Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan 2021-2024
# Dedication

This Age-Friendly Action Plan is dedicated to:

The Howard County community who continue to strive each day to learn, teach, give, and enable this county to prosper, and to the community partners who work to make each day the best day possible. This plan was developed during one of the most trying times in recent memory. It seeks to move Howard County forward toward a more cohesive, livable community for persons at all ages and stages of life.

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To view the appendices please visit: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly

To request a hard copy of an appendix contact agefriendly@howardcountymd.gov or call Maryland Access Point of Howard County at 410-313-1234 (voice/relay).

Appendix I: Age-Friendly Howard County Survey
Appendix II: Age-Friendly Survey Analysis
Appendix III: Age-Friendly Actions with Detailed Information and Rationale
Executive Summary

With baby boomers now entering retirement age, the world’s population is aging. Howard County is no different.

By 2030, one in five Howard County residents will be 65 or older. In addition, 8,000 residents will be 85 years or older—double the number of individuals in that age group today.

“Age-friendly” communities stem from the World Health Organization’s (WHO) recognition that there is work to be done to ensure that all people can age in their communities in a healthy way. To support communities around the world in this effort, WHO developed eight “domains of livability” to identify and address obstacles to the health and wellbeing of older adults and their ability to participate in their communities. Today, more than 1,100 communities worldwide have articulated their plans to make their communities more livable through the Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and the U.S. affiliate, Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The great news is, what’s good for older adults is good for everyone.

After much research and consideration, Howard County officially joined the Network in December 2019, kicking off an 18-month process of community engagement, research and planning during an incredibly challenging time. Despite the need to shift to virtual collaboration, Howard County pulled together nearly 3,500 residents who completed the Age-Friendly Howard County survey to assess the County’s needs and assets.

At the Age-Friendly Howard County kick-off, community interest was strong across all eight domains; more than 100 diverse community members signed up to join work groups to inform the plan. Those eight work groups reviewed Age-Friendly survey results and drafted recommendations to address gaps in services and resources in the County. While the pandemic prevented work groups from holding focus groups as planned, public input on proposed action steps was still gathered before finalizing the report.

The resulting Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan 2021-2024 is the first step in creating a more inclusive, respectful and informed community. Successful implementation of the plan will require the participation of the entire Howard County community, including government, private sector, non-profits, faith communities and individuals stepping forward in leadership.

Community members are needed to continue to support the plan’s development, operation and evaluation. All members of the community are invited to decide how, where and when they will become involved in the action steps to make Howard County a great place to grow up and grow older.

The Eight Domains of Livability

- Communication and Information
- Health and Community Services
- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Transportation
- Work and Civic Engagement
I am excited to present the Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan 2021-2024, which will enable us to join the World Health Organization and AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The Action Plan is a culmination of two years of work by members of the community and the county all with a shared interest of making Howard County more livable for individuals of all ages.

This plan is a blueprint that will guide Howard County’s neighbors, corporate and non-profit partners, faith-based and civic organizations and government agencies toward high-level intentionality in making the county an even greater place to grow up and grow older.

An Age-Friendly Howard County promotes new thinking, new strategies and a culture that embraces inclusion across age, race, ethnicity, ability level and lifestyle — all the things that make us individually unique and collectively strong. That diversity, when viewed through an age-friendly lens as this plan promotes, adds to the vitality of our community.

More than 100 community members volunteered to diligently research and review information from surveys and studies informing the action steps outlined in this plan. This blueprint was established by the oversight and support of a community-based steering committee and the public input of individuals, and they will be the same network of advocates who will inspire their friends and family members to become involved in turning this plan into progress.

We decided it was important to pursue age-friendly status when we looked closely at the population projections, which forecast significant increases in the number and diversity of older adults over the next 30 years. We believe that preparing for these shifts, and for those which will follow in generations to come, will inspire a true culture of community livability. We want our mantra in Howard County to be, “What’s good for an 8-year-old is good for an 80-year-old.”

Thank you to the many people who worked tirelessly on the planning process, the Howard County Commission on Aging, and the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence and the Department of Community Resources and Services which has and will provide ongoing support to the Age-Friendly initiative. Thank you for your interest in the Howard County Age-Friendly Action Plan. You will find detailed information regarding ongoing initiatives on the website at www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
The older adult population is growing, living longer, and living longer healthier. The research shows older adults and individuals living with disabilities desire to remain in their homes and connected to their communities. County Executive Calvin Ball’s vision to create a community that is a great place to live, work, play and age for all, demonstrates we value older adults, a culture of inclusion, and recognizes the importance to design and maintain a community where all members can fully participate.

Working on the Age-Friendly Howard County initiative was an exciting, thought provoking process as the livability of our community across the eight domains was contemplated. The World Health Organization’s and AARP’s Age-Friendly Network provided an excellent framework to engage community members, collaborate with County departments, and partner with service providers in innovative ways. The collective input of over 100 work group participants identified challenges, opportunities, and recommendations that ultimately became the Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan 2021-2024.

We wish to thank the community members, County partners, steering committee members, the Howard County Commission on Aging, business owners, and service providers who spent countless hours tackling the challenges and exploring the possibilities that exist across the eight domains of livability. While Howard County has many age-friendly characteristics and existing initiatives that promote livability, we recognize additional supports, services, and applying new approaches and strategies are needed to create a culture of equity and inclusion for all. To realize an age-friendly and inclusive county, we need to continue to leverage the skills, expertise, activism, engagement and collective strengths of our community.

We look forward to continuing the strong collaboration and partnerships that are the foundation of this initiative. Together, as we implement the Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan 2021-2024, we will demonstrate Howard County is not just a great place to grow up but is also an exceptional place to grow older.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline R. Scott
Director, Department of Community Resources and Services

Jenna Crawley
Administrator, Office on Aging and Independence
Howard County, MD is a wonderful place to live, work and thrive. Centrally located between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., this small 254-square-mile county is full of opportunities for its richly diverse population.

Howard County is a mix of urban and rural. The western portion of the county, which represents about 60% of its land, boasts farmland and forests, much of which has been permanently preserved through county and state agricultural and environmental preservation programs. Transitioning from tobacco to wheat farming in the mid-1700s, Howard County remained rural until businessman, developer, and urban planner James Rouse purchased 14,000 acres in the county center in 1962 and built a city. That city, Columbia, MD, opened in 1967 as a community designed for social and economic diversity with apartments, subsidized housing, and single-family homes in the same neighborhoods—still rare to this day.

Columbia’s rich landscaping and parks offer residents an escape to nature. With thriving businesses and high quality of life, it holds the honor of being one of the most remarkable modern planning achievements in the United States.

Today, most residents reside in the urban pockets of the eastern and southern parts of the county, including Columbia, Ellicott City, Elkridge, and Laurel. With 6 regional parks, 24 community parks, 7 golf courses, 5 lakes, and more than 200 miles of walking, hiking, and biking trails, Howard County offers outstanding recreation for its residents. Its communities have received countless awards for safety, education, and quality of life. It’s no surprise—Howard County is a great place to call home.
Howard County is among the wealthiest counties in the nation.

Median household income: $121,618

Howard County is the sixth largest in population of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions, including its 23 counties and Baltimore City.

