



TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE

66 MAIN STREET, WEST ORANGE, N.J. 07052

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ROBERT D. PARISI

Mayor

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Membership Application

**To join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities
and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly
Cities and Communities**

Section 1: Community Details

Application Submission Date: June 12, 2020

Community: West Orange, NJ 07052

Population Size: 47,563 (US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, July 2019)

Residents age of 55+ *: approx. 14,500 (approx. 30% of the current population)

Residents age of 65+: 8,656 (18.2% - US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, July 2019) **(uncertain of exact statistics for population age 60+)*

Name/Title/Address of Elected Official Signing the Official Commitment:

Mayor Robert Parisi

66 Main Street

West Orange, NJ 07052

Section 2: Community Contact for AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Community

Name: Robert Parisi

Position: Mayor

Email Address: rparisi@westorange.org

Telephone No. (973) 325-4100

Please describe the named person's role in the city or community's friendly initiative.

Mayor Robert Parisi is the highest-ranking elected official in the township of West Orange. He is a life-long resident of the Township with a deep commitment to public service and has served as Mayor since 2010, after serving 12 years as a Township Councilman. As Mayor, he oversees all Municipal Departments, including the Departments of Senior Services, Recreation, and Health, where the Senior Livability Initiative for the Township is housed. In 2019, the Township received a grant from the Partners for Health Foundation to hire a Senior Livability Coordinator, responsible for furthering the Township's age-friendly community and aging-in-place initiative, consistent with the World Health Organization's 8 Domains of Livability in



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the areas of transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment /volunteerism, community and health services and outdoor spaces and buildings. The Initiative is a partnership with the Township, municipal departments, local businesses and health and social service providers. The Senior Livability Initiative advances the Township's progress as age-friendly community and a great place to live for people of all ages. It promotes the Township's commitment to create a quality environment that encourages independent living for older adults who wish to remain in their own homes as they age. Mayor Parisi is a staunch advocate of these initiatives and the Township's work with public and private partners to support the 8 Domains of Livability. He has advanced numerous initiatives important to health, wellness and senior services.

Mayor Parisi is committed to West Orange as an age-friendly community - a place that makes a conscientious effort to encourage active-aging and provides opportunities for good health, inclusion and security. We believe that age-friendly cities must also address social issues such as isolation, social inclusion, and mental health issues, such as depression and grief. Further, we believe in engaging senior residents to help plan their environments. The Township continually seeks to enrich the quality of life for residents to enable them to successfully age-in-place and fully participate in their community and society for as long as possible. We seek to build a community where it is easy for older people to stay connected to others.

We benefit from diverse citizen engagement and encourage people of all ages to actively participate in community activities, where everyone is treated with respect, without regard to their age, race, creed, color or persuasion. The Township collaborates closely with senior groups within the Town to engage seniors in dialogue about the needs and preferences of older adults. These diverse groups include senior residents from social and civic groups such as the Prime Timers, the Pleasantdale Seniors, the West Orange African American Heritage Organization, the Hispanic Foundation, the West Orange Human Relations Commission, the Township's Senior Housing Residences, as well as other long-time residents, senior advocates and ombudspersons. Through continuous engagement and collaboration with these groups, we seek to obtain further insight into the particular needs and preferences of diverse community residents. Our partnership with the West Orange Board of Education and the public schools further supports a vigorous intergenerational program between the Township's senior residents and student population of varying backgrounds and experiences. The Mayor encourages grant applications from various foundations in support of these initiatives and has generously provided part-time and in-kind support for initiatives that support healthy living and active lifestyles for older adults. The Mayor and Township personnel subscribe to the AARP Livability Communities Weekly e-Newsletter.

