



## 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: 4/6/2019

### Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

**NAME OF THE COMMUNITY:** Ridgewood

**STATE:** New Jersey

**POPULATION SIZE:** 25,554

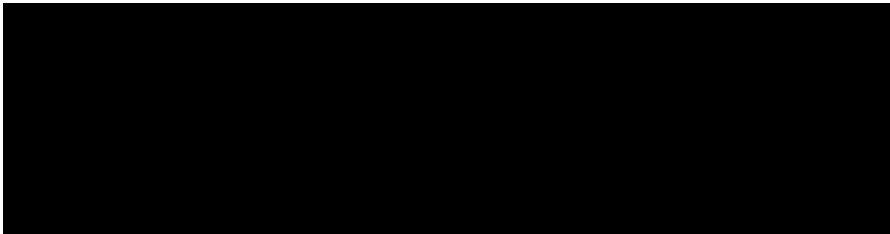
**PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60:** 18%

**NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:** Ramon Hache, Mayor of Ridgewood

**OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:** Village of Ridgewood 131 Maple Avenue Ridgewood, NJ 07450

### 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.



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

Beth Abbott and Sheila Brogan have been co-chairing the Age Friendly Ridgewood initiative since its inception in 2016. Prior to that they were involved with a committee to design and administer a needs assessment to Ridgewood's older adults, age 55 and over. Beth also led a series of focus groups with organizations serving older adults to more closely hone in on their needs. To analyze the data from both the survey and focus groups, Beth and Sheila worked with Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS) at Montclair University. CREEHS, using the information obtained from the assessment and focus groups, developed informational sheets on key areas aligned to the WHO Livability Domains: transportation, pedestrian safety, housing, social engagement and volunteerism, and health services. This information was shared with the Village government officials and the public to engage the community and create awareness of the Age Friendly movement. Beth volunteers weekly for the Medicare Rights Center and is knowledgeable about Medicare, insurance options, and Medicare Part D plans. She is an active volunteer in the community and had worked diligently in writing the grant requests and reports. Sheila is a geriatric social worker in the community and is employed by Bergen County's Division of Senior Services. Sheila possesses a wealth of knowledge on the benefit system and services available to

older adults in Bergen County and New Jersey. She was instrumental in collecting and writing the resource information for Age Friendly Ridgewood's web site. Her office is in the regional senior center serving Ridgewood and the surrounding towns in NW Bergen County. Sheila is also an active volunteer in the community and serves on the Ridgewood Board of Education, chairs the Ridgewood Municipal Alliance Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention, and is chair of the NW Bergen History Coalition. Both Beth and Sheila serve on the Ridgewood Community Center Advisory Board. The hard work and enthusiasm they bring to their work with Age Friendly Ridgewood has translated into success and the development of valuable partnerships with Village government officials and the Directors of the Village Departments serving Ridgewood residents, the local hospital, area social service agencies, the Ridgewood Adult School and Public Schools, Ridgecrest Senior Housing, and Share Senior Housing.

### **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 2016, Age Friendly Ridgewood presented to the Village Council and the community at large valuable data collected from focus groups and an assessment completed by over seven hundred residents age 55 and over. The information compiled identified the needs and perspectives of Ridgewood's older adults and informed the work of Age Friendly Ridgewood. Using the data, a series of projects were designed funded through the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation focused on building and enhancing Ridgewood's efforts to support those older adult residents choosing to age in place with dignity and independence here in Ridgewood. We are committed to advancing public policy and developing a service network directly related to the needs of our older adults: making outdoor spaces and buildings more senior friendly, increasing access and affordability of transportation and housing, creating safe pedestrian crosswalks and sidewalks so as to encourage walking and healthy lifestyles, providing important benefit and services information to assist older adults to age in place, and provide an enhanced schedule of activities and inclusive social participation in an effort to keep older adults active and engaged in our community. Our Village government has embraced the work of Age Friendly Ridgewood and encouraged our work with the Parks and Recreation Department running the Community Center and offering programs to older adults; expanding the Senior Bus Services from two to three days a week; and the Engineering Department responsible for improving sidewalks, repainting crosswalks, and installing street furniture (benches) along routes routinely traveled by older adults. The Village in next years budget and through work at the County level have shown a commitment to continue with the three-day a week bus service and to improve the Franklin Avenue corridor that has been identified in need of safety upgrades for our older adult pedestrians.