Today’s population: over 332,317 people.

The population has increased more than five-fold since 1970.

Population by Race & Ethnicity:
- 47% White
- 20% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 19% African American
- 8% Hispanic
- 5% Multiracial
- 0.1% American Indian & Alaska Native
- 0.7% Other

Howard County is racially diverse, and becoming more so.

Over ¼ of Howard County residents speak a language other than English.
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Howard County’s Key Trends & Data

By 2030, (when the youngest of the baby boomers turn 66), one in five Howard County residents will be 65 or older. In addition, 8,000 residents will be 85 years or older—double the number of individuals in that age group today. Older, more at-risk individuals have different needs and interests. Planning must begin now to account for the changing population.

Including the needs of individuals with varying socioeconomic statuses is imperative to ensure that everyone can enjoy the elements of a livable community.

5.6% of individuals aged 65+ in Howard County live below the poverty level

Of those living alone,

3.3% are men 65+
6.4% are women 65+

Nearly 60% of households are occupied by married couples, with an additional 5% by cohabitating couples.

Understanding where and with whom people live provides valuable information for short and long-term planning.

Today, 26.5% of non-institutionalized individuals aged 65+ have a disability—this number will increase as the population ages.

In an age-friendly community, planning for adequate and accessible transportation and housing helps ensure that everyone can live comfortably.
“Age-friendly” communities stem from the World Health Organization’s (WHO) recognition that the world’s population is aging and there is work to be done to ensure that all people can age in their communities in a healthy way. To support communities around the world in this effort, WHO developed eight “domains of livability” to identify and address obstacles to the health and wellbeing of older adults and their ability to participate in their communities. While WHO initially focused on older adults living in urban areas, thus coining the term “age-friendly cities” in 2006, the elements identified are relevant in communities of all types and sizes. The concept of an age-friendly city soon grew to include counties, regions and states. Today, there are more than 1,100 communities worldwide in the Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities; including the entire country of Ireland.

Focusing time, energy, and resources on the eight domains not only has a direct impact on the health and quality of life of older adults, it improves life for people of all ages.

In an age-friendly community, the built environment anticipates users with different capacities, ensuring that information is accessible and that respect and diversity characterize social and service relationships.  

The domains can be characterized within the context of the built environment and the social environment, with two domains that are cross-cutting in nature as seen in the figure to the right.

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An age-friendly community requires multiple modes of communication—including print, radio, television and social media in multiple languages.

Communication and Information

Inherent in all the other domains of livability is the need to share information about community services and resources in an accurate, timely and accessible way. An age-friendly community requires multiple modes of communication—including print, radio, television and social media in multiple languages—to acknowledge the different needs and preferences of community members. Recognizing the connection between technology and information, an age-friendly community provides access to and education about technology options that help older people, persons with disabilities and others connect with their community, friends and family. An age-friendly community develops communications using universal design or ADA-compliant standards that consider how elements like font size, contrast and language complexity influence accessibility.
Accessible and affordable community and health services are crucial to keeping older adults healthy, independent and active, but access to these services is important for persons of all ages. Access to homecare services, health clinics and programs that promote wellness and active aging are essential. Rehabilitation, nursing home care, respite care, adult day services, social services, wellness programs and other preventive care support the needs of individuals to remain as active and healthy as possible while remaining as independent as possible. Supporting individuals to remain in a community setting while actively participating in the community is the hallmark of an age-friendly community.
Research supports the health benefits of spending time outside in green spaces, which include improvement in anxiety, depression and other mental health issues and a boost in Vitamin D.
Respect and Social Inclusion

An age-friendly community has programs that show respect for and celebrate the differences of the community, which include ethnic and cultural diversity as well as multigenerational interaction and dialogue. Inclusivity extends beyond an invitation to participate; it includes inviting people to be part of the planning and governance and acknowledging and respecting that all people have much to contribute. Providing inclusive opportunities can help to break down the prejudices—ageism, racism, sexism—that come with misunderstanding and tear down a community.

Providing inclusive opportunities can help to break down the prejudices—ageism, racism, sexism.
Vital housing issues include affordability, range of housing options, home modification programs and connectivity to community programs.

Housing

Housing options and conditions are linked to quality of life across the age span and become particularly important to enable older adults to age independently and remain active in the community. Vital housing issues include affordability, range of housing options, home modification programs and connectivity to community programs.

An age-friendly community works to provide well-designed housing and communities for older adults and develops programs, education and services to support individuals who wish to remain in the homes and communities where they have lived for many years. Ideally, those communities enable social participation and good health through easy access to key community services and amenities.
Social Participation

Providing opportunities for social participation such as leisure, spiritual, cultural, social or civic activities with peers and younger people ensures integration with society and keeps older adults engaged and informed. The CDC noted in recent studies that “social isolation significantly increased a person’s risk of premature death from all causes,” and compared the risk to smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity. Studies also found that social isolation was associated with a roughly 50% increased risk of dementia.¹ Since older adults have a broad range of interests and needs, the activities offered should be diverse and accessible to people of all ages, cultures, abilities, genders, lifestyles and incomes.

An age-friendly community has a variety of safe and affordable modes of private and public transit.

Transportation

The Transportation domain acknowledges how people get around—walking, biking, scooters, driving and using private and public transportation. An age-friendly community has a variety of safe and affordable modes of private and public transit as well as the infrastructure for them to function—sidewalks, pathways, bike lanes, crosswalks, signage, etc. Public transportation options include buses, ride-share services, taxis, light rail and trains. Moreover, an age-friendly community examines the availability, affordability, safety and effectiveness of the transportation options offered and ensures that individuals of all ages and abilities have information about the transportation options available.
Work and Civic Engagement

Individuals of all ages, abilities, races, ethnicities and sexual orientations thrive when there are opportunities to work, volunteer and be involved in the community. In an age-friendly community these opportunities are available: everyone is included; opinions, skills and ideas are respected; individuals are able to travel to locations to engage in the community; and all are communicated with and receive timely and accurate information in a manner that is respectful of educational, cultural and personal needs and preferences.

In an age-friendly community, the opinions, skills and ideas of all people are respected.
Howard County’s Age-Friendly Features

Even before signing onto the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, Howard County has made strides toward enhancing its livability. A snapshot of features includes:

The Howard County Office of Transportation, in conjunction with concerned citizens and partners like the Horizon Foundation, ensured that Complete Streets policy implementation became a reality. As a result, the County has developed and implemented detailed Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans.

For more than 10 years the county has offered tax credits to assist older adults.

- **The Senior Tax Credit** provides a 25% credit on the County property tax for individuals over 65 who meet the income and asset criteria.

- **The Livable Homes Tax Credit** allows homeowners to make upgrades in their homes to allow for aging in place and to make their homes livable for individuals of all ages and ability levels.

- **The Aging in Place Tax Credit** provides a 20% credit for individuals who have owned their home for 40+ years.

Universal Design guidelines have been mandated in all 55+ communities for nearly 20 years.

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

Howard County Recreation and Parks facilities and outdoor spaces offer services and programs for individuals of all ages, with specialized programming for active adults 55+.

