Section 1: Community Details

Application Submission Date: July 19, 2021

State: NY

Community Name: Town of Keene

Total Population: ~ 1,200

% Age 60 or older: ~ 31%

Community Governance Structure: Town

Community Type: Small Town, Rural, Other: Located wholly within New York State’s Adirondack Park, much of the Town land is State-owned, preserved as “forever wild,” and contains several of the State’s highest mountains.

Elected Official Signing the Letter of Commitment: Joseph P. Wilson, Jr., Town Supervisor

Official Mailing Address: Town Hall, 10892 NYS Route 9N, Keene, NY 12942

Community Contact: Jeannie Cross

Email: [redacted]

Position: Volunteer

Telephone Number: [redacted]

Describe the named person’s role in the community’s age-friendly initiative: Ms. Cross led a Town strategic planning workgroup that focused on health and senior services. One of the workgroup’s recommendations was to seek AARP age-friendly designation, in part to provide a framework to advance other workgroup recommendations, all of which were developed from community input.

Section 2: Community Activities, Engagements and Collaborations

Describe your existing community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people. Please identify how your community plans to become more age-friendly:

The Town of Keene and individual groups of residents have organically developed services of interest to older residents, such as the Town-operated shopping bus, Town-developed walking trails, a ladies’ lunch group, the Golden Peaks group of seniors that meet in the Town Community Center, East Branch Friends of the Arts, and programs at the non-profit Keene Valley Library.

Through the age-friendly initiative, we hope to expand awareness and use of these and other local/regional resources and to:

• inform plans to expand active recreation on town land,
• improve housing options for seniors and individuals who work in Keene,
• ensure continued convenient access to health care, and
• better balance growth in the local outdoor tourism economy with respect for the small-town atmosphere enjoyed by year-round residents.

Most of these actions would benefit residents of all ages and help attract/retain both working-age adults and retirees.

**How will older adults be involved in community efforts to become more age-friendly?** An advisory group will be formed to gather input and develop ongoing age-friendly initiatives. We expect this group to comprise several members of the Town of Keene Strategic Plan Health Center and Senior Services Workgroup, all of whom were seniors and/or working in health and senior services. We expect to follow the format of the Strategic Plan initiative to gather input, such as in-person community meetings, focus groups and distribution of a survey on Nextdoor Keene.

**How will this increase collaboration and coordination among relevant communities and departments?** We expect our initiative to intersect with the Caregiving Working Group established by Mercy Care for the Adirondacks (a parish nurse/friendly visitor/family support organization), which regularly convenes representatives of regional health and social service entities, including the Essex and Franklin counties’ Offices for the Aging, AARP, Adirondack Health, North Country Home Care and many others. One of our key goals is to ensure that residents of Keene know what services already exist and to improve the usefulness of currently available information resources. For example, the State has created a website that lists available services (NY Connects) but our Strategic Plan Workgroup members found it difficult to use and sometimes inaccurate as to what services were available locally. We hope to work with the Essex County Office for the Aging to either improve the site or excerpt the relevant information to both digital and print formats that would be made available within Keene (because not all residents have or even want internet connections).

**Section 3: Network Membership**

**1-a. What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities?**

In Spring 2019, the Keene Town Board solicited community residents to help update the Town’s Strategic Plan, identify challenges due to a variety of recent trends, and capitalize on the Town’s existing strengths, which include a strong sense of voluntarism and community-building. A Keene Strategic Planning Steering Committee was formed; its first major task was to develop and disseminate a community survey in order to assess areas of concern from stakeholders. A public meeting was held in October of 2019 to establish five working groups – one of which focused on health and senior services with overlap with the achievable housing and recreation workgroups. All workgroups were comprised primarily of community volunteers; there were no paid staff or consultants. The health and senior services workgroup members were seniors and/or worked in senior/health services. The groups developed a series of recommendations for each topic area, which ultimately were packaged into a volunteer-written plan that was adopted by the Town Board on June 8, 2021.

One of the key recommendations of the health and senior services workgroup was to seek membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and use that membership as a platform to continue gathering community input – for example, from socially isolated seniors and residents of a local assisted living facility – and more fully develop other of the workgroup recommendations such as developing an information bank of existing health and senior services.
1-b. If you have consulted with an AARP State office or the national AARP Livable Communities team to discuss enrollment, please provide that person's name, title and e-mail address or phone number.
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What aspect of your community’s current or intended age-friendly work could be useful to other communities in the network?
As a small community nestled in the heart of the largely state-owned Adirondack High Peaks, Keene has long nurtured – and relied upon – a vibrant spirit of volunteerism. Knowing how to inspire volunteerism, coordinate it and not micro-manage it are critical skills and strengths that we can share. The Town has very few employees who focus on road maintenance and managing hiker parking (in season), so most of the Town’s cultural life and social supports are based on volunteer initiatives.

Section 4: Required Materials

Letter of Commitment and Town Board Resolution – attached in one PDF
Logo – attached JPG

Website URL: https://www.townofkeeneny.com/

Section 5: Social Media

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/KeeneAdks

Other: Nextdoor Keene (https://nextdoor.com/news_feed/)

Section 6: Agreement

I have read and understand the requirements for my community to become a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, including the need to conduct a community assessment; develop and acquire approval of an action plan; implement the plan; submit an annual best practice and provide periodic updates, including a five-year progress report.

☐
Yes, I understand the requirements.