Section 1: Community Details

Application Submission Date
April 28, 2021

State
Select a State
New Mexico

Community Name
Las Cruces

Total Population
103,000

Percentage of Resident Age 60 or Older
16%

Community Governance Structure (choose one)
X City

Community Type
X Mixed

Elected Official Signing the Community’s Letter of Commitment
Ken Miyagishima
Mayor
700 N. Main Street, Las Cruces, NM 88001

Community Contact
Jamey Rickman
jrickman@las-cruces.org
Community Engagement Manager
575 541 2192

Please describe the named person’s role in the community age-friendly initiative (100 word minimum)

The City of Las Cruces Community Engagement Office provides services and support to City Council members and constituents in Council Districts. The office is the liaison between community members, group organizations, city officials, and employees. The primary purpose of community engagement is to empower residents to participate in City government decisions that shape their city and their quality of living in the community, and to make a positive difference. Community building, outreach, education activities, improved communication, civic engagement, and collaboration are important to the City to help constituents understand city policy and to help constituents be better understood by city officials. The
office posts upcoming public engagement events on it’s website page and has included virtual events during the COVID pandemic.

**Section 2: Community Activities, Engagements, and Collaborations**

Briefly describe your existing community policies, programs, and services that are targeted toward older people. Please identity how your community plans to become more age-friendly (250-300 words required)

The City of Las Cruces, a southwestern mixed/urban city that has frequently been voted among the “Best Places to Retire,” has a low cost of living, a robust art community, vibrant traditions, a wide range of outdoor activities, beautiful landscapes, fantastic weather, growing economic opportunities, a range of educational institutions, three major hospitals, and a multi-cultural population. It’s aging population can take advantage of a wide array of ***SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT FOR CONTINUATION***

**CONT. Briefly 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.**

... services for seniors age 60+. The City of Las Cruces has a robust Senior Programs and five senior centers with various programs and art craft studios and provides several core services: Congregate Meals, Home Delivered Meals, Homemaker Services, Caregivers Serving Elderly/In-Home Respite, and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. The meal program is not based on fees or charges, but there is a suggested donation. There is a robust ADA accessible transportation system with eight fixed routes and an origination-point-to-point-of-destination service as well as ADA specific transit service for seniors and those living with a disability.
The Parks and Recreation Department offers many benefits for seniors seeking physical activities including almost 100 parks, an aquatic center, pickle-ball courts, other instructor-led fitness classes, and planned outings such as hikes and bike rides.

The new FitPark, provided to the city by AARP, will offer seniors/grandparents the ability to exercise in a safe area. Grandparents will be able to bring grandchildren to play on the adjacent playground, while grandparents/seniors will be able to take advantage of the provided exercise workshops.

The following are services that are also available to seniors:

- Two Branch Libraries
- Four City operated Museums
- Senior Volunteer Opportunities
- Food Distribution programs
- The Fire Department’s Mobile Integrated Health unit assists at risk seniors
- The New Mexico State University Nursing Department provides senior healthcare projects

Nationally, the U.S. aging population is estimated to reach 72 million by 2030. The City of Las Cruces endeavors to enhance services and support through future planning in its new comprehensive plan, which includes the AARP Livable Communities features as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) Domains of Livability and is opting to rebrand with a more active “community” facility approach. The City will also be focusing on culturally appropriate opportunities for seniors to meet the needs and supports of a growing, active, aging population, who are more health conscious and very engaged in community activities.
How will older adults be involved in the community’s efforts to become more age-friendly? (250-300 words required)

Seniors in Las Cruces are already very involved in city activities and policy making. They serve on advisory boards such as the Senior Programs Advisory Board, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the El Paseo/South Solano Ad Hoc Board, and the Las Cruces Economic Recovery Board in the City, just to name a few. They are also very active in the League of Women Voters on several committees, including one on affordable housing, and frequently submit their ideas to the city’s Housing and Neighborhood Activities Department. They participate in City Council District Meetings, Public Comment periods during regular city council meetings and a variety of public meetings held throughout the City. They also take part in the City’s Neighborhood Leadership Academy.

As part of the age-friendly initiative, members of the local AARP group will hold focus group meetings in each of the six council districts. There will also be a survey of seniors to determine which of the WHO Domains of Livability (Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, and Community and Health Services) they wish to focus on. The City’s Action Plan will be developed based on the information collected in these activities.