CAREAPP is an online application providing real-time information about food, housing, health, transportation, finances, education, work, community services and more. Individuals can seek information, send information to friends and family and contact providers.
Mobile Integrated Community Health, a program serving older adults and adults with disabilities, grew from an increasing need for support services. Staff from the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) and Fire and Rescue Services conduct home visits and provide referrals to partnering agencies to help residents access appropriate healthcare and social services and reduce unnecessary use of emergency medical resources.

Neighbor Ride is a non-profit agency in Howard County that addresses the concerns of older adults in need of transportation using volunteer drivers. Founded in 2004 to empower older adults “maintain independence and connect to people and things that matter most.”

Columbia Association has provided specialized programming for older adults for many years. In the fall of 2013, the Association surveyed its older adult community and developed “Community for a Lifetime: Columbia Association’s Comprehensive Plan for Serving the Older Adult Community” as the guiding framework for CA’s ongoing efforts to continuously enhance programs and services for Columbia’s growing older adult community.

Rebuilding Together Howard County is a non-profit organization formed in 1992. Volunteers provide free home repairs to low-income families, older adults and persons with disabilities who are unable to afford or complete the home repairs that they need to stay safe, warm and dry.

Howard County General Hospital developed a Community Care Team to provide care management services for older individuals with frequent admissions to the hospital to address underlying factors.

Since 2019, Racial Equity Training has been provided to County government staff and offered to staff of non-profit human service agencies to bring awareness to the root causes of disparities and to develop tools and processes to grow institutional equity.

Howard County operates six vibrant, state of the art 50+ Centers (senior centers) providing lifelong learning and socialization opportunities, as well as fitness rooms/centers.

The county’s public transportation service provides paratransit services beyond mandated ADA transportation to medical appointments, 50+ Centers, schools/colleges, social service agencies and employment locations for adults 60+ and individuals 18-59 with a disability.
Vision

Howard County will be a livable community and a great place to grow up and grow older.

Mission

Provide an Age-Friendly Howard County that enables residents to feel safe, respected and connected to their community at all stages of life. This is accomplished through collaboration, new thinking and strategies that support the wellbeing of people of all ages.

By addressing affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options and supportive community features and services, Age-Friendly Howard County supports the wellbeing of people of all ages.
Joining the Age-Friendly Network

In the summer of 2019, at the request of County Executive Calvin Ball, Howard County applied to the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. It was time to be part of a nationwide and worldwide network of communities focused on addressing elements of livability to make the County a healthier, safer, more inclusive place to live.

In support of this effort, and to encourage other jurisdictions to explore the possibility of becoming an age-friendly community, the Howard County Commission on Aging sponsored the Maryland Statewide Commissions Summit in September 2019. Speakers included experts on aging, AARP representatives and representatives from Hyattsville and Montgomery County who described their journeys to receiving the age-friendly designation. Participants enjoyed roundtable sessions and sharing ideas around next steps in the process.

Launch of Age-Friendly Howard County

On December 3, 2019 over 200 members of the community joined county officials, members of AARP and representatives from local businesses and nonprofit organizations for the official launch of the Age-Friendly Howard County initiative.
The message at the launch was that, above all, an age-friendly community respects people of all ages. It is a place that has:

- useable outdoor spaces;
- opportunities for work and play;
- needed services;
- affordable, accessible and safe housing;
- effective ways to get around including safe and accessible public transportation;
- engaging activities and social events; and,
- the ability to get information to all its members in a variety of ways.

The elements of an Age-Friendly Action Plan will make the county a better, safer, healthier, happier place to live.

Call to action

Attendees were encouraged to
1. Visit tables to sign up for workgroups related to a domain of livability;
2. Sign up to learn more about the domains;
3. Share information they have learned with neighbors, friends and family; and
4. Participate in upcoming surveys and focus groups to identify the assets and needs of the county.

Success

More than 100 individuals signed up to be on work groups to develop recommendations for the Action Plan. The community spoke clearly that all eight domains of livability were important to address in this initial plan and guided the direction of the initiative from that day forward.
Age-Friendly Survey

Howard County conducted a survey to capture the age-friendly needs and interests of the community. Howard County first reviewed many existing age-friendly surveys, including the model survey prepared by AARP. (See page 55 for a full list of surveys reviewed) Then, the survey developer, working in conjunction with the Age-Friendly Manager, prepared a comprehensive survey of 35 multiple choice and four open-ended questions that addressed all eight domains of livability. Visit www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly to view a copy of the survey and full analysis of the final report (Appendix I and II, respectively.)

Methodology and Sample

Total of 3,404 respondents, including:

- **2,965 people** from a convenience sample
  
  (A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people who are easy to contact or reach.)

- **234 people** from a mailing
  
  sent out to 1,000 households randomly selected from voter registration rolls

- **205 individuals** responding to surveys in a foreign language
  
  - 89 in Korean
  - 57 in Mandarin Chinese
  - 59 in Spanish

Representation by race and ethnicity was comparable to the community at large for the age groups represented.

The survey was designed to be taken online or by paper copy. Paper copies were provided at libraries, County office buildings, 50+ Centers and upon request. The online survey allowed unlimited responses from any given computer to facilitate submission via libraries, 50+ Centers, and instances where multiple members of a household wanted to participate.

Limitations

It is recognized that surveys of this nature are typically skewed due to self-selection biases. The aim of the analysis was to try to draw inferences about the underlying population of the County, while recognizing the nature of the biases. An examination of the demographic data illustrated that, among other traits, respondents were more highly educated (78% with college degrees in the Age-Friendly sample vs. 45% in comparable age groups in the 2018 American Community Survey data). They were also more likely to be female (71% vs. 29% male) and older (42% were age 70+). The data were weighted to help compensate for these biases. Unless otherwise noted, the results presented reflect the weighted data to more accurately depict the community as a whole.

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1 Data were statistically adjusted using SPSS software to give greater and lesser weight to specific responses based upon demographic attributes to more accurately reflect the underlying County population.
Across age groups and ethnicities, respondents overwhelmingly selected the Internet as their preferred source of information on aging.

Beyond the Internet, all non-white groups had a much higher likelihood of using TV/radio and faith communities as an information source.

Nearly 80% stated that sidewalks were very to extremely important in their community/neighborhood.

Over 75% reported having conveniently located parks and parks with benches and accessible bathrooms as very or extremely important.

19% of respondents reported being a caregiver to a family member or friend.

Asian and Hispanic respondents were more likely than White and Black respondents to report fair or poor health and frequent loneliness.

48% rated the age-friendliness of Howard County’s infrastructure as excellent or very good.

70% rated the county’s inclusion of all people as excellent or very good.
**Survey Findings in Brief**

**Housing**

- Respondents **under the age of 65** chose single-family homes as their preferred housing option.

- Those **65+ preferred apartments/condos** over townhomes and single-family homes.

- **55+ communities** were the most preferred housing option across all ages.

**Transportation**

- **15%** of respondents reported **limited or no access to a car**.

- Survey data showed that for those with a car, specialized transportation for persons with a disability was most important.

- For those with limited access to a car, fixed route buses were most important.

**Social Participation**

- Most respondents **ages 50-79 reported volunteering** in the past year.

- **28%** of all respondents reported they would like to volunteer more in the coming year.

