregivers can access all the services they need, such as transportation for food shopping and medical appointments, caregiver support, and home maintenance. Members have access to PI community event calendars as well.
- New York State government website, including the Labor and Health Departments
- Websites for local social service agencies and nonprofits such as Family and Children's Association, RSVP, 211 Long Island
- AARP.org website
- Online newsletters from local elder law firms, nonprofit organizations, professional and trade associations

Consumers often get information through personal interaction, meetings, events, workshops and conferences provided by government agencies and nonprofit organizations, such as:

- DOSA/PI staff routinely provides presentations to Civic-Veteran-Senior Groups, coordinate mailings and exhibit at events and community meetings.
- Senior centers/YMCAs activities, speakers and events
- Suffolk County Advocate consultations
- Faith-based institution events and interpersonal interactions
- Speaker presentations and informational conferences sponsored by professional firms, agencies, professional associations, universities (Hofstra's annual Aging in Place conference) and groups such as 50+ Lifestyles
- AARP Long Island seminars, workshops and activities

Challenges/Gaps

Rapidly changing media technologies have created several challenges in communicating with various audiences, particularly the elderly:

- The “digital divide” in technological skills between younger and older populations is lessening, but there is still a gap. Furthermore, given the pace of change, especially in mobile devices, it’s difficult for both providers to figure out the best ways send information—especially when messages need to reach adult children and older parents, who may communicate in different ways.
- Information overload. There is so much available information today, but it’s usually not organized aggregated in easy-to-locate places for consumers. It’s “silo-ed” in multiple agencies, websites and locations that makes it difficult for consumers to find—especially because many people only start looking for critical information when they’re in crisis situations.
- Keeping information current. Information (regulations, research, events) changes so often these days that organizations are constantly struggling to find additional staffing and funding to keep their communications outreach up to date.

Opportunities

While there are many challenges to communicating with target audiences in a digital age, there are also opportunities for Age-Friendly communities to improve effectiveness and test new approaches. Some suggestions:

- Partner with organizations that provide more opportunities for face-to-face interaction, information and counseling with consumers, including religious institutions, hospitals, and social service agencies. Some examples:
 - Long Island Health Collaborative
 - Family and Children’s Association
 - Vision Long Island
 - Tri-State Transportation Council
 - Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council
 - Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
 - Long Island Builders Institute
 - Long Island Council of Churches
 - Great Neck and Port Washington Chambers of Commerce
 - PSE&G-Long Island
- Create a joint “Speakers Bureau” through a network of organizations such as AARP, hospitals and health care agencies, nonprofit groups, elder law and financial services firms, the Long Island Volunteer Center.

Short-term Action Item:

- Coordinating with the Project Independence monthly calendar of events, coordinate an annual calendar of educational events, seminars, fairs and conferences sponsored by a network of institutions across North Hempstead.

Long-term Action Item:

- Since almost 9 in 10 respondents in AARP surveys of North Hempstead say they turn to family, friends or neighbors to learn about key services, consult with media experts to better target communications to both adult children and older seniors—particularly exploring how social media can be used to advance information for age-friendly initiatives. The Town has a Facebook page and often features PI Programs and events, so perhaps a page can be dedicated to Project Independence services.

Community Support & Health Services

This domain covers a range of programs and social services vital to the day-to-day needs of residents, particularly older adults. Included are home care, residential care and community service facilities, as well as clear and accessible information about health and social services

In AARP’s 2014 “State of the 50+ in Long Island report:

- ✓ 71% of those surveyed they would be likely to remain in the state as they age if improvements were made in the areas of health services and community support
- ✓ 54% said they have been family caregivers to an adult spouse or relative in the past five years, and 54% also say that it is extremely or very likely they will need to provide similar care within the next five years.
- ✓ 53% said the impact of caregiving is either “overwhelming” or places a “good deal of strain on their quality of life, including financial hardship, emotional stress at work.

In AARP’s 2014 Livable Communities survey for North Hempstead:

- ✓ 96% of members age 50+ said it is extremely or very important to have well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities in their community.
- ✓ 90% said having conveniently located emergency care centers was important.
- ✓ 89% said having well-trained certified home health care providers was important.

Assets and Best Practices

- North Hempstead is home to 7 renowned hospitals, including North Shore-LIJ Health System, Winthrop-University Hospital and St. Francis Hospital. In addition, the region has several assisted living/continuing care facilities, skilled nursing facilities and at least 5 certified home health agencies (known as CHHAs).
- Project Independence helps the Town's older residents connect to health and mental health services. The program links seniors to providers of physician home visits, geriatric mental health assessments, Alzheimer's Disease support programs and advance directive education. Our partners provide case management, supportive counseling, wellness classes and nutrition education. Project Independence locations have nurses and social workers on site to provide assistance such as screening for chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes, immunizations for influenza, pneumonia and shingles, and health care advocacy. Social Workers are also available to assess individual needs and ease access to in-home support services. The Vial of Life program is a packet of information about your health status that you keep in an easily accessible spot in your home so that in case of emergencies, responders can access it. The Circle of Support Life Planning tool was implemented to help individuals establish immediate and long-term life goals. This tool was developed using a person-centered planning model that focuses on the whole person.
- Caregiver support. Project Independence and its partners can assist with information and linkage to services and support programs that bring caregivers together to discuss issues and concerns. Respite services (adult day care programs and in-home support services) provide the opportunity for time off. Project Independence offers a program for grandparents raising their grandchildren. The Grandparent Respite and Support Program [GRASP] is facilitated by our partnering social workers at North Shore Child and Family Guidance.
- Food and Nutrition. Project Independence staff evaluate individuals for homebound meal delivery programs (Meals on Wheels), grocery shopping assistance, food stamp applications, free food package programs, congregate meal sites and mobile food van locations. Nutrition education programs developed by Cornell Cooperative are offered to residents of the North Hempstead Housing Authority buildings. Community resources also include nutrition counseling and education. In addition,