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

The Village of Ridgewood supports the Community Center with paid staff and programs. They have encouraged older adults to become active on Boards and Committees involved with the Community Center, Environmental concerns, and Traffic and Pedestrian Safety. The Interfaith Clergy Council helped to disseminate resource books providing information on services for older adults. The School District through its Adult Community Schools Program worked closely with Age Friendly Ridgewood to open the Ridgewood High School MakerSpace to older adults, families and students Mondays from 4 to 9 PM allowing for creativity, invention, and socialization. The Ridgewood Library has partnered with Age Friendly Ridgewood and offers programming to bring information on a wide variety of subjects. This year the library in collaboration with Age Friendly Ridgewood sponsored programs on Medicare for the Baby Boomer, Understanding Medicare Part D, Elder Law and Estate Planning, and Universal Design. In addition, Age Friendly Ridgewood will host Ashton Applewhite, the author of *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism*, at the library and has invited students and older adults to learn about ageism and to start a conversation on how we might better engage older adults in the community. Age Friendly Ridgewood has organized a number of task forces and a Steering Committee to bring the ideas and aspirations of older adults to the forefront. Older adults serve on these committees and are actively involved in planning Age Friendly's work. The progress made over the last three years is quite remarkable in engaging the community in efforts to ensure our older adults are welcomed, feel included, and can continue to live comfortably in Ridgewood should they choose to age in place.

**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.**

The co-chairs of Age Friendly Ridgewood meet monthly with the Village Manager and regularly schedule time to speak with the Mayor. These meetings are used to keep the Village informed of Age Friendly Ridgewood's work and to brainstorm ideas that will enhance the community's efforts to become more age friendly. These meetings have also opened the doors to allow the Age Friendly co-chairs access to meet with the Department Heads and bring ideas and concerns directly to those who can best address issues and solve problems. For example, Age Friendly Ridgewood worked with consultants on a Walkability Study of the downtown shopping area (CBD) and conducted a sidewalk audit. The information pointing to the need for improved sidewalks was brought to the Engineering Department. Armed with photographs and a walking plan, the Village Engineer reviewed sidewalk conditions and responded with a work plan to repair the sidewalks. To date, at least 80 percent of the work has been completed. Recently, working closely with the Building Department, Age Friendly Ridgewood hosted a workshop for builders, designers and older adults on Universal Design. The Village's Building Inspector and Code Official was the keynote speaker. Making our older adults feel a part of the community and opening up opportunities, Age Friendly Ridgewood works with the Parks and Recreation Department Director to welcome older adults to the community pool with an opening day picnic and availability of free passes for low-income older adults. In November, in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation team, a local church, and Health Barn, older adults were invited to a Giving Thanks Dinner. Over 100 people attended this dinner in 2018. The Kasschau Memorial Bandshell Committee hosts a series of outdoor summer concerts on Tuesday and Thursday evenings throughout June and July. Older adults needing transportation were provided with bus service, comfortable chairs, and bug spray so that they could enjoy an evening of music under the stars once a week. Finally, Age Friendly Ridgewood has worked closely with the Manager's office in expanding the senior bus services from two to three days a week. Beyond the Village government and departments, Age Friendly Ridgewood has collaborated with Valley Hospital to bring a noted geriatrician into speak on wellness and health. In addition, the Ridgewood Public Library embraces Age Friendly Ridgewood's mission and has been a key partner in identifying programs and speakers that will be of interest to older adult. The library is a valuable partner in serving the needs of older adults with programs and information.

#### 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?

Ridgewood can serve as a model for how a community known for its Public Schools and family friendliness can also be age friendly. We can expand our Village's reputation from a wonderful place to raise children to a great place to grow up and to grow old. As we make improvements in our community for our older residents, we improve the community for all of our residents. Our metamorphosis will serve as a template for other communities struggling to retain their older adults and be an intergenerational community where young and old find acceptance and are encouraged to live and be part of the fabric of a vibrant and inclusionary community.

#### 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?

As we began our work designing a needs assessment, we were introduced to WHO's Eight Domains of Livability. As noted in material from the World Health Organization, "the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age." We also utilized AARP's materials to guide our work. We quickly realized that there was work to be done in all of our community: the built environment, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, employment, communication, and community support and health services. Through the Henry and the grantee workshops we were introduced to more livable work that AARP is doing to heighten the awareness of the communities can make changes and grow as an age friendly municipality. As part of a consortium of five communities in Bergen County, we will be the last to receive the AARP and WHO's Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities Designation. This was a deliberate strategy on our part, based upon our awareness that we had work to do. We knew the value of and need to engage our community. Membership Application: AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities – Page 3 required to become an age friendly community. We are now at a point where we are ready to proclaim to Bergen County, the state of New Jersey and to the world that Ridgewood is an Age Friendly Community and it is indeed a safe place where older adults choosing to age in place can do so with dignity and independence and their voices heard and respected as we plan for the future.



#### 6) Please provide a digital (JPG, PNG or PDF) file or link of a logo or other image that represents your community.

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