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“I wish older adults in the County knew how open and even eager the County is to seek citizen participation and help people anticipate and prepare for problems they may not have considered.”

Larry Carson, community member
AGE-FRIENDLY HOWARD COUNTY ACTION PLAN

Building the Plan

Creating the Action Plan

In January 2020, the Age-Friendly Howard County team began meeting in eight work groups, each one representing a separate domain of livability. The work group members (see page 56 for a full list) came from a wide variety of backgrounds inside and outside of Howard County government, working and retired.

- One-quarter of work group members were employees of Howard County government.
- Community members included accountants, educators, healthcare workers, planners, clergy, former and current members of the press, technology specialists, realtors, developers, aging specialists, transportation specialists, artists, and policy analysts.
- Work group members ranged in age from early twenties to eighties.

In March 2020, the pandemic closed the doors of County offices where the groups were meeting. Without missing a beat, groups began to meet virtually. While some individuals left the work groups due to pandemic-related personal responsibilities, the majority of members remained.

Work groups reviewed Age-Friendly survey results and learned from guest speakers who provided additional context and ideas. Then, each group went to work to draft recommendations to address gaps in services and resources in the County.

In February 2021, all eight work groups presented their innovative recommendations to a 25-person Steering Committee for review and approval.

Steering Committee Review

Appointed by County Executive Ball, Steering Committee members represented front-line and manager level staff from all county agencies and CEO-level staff from the local hospital, community college, library system, chamber of commerce, a Commission on Aging member and a variety of non-profit organizations serving the county. (See page 59 for a full list of Steering Committee members.)

The Steering Committee reviewed all recommendations, as well as their underlying rationale and research, and provided feedback to the work groups and the Age-Friendly Manager. Steering Committee and work group members also completed a survey to assist in prioritizing the action items across domains.

Action Frameworks

As a final step, Howard County consulted with the University of Maryland School of Public Policy to design frameworks to guide stakeholders in implementing the recommendations. These frameworks identify:

- potential resources
- activities
- possible outcomes following implementation
- community impact

This approach provides a stepping stone to the stakeholders pursuing new program development or policy/structural change.
Plan Implementation

A working group of community members, County agencies, nonprofit and business partners, faith communities and civic/social organizations will be established to guide implementation of the Action Plan and to provide quarterly updates on the progress. The Age-Friendly Howard County Manager will continue to coordinate with the broader community to provide guidance, support and supervision during the implementation of the plan. The Manager is responsible for working on behalf of the County Executive’s office to develop ongoing collaborative relationships and connections between and among County government agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, faith communities and individuals. Success is not only contingent upon ongoing active community involvement from all these individuals and entities, but it also requires involvement and participation from the community at large so every voice is heard and is part of creating a livable community for people of all ages. Implementation will be a transparent process that will keep all stakeholders updated by regularly communicating with the entire community.

“The best thing for me about participating in the Health and Community Services work group was getting to know the many other participants — from diverse backgrounds and with great expertise — who all shared a commitment to improving the future for aging Howard County residents.”

Jim Gutman, community member
The following section includes the recommendations of the work groups, and Steering Committee for each domain of livability. These recommendations became actions - the tangible and specific projects to accomplish the work identified. These actions are accompanied by a vision statement, a brief discussion of the domain’s importance and, challenges identified by the groups.

The actions identify specific ways that County agencies and partners can address challenges and opportunities raised through the age-friendly planning process. The actions are dynamic and may fluctuate depending on resources, current conditions, partners and identified need.

For each domain, work group members ranked recommendations in order of priority for implementation. By working together to improve programs and practices, a variety of stakeholders will bring Howard County closer to the vision of being a great place to grow up and grow older.

For more details and the rationale for the individual action items, please visit www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly to view Appendix III: Age-Friendly Actions with Detailed Information and Rationale.

To request a hard copy of the appendix contact agefriendly@howardcountymd.gov or call Maryland Access Point of Howard County at 410-313-1234 (voice/relay).

In addition to Howard County residents, the following departments, agencies and organizations, recommended by work group and Steering Committee members as potential key stakeholders, are invited and encouraged to play an influential role in the plan’s implementation:
### AGE-FRIENDLY HOWARD COUNTY ACTION PLAN POTENTIAL KEY STAKEHOLDERS

| Howard County residents of all ages and backgrounds working together, giving of their time, talents and energy to make their community better, will be the foundation of a successful Age-Friendly Howard County. |

| Association of Community Services | Howard County Loan Closet |
| American Diabetes Association | Howard County Office of Tourism |
| American Heart Association | Howard County Office of Transportation |
| Businesses serving Howard County | Howard County Office of Workforce Dvlpmt |
| Civic and cultural organizations | Howard County Public Library System |
| Coalition of Geriatric Services | Howard County Public School System |
| Columbia Association | Howard County Residents |
| Community Action Council | Homeowners associations |
| Community Foundation of Howard County | Howard County Legacy Leadership Institute for the Environment (HoLLIE) |
| Howard County Chamber of Commerce | Horizon Foundation |
| Howard County Commission on Aging | Indian Cultural Association |
| Faith communities | Internet providers (Comcast, Verizon) |
| Luminus | Korean American Senior Association |
| Howard County Chinese School | Kaiser Family Foundation |
| Howard Community College | Korean Community Service Center |
| Howard County Council | Local Children’s Board |
| Howard County Dept of Community Resources and Services/Office on Aging and Independence | Leadership Howard County |
| Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services | Local Health Improvement Committee |
| Howard County Dept of Housing and Community Development | Medicaid Assistance Direct Care |
| Howard County Dept of Inspections, Licensing and Permits | Maryland Department of Transportation |
| Howard County Dept of Public Works | National Alliance for Mental Illness |
| Howard County Dept of Planning and Zoning | National Pharmaceutical Council |
| Howard County Dept of Recreation and Parks | Neighbor Ride, Inc. |
| Howard County Dept of Technology and Communication Services | Non-Profits serving Howard County |
| Howard County Economic Dvlpmt Authority | Private sector transit (Uber, Lyft, Taxi) |
| Howard County General Hospital | Parent Teacher Associations |
| Howard County Government | Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland |
| Howard County Health Dept | State Highway Administration |
| | The Village in Howard County |
| | Veterans Administration |
| | Weinberg Foundation |
Communication and Information

**Vision:**
Howard County residents will be connected to age-friendly resources and services via multiple forms of media that are timely, accessible and inclusive of all.

**Importance:**
Communication and information thrive on a “two-way street.” Not only do residents need to learn and know about their community, but community organizations need to know about residents’ needs and priorities. Effective communication allows residents to address their own needs and equips organizations to respond effectively in support of common goals.

**Challenges:**
Howard County residents get their information from a variety of sources, but many are not user-friendly or timely. Also, barriers interfere with effective communication for a number of the County’s residents, including older residents. These include but are not limited to deficits in vision and other physical challenges associated with age, language/cultural differences, lack of access to technology, and the economic conditions that underlie many of these barriers.

“While there is a plethora of resources and activities available to our county’s seniors, the broader community is often not aware of them.”

L. Ann Benjamin, community member
**Actions:** Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**CI 1** Increase coordination among programs to ensure consistency of messaging and information sharing.
- Create a central source for age-friendly providers to share information about their programs with key County and community communicators.
- Create unified communications for the community about programs from different agencies/partners.
- Partner with community and cultural associations and other diverse organizations for dissemination to the community at large.

