



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ROSALYNN C. BLISS
MAYOR

August 15, 2018

Jennifer Feuerstein
AARP Michigan
309 N Washington Square, Suite 110
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Jennifer,

On behalf of the City of Grand Rapids, we are excited about the opportunity to join with AARP Michigan and the World Health Organization (WHO) to become an Age-Friendly Community. Within Grand Rapids, older adults (aged 50 and above) represent just over a quarter of the City's population, with some neighborhoods exceeding 25% of the population aged 65 and older. The City of Grand Rapids wishes to encourage and promote public policies that support healthy aging and thereby improve the health, well-being, satisfaction, and quality of life for our older residents. In addition to directly impacting a significant portion of our population, we also recognize that many of the improvements that make a community more age-friendly positively impact ALL residents.

Although we are making our formal request now, our efforts towards becoming an Age-Friendly community have been underway for more than two years. In early 2016, a series of three "Thought Leader" listening events were hosted by the City, AARP, and the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. These events attracted more than 300 participants representing City and neighborhood leadership, non-profits offering services to older adults and other key stakeholders. AARP next conducted an Age-Friendly Community Survey of Residents Age 50-Plus which collected general information regarding the 50-plus community in Grand Rapids and preliminarily identified key areas of interest under each of the eight WHO domains. From September to October 2017, the City of Grand Rapids embarked on an age-friendly listening tour, hosting 23 events that reached more than 300 attendees and generated more than 2,000 community comments. From these events and community feedback, we narrowed the area of focus to the four domains of: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Transportation; Housing; and Communications. In May 2018, the City Commission passed a formal resolution supporting the Age-Friendly Communities initiative.

The next step in our process is development of the City's Age-Friendly Community Action Plan. This work is being undertaken by an Age-Friendly Advisory Council and Work Groups focused around our four focus domains. We have nearly 400 individuals that have expressed interest in becoming involved in these Work Groups, representing all facets of our community. The intent of the Action Plan is to identify improvements that are feasible for implementation over a 2-3 year timeframe and establish measures of our progress.

We are confident in our work to date and have been buoyed by the tremendous community support that has grown around this initiative. Please accept this letter, application and accompanying resolution as our formal letter of commitment in pursuing admission into the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

If you have any follow-up needs, please continue to coordinate with Ginnie Smith, our Age-Friendly Communities Coordinator at vsmith@grcity.us or call 616.456.3051. You are also welcome to contact my office at 616.456.3168.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosalynn Bliss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "B".

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss
City of Grand Rapids

Attachments: application, resolution