Additional Subscribers to the AARP Livable Communities Weekly e-Newsletter:

Name	Email Address
Robert Parisi, <i>Mayor</i>	rparisi@westorange.org
Michelle Casalino, <i>President, Town Council</i>	mcasalino@westorange.org



Laura Van Dyke <i>Senior Services Coordinator</i>	lvandyke@westorange.org
Susan Iovino <i>Senior Public Health Nurse</i>	siovino@westorange.org
Theresa De Nova <i>Health Officer, Dept. of Health</i>	tdenova@westorange.org
Noelia Perez <i>Assistant, Senior Services Coordinator</i>	nperez@westorange.org
Brian Plank <i>Librarian, Adult Services</i>	bplank@westorange.org
Dorothy Sanders <i>Senior Livability Coordinator</i>	dsanders@westorange.org

Section 3: Community Activities, Engagements and Collaboration

- 1. Provide a brief summary of the community policies, programs and services that are targeted towards older people and how the community plans to become more age-friendly.**

The Township of West Orange works closely with the community to address the needs and desires of older adults. In 2019, the Township formed a Senior Coalition Group to focus on adult programming and development. The working group meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from the Department of Senior Services, the West Orange Public Library - Adult Services Librarian, the Senior Public Health Nurse and the Senior Livability Coordinator. Monthly meetings include invited guests from the senior community and local service providers.

In January, 2020 the Township published its inaugural Senior Livability Initiative Newsletter, focused on enhancing senior livability and developing an age-friendly community. The Newsletter, now a part of the official Township website, links to a comprehensive calendar of adult programs, events and resources throughout the Township. The Newsletter is easily translatable to over 20 languages, to accommodate our diverse population.

a. Policies

The Township of West Orange has a longstanding commitment to equality and respect of all people without regard to age, sex, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, marital status, socioeconomic standing, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability.

The Town enjoys a strong collaboration with the Human Relations Commission to encourage community-building and inclusion of all people in leadership of civic and community issues. To further meet the needs of a growing senior population, the Township recently approved of a senior residential development for the downtown area. The 5-story, 65-unit complex will be in walking distance to municipal offices and many amenities. The complex includes a large senior activity room and the hiring an on-site Senior Coordinator. The developer remains receptive to additional input from the Township with respect to senior planning initiatives.



b. Programs

Over the past year, the Township developed and implemented numerous programs and events designed to target the needs of older adults and issues specific to senior livability and aging-in-place. Many of the programs are subsidized by the Township. The Senior Services Department works in close collaboration with the West Orange Public Library, Health Center and the Senior Livability Initiative to advance these programs. A sample is listed below.

Calendar Year 2019

May	Salute to Seniors Luncheon
July	Successful Aging with Medical Director of RWJ St. Barnabas
July	Memory Screening with RWJ St. Barnabas Geriatrics Nurse
August	Fall Prevention with Nurse from Kessler Institute for Rehab.
August	Personal Info/Cybersecurity with Cybersecurity Specialist
September	Senior Picnic
September	West Orange Senior Safety Summit
September	Jitterbug and Nostalgia Twist Trivia
October	Umbrella Senior Home Repair Program
October	Senior Freeze Property Tax Workshop
October	Oktoberfest Senior Bus Trip – Krucker’s, Pomona, NY
October	Genealogy and Family History
October	Senior Halloween Party
October	Conversations of Your Life Series – Advanced Care Planning
November	Navigating the Medicare Maze
November	AARP Defensive Driving Course
November	Planning for Your Passing
November	Senior Bus Trip to Doolan’s Shore Club
December	Slip and Fall Avoidance, with Licensed Physical Therapist
December	Thomas A. Edison’s Christmas Lights
December	Holiday Caroling with WO High School
December	Holiday Party at the Manor

Calendar Year 2020

January	Volunteerism and Giving Back in Your Golden Years
January	Understanding NJ Assistance Programs
January	Elder Abuse – Detection, Reporting and Prevention
February	Mental Health in Older Adults
February	Red Wine, Dark Chocolate and You
February	Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (6-week Program)
February	Valentine’s Day Movie: Love Story
February	Living with a Healthy Heart
Feb- April 15	AARP Free Tax Preparation at Library

Ongoing intergenerational events include the Chess Club for all Ages, Crocheting classes and the Intro to Computers & Technology with WO High School students.



c. Services

The Municipality has several Departments that provide specialized focus on the elderly population and senior citizens. These include the Department of Senior Services, Recreation Department, Police Department, Fire Department, Health Department and the Senior Livability Initiative.

Senior Services. The Township's Senior Service Department employs a full-time Senior Services Coordinator, reporting directly to the Mayor, as well as a full-time Assistant Senior Services Coordinator. Counseling and referral services are offered by the Department, which include a licensed clinical social worker.

