



## Membership Application

To join the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly 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](mailto:livable@aarp.org).
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 8/16/2018

### Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

**NAME OF THE COMMUNITY:** Grand Rapids

**STATE:** MI

**POPULATION SIZE:** 198,829 est.

**PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60:** 14.2% est.

**NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:** Mayor Rosalynn Bliss

**OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:** 300 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

### Section 2: COMMUNITY CONTACT FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY 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.

[REDACTED]

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

Ginnie Smith joined the City of Grand Rapid's staff specifically to lead our Age-Friendly Communities Initiative. Ginnie is a senior herself, and has become incredibly dedicated to both the process and people involved in this effort. Specifically, Ginnie led our 23 Age-Friendly Listening Sessions that took place between September and October 2017. She has continued this leadership role through facilitation of the recently appointed Age-Friendly Advisory Council.

### **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.**

The City of Grand Rapids administers both traditional services oriented to older adults, as well as some innovative approaches. The Grand Rapids Housing Commission provides assistance to low income families, the disabled, and senior citizens. We also promote alternative programs including a GR HomeShare pilot program that brings together seniors with anyone looking for affordable housing to share a home. This serves both a housing need and provides companionship/assistance for the hosting senior. Our Parks and Recreation Department also offers programs and activities oriented towards older adults. Other services such as the 311 information line also provide a single conduit to information that citizens need over the phone, which is highly beneficial to seniors who may have limited mobility or are uncomfortable with the use of the website/technology. In addition to direct services, we also maintain close working relationships with other agencies that provide support and services for older adults such as The Grand Rapids Housing Commission, The Rapid (transit authority), Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, Disability Advocates of Kent County, and others.

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

In 2017, we reached out to older adults through interviews, paper and online surveys, and a 23 location listening tour asking: “What would make Grand Rapids more age-friendly?” From this outreach, we received more than 2,000 comments/suggestions. This feedback is the basis of our four emerging themes: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings, Housing, Transportation, and Communication. To date, more than 400 residents have volunteered/expressed interest in additional participation. This engagement will take place through the Mayor’s Advisory Council and Work Groups. The Advisory Council, which is made up primarily of older adults, will identify goals and action steps which will be used in our Age-Friendly Action Plan. The Work Groups will continue the work by verifying the goals and adding timelines and progress indicators. Invitations to the Work Groups will be extended to this full list of 400 residents, which is comprised primarily of older adults.

**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.**

Our Age-Friendly Advisory Council serves a key role in fostering collaboration, forming partnerships and identifying specific champions to lead the implementation efforts. Specifically, the Council includes City staff representing Planning, Communications, Parks and Recreation, as well as direct involvement of Mayor Bliss and Commissioner Kelley and County Commissioner Bulkowski. AARP Michigan and the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan also serve on the Council. Other key agencies involved include The Grand Rapids Housing Commission, The Rapid (transit authority), Disability Advocates of Kent County, Senior Neighbors, and other key organizations representing minority communities in Grand Rapids. Through the collaborative work on the Council and the leadership role they will serve on the Work Groups, we anticipate that our Age-Friendly Action Plan will clearly identify the key players involved on each initiative and provide for a smooth transition into implementation.

## 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 Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

We hope to serve as a model for equitable and innovative community engagement, particularly around engagement of older adults. Through our work to date, we have made substantial efforts to reach all aspects of the community, including sessions oriented towards LGBTQ seniors, our minority communities, homeless older adults, adults living with disabilities, and refuge communities. We have also been intentional in making sure our Advisory Group and upcoming Work Groups will include this same broad representation. We have also incorporated innovative engagement tools to complement traditional community meetings and surveying, such as the creation of a game called "Grandy Land" that led players through the WHO domains and encouraged them to consider their application to Grand Rapids. We have also encouraged others to learn about the needs of older adults, including presentations to GVSU's Honors College which includes future medical and business professionals. This work has continued through a unique partnership between the university and a senior living community in a combined classroom environment. We hope that this work can serve as a model for other communities, and that we can also learn from their experiences.

ANSWER TO #5, BELOW. (Issue with text box.) Discussion about Age-Friendly Grand Rapids first began when City Commissioner Ruth Kelly attended an AARP Convention about safe streets and livable communities. She realized that Grand Rapids was already doing much of this work, but that the City had great potential for future improvements. Commissioner Kelly then reached out to Suzanne Schultz, the City's Planning Director, who also saw potential for this work to inform the City's Master Plan. The City then involved representatives from AARP and the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. This combined group jointly engaged more than 300 business, community, and city leaders. The next steps involved the City engaging residents through interviews, surveys, and listening events. The overwhelming support at each step along the way, including participation from educational institutions, faith communities, non-profits, neighborhood and city leadership, and residents have motivated our community to join the AARP and WHO Networks of Age-Friendly Communities.

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

Difficulty with this text box. For the answer to 5. see the latter part of 4. above.



*Click here to add a link to where we can find your logo. Or, send us your logo by email attachment to [livable@aarp.org](mailto:livable@aarp.org).*

*Note: Age-Friendly Grand Rapids logo will be sent as a separate attachment.*

**6) Please provide a digital (JPG, PNG or PDF) file of your community.**

Membership Application: AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities – Page 3

The image resolution should be at least 72 dpi. As an example of an image, here's ours >