**CI 2** Improve dissemination of information through direct outreach, both electronic and phone.
- Offer an opt-in email newsletter, phone call and/or text service for older adults to provide timely information on events and services.
- Increase the use of social media platforms and podcasts to provide timely information via cellular connection.

**CI 3** Develop guidelines for creating age-friendly communications, and promote positive perceptions of older adults.
- Share ADA-accessible text and design recommendations with agencies and organizations.
- Educate agencies and organizations to avoid ageist and ableist language.
- Develop and launch an anti-ageist communications campaign to dispel bias and change the culture in Howard County, including an aligned media kit.

**CI 4** Expand and publicize the availability of free Internet access in identified areas of need.
- Advocate to expand free Internet in subsidized and moderate-income housing and others serving older adults and persons with disabilities.

**CI 5** Develop and publicize programs to provide technology devices (new or donated), access to information for those without Internet, and technology education and training.
- Enhance technology education and training programs and printed resources for older adults, adults with disabilities, non-English speaking adults, and culturally diverse older adults. Explore new technology designed to strengthen communication with the same groups.
- Create a redistribution program for donated, reused and/or refurbished devices.

**CI 6** Publicize and support newly created Age-Friendly Ambassador programs.
- Educate Ambassadors about Age-Friendly programs and services in the County and culturally affirming communication practices.

**CI 7** Enhance the County website to make it more user friendly and increase the public's access to available resources.
- Increase accessibility through features like screen-reader technology and the ability to translate text into a variety of languages.
# Communication and Information

## Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions in the Communication and Information domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Community Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources &amp; structures which act as key enabling factors</td>
<td>Interventions and activities</td>
<td>Short/medium term changes achieved</td>
<td>Long term or societal changes achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/partners (coordination among multiple organizations)</td>
<td>· Centralized website</td>
<td>· Increased knowledge and awareness of community about services and resources</td>
<td>· Increased inclusiveness of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Lead agency</td>
<td>· Community outreach</td>
<td>· Increased utilization of services and resources</td>
<td>· Improved mental and physical health of residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Overarching communication strategies</td>
<td>· Guidelines, media kits, communication campaigns, physical handouts</td>
<td>· Improved accessibility and utilization of websites</td>
<td>· Improved coordination between organizations serving residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Funding</td>
<td>· Consistent updates to information providers</td>
<td>· Increased accuracy of referrals</td>
<td>· Improved responsiveness of organizations to community needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>· Translation of materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>· Decreased ageism and ableism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Cross training of staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>· Technology devices to residents</td>
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RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Health and Community Services

Vision:
Howard County will be a thriving, healthy community for persons of all ages by promoting healthy behaviors and access to resources and services, and by providing a safe and healthy environment for all Howard County residents to live their best lives.

Importance:
While the majority of older adults are physically, emotionally and cognitively healthy and vibrant, increased age is associated with increased rates of disabilities and needs. Integrated and comprehensive networks of services are critical to address individuals’ needs and ensure they are healthy, engaged and independent for as long as possible.

Challenges:
While Howard County residents are fortunate to live in a community with a multitude of resources, services may still be inadequate to fully meet their needs. In addition to identifying existing gaps and barriers to service, leaders must anticipate the future needs of an aging and diversifying population, including new and more innovative services. Priorities must include addressing the needs of caregivers, ensuring that affordable services reach all areas of the County and increasing awareness of and access to services for all County residents.
Health and Community Services

**Actions:** Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**HC 1** Expand access to information on existing health and community resources.
- Improve searchability and breadth of information resources such as the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence website and Resource Guide and Maryland Access Point.
- Improve information and services available to nursing home and assisted living residents and their families.

**HC 2** Expand home and community-based services (e.g., chronic disease self-management, caregiver supports).
- Pilot early intervention diabetes programs in high-risk groups.
- Develop a hotline and online resources for caregivers in need of support outside of business hours.

**HC 3** Analyze the range of services available in the County, including gap analysis (need vs. availability).
- Fill gaps in prevention, treatment and palliative care resources in rural areas and among non-English speakers and persons with disabilities.
- Promote home health services that foster aging in place.

**HC 4** Develop new or enhance existing programs of trained individuals to provide health advocacy and informal outreach.
- Recruit and train Community Health Workers from marginalized communities to provide peer outreach.
- Recruit and train Senior Health Coaches to provide ongoing follow-up care and encouragement for older individuals.
- Recruit and train Age-Friendly Ambassadors to help older adults find and navigate trusted sources of information.

**HC 5** Investigate and promote innovative models of affordable respite care.
- Focus on community-based care models that integrate supports and offer more home health care and social services.

**HC 6** Develop a mechanism to ensure accountability and promote collaboration between service providers.
- Create and oversee a coordinating council of County agencies, nonprofit and volunteer organizations and acute and long-term care facilities.

**HC 7** Identify funding to increase the availability of small group and individual health information services, like Community Health Workers.
Health and Community Services

Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions HC 2, HC4, and HC6

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<td>Resources &amp; structures which act as key enabling factors</td>
<td>Interventions and activities</td>
<td>Short/medium term changes achieved</td>
<td>Long term or societal changes achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Peer outreach workers</td>
<td>· Trainings and credentialing</td>
<td>· Increased access to services</td>
<td>· Improved health of community members</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Volunteers</td>
<td>· Client contacts</td>
<td>· Increased utilization of services</td>
<td>· Increased knowledge in community about services/options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/ partners</td>
<td>· Council meetings</td>
<td>· Reduction in caregiver burden</td>
<td>· Decrease in 911 calls/hospital readmissions/institutionalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Lead agency</td>
<td>· Strategic plan</td>
<td>· Improved care coordination</td>
<td>· Increased effectiveness of healthcare system (e.g., decrease duplication, removal of barriers)</td>
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<td>· Protocols for engagement</td>
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<td>· Decreased social isolation among community members</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Community outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Funding</td>
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Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

**Vision:**
Howard County will educate and inspire community members, especially older adults, on ways to stay active and will create, promote and enhance welcoming spaces that are inclusive, accessible, multicultural, multi-generational and sustainable.

**Importance:**
The use of outdoor spaces and buildings has many physical and mental benefits for all ages, including improving cardiovascular health, offering strength training opportunities, reducing social isolation and improving cognitive functions.

**Challenges:**
Howard County boasts an incredible range of outdoor spaces and amenities as well as historical, cultural and community-based buildings (such as parks, trails, 50+ Centers, Community Centers and faith-based entities). The challenge is that residents are often unaware of and therefore underutilize the resources in their community.

**Actions:**
Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**OSB 1**
Make outdoor spaces and buildings more age-friendly by using universal design concepts in renovation and construction projects and adding outdoor exercise equipment, enhanced security, and improved walkability.

- Develop Age-Friendly certification process for outdoor spaces and buildings.
- Develop and evaluate a pilot project of outdoor exercise equipment for older adults.

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

- Enhance the Age-Friendly website to include assessments and certifications of usable parks, trails and buildings.
- Establish an Age-Friendly Ambassador program focused on certifying buildings and outdoor spaces.