Information on financial aid programs and income eligibility programs, such as SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), emergency food and housing services, Social Security, Disability, Medicare and Medicaid is provided to senior residents. The Department provides information and referral resources to seniors and their caregivers for long-term care planning, day programs, counseling and support. This is an important resource for family members seeking support as their loved one's age, require additional care in the home or enhanced long-term care. Additionally, the office is responsible for providing recreational programs that promote a healthy lifestyle, social programs that offer an opportunity for older adults to gather and engage, and free or low-cost senior health and fitness classes, including yoga, Zumba, aerobics, swim aerobics. Additionally, we are exploring plans for a new Tai Chi class to improve senior balance and strength.

The Department also maintains an intergenerational community garden at the Katz Community Center, which is run by designated senior residents from the Rutgers Master Gardeners Program. West Orange students assist with the heavy lifting of soil, plants, sod and digging. Traditionally, the gardeners share the overflow harvest bounty with local food pantries and shelters to further assist Town residents dealing with food insufficiency.

Personalized Social Services. Often, senior residents have difficulty in navigating the myriad services and programs offered by the state and/or county, determining the services for which they meet eligibility requirements and understanding the proper departments to contact for assistance. Senior Service Department helps connect seniors to existing services, make referrals, and assist seniors in the application process. Additionally, we create new programs to fill voids necessary to assist seniors in successful aging-in-place.

Senior Services works with senior residents and their families on multiple issues, such as referrals of isolated residents to assisted living facilities, Township programs and social events, as necessary; resident assistance to secure home health agency and support; resident assessments for mental health and food insufficiency issues; resident assistance in Medicare dentures and hearing aid concerns; resident assistance with Housing Assistance Program to void rental increases at senior housing, consistent with hardship medical and financial issues; and resident referrals to the LEAP Utility decrease cost program. Additionally, we work closely



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with the Police, Fire and Health Departments to make referrals for Operation Blue Angel, "Take Me Home", Welfare Lockbox, and Welfare Check Home Visits services, as described below.

The Department of Senior Services also coordinates and participates in numerous events and programs designed to provide social participation, respect and inclusion for seniors. These include: 2-3 Annual Senior Bus Trips, Annual Senior Prom, an intergenerational event with the WO High School and the Board of Education, and seasonal and holiday parties to celebrate annual events. Free transportation is provided to all local holiday parties.

Senior Health Care Services. The West Orange Health Center provides free or low-cost health services for all Township residents. The Center is open daily, Mon-Friday from 8:30 AM- 4:30 PM. The services include Senior Care through evaluation of the total health status and assessment screenings for cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes, hearing and urine. Additionally, patients are evaluated for cardiopulmonary, abnormal heart and breathing. All West Orange residents age 60 and over are eligible for this service, regardless of income. Also, Home Visits from Registered Nurses can be arranged for homebound seniors for check-ups, including blood pressure, review of medications and safety referral to appropriate state agencies, such as Meals-on Wheels, home health aides and other social services. The staff of registered nurses also serve as liaisons to the residents' private physicians. The Township employs a part-time medical doctor and an optometrist for additional free or low-cost health, vision and podiatry care services for clients 60 years or older, disabled or diabetic. The Health Department also partners with various county Senior Services divisions and Mental Health Associations in furtherance of senior health care and well-being. The Health Department collaborates with the premier RWJ Barnabas Hospital for health education programs for the Township community and participates in the Community Health Profile (CHIP).

Senior Transportation. The Township provides free transportation service for senior residents via a Senior Jitney to key sites in and around West Orange. Transportation services are offered consistent with the following priorities:

- Medical transportation to dialysis, doctor, dentist and/or clinic
- Dialysis patients can access free bus service to their medical provider
- Weekly transport to local shopping plaza and grocery stores.

Additionally, the Township offers a town-wide Jitney Service to nearby Train Stations with transit to New York City. Many residents age 55+ who continue to work, rely on this convenient jitney service.

Police and Fire Departments. The Police and Fire Departments work in close collaboration with the Health Department and others to serve, protect and inform our senior population. Some of the senior programs include:



“Operation Blue Angel.” A collaboration between the Departments of Police, Fire and Health to provide emergency access or lock box entry into the residence of a senior or medically impaired conditions in the event of an emergency where the resident is unable to open the door.