Two pilot focus groups were conducted in early fall of 2020 to help define a process to work with the six city districts. For these two groups, we invited local AARP Chapter members to participate. Using three questions, the groups discussions centered on Housing and Transportation Domains as the top two areas to focus on. We expect to use this information in our future focus groups, one for each of the six districts.
How will the efforts to become more age-friendly increase collaboration and coordination among relevant community agencies and departments? (250 – 300 words required)
The City of Las Cruces recently adopted a new comprehensive plan, *Elevate Las Cruces*, which describes the vision for the future of our community and provides over-arching goals, policies, and actions for achieving this vision. *Elevate Las Cruces* was developed using a systems approach and perspective with the organizing systems being Community Development, Community Prosperity, and Community Livability. Utilization of this approach required a robust and extensive public engagement effort for the drafting and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Las Cruces plans to continue to use this effective and inclusionary collaboration and coordination method for its participation in the AARP Age-Friendly Network. This public engagement and community participation strategy utilized a variety of outreach methods with both external and internal resources as well as on-site and online engagement opportunities. Internal methods included interdepartmental work groups, administrative work groups, and public/stakeholder work sessions. External methods included charrettes, online surveys, traditional surveys, focus groups, social media advertisements, and public open houses. The city will continue to use portions of this approach and supplement it as necessary to connect with potentially underserved populations and ensure coordination with agencies that are or may be focused on senior issues. In addition, *Elevate Las Cruces* has an extensive implementation section that crosses departments and brings together local entities. The shared community vision identified within *Elevate Las Cruces* is supported by policies and actions that will be implemented over the next 25 years.

***SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT FOR CONTINUATION***

• **CONT. How will efforts to become more age-friendly increase collaboration and coordination among community agencies and departments?**

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Las Cruces is an inclusive community, recognized for its cultural diversity, enchanting natural amenities, and vibrant quality of life. We are committed to enhancing our livability, prosperity, and environment for the shared benefit of current and future generations of Las Crucens in a fiscally and socially sustainable manner.”

Elevate Las Cruces provides self-assessment, forward thinking, and an inclusive process where all Las Crucens have a role in proactively influencing the type of city that Las Cruces will be in the future.

Section 3: Network Membership

1-a. What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities (100 words minimum)

The local AARP chapter has worked on several projects with the City and contributed to the development of the new comprehensive plan, which includes the list of Livable Communities features that local planning policies should consider as well as World Health Organizations (WHO) Domains of Livability. In Elevate Las Cruces, the City’s comprehensive plan, the short-term work program identifies the following action:

ACTION CP-11.1.4 Consider joining the AARP Network of Age-friendly States and Communities.

This action is further supported by the following Elevate Las Cruces Vision:

Las Cruces leverages social partnerships: Goal: CP-11. Underserved Populations: Develop and support programs that provide assistance to traditionally underserved populations; Policy: CP 11.1, Expand programs that provide assistance to Las Cruces’ elderly population.
1.b. If you have consulted with an AARP State office or the national AARP Livable Communities to discuss enrollment, please provide that person’s, name, title, and email address or phone number.
Bill Armbruster, National AARP Livable Communities Senior Advisor
Gary Williams, Asst. Director of Outreach, NM AARP State Office
Dave Lynch, Las Cruces AARP Chapter President

2. What aspect of your community's current or intended age-friendly work could be useful to other communities in the network? (100 words minimum)
The Las Cruces community has a very engaged population of older people who are passionate about supporting age friendly community planning. The process used to establish the comprehensive plan (Elevate Las Cruces) provides a good example of community engagement and age-friendly focused development of future city plans. To sustain and grow that involvement, our community taps into these stakeholders who are already engaged to ensure appropriate representation of older people involved in opportunities provided by the city and to develop additional opportunities as identified. We also ensure, through Elevate Las Cruces and other interdepartmental collaborations, that our older population is consistently considered in the services, programs, and civic engagement opportunities offered by the municipal government and ensure that we genuinely consider input from our older stakeholders that impact their quality of life.

Section 4: Required Materials

1.-a Letter of commitment
Provide a digital file (PDF preferred) of the signed document.
1-b. Resolution of proclamation (optional)
If your community issued either document in addition to the commitment letter, provide a digital file (PDF preferred) here.

2. Logo or image
Provide a digital (JPG preferred) and/or a link to a downloadable logo or other image that represents your community and for which you have reprint rights and permission to provide for use by AARP and the World Health Organization
Website URL
https://www.las-cruces.org

Section 5: Social Media
Provide the most applicable Twitter handle(s) and Facebook account(s) for your community (i.e. an age-friendly coalition, the local government, key elected officials, and/or local partners)

Twitter 1:
https://twitter.com/clcgov

Facebook 1:
https://www.facebook.com/CityofLasCruces

Instagram:

YouTube:
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.

X Yes, I understand the requirements

SUBMIT YOUR COMMUNITY’S APPLICATION TO THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY STATES AND COMMUNITIES

Receipt of the application will be acknowledged by AARP within 24 hours of submission of during the next business day.