programs are available to provide emergency food for eligible individuals via local food pantries.

- Minor home maintenance support working with partner agency, The Rehabilitation Institute (TRI). TRI provides job training and placement for people with developmental disabilities. Trainees are accompanied by a job coach after a social work assessment has been completed.

Challenges/Gaps

Despite the region's strong network of hospitals, health care facilities and institutions, the cost of care is often high, sometimes unaffordable, to many seniors.

- Readily accessible, point-to-point transportation for home health aides is inconsistent, depending on local jurisdictions.
- There is often lack of knowledge about ongoing changes in complex government health care regulations for long-term care, including DSRIP (Design System Reform Incentive Payment Program, the Medicaid redesign program to achieve cost savings and efficiencies); and FIDA (Fully-Integrated Dual Advantage, the Medicare/Medicaid managed long term care plan integration for dual recipients).

Opportunities

The Age-Friendly Council members assigned to this domain should work with staff at Project Independence and partner organizations to:

- Continue exploring innovative tactical approaches to low-cost, effective delivery of health care and medical practices, such as mobile doctor services in areas where patient transportation is difficult.
- Create more venues (working with Project Independence and HIICAP) to promote greater understanding of Medicare services, including the expansion of Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement to include preventive treatments.

Short-term Action Item:

- Promote informal preventive health programs through Project Independence, incorporating health education programs and screening for at-risk patients at the provider level.

Long-term Action Item:

Through Project Independence, look for multiple ways to provide health information through government agencies and nonprofit organizations, such as:

- Senior centers/JCC of Roslyn
 - Town of North Hempstead and Great Neck Plaza agency websites, including Project Independence
 - Faith-based institutions across North Hempstead
 - Organizational newsletters
 - AARP Long Island website
 - Long Island Health Collaborative
 - Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council
 - Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
 - Nassau County Library System
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NEXT STEPS

While the Town of North Hempstead has been a member of AARP's Age-Friendly Communities Program for just over a year, the development of Project Independence over 11 years has put the Town well beyond the traditional planning stage of Age-Friendly programs—and into the Phase 3 Implementation Phase. Over the next year, one of the major tasks of stakeholders is to analyze what age-friendly goals have already been accomplished through Project Independence, and how the community can use the AARP/WHO framework to identify opportunities for improvement and a sustainable measureable action plan. Following are four major action items:

1. After review the current PI initiatives, the Department of Services for the Aging will determine whether the current administrative structure should be augmented by an advisory council that supports the maintenance of a 3- to 5-year Age-Friendly Action Plan. **Target completion: August 2016.**
2. Each of the Action Plan domains will be evaluated to identify:
 - Best practices achieved by Project Independence over the past 11 years that constitute completion of goals as set forth by the Action plan
 - Action items that require more specific metrics or resources to monitor success
 - Action items that merit highest priority, with timeline for completion

Target completion: October 2016

3. Develop a 2- to 3-year Action Plan that identifies municipalities that should be added to the current six Project Independence regions and incorporated into the Age-Friendly Action Plan, including what additional resources may be needed and potential political and civic barriers to implementation.

Target completion: December 2016

4. Develop a communication and education plan to support the next phases of the Age-Friendly program. Stakeholders agree that the continuous communication with the public has been essential to the success of Project Independence and will remain critical to overcome inevitable obstacles ahead.

Stakeholders must sustain the vision first articulated by Supervisor Bosworth when she announced the town's Age-Friendly designation in early 2015: "We care greatly about the aging members of our community, and this honor bestowed by AARP reflects our commitment to keeping members of our community healthy and happy. North Hempstead is now recognized as an international leader in preparing for the needs of the growing number of mature adults, both today and in the coming decades."

APPENDIX:

Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly Cities

This checklist of essential age-friendly city features is based on the results of the World Health Organization Global Age-Friendly Cities project consultation in 33 cities in 22 countries. The checklist is a tool for a community's self-assessment and a map for charting progress. For the checklist to be effective, older people must be involved as full partners, suggesting changes and in implementing and monitoring improvements.