**OSB 3**
Promote donation programs for less well-known parks to beautify spaces and make them more age-friendly.
### Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions OSB1 and H3

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<td>Interventions and activities</td>
<td>Short/medium term changes achieved</td>
<td>Long term or societal changes achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Universal design (UD) guidelines and criteria for homes, public buildings and outdoor spaces</td>
<td>· Coordination between County government, volunteers, private sector, builders</td>
<td>· Increase in homes that meet UD guidelines</td>
<td>· Increased utilization of public spaces and buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Volunteers</td>
<td>· Establishment of UD certification programs</td>
<td>· Increase in buildings/outdoor spaces that meet Age-Friendly certification criteria</td>
<td>· Increased home values and capacity to be used over greater time span</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/partners</td>
<td>· Education of buyers, remodelers and builders about advantages of UD</td>
<td>· Increased knowledge about advantages of Universal Design</td>
<td>· Greater involvement of all individuals in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Lead agencies</td>
<td>· Evaluation of spaces and buildings</td>
<td>· Improved mental and physical health</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Funding</td>
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<td>· Improved ability to get around inside home</td>
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<td>· Improved capacity to connect with others</td>
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Respect and Social Inclusion

Vision:
Howard County is a multicultural community that welcomes and connects persons from all generations and backgrounds to live, learn, work and enjoy activities together.

Importance:
Respect and social inclusion are required to truly embrace and include people from diverse backgrounds in the community. An inclusive community is responsive to all cultures, languages, backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses and abilities.

Challenges:
Community programs that promote respect and social inclusion should ensure that residents are comfortable to retain and maintain their respective identities and cultural affiliations, while bringing the richness of diversity to the whole.
RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

**Actions:** Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**RSI 1** Expand and promote intergenerational activities like tutoring, gardening, volunteering and exercising.
- Expand public and private partnerships to recruit volunteers.
- Engage teachers and school counselors in the Age-Friendly initiative.
- Train volunteers and organizations to support intergenerational engagement.

**RSI 2** Analyze and document the impact and value of intergenerational activities for all residents.
- Establish evaluation tools to measure program effectiveness and outcomes for volunteers, hosts and beneficiaries.

**RSI 3** Improve age-friendly practices in businesses.
- Develop an Age-Friendly Business certification program which addresses considerations for customer service, marketing, ambience, design, accessibility, service, and products that meet the needs of older adults.

Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Action RSI3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Interventions and activities</td>
<td>Short/medium term changes achieved</td>
<td>Long term or societal changes achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/ partners&lt;br&gt; · Lead organization&lt;br&gt; · Volunteers&lt;br&gt; · Funding</td>
<td>· Community outreach&lt;br&gt; · Assessment checklist&lt;br&gt; · Education/awareness&lt;br&gt; · Volunteer training&lt;br&gt; · Issuing of certificates</td>
<td>· Improved services received by public&lt;br&gt; · Increased activity for businesses&lt;br&gt; · Improved capacity to connect with others</td>
<td>· Increased community inclusiveness&lt;br&gt; · Improved responsiveness of businesses to community needs&lt;br&gt; · Decrease in ageism and ableism</td>
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Housing

**Importance:**
Surveys indicate that a significant percentage of older adults desire to remain in their current homes, as opposed to entering assisted living or nursing homes. An individual's home environment produces a sense of comfort and security, yet for reasons of health, suitability of the home to modification, mobility issues or a change in finances, older adults may need to consider alternative living arrangements. An age-friendly community should include a variety of housing options for older adults.

**Challenges:**
A range of affordable and adaptable housing options are necessary to account for the different ways that older adults age. Some of the challenges in age-friendly housing include: providing reliable information about affordable and adaptable housing options; providing services that help people implement their choices (e.g., home modifications, self-help assessments, webinars); and coordinating services among various agencies and organizations.

**Vision:**
Howard County will be a welcoming place that includes a wide variety of housing options for older adults, ranging from remaining in the family home or aging elsewhere within the community to housing arrangements geared specifically for older adults. Services that support these choices will be readily available to all older adults within the broad community and from the County government.

**Actions:**
Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**H 1**  Modify covenants and zoning regulations to enhance and facilitate aging in place.
- Allow for adult group homes and assisted living facilities in more developments.
Ease the permitting process for in-law suites and Accessory Dwelling Units.

**H 2**  Expand and promote existing services to facilitate aging in place.
- **Consolidate information** on home modifications and housing options into a single online information hub.
- **Improve access to home safety assessment** for older adults.
**Actions:**

**H 3** Enhance the capacity for individuals to remain safe and independent in the community through Universal Design in construction.
- Update Howard County’s Universal Design Guidelines
- Increase requirements for contractors to build more accessible entrances, doorways, bathrooms and kitchens in housing targeted to older adults and encourage use of universal design in new and remodeled homes for persons of all ages.

**H 4** Enhance planning for older adults.
- Prioritize and implement Housing Opportunities Master Plan recommendations for older adults and persons with disabilities. Integrate findings into the new Howard County General Plan.

**H 5** Expand access to information about housing options and choices, including nursing homes and assisted living facilities.
- Create an education and outreach program that expands assessment, referral and peer sharing to help older adults choose facilities.

**H 6** Develop a program that advises homeowners how to make modifications, from design through construction, to facilitate aging in place.
- Maintain an inventory of vetted home construction vendors, promote self-help training options and streamline the process for the Livable Homes Tax Credit.

**H 7** Develop consistent permitting requirements across all jurisdictions within the County that remove barriers to home modifications that facilitate aging in place.
- Ease modifications to garages, sunrooms and other first-floor spaces that are frequently used to make homes more accessible.

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

**H 9** Expand support for communities that want to develop “village” models which help older adults remain in their own homes and engaged in the community with a cooperative support network.
- Allow home sharing without going through licensing and inspection.
- Establish a process to screen potential roommates/housemates.

**H 10** Modify regulations to facilitate home sharing (a program where unrelated adults can share housing with older adults).
- Ease modifications to garages, sunrooms and other first-floor spaces that are frequently used to make homes more accessible.

**H 11** Expand financial support in the form of tax credits, rent subsidies and validated home equity and reverse mortgage opportunities for older adults.

**H 12** Create coordination and cooperation programs for congregate housing and aging-in-place providers to meet, identify gaps and improve services.

