



## 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@aarpp.org](mailto:livable@aarpp.org).
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 12/4/2018

### Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

**NAME OF THE COMMUNITY:** Grand Island

**STATE:** Nebraska

**POPULATION SIZE:** 48,520 in 2010; 51,390 est. for 2017 (US Census)

**PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60:** 13.6% over 65 (US Census)

**NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:** Jeremy Jenson, Mayor

**OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:** City Hall; 100 East First Street, Grand Island, NE 68801

### 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.

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

Tonja Brown is the current Chair (2016-present) for Grow Grand Island, Inc., which is a non-profit organization that originated out of two visioning efforts that both took place in 2013. One visioning effort was endorsed by the City of Grand Island which gathered input from the community at large. The other visioning effort was endorsed by the Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce, the Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation, and the Hall County Convention & Visitors Bureau, which gathered input predominantly from businesses and community organizations. The two resulting reports/plans were merged together in 2016. The complete program of work includes 30 initiatives ranging from early childhood education to housing and transportation. >>Tonja Brown, age 57, has lived in Grand Island since age eight. Over those years she has been engaged in several non-profit and professional boards, including two terms (and Chair) on the Chamber of Commerce Board. She is also an active CASA (Courth Appointed Special Advocate), Rotarian (current Club President), and serves on the advisory committee for our local Career Pathway Insitute (via our public school district), and the Chamber’s Legislative Committee.

### 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.

Grand Island has many programs targeted toward older people, including a Grand Generation Center (day programs), Midland's Area Agency on Aging, several assisted living centers, and a handi-bus system. As you can see, these services are very much geared toward meeting the specific needs of the aging population. They do not, however, address the greater livability needs throughout the community such as transportation, housing and healthy living. Grow Grand Island is an ideal organization to bring needed collaboration and coordination to meet the community-wide livability needs of residents and visitors of all ages. The City of Grand Island has conducted many studies in the last few years that include needs assessments and potential strategies that have already provided a good road map to consider. For instance, Grow Grand Island refined their program of work for 2018-2022 to focus primarily on workforce development, downtown, entrepreneurship, education, and affordable housing. This process laid out specific action items to explore and/or pursue. To help finance projects across our program of work, Grow Grand Island receives \$500,000 per year from the City of Grand Island to be used to improve the quality of life and community development outcomes: The City of Grand Island completed a transportation study in 2017, as well as a bike/pedestrian study to provide a strategic direction for our community, as well as to identify gaps in wants and needs vs. resources; the Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation is currently conducting a new housing study to be completed in March 2019 (this will be an update to the previous study conducted five years ago); the Heartland Area United Way conducted a poverty study in 2016 to provide scope and strategic direction for service agencies in our community; the Grand Island Health Department received a 2-year walkability grant that has now expired—they have formulated ideas that have not yet been explored (which Grow Grand Island hopes to address); and the State of Nebraska has launched a workforce development program to help address our low unemployment in outstate Nebraska, which includes efforts to utilize the senior population to meet employer needs. With all of these studies & strategies, as well as engaged organizations, agencies, citizens & leaders, we can collectively carry out an action plan that now includes age-friendly concepts by focusing on the Domains of Livability for Transportation, Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Civic Participation and Employment and Community and Health Services. AARP has a wealth of tools and resources to help Grow Grand Island incorporate this essential component across our program of work. In addition, we know we have the support of our state and national AARP organizations, as well as the many local folks across the country who have helped paved the way so far.

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

The Grow Grand Island Executive Board, as well as the Advisory Committee are diverse in age, but predominantly over age 50. We will establish a taskforce out of this pool of community leaders to focus on livability. In addition, we will invite the former walkability committee that was administered by the local health department and included representation from older adults; representatives from the AARP Grand Island Community Action Team and staff or Advisory Board members from the local Area Agency on Aging. We believe it will be beneficial to engage the various neighborhood groups established out of the Grow Grand Island program of work, our local Rotary club, and Friends of Grand Island Parks (recently organized to address gaps in park development and care by our municipality budget) in listening sessions and as a pool of volunteers for projects. The taskforce will utilize existing surveys and plan and implement community listening sessions with people age 50+ in a variety of settings throughout the community to gather information on their needs and wishes. We will incorporate this data as we formulate our action plan. We will then request feedback and input from people 50+ at various stages of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Grand Island Age Friendly Community Action Plan. Overall, our community has many wonderful citizens of all ages who are willing to lead the charge and/or roll up their sleeves to pursue work that will have a positive impact on Grand Island. We need to tap this energy and channel it collectively to achieve the best possible

age-friendly outcomes. Grow Grand Island will serve in this role as we move forward with our livability application & process.

**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.**

Grow Grand Island has worked diligently to develop collaboration among agencies and city leaders and will use these relationships as we move forward with our Age Friendly/Livable Community work. We are governed by an Executive Board that meets quarterly and consists of the Chair (this application's community contact), Immediate Past Chair, Director of our Local Chamber, appointed representatives of the Economic Development Corporation, Convention & Visitors Bureau, two County Board representatives, City Administrator, Mayor and four at-large representatives from the community. The mission for Grow Grand Island is "to cultivate bold ideas that create business and quality of life opportunities in our region through planning, partnering and doing." In addition to our Executive Board, there is also an Advisory Committee, also meeting quarterly, consisting of a diverse group of about 25 community members from key businesses and organizations who serve as the "sounding board" for prioritizing and refining projects. As projects are developed, the Grow Grand Island grant process is used to apply for funding, which includes and application screening by our Grant Review Committee and a formal recommendation made to our Executive Board. The Executive Board for Grow Grand Island will coordinate and facilitate this livability application and ongoing process.

## 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?

Grow Grand Island plans to focus on the Domains of Livability for Transportation, Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Civic Participation and Employment and Community and Health Services. We see opportunities for addressing transportation coordination and availability, housing accessibility and shortages; and vibrant job market hindered by low unemployment rates. Grand Island recently grew into a Metropolitan Service Area (MSA) that includes four counties (Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick). Although the emphasis for our Age-Friendly/Livable Community application is on Grand Island as a community, we need to be thinking long-term about our MSA and the regional aspect of our tri-city area (Grand Island, Hastings and Kearney). In addition, it would be our hope that Grand Island can serve as a model for other rural communities and counties in the state of Nebraska. At present, there are no communities or counties in Nebraska with the Age-Friendly/Livable Community status. We are proud to take this lead and we look forward to being part of AARP's network of age-friendly places.

### 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?

A local AARP volunteer who was also aware of Grow Grand Island's program of work arranged for a meet & greet that included our AARP State Director and Grow Grand Island Chair in the fall of 2017. These conversations led to the realization status. Over the efforts and study comprehensive enhanced with consideration.



as primed and ready to embark upon the Age-Friendly/Livable Community. *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).* Grand Island has invested a great deal of time, energy and money in visioning resulted in the establishment of Grow Grand Island, Inc., which includes a wide engagement within our community. Our program of work that can be community influence, which is why we are submitting this application for your

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

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