Transportation

- Public transportation costs are consistent, clearly displayed and affordable.
- Public transportation is reliable and frequent, including at night and on weekends and holidays.
- All city areas and services are accessible by public transport, with good connections and well-marked routes and vehicles.
- Vehicles are clean, well-maintained, accessible, not overcrowded and have priority seating that is respected.
- Specialized transportation is available for disabled people.
- Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.
- Transport stops and stations are conveniently located, accessible, safe, clean, well-lit and well-marked, with adequate seating and shelter.
- Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules and special needs facilities.
- A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.
- Taxis are accessible and affordable, and drivers are courteous and helpful.
- Roads are well-maintained, with covered drains and good lighting.
- Traffic flow is well-regulated.
- Roadways are free of obstructions that block drivers' vision.
- Traffic signs and intersections are visible and well-placed.
- Driver education and refresher courses are promoted for all drivers.
- Parking and drop-off areas are safe, sufficient in number and conveniently located.
- Priority parking and drop-off spots for people with special needs are available and Assets and best practices

Housing

- Sufficient, affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to services and the rest of the community.
- Sufficient and affordable home maintenance and support services are available.
- Housing is well-constructed and provides safe and comfortable shelter from the weather.
- Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways.
- Home-modification options and supplies are available and affordable, and providers understand the needs of older people.
- Public and commercial rental housing is clean, well-maintained and safe.
- Sufficient and affordable housing for frail and disabled older people, with appropriate services, is provided locally.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Public areas are clean and pleasant.
- Green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well-maintained and safe.
- Pavements are well-maintained, free of obstructions and reserved for pedestrians.
- Pavements are non-slip, are wide enough for wheelchairs and have dropped curbs to road level.
- Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number and safe for people with different levels and types of disability, with nonslip markings, visual and audio cues and adequate crossing times.
- Drivers give way to pedestrians at intersections and pedestrian crossings.
- Cycle paths are separate from pavements and other pedestrian walkways.
- Outdoor safety is promoted by good street lighting, police patrols and community education.
- Services are situated together and are accessible.
- Special customer service arrangements are provided, such as separate queues or service counters for older people.
- Buildings are well-signed outside and inside, with sufficient seating and toilets, accessible elevators, ramps, railings and stairs, and non-slip floors.
- Public toilets outdoors and indoors are sufficient in number, clean, well-maintained and accessible.

Community Support & Health Services

- An adequate range of health and community support services is offered for promoting, maintaining and restoring health.
- Home care services include health and personal care and housekeeping.
- Health and social services are conveniently located and accessible by all means of transport.

- Residential care facilities and designated older people's housing are located close to services and the rest of the community.
- Health and community service facilities are safely constructed and fully accessible. Clear and accessible information is provided about health and social services for older people.
- Delivery of services is coordinated and administratively simple.
- All staff are respectful, helpful and trained to serve older people.
- Economic barriers impeding access to health and community support services are minimized.
- Voluntary services by people of all ages are encouraged and supported.
- There are sufficient and accessible burial sites.
- Community emergency planning takes into account the vulnerabilities and capacities of older people.

Social Participation & Inclusion

- Venues for events and activities are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit and easily reached by public transport.
- Events are held at times convenient for older people.
- Activities and events can be attended alone or with a companion.
- Activities and attractions are affordable, with no hidden or additional participation costs.
- Good information about activities and events is provided, including details about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for older people.
- A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of older people.
- Gatherings including older people are held in various local community spots, such as recreation centers, schools, libraries, community centers and parks.
- There is consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation.
- Older people are regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on how to serve them better.
- Services and products to suit varying needs and preferences are provided by public and commercial services.
- Service staff are courteous and helpful.
- Older people are visible in the media, and are depicted positively and without stereotyping.
- Community-wide settings, activities and events attract all generations by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences.
- Older people are specifically included in community activities for "families".
- Schools provide opportunities to learn about ageing and older people, and involve older people in school activities.
- Older people are recognized by the community for their past as well as their present contributions.

Older people who are less well-off have good access to public, voluntary and private services.

Employment

- The qualities of older employees are well-promoted.
- A range of flexible and appropriately paid opportunities for older people to work is promoted.
- Discrimination on the basis of age alone is forbidden in the hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees.
- Workplaces are adapted to meet the needs of disabled people.
- Self-employment options for older people are promoted and supported.

Civic Participation

- A range of flexible options for older volunteers is available, with training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.
- Training in post-retirement options is provided for older workers.
- Decision-making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership of older people.

Communication and Information

- A basic, effective communication system reaches community residents of all ages.
- Regular and widespread distribution of information is assured and a coordinated, centralized access is provided.
- Regular information and broadcasts of interest to older people are offered.
- Oral communication accessible to older people is promoted.
- People at risk of social isolation get one-to-one information from trusted individuals.
- Public and commercial services provide friendly, person-to-person service on request.
- Printed information – including official forms, television captions and text on visual displays – has large lettering and the main ideas are shown by clear headings and bold-face type.
- Print and spoken communication uses simple, familiar words in short, straightforward sentences.
- Telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time.
- Electronic equipment, such as mobile telephones, radios, televisions, and bank and ticket machines, has large buttons and big lettering.
- There is wide public access to computers and the Internet, at no or minimal charge, in public places such as government offices, community centers and libraries.