



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

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 3/1/2020

Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: County of Somerset

STATE: New Jersey

POPULATION SIZE: According to the most recent demographic data available from the US Census Bureau released December 2019; Figure 1, Somerset County shows it has a population of 330,176; which is 6th ranked in population out of 10 in the area.

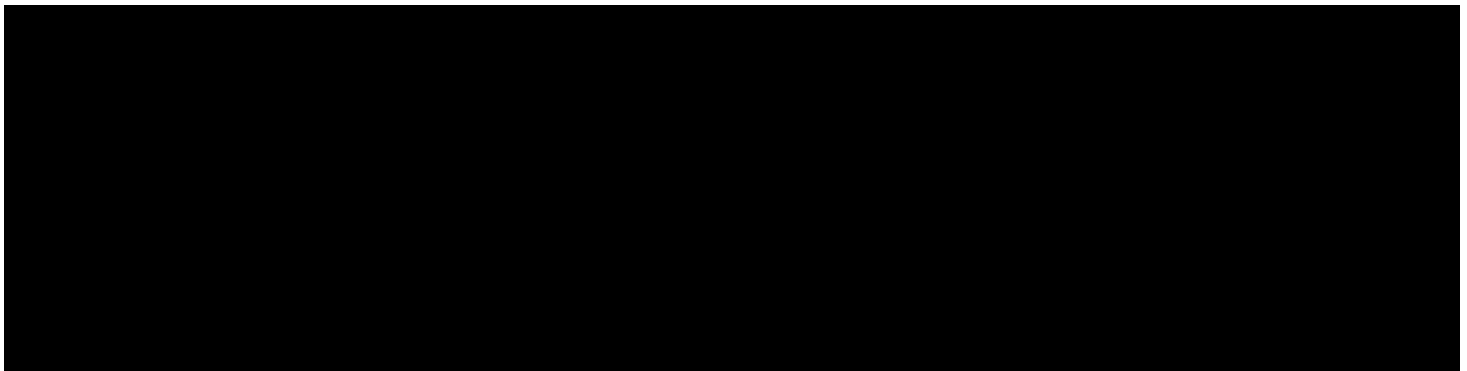
PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 73,629 or 22.3% of the County's total population
Source: US Census Bureau Population Division December of 2019.

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Shanel Y. Robinson,
Freeholder Director, Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: County of Somerset 20 Grove Street P.O. Box 3000 Somerville,
NJ 08876-1262

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:

Executive Director, OoA&DS – Ensure appropriate oversight, advocacy, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs for older persons, persons with disabilities and caregivers in the County including but not limited to: community services, economics, employment, income and retirement, health care, mental health, institutional and non-institutional housing, recreational activities, transportation, homemaker services, long term care, case management, congregate and home delivered meals, adult day care and legal services. Co-facilitator; Director, SCPB – is responsible for all of Somerset County’s planning efforts, as well as the Office of Solid Waste Management, Agriculture Development Board, the county’s Cultural and Heritage Commission and the Somerset County Energy Council. Previously he had served as a supervising transportation planner, principal planner and senior community planner for the county. He has more than 20 years of land use, regional planning and transportation planning experience and has managed numerous award-winning projects. He currently serves on the Executive Committee of the New Jersey County Planners Association and the Somerset County Business Partnership. He has served on the APA-NJ Executive Committee and is a past chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee at the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority.

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.

Somerset County Office on Aging and Disability Services is designated as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and an Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) – as such has the authority and responsibility to streamline access to long-term care support services, health promotion and education. The agency is committed to promoting health, independence, dignity and choice for Somerset County 60+ population as well as adults with physical disabilities and caregivers by providing diverse access to services which allow its target population to remain safely in the community as long as desired. The office is mandated through Federal Legislation: Older Americans Act and county and state regulations. The County is the lead for six Senior Wellness Centers strategically located throughout the area to provide access to nutrition, noon-time meal that meets 1/3 of the daily dietary allowance, education and mind stimulating activities, evidenced-based exercise, and socialization all planned to meet its diverse populations both socio-economic and culturally diverse. The agency is staffed by a team of skilled nurses and social workers who screen for long term care support services and provide access to such through case management. The Planning Board develops a Master Plan which contains recommendations and strategies to promote active lifestyles and the implementation of age friendly policies. The County works in collaboration with its municipalities to ensure the provision of affordable senior housing opportunities throughout the County.