**H 13** Expand training and consultation for older adults on the financial aspects of housing.

**H 14** Advocate for changes in state funding formulas that favor constructing and funding subsidized housing.
## Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Action H9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Community Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders/partners</td>
<td>Identification of interested communities and leaders</td>
<td>Commitment of communities/villages</td>
<td>Older adult resident needs are better met (better health, decreased isolation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>Identification of service provider networks</td>
<td>Creation of a Howard County network of villages</td>
<td>Cost savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead agency/Coordinator</td>
<td>Education to communities</td>
<td>Increase in requests for assistance</td>
<td>Increased capacity to age in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Technical assistance to communities</td>
<td>Increase in volunteerism</td>
<td>Reduction in unnecessary institutionalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
<td>Needs assessment of organizational capacity</td>
<td>Increased knowledge of village model</td>
<td>Increased community cohesiveness and sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection process</td>
<td>On-going fundraising and volunteer recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
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Housing

Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions H2, H6, H7 and H10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts Resources &amp; structures which act as key enabling factors</th>
<th>Outputs Interventions and activities</th>
<th>Outcomes Short/medium term changes achieved</th>
<th>Community Impacts Long term or societal changes achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| · Stakeholders/ partners  
· Lead agency/ Coordinator  
· Funding | · Coordination among relevant County departments, organizations, service providers, homeowners, HOAs  
· Modification of rules/ regulations  
· Development of consistent policies  
· Legislation to increase tax credits  
· Searchable database for people to find information and resources  
· Self-help trainings | · Increase in homes  
· Increased utilization of existing services  
· Increased access to and awareness of information  
· Decrease in falls among community residents  
· Increased coordination | · Increased independence  
· Safer and more accessible homes  
· Decreased isolation  
· Improved mental and physical health  
· Decrease in unnecessary institutionalization |
Social Participation

**Vision:**
Howard County will be a community in which individuals of all ages are connected by accessible and inclusive social, cultural, educational and wellness opportunities that foster socialization, engagement, continuous intellectual growth and meaningful interpersonal interactions.

**Importance:**
Social isolation and loneliness have been linked to several mental and physical conditions, including depression, Alzheimer’s disease, cognitive decline, impaired immune function, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and reduced life span. Social isolation and loneliness are separate but overlapping states; few social relationships or contacts can lead to a feeling of isolation. The problem is not insignificant; about one quarter of people in the U.S. aged 65+ are considered to be socially isolated (pre-COVID-19) and over 40% of those 60+ report feeling lonely.

**Challenges:**
Howard County is fortunate to have many resources and activities available for older adults to interact, learn, and engage socially—even when compared with other parts of the country. The challenge is spreading awareness and motivating use of these resources by those most at risk for social isolation and loneliness.

**Actions:**
Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**SP 1**  
Launch a community-wide effort to market available 50+ programs and amenities.
- **Strengthen linkages** among government, nonprofit and for-profit organizations serving older adults to increase awareness and engagement.
- **Engage the Commission on Aging** to promote programs and capture the needs of the older adult community.

**SP 2**  
Enhance the public’s ability to provide input to 50+ Center activities.
- **Formalize a process for two-way communication** between 50+ Centers and their users.
**Actions:**

**SP 3**  Expand the range and types of activities available through 50+ Centers, including activities outside of the physical centers.

- Expand evening and weekend activities as well as those in places like churches, police stations, libraries and historic properties spread throughout the community. Continue remote programming based on community interest.

**SP 4**  Develop and promote an Age-Friendly Ambassador program to promote social participation.

- Develop Ambassador recruitment, application, selection and orientation processes.
- Implement community outreach programs and establish phone and online portals for older adults to request contact with an Ambassador.
- Develop an evaluation program to measure the effectiveness of the Age-Friendly Ambassador program.

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**Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Action SP3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts Resources &amp; structures which act as key enabling factors</th>
<th>Outputs Interventions and activities</th>
<th>Outcomes Short/medium term changes achieved</th>
<th>Community Impact Long term or societal changes achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/ partners</td>
<td>· Provision of devices/ connectivity to targeted individuals</td>
<td>· Increased participation</td>
<td>· Increased community engagement and quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Lead agency</td>
<td>· Activities/sessions streamed online</td>
<td>· Increased social interaction</td>
<td>· Increase in types and diversity of opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Volunteers</td>
<td>· Activities/sessions held at physical locations outside 50+ Centers</td>
<td>· Improved mental and physical health</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Community Outreach</td>
<td></td>
<td>· Decreased social isolation and loneliness</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Funding</td>
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## Social Participation

### Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Action SP4

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/partners</td>
<td>· Trainings and credentialing of volunteers</td>
<td>· Increased awareness of and access to activities/resources</td>
<td>· Increased community engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Lead agency</td>
<td>· Assistance to community residents</td>
<td>· Increased socialization</td>
<td>· Reduction in unnecessary institutionalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Volunteers</td>
<td>· On-going evaluation and process improvement</td>
<td>· Improved mental and physical health</td>
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<td>· Community Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Protocols for engagement</td>
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<td>· Funding</td>
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Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan
Vision:
Howard County will have a varied, efficient and sustainable multimodal transportation system that provides safe and affordable transportation for users of all ages and abilities. The system will be easy to understand, use and access. It will connect people to jobs, goods, services and activities. The system will facilitate active transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of scooters and similar devices.

Importance:
Remaining connected with other people, jobs and services is critical to remaining engaged. The inability to get to where you need is a significant barrier to aging in the community and contributes to isolation. A robust transportation system is one that increases the efficiency and effectiveness of public, private and non-profit transportation services and that is readily available to serve all users. The system should accommodate walking, bicycling, transit and automobile travel.

Challenges:
Howard County’s central location creates access to two major metropolitan areas. Major transportation hubs (Amtrak and BWI airport) are convenient to county residents. The Regional Transportation Agency (RTA) of Central Maryland, and several county non-profits offer transportation services to seniors and persons with disabilities. Also, faith-based organizations offer transportation services to their members. However, the geography and population distribution in the County results in large areas with no public transit, perpetuating a vehicle-focused community in those areas. In the more densely populated areas that are likely to be the focus of future development, the insufficient number of safe and convenient alternatives to cars contributes to increased congestion. Additionally, many County residents are not aware of the many options currently available or how to access them. Actions leverage the assets of the county and point to new options.
**RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

**Transportation**

**Actions:** Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**T 1** Promote and fund alternative transportation options to supplement traditional fixed route transit, paratransit and single occupancy vehicle trips.
- Improve access to mobility service sharing companies (e.g., Lyft or Uber and GoGo Grandparent).
- Promote Neighbor Ride and increase collaboration with community-based organizations with access to underutilized vehicles.
- Train information specialists from Maryland Access Point, 211 and similar resource agencies, as well as community partners, on all transportation options available to older adults.

**T 2** Develop a work group to explore alternatives to transportation (e.g., goods and services delivered directly to people).

**T 3** Maintain and expand affordable transit options and/or alternatives in underserved areas/corridors with densities and populations that will benefit from access to transit.
- Seek funding to implement at least 50% of the service routes recommended by the 2018 Transit Development Plan.
- Promote alternatives to travel, such as telemedicine, to focus transit resources on the greatest needs.

**T 4** Implement Howard County Complete Streets Policy to ensure safer mobility and access to community services.
- Prioritize investment in areas with underserved populations, including older adults, and encourage alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.

**T 5** Develop and provide transportation training.
- Partner with organizations and communities to create accessible videos and fact sheets that educate transit patrons to use new apps for transit scheduling, payment and bus route status.

**T 6** Prioritize and implement elements of Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans.
- Identify high priority transit locations (supermarkets, employment, health care and service centers) to improve access to fixed routes for older adults and persons with disabilities.
- Implement a user-friendly wayfinding system to make pathways and long-distance pedestrian and bike routes more accessible.
- Develop Capital and Operational Funding and Implementation plans for pedestrian and bicycle master plans and Complete Streets Implementation Plan.

