State: Indiana
Community Name: South Bend
Population Size: 103602
Percentage of Residents Above Age 60: 20
Community Structure: City
Other:
Community Type: Urban, Mixed, Suburban (offices, apartments and shops), Suburban (mostly residential)

Elected Official Signing the Letter of Commitment
Name: James Mueller
Title: Mayor
Office Mailing Address: 227 W. Jefferson Blvd. 1400 South Bend, IN 46601
Community Contact Name: Allie Dolz-Lane
Email: [redacted]
Position: Project Manager
Telephone: [redacted]
Role: The project manager of the Mayor's Office will be responsible for conducting community assessments, managing implementation plans, and other reports and assessments as requested by AARP.

Older Adult Involvement: South Bend's AARP Livability Index score is the lowest in the subject of engagement. That is why we are planning to hold focus groups, called Community Action Groups (CAG), to specifically seek input from older adults on how the city can improve their quality of life and address their needs. This past summer, the city sought input from our residents through online services, a voicemail survey through our 311 service, and a series of in-person and hybrid Community Action Group meetings on the use of American Rescue Plan Act dollars and our 2022 city budget. We received more feedback than any prior budget in South Bend's history, including feedback from older residents. Some of their requests were for athletic courts, pickleball courts, especially, along with social spaces and accessible housing options for older adults. All this feedback was considered for the 2022 budget and American Rescue Plan spending. In the future, we will continue to hold focus groups to engage our aging population for input on making this city a more age-friendly place to live. We will also be sure to hold these meetings in senior centers, apartment
complexes, and community centers, where our older populations live, socialize, and get resources. We will continue to offer virtual and in-person options, especially for our older adult residents for whom COVID-19 and other risks may deter them from participating otherwise. These focus groups will continue to give our older residents agency and allow us to find out what they want and need.

The City of South Bend has supported many local initiatives and organizations that work on issues impacting older adults in our community. The City is a partner of South Bend Heritage Foundation, which has two apartment buildings exclusively for older adults. The Foundation?s purpose combines equity and neighborhood enhancement. This organization is also an AARP Community Challenge Grantee and will be installing an outdoor space in one of their apartments for older residents. The City also works with REAL Services, a nonprofit that was created in 1966 to provide services to older adults. They provide caregiver support, aging and disability resources, household assistance, meals on wheels, and other services that are crucial for aging populations. They also provide older residents with transportation, amounting to more than 14,000 trips for medical appointments and other needs. Another organization with potential for partnership with the City is the Forever Learning Institute, which hosts classes and social events ranging from arts, language, and exercise, all for older adults. Within the City, the South Bend department of Venues Parks and Arts has programming for residents over 50 daily. These include exercise classes, social groups, art classes, walks in nature, and euchre! The activities planned in City community centers and parks aim to promote fitness and healthy lifestyles, as well as cultural and social activities to improve and maintain mental and physical health of older residents. The city hopes to create more partnerships in the future with housing and social service providing organizations, and others in the area that work with our older residents. It takes partnership in the public and private sector to make real progress in age-friendly services and programs, and while South Bend has room to improve, there are several groups already doing this important work.

South Bend has many other features that are truly age-friendly, and other communities in the network could take inspiration from a few our initiatives. First, we are proud of the City?s efforts to create inclusive options for collecting public input, which allows our older residents to contribute to these inquiries. Next, our vast systems of parks, arts venues, and public and community events improve the quality of life for all ages. The city also has wide-spanning biking and walking trails, including the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail, which spans from Niles, Michigan, through South Bend, all the way to Mishawaka, Indiana. These are just a few of the city?s exemplary assets that make living here more pleasant and enjoyable for older residents. Another aspect of our community that could serve as a
good example for others in the network is our system of transportation. While the city and surrounding areas are entirely drivable, there are also unique public transportation options. Along with a public bus system, we also have the Transpo Access system which can transport residents who have accessibility issues with traditional buses. Additionally, South Bend has an international airport, the South Shore train line, and an Amtrak station. The many transportation options in South Bend make it especially friendly for older adults. These parts of our city are also in line with the recommended American Rescue Plan Act spending on transit, mobility, and public spaces, and are parts of the city that are unique sources of pride for us and our residents. We will continue to improve on these, as we recognize their importance. All of these may make useful examples for other communities in the network.