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.
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: September 24, 2020

Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: Borough of Highland Park

STATE: New Jersey

POPULATION SIZE: 13,992

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 17%

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: 221 South Fifth Ave, Highland Park, NJ 08904

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.

The Department of Community Services, Office of Aging and Senior Services.
Our department provides the residents of Highland Park with a wide variety of educational and health related programming as well as social events. Our mission is to enrich the lives of all of our residents, to provide support and vital services so that they maintain their independence and reduce the risk of becoming homebound or isolated. We provide accessible transportation for residents with medical appointments within Highland Park and Middlesex County. Transportation and access to local food shopping and services. As well as daily transportation to the Community Center to attend activities and events. Our department is responsible for all daily programming and events that keep our seniors active and engaged in the borough. Our department works with outside sources to employ members of the aging population at the community center, such as the 55+ program and Easter Seals Program. We collaborate with the HP Police Department and the Department of Recreation for large scale events. We look forward to working towards creating an age friendly initiative in the Borough of Highland Park. Our goal is to implement new programs, sustain diversity and create space for the older population to feel welcomed in the borough. Transgenerational programming, civic participation, engaging new membership and reducing isolation. are at the forefront of her goals for an age friendly community. Our goal is to implement new programs, sustain diversity and create space for the older population to feel welcomed in the borough. Transgenerational programming, civic participation, engaging new membership and reducing isolation. Our goal is to implement new programs, sustain diversity and create space for the older population to feel welcomed in the borough.
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 Borough of Highland Park provides a designated space throughout the day for seniors 55 plus or adults with disabilities, regardless of age, to spend their time. The Department of Aging creates daily programming for seniors to participate in including but not limited to luncheons, activities, trips, exercise and educational classes. We also provide a social worker that works in the community center full time. Her schedule is by appt Monday-Thursday and she has walk-in hours on Friday. She also provides information sessions throughout the year and has an open discussion group once a month. The Borough also provides in-town and medical transportation. We have recently started to improve an outdoor space connected to the center to create inviting areas for members of the community to gather. This space has tables that are accessible to people with wheelchairs and our large umbrellas protect seniors who may be on medications that prohibit them from the sun or those who have increased photosensitivity to sunlight. We have hopes of planting a variety of brightly colored flowers in the garden as well as calming fragrant plants like lilac and lavender to create a relaxing, inviting and cheerful space that will help the seniors that are experiencing depression. This will serve as a lovely space for our plan to create a bird watching program. We plan to become more age friendly by using the resources provided by the AARP and creating a committee to work on creating plans that represent what the community wants. Our Council on Aging committee is comprised of local, volunteer senior citizens whose purpose is to advocate for programs and services within our Borough that meet the needs of Highland Park’s growing senior population.

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

We are looking to expand and diversify our programs so that our seniors are more present and involved in mainstream community based events with people of all ages, cultures, and religious backgrounds. Within the committee we establish we will appoint older members of our population to serve. They will address plans and ideas to implement in the community. We also plan on using surveys in targeted age brackets to get an idea of what the older population wants or feels is currently missing. We are also looking to develop a larger programming repertoire including new projects at locations outside of the HP Community Center. We would like to collaborate with our local county parks to engage new members of the community. We plan on advertising our surveys at our community center, local library, our main street and community events. We would also like to institute a new transgenerational program linking directly with clubs in the High School and Middle School and connecting them with the older members of our community. These programs will serve and provide many incentives and benefits within our community. The teens will receive letters of recommendation to colleges that they may be seeking, certificates with the number of volunteer hours, positive exposure in the media such as: local newspapers, cable television, HP website and social media outlets with photos acknowledging their efforts. This will serve as a benefit for our seniors by allowing them to share their vast knowledge and experience with the younger generation while developing meaningful new relationships. We would also like to add in night time programming to target members who are 55+ and work so they can attend. This generation of “younger seniors” have the desire for more active programming and events that go later into the evening that focus on maintaining and improving their current health and well-being. We plan to specifically target older adults for feedback and involvement by using data collected from our survey, participation on our advisory panels, community needs assessment and by using the 8 Domains. We plan to collect vital feedback from our active 55+ participants and programming to allow us an opportunity to work with those who attend our evening programs in hopes of engaging with our “younger seniors” on the needs and what’s working and where there’s future opportunities to improving HP’s Age Friendliness.
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.

Being a small town creates a need for constant collaboration between departments to get projects done. This makes working on projects such as the Age Friendly community a town wide effort. We already have in place a working relationship between the Mayor and Department of Aging for implementation of this program. We are working on increasing our work with the local Zone 6 Teen Center to create and support Transgenerational programming. The Teen Center is also currently developing rain gardens which will be part of our outdoor space and meeting areas plan. This will also create a wonderful place for the teens and older population to hold programs together. We will work with the County Parks Department to create events that will be based out of Donaldson and Johnson County parks. Programs to be implemented include walking groups, a bird watching club and a special event held once a year as an open house to engage new members of the older population. We would also like to create new programming with the HP Police Department for community outreach and education for our older population.

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?

Through outdoor spaces, programming, resources and input from the older population, we want to create a sustainable community for the older population to live easily and comfortably. As we implement our plans for change, we hope to gather data that we can use to help other communities in the future. Becoming a part of this network will enable us to have a positive impact for the residents and enhance our current programming to make an impact and reach the unmet needs of our community.

We are in the process of establishing a Community Resource Directory for new residents, family members, neighbors and caregivers to provide access and support to all services offered by our borough as well as information and assistance to local, state and federal resources and services.

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 a borough we want to support all members of our community. Providing the best services as a town is our ultimate goal. We want to combat isolation for our aging community as well as create strong physical and mental wellness for our older population. Joining the AARP Network will give us the assistance we need as a small town to add in programs efficiently and effectively. We would take advantage of the support from the local staff as well as the resources you provide. Having access to a network of other towns that have implemented these programs and written sources, such as the surveys and resource materials, are tools we do not have access to on our own. We were visited by Christine Newman to discuss moving forward on this plan and just the ideas and excitement that came from that meeting were inspiring. The support from the AARP would be instrumental to having a positive outcome.
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 >