Membership Application
To join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities
and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

- If you have questions while completing this form, please email livable@aarp.org
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper

Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS
APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 3/14/2022

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: County of Bergen
STATE: New Jersey
POPULATION SIZE: 955,732 *number is based upon 2020 US Census data
PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 22.5% *number is based upon 2019 US Census data
NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: James J. Tedesco, III
Bergen County Executive
OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: One Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack, NJ 07601

Section 2: COMMUNITY CONTACT for the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities
- The community contact is the local staff member or volunteer who is primarily responsible for carrying out the community-level work — it is not the responsible AARP staff member.

NAME: Michael Pagan
POSITION: Age-Friendly Coordinator
EMAIL ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]

Please describe the named person’s role in the city or community’s age-friendly initiative:

Michael Pagan is the Age-Friendly Coordinator for the County of Bergen. Mr. Pagan is responsible for coordinating and collaborating with our stakeholders, age-friendly communities, older residents, and departments within the County on various age-friendly initiatives. On November 7th, 2018, the County of Bergen adopted Resolution #1134-18 supporting the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program. This resolution authorizes the Age-Friendly Coordinator to move forward with the Administration in taking the necessary steps to complete the application process and become an active participant of the program.

The person named above agrees to be subscribed to the AARP Livable Communities Weekly e-Newsletter, which is one of the primary ways we share useful news and resources. To add additional subscribers, type their names and email addresses into below. Once this application is processed, a subscription confirmation message will be sent so the individual can confirm that they want to subscribe. To subscribe today, follow the link above or visit AARP.org/Livable-Subscribe.

Click here to enter text.
Section 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

1) Please provide a brief summary of the community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people and how the community plans to become more age-friendly.

In New Jersey, Bergen County has the largest population of people aged 60 and over and account for over 20 percent of the County’s overall population. In 1966, Bergen County took the first steps in creating an “age-friendly” community by establishing the Division of Senior Services under Federal Legislation of the Older Americans Act to service county residents age 60 and over. The Division is the primary planning, coordinating, and funding agency for senior programs and services, promoting the well-being, health, and independence of Bergen County’s older adult residents. In accordance with the Older Americans Act, the County also established the Senior Advisory Council, which acts in an advisory capacity to the Division Director on all matters relating to the Division of Senior Services including development, administration, and execution of the Area Plan. The Senior Advisory Council assists in the development of exhibits and programs related to older adults within the community. In addition, through the Bergen County Division of Community Development, the County funds various programs that assist our older residents in a number of programs that provide home improvement renovations, in-home support services, transportation needs, and improvements to our 10 County-owned senior centers. Moreover, our Department of Transportation has been working to increase transportation options for our older residents so that they may have more access to appointments and activities within the County. Most recently, the County has been redeveloping our Master Plan and working with different departments to ensure that they improve the Plan with an age-friendly lens.

2) How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly?

Over the past few years, the County has been collaborating with our departments and divisions, including the Division of Senior Services to develop three detailed assessments to be distributed to our older residents, division directors and department heads, and providers and stakeholders that are important in moving forward with the age-friendly process. These various assessments will assist us in developing a community-wide action plan and allow us to identify key indicators that will measure our progress in implementing this plan. In particular, older adults will be recruited to become active stakeholders in Bergen County’s age-friendly process. Careful attention will be made to ensure older adults stakeholders reflect the rich diversity of the County. While many programs had to adapt and modify due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our efforts to serve older adults and our vulnerable population were executed during the most difficult of times. In fact, many saw increases in participation. The County hired a Housing Navigator who is working diligently in consolidating the vast and extensive housing resources and applications available to better assist our older residents in navigating through the difficulties of finding a home and living in place. The County partnered with Rutgers University to create a GIS mapping system that will eventually assist our residents in accessing the various resources throughout the County as well as assist the County in assessing where and what resources can be better utilized.

3) Briefly describe the mechanisms the community has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments.
Bergen County is currently revising the Master Plan and taking into account all ages and physical abilities. Many of our departments including the Division of Public Works, Engineering, Parks, etc., have been working together to make sure that all of our streets, parks, and pedestrian facilities are not only ADA compliant, but also take into consideration the various ages and needs of all residents. For example, Bergen County recently increased a pedestrian crossing time in Teaneck to accommodate the length of time it takes for individuals pushing strollers and older adults to cross the street. In addition, in 2018 the County Executive, Jim Tedesco, launched the Hackensack Transit Connector bus routes, which connects Hackensack’s train stations and bus terminal with the County Administrative complex. The transit connector, which is free to the public, has helped reduce the number of personal vehicles on the roads and provide better public transit access to those without vehicles and individuals with mobility issues.
Section 4: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

- Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your membership in the global age-friendly network and better enable us to understand how to support the network.

4) How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

As the largest county in New Jersey with the highest number of older residents, Bergen County hopes to be an example and demonstrate the various ways other communities of similar size and population can work towards becoming age-friendly. In addition, we hope that our GIS mapping system can not only be used as a tool for our own community, but also as a resource for other communities to emulate as we share our codes and methodology in creating this system. Moreover, we hope to demonstrate ways departments can come together to create a Master Plan that positively affects the community and people of all ages and physical abilities.

5) What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

In recent years, Bergen County has become the home of the largest number of older residents in New Jersey. We believe that being a part of such a remarkable initiative will only enhance our ability to continue to serve this growing population and allow them to remain a part of our Bergen County community. In addition, amongst our seventy towns, five have been designated age-friendly, and we believe that in order to move forward and encourage our towns to take suit we must lead by example and become part of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Since establishing our Division of Senior Services, Bergen County has had a long standing history of serving our older population, and as their needs change, we too, must evolve and utilize all the resources available to allow our older population to not only live in place, but to also feel comfortable and proud in living in a place that advocates for them and always keeps their needs in mind. We believe being a part of AARP and the WHO Network of Age-Friendly Communities will allow us to continue in this mission.

6) Provide a digital file or link of a logo or other image that represents your community and for which you have reprint rights. The image resolution should be at least 72 dpi. As an example of an image, here’s ours:

Click here to add a link to where we can find your logo. Or, send a JPEG, PDF or PNG of your logo by email attachment to livable@aarp.org.