Fire and Safety Awareness. Fire and Police Departments conduct annual safety and awareness programs at senior housing residence complex to provide valuable information and resources for safer living at home and in the community. This includes distribution of free carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms, as available.

“Take Me Home”. A location and home service working with family members and caregivers and utilizing a private and secure description database to assist in finding nonverbal or disoriented residents who have run, wandered or otherwise walked away from their residence within the Township and assist in their safe return. This includes individuals who may suffer from autism, dementia, deafness, Alzheimer’s or other developmental disabilities.

Welfare Checks. Police stop by to conduct wellness checks at senior residences to make certain they are safe, as requested by family, friends or neighbors in the event a senior unexpectedly stops answering their phone or ceases contact with others. Often such welfare checks are made on elderly persons living alone.

Department of Recreation. The Department of Recreation works in collaboration with the Department of Social Services to coordinate senior activities, senior fitness and support for the Master Garden at Katz Community Center. The Rec Department recently oversaw complete renovations at the Town pool and recreation center, including new handicap accessible parking, and senior friendly landscaping for greater access and safety. The Town pool offers reduced rates for senior residents. Additionally, the Township and the Recreation Department examined the benefits of European-style adult playgrounds and discussions are underway to include a new senior adult playground with exercise equipment in the Township.

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

The Township of West Orange is committed to making the Town an age-friendly community. Through a grant from Partners for Health Foundation in Fall 2017, the Township worked with the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services at Montclair State University (“MSU”) to conduct a Senior Survey of West Orange residents age 55 and over to better understand the characteristics, assets, needs and future programs they would like to make the community ever more age-friendly. In July 2019 the Township hired a Senior Livability coordinator and in January 2020, the Township incorporated a new Senior Livability Initiative page into the official Township Web Site. The SLI page is available in over 20 languages and provides useful information and resources to the Senior Community. It links to the Senior Services Department, as well as a Senior Calendar, listing various programs and events designed specifically for seniors available throughout the Township. In addition, the Department of Senior Services hosts various



programs conveniently accessible to seniors throughout the Town, including the library, the Community Center and on-site at senior residence housing buildings. The West Orange Senior Citizen Program coordinates several sessions of free or low-cost senior health and fitness exercise classes, including Yoga, Aerobics, Water Aerobics, and Senior Zumba. The health and fitness exercise programs are self-sustaining and typically have a wait list for seniors seeking to join in the fun and activity. In addition to traditional exercise, the Department of Seniors Services works with local entities to provide monthly line dancing sponsored by Human Rights Commission. Throughout the calendar year, there are several established programs that cater to senior engagement and social activities, education, senior health, social participation and networking. These include weekly Bingo, Tea Time socials, healthy-aging seminars and diet and nutrition classes.

The WO Public Library helps to promote the availability of services and activities offering programs and events including computer access, knitting, genealogical and monthly book clubs and a host of other programs. The Department of Public Works assists in senior events and programs, as necessary. They provide Garden Club support by transporting plants and potting supplies, refurbishing the storage shed, maintenance of walkways and other resources. The Department of Health runs a senior jitney to accommodate senior citizens to critical care facilities, including renal dialysis and doctor appointments; grocery shopping, visits to local shopping centers, and transport to NJ Transit rail stations. The Senior Coalition attends and participates in senior and civic group meetings and events. We meet regularly with diverse senior residents and ombudspersons to keep abreast of their wants and needs, as well as take the pulse and obtain direct feedback from senior residents.

3. Briefly describe the mechanism the community has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments.

As stated above, the various Township Departments and the Public Library work closely together to provide collaborative planning and implementation. In 2019, the Township launched a Senior Coalition Group, comprised of representatives from the Department of Senior Services, Senior Public Health Nurse, Senior Livability Coordinator and the West Orange Public Library Adult Services Librarian. This group meets monthly and is responsible for senior planning and implementation of diverse senior events, seminars, classes and programs, with senior input. They brainstorm on new ways to involve and engage the senior community, enhance health, fitness and nutrition services, and enhance methods to make the Township evermore age-friendly. To date, the Group has been responsible for over 40 programs and events tailored for seniors and enhancing West Orange's standing as an age-friendly community. For example, recently the Group collaborated with the registered dietician from the largest local supermarket chain to develop on-site cooking demonstrations for seniors and budget-friendly, healthy meal preparations for 1-2, as well as ways to address food insecurity, working in joint partnership with the local garden and Food Pantry. To that end, we continue to explore ways to use the Town jitney to transport seniors, free of charge, to the local pantry to receive free