**T 7** Implement Strategic Roadway Safety Plan for roadway elements to create a safe and well-designed transportation system for older drivers.
**Actions:**

**T 8**  
Promote driver education and vehicle maintenance support for older adults.  
- Offer CarFit program at least once a year in person and online on a regular basis.  
- Promote the Maryland Vehicle Association’s Older Driver Week and AARP’s Smart Driver Course.

**T 9**  
Develop and provide education related to the physical and psychological process of transitioning away from driving.

---

**Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions T2 and T3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efforts</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Community Impacts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources &amp; structures which act as key enabling factors</td>
<td>Interventions and activities</td>
<td>Short/medium term changes achieved</td>
<td>Long term or societal changes achieved</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/partners</td>
<td>· Trainings and education</td>
<td>· Reduction in trips required</td>
<td>· Improved health of residents (mental and physical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Lead agency</td>
<td>· Provision of devices/Internet service</td>
<td>· Decrease in transportation costs</td>
<td>· Reduction in traffic congestion, air pollution and accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Volunteers</td>
<td>· Increase in virtual sessions</td>
<td>· Improved consistency in services</td>
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## Transportation

### Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions T5 and T9

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<td>· Stakeholders/partners</td>
<td>· Development of public information on transportation options&lt;br&gt; · Trainings and education</td>
<td>· Increased utilization of transportation alternatives&lt;br&gt; · Increased knowledge and receptivity to transportation alternatives&lt;br&gt; · Improved independence</td>
<td>· Improved health of residents (mental and physical)&lt;br&gt; · Reduction in traffic congestion, air pollution and accidents</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Identification of lead agency</td>
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<td>· Travel trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Community Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Funding</td>
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</table>
Vision:
Howard County will be a community that provides its diverse population of older adults with a multitude of options for employment, volunteering and civic engagement rich with meaning, purpose and impact. The community will strive to engage older adults in innovative ways and to recognize and utilize their skills and experience through these opportunities, which will be made widely available using prominent promotion and publicity.

Importance:
Work and civic engagement in an age-friendly community drive economic inclusion and access to prosperity for all individuals and businesses in a region. The goal is for Howard County to foster an environment in which living well is ageless; where people can work, volunteer and be engaged in civic organizations, regardless of their age, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status or any other social construct.

Challenges:
For many years, a person’s identity and purpose may be largely shaped by their occupation. Particularly for men, social interaction may also primarily stem from work. As residents look toward retirement, some are faced with the task of filling their calendars with meaningful activities. Many may have worked outside of Howard County and are unaware of the broad and diverse resources available to them inside the County. An age-friendly community fosters an environment where residents can explore new ways to be gainfully employed, give back through civic engagement and strengthen ties to the community.

Howard County is home to more than 1,300 nonprofits that would benefit from partnerships with civic-minded residents looking for opportunities to give back at all stages of life.
Work and Civic Engagement

**Actions:** Visit the website for a detailed report of the recommendations/actions with a rationale for each: www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly.

**WCE 1** Develop an expanded and centralized one-stop engagement/volunteer center.
- Resume the activities of the former Columbia Association Volunteer Center and expand its activity database to include other databases from the County.
- Include service to match community members/programs with short-term, specific needs with interested volunteers and paid gig workers.
- Improve the diversity, equity and inclusion of government-sponsored volunteer programs through outreach and support.

**WCE 2** Develop and promote a Time Bank system that allows for the swapping of time and skills of community members.
- Expand non-profit staff sharing projects.
- Reinvent or replace former Columbia Association Timebank.

**WCE 3** Develop a program to provide education on best practices in volunteer management for small organizations.

**WCE 4** Develop a Howard County Encore Initiative (i.e., gig work with social impact for highly skilled professionals in retirement).
- Determine a host agency and core leadership team.
- Develop a strategic plan for the initiative.
### Work and Civic Engagement

#### Framework for stakeholders to consider in development of Actions in Work and Civic Engagement

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<tr>
<td>· Stakeholders/ partners</td>
<td>· Community outreach</td>
<td>· Increase in volunteer participation</td>
<td>· Increase in community engagement and participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Lead agency</td>
<td>· Standardized best management practices</td>
<td>· Increased diversity (age, income, etc.) of people volunteering</td>
<td>· Improved mental and physical health of volunteers</td>
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<td>· Consolidated database</td>
<td>· Creation of a centralized “one stop” volunteer/engagement center</td>
<td>· Increase in gratifying volunteer experiences and retention</td>
<td>· Decreased social isolation</td>
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<td>· Volunteers</td>
<td>· Creation of a “time bank” system to exchange services</td>
<td>· Increase in number and types of volunteer opportunities</td>
<td>· Increase in capacity to deliver community services</td>
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<td>· Gig workers</td>
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<td>· Improved ease in finding meaningful volunteer activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td>· Increase in number of organizations using best practices in volunteer management</td>
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</table>
Conclusion

The Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan 2021-2024 is the first step in creating a more inclusive, respectful and informed community. The ideas in this plan came from the feedback of over 3,000 community residents and the work of more than 100 people across eight work groups to investigate, analyze and recommend specific action steps that contribute to a more age-friendly, livable community. Thanks to the thoughtful review of the Steering Committee and the public’s input, this plan has become a reality.

The next stage in the process will require the work of the entire Howard County community, individuals and groups alike. Implementation will require:

- Identification of an entity, or entities, responsible for overseeing and monitoring progress of the tasks;
- Organization and support of partners (private sector, non-profit, government and residents) to leverage skills and resources;
- Accountability measures to monitor and ensure progress and direct corrective steps; and
- Identification of funding where necessary to achieve action steps.

While the work groups identified Howard County government as the primary responsible party for many of the action steps, it is important to recognize that a truly age-friendly community is based upon a culture that springs from the community, not one imposed by government or other agencies. Howard County government and its departments will be a leading partner in moving these action steps forward, but it is incumbent upon partners from all levels of the community—from individuals to small groups to large businesses—to also step forward in leadership.

To be effective, the process of realizing the community’s age-friendly vision must continue to reflect the energy and input of the community’s members. Whether through ongoing commitments or one-time or short-term opportunities to weigh in, community members are essential to support the plan’s development, operation and evaluation.

Howard County invites all members of the community to decide how, where and when they will become involved in the action items to make Howard County a great place to grow up and grow older.
To further inform work group members of the needs and interests of Howard County residents over time, a compilation report of previous studies, surveys and reports was developed sharing the results related to the eight domains of livability from each study or report. The previous studies used provide a decade-long lookback period to ensure that decisions are based on a wider base of individuals, over time. Surveys reviewed include:

- **Howard County: Community Health Needs Assessment** (2019)
- **Howard County Recreation & Parks FY2020-2024 Strategic Plan** (2019)
- **PlanHoward 2030** (2017)
- **Howard County Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan** (2017)
- **Planning for the Growth of the Older Adult Population in Howard County: Creating an Age-Friendly Community** (2015)
- **Community for a Lifetime: Columbia Association’s Comprehensive Plan for Serving the Older Adult Community** (2014)
- **Howard County Senior Housing Master Plan** (2004)
## Work Group Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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</table>
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A County initiative led by the Department of Community Resources and Services/Office on Aging and Independence
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Learn more about Age-Friendly Howard County at:
www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly

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