After Action Report:
A look back at our accomplishments
Introduction

The City of Bangor established the Bangor Livable Communities Committee (BLCC) in June of 2018. The goal of the BLCC was to create a measurable action plan that incorporated the eight domains of Livability into the community to the fullest extent possible. Early in the process the committee realized that specific areas of the City had different concerns. But the goal of the committee remained the same: engage its citizens to get to the crux of issues (or assets). While the focus of the committee was on persons fifty and older, individuals of all ages were welcomed to join because planning that is good for older individuals is good for the entire community regardless of age. Furthermore, the committee knew that the more people that were involved would ultimately strengthen neighborhoods and they would be further empowered to brainstorm innovative ideas that could improve individual neighborhoods and eventually the entire city. This report provides a highlight of some of the activities of the committee over the last three years.
Mission Statement

Bangor Livable Communities fosters a collaborative and healthy community by encouraging organizations, residents and city officials to work together to improve access to services and opportunities for all. We will accomplish our work by:

• Providing a voice for residents and visitors, to advise and advocate about changes to make Bangor a livable community.

• Encouraging a livable community that adapts and changes as the residents evolve.

• Promoting activities to bring all generations together to foster social engagement and civic participation.

• Upholding Livable Communities values so all citizens of Bangor can thrive and grow.
Vision and Values

Vision Statement
Bangor, where all residents are empowered to contribute to the growth of a community that encourages citizens to thrive across the lifespan.

Values of the Bangor Livable Communities Group
The Bangor Livable Communities group lets the following set of values and principles guide our work:

- Support an inclusive, welcoming and diverse community where all residents have a voice in the life of the city.
- Encourage communication amongst all community groups, city officials and residents that fosters a transparent process for identifying solutions to community issues.
- Be efficient and build on existing resources in the community without duplicating efforts.
- Promote an intergenerational and lifespan perspective to program and policy planning.
- Work collaboratively with the City of Bangor staff, Bangor City Council to advise and support on issues related to the Livable Community activities.
Benches

As part of our planning process in Bangor for the Livable Community initiative, the city hosted several focus groups to determine improvements that could be made to make public spaces more age friendly. Several community groups noted the Cross Insurance Center is difficult for older citizens to navigate because of the long hallways. After completing an on-site assessment of the facility, committee members were able to identify locations where additional benches could provide a much-needed respite for walkers. In 2018, these benches were installed inside and outside the facility.
Volunteer Fair

With the goal of increasing awareness of the need for volunteers in Greater Bangor, the BLCC hosted a public volunteer fair in October 2019. The fair was a partnership between many organizations that are part of the BLCC but also included higher education and the local United Way. The event included:

- 25 community organizations
- Event space donated by a local college
- 80 – 100 attendees
- Great media coverage by local TV stations
AARP Maine recognized the efforts of the BLCC to offer more opportunities to utilize outdoor public space. To that end, AARP chose the city of Bangor as a location to install an outdoor adult fitness center. In July of 2019, a dedicated group of volunteers installed a FitLot in Broadway Park. The result is a fantastic outdoor space that is still used today by community members across the lifespan.
Golden Shovel

The Golden Shovel Award was an initiative created to incentivize businesses in downtown Bangor to shovel sidewalks during the winter months. Bangor enacted an ordinance requiring homeowners and business to clean up after a snowstorm and if they don’t there is a fine. BLCC started the Golden Shovel award in the winter of 2019. They committee developed a welcome packet for businesses and a scoring system for this initiative. There were approximately six businesses who enrolled in this voluntary program in the first year. At the end of the winter season the award was presented to the business with the highest score.
As part of the action planning for the eight domains, the BLCC wanted to explore the viability of a self-sustaining intergenerational community center. In 2019, Eastern Area Agency on Aging (EAAA) agreed to take the lead on this activity. After internal discussions, EAAA announced they would be opening the Durgin Center in Brewer, Maine. The Durgin Center will open in the Fall of 2021. BLCC members continue to be part of the planning process through a subcommittee as well as an invitation to be part of an ongoing advisory committee through EAAA.
BLCC Member Comments

BLCC members were asked to share any “lessons learned” as part of the past three years with the initiative. Here are their thoughts:

1. “The volunteer fair was great, for public and agencies. I volunteered there, and met many seniors and college students exploring ways to help in the community.”

2. “Although I was not able to attend meetings regularly, due to my volunteer work, I was always impressed with the diversity of the group. Bringing people together from the City, non-profits, and agencies to brainstorm and take action to improv the Bangor area.”

3. “I think the greatest accomplishment has been the purchase of the space in Brewer for a new Senior Center.”

4. “Active transportation; our involvement helped to advocate for safer and better maintained sidewalks/bicycle trails.”
Next Steps

As the City of Bangor looks toward the future and what lies ahead for the BLCC, there are some crucial next steps that need to considered:

- Reinvigorate committee attendance after COVID-19
- Engage more citizens in committee planning
- Transition the committee from Public Health Dept to Community & Economic Development Department
- Participate in City Comprehensive planning process
- Determine BLCC role related to the Durgin Center