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

The County surveys its senior community annually through on-line and mail-in surveys as well as annual focus groups and a Public Hearing. The findings are incorporated in the County's Area Plan Contract which outlines identified needs, priorities and a spending plan. The county has a process in place that continuously reviews the area demographics and plans activities to meet the needs of our diverse population including mind stimulating activities, exercise and sense of purpose. The agency has an Advisory Council made up of representatives from various disciplines who advise the Executive Director, Department of Human Services Director and ultimately the Board of Chosen Freeholder (serving on committees, organizations and reporting information back to ensure key priorities are being achieved) on issues related to aging in place. In addition to its Master Plan, the County Planning Board completes a Walk, Bike, Hike study. This process included a collaborative with AARP to ensure input was sought from the senior community through senior focus groups. The County's Master Plan contains recommendations and strategies to promote active lifestyles and the implementation of age friendly policies.

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.

Somerset County has established partnerships, such as the Somerset County Business Partnership, a public private partnership, funded in part by the County to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the County; Aging and Disability Services Providers Network made up of providers from public and non-for profit social services agencies and senior housing providers work collaboratively to implement the statewide business practices of "No Wrong Door" – whereby a county resident (age 60+) can access information and services through all partnering agencies to remain safe and well in the community. The County works in collaboration with its 21 municipalities to ensure the provision of affordable senior housing opportunities. We are working in collaboration with Rutgers, The State University, Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and the School of Social Work and AARP on Age Friendly Mapping/Data Visualization for strategic planning. Through this Aging Friendly Partnership, the group is reviewing AARP's livable communities' domains and looking toward long term sustainability so that longtime residents don't need to move out of state. The County strives to educate the community on its vastly growing and diverse populations, the needs of older citizens and implement initiatives which will include quality of life for all ages.

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?

Somerset County works to be the lead in New Jersey, demonstrate the needs of older citizens which will include quality of life for all ages and share best practices so the other counties and communities will join the global network. The OoA&DS Executive Director serves as the President of the New Jersey Association of Area Agencies on Aging (NJ4A) (2016 to current) and the Director of SCPB as the President of the New Jersey County Planners Association. This role allows opportunities for agenda setting and the disseminating materials statewide. The County has established public private partnerships, funded in part by the county, to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the County; the Aging and Disability Services Providers Network made up of providers from public and private social services agencies and senior housing providers who work collaboratively to ensure the statewide business practice of “No Wrong Door” – whereby a county resident (age 60+) can access information and services to remain safe and well in the community. Additionally, the County works in collaboration with its municipalities to exchange information, avoid duplication of services and ensure opportunities for all. Through this Aging Friendly Partnership, the group is reviewing AARP’s livable communities domains looking toward long term sustainability so that long time residents don’t need to move out of state.

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?

The continuous review of the County’s demographic data through the Planning Board, US Census and ELDER Index and understanding that county government cannot meet all the needs of this growing market, much effort is being made to partner, collaborate and use coalitions to cost effectively implement prioritized programs and services. The intent of Somerset County is to empower our residents while independent, and to respond to the immediate needs of the most frail and vulnerable population, whose numbers and needs are the fastest growing segment of seniors in our County. We feel strongly that this opportunity will allow us to further examine community issues, access resources, best practices, and further develop our relationships and strengthen and/or modify programs and services essential to living well.

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 >



Logo sent as by email attachment to livable@aarp.org.