packaged food boxes, including fresh produce, which can be incorporated into the meal prep and cooking demonstrations. Council President Michelle Casalino, another life-long resident of West Orange, is an ardent supporter of the Town's aging-in-place and age-friendly community initiatives. Ms. Casalino recently joined representatives from Senior Services and Senior Livability for a training session on Strategic Doing, hosted by the New Jersey Innovative Institute, to explore the highly structured process for collaboration, to broaden and deepen the scope of their work in the context of their work on age-friendly communities. Along with Mayor Parisi and town residents, the Council President is strongly committed to embracing diversity in West Orange to create a better place for all residents to grow older together in West Orange.

Section 4: Network Membership

4. How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-friendly Communities?

The demographics of the United States and elsewhere have created a movement for progress. Every day in the United States 10,000 Baby Boomers retire. Age-friendly is a concept whose time has come and it continues to gain traction. Aging-in-place and the desire to build and create age-friendly communities is a growing requirement. West Orange is inspired by state and national thought leaders to think differently about aging-in-place and the ways we can improve our Township to be a better place to grow older together. A place where *Aging Well West Orange* is a lifestyle, not just a phrase. West Orange is committed to partnering with key stakeholders in the age-friendly movement throughout New Jersey and beyond. To date, we are working with municipal leadership, social service agencies, educational institutions and neighboring communities to better understand the needs of healthy aging and removing the barriers to successfully growing older in one's home and community. There are tremendous returns on investment in our community and we benefit from diverse citizen engagement because all ages benefit when we care for each other. We hope to create momentum and foster change around the idea of healthy aging. We seek to constructively engage with leaders on the topic of age-friendly communities and reframe how we think about and engage the older population and how we view the challenges and opportunities associated with aging. We seek to connect and partner with local and national peers who are committed to these issues. We strive to be an integral part of local, state and national groups that work collectively to create programs and policies to create age-friendly practices that benefit all communities. In short, we seek to contribute to local, state, national and worldwide solutions for healthy aging by removing existing barriers to the benefit all communities. Most recently, in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, the Township's Senior Livability and Senior Services Coordinators took the initiative to reach out to colleagues in the surrounding towns of South Orange/Maplewood, Orange, East Orange, Montclair, Livingston and Millburn/Short Hills to create a COVID-19 Community Coalition. Meeting via Zoom technology, this newly formed



group works together on a local and community level to confront critical problems and find effective, creative solutions to support our senior communities. The objective of the COVID-19 Community Coalition is to come together to share information and resources, brainstorm and develop new practices to assist our respective seniors to navigate through the coronavirus pandemic and the challenging months ahead in the “new normal”. The Coalition has been met with much enthusiasm, as we continue to strengthen our relationships and build our communities.

5. What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

Mayor Parisi and Council President Casalino proudly serve West Orange with strong beliefs in community, senior services and engagement. They are visionary leaders who continue to help shape the future of West Orange into a responsive and progressive community. An examination of the Township population over the last 10 plus years shows significantly changing demographics. Today, the Town’s population of residents age 55+ is approximately 30% and it is expected to continue to rise over the next few decades. As a result, there is a need to adapt services and physical environments in the community to support older adults. Additionally, the population has become more diverse in terms of age, nationality and economics. West Orange population estimates, as of July 2019 (US Census Bureau QuickFacts) indicate the town population is 56.4% white; 27.7% Black or African American; 19.5% Hispanic or Latino; and 7.8% Asian. We seek to live in a community that reflects this tapestry of diversity. As the Township Survey indicates, most senior residents wish to remain in the community and age in place for as long as possible. As we interact with other local and state communities, we clearly see the increasing move towards age-friendly communities.

6. Provide a digital file or link of a logo or other image that represents your community and for which you have reprint rights. The image resolution should be at least 72 dpi. {See example provided by AARP} Or, send a JPEG, PDF, or PNG of your logo by email attachment to livable@aarp.org

Sincerely,



Robert D. Parisi
Mayor



RDP/spq



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