

2016

Newport City's Age Friendly Community Action Plan



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Paul Dreher, Newport City Renaissance Corporation (NCRC) Design Committee, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS) & Dreher Design

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Pam Ladds, NCRC Design Committee & Community member

Jennifer Leithead, NCRC Design Committee; Fresh Start Community Farm

Alison Low, Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)

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Bobby Starr, Vermont State Senator

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Jennifer Woolard, Vermont Department of Health

Workgroup members include:

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Paul Monette, Newport City Mayor

Patricia Sears, NEKTI Consulting

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Jen Leithead, Newport City Renaissance Corporation (NCRC) Design Committee

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Caregiving

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Social Participation

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Community Partners:

Vermont Council on Independent Living (VCIL)
Newport City Parks and Recreation
Green Mountain United Way (GMUW)
HealthWorks Orleans/Northern Essex Counties
Support & Services at Home (SASH)

Introduction

Newport is located in the most remote rural region of Vermont known as the Northeast Kingdom, one of the most beautiful, undisturbed, and peaceful parts of the state. Known to many as simply “The Kingdom,” it is cherished by its residents and visitors for its stunning beauty and abundance of natural resources. The Kingdom is made up of the three northeastern counties in Vermont, one of which is Orleans County, with Newport serving as its county seat. The region is rural and sparsely populated, made up of scattered small towns and village centers offering a strong sense of community. Newport sits on the southern end of the international Lake Memphremagog, a 32 mile long lake that is shared with Quebec, Canada. The city is essentially split in two by water, with the “main lake” to the north and the expansive South Bay to the south. In the summer, the city is peaceful and pleasant, with cool breezes drifting off the water and an abundance of sun. Fall is the shortest season and comes in a shocking blaze of glory, with brilliant fall colors reflecting off blue water and hints of the upcoming chill riding on the breezes. Winter is hauntingly beautiful and often harsh, with snow piling up along city streets, the lake turning to expanse of white with wind whipping off its 32 miles from the north. Thankfully, spring comes slowly but surely, bringing early “mud season” and eventually warm winds, bright green leaves, and budding flowers.

The Northeast Kingdom of VT is a difficult place to earn a living. Data from August 2015 shows the Newport - Derby labor market area with the highest unemployment rate in the state at 4.9%, down from 5.5% in August 2014 (source: <http://www.vtlni.info/laus.pdf>). The region is the most isolated and sparsely populated corner of the state, which has resulted in the area being the most economically depressed region of Vermont, with a poverty rate of 18%. This can have an overwhelming effect on the aging population:

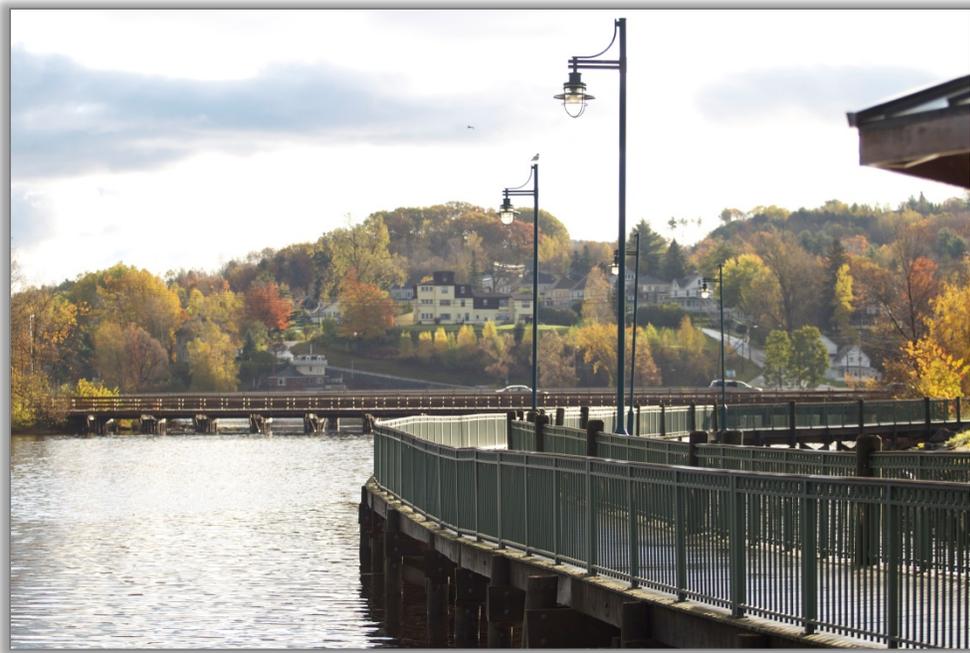
- 16% of the population is over the age of 65 years
- 5% of those over 65 years old live below the poverty line
- The aging population is faced with isolation and limited public transportation.

In 2012, the [Northeast Kingdom Economic Development Initiative](#) was launched, which is an ambitious set of projects funded by the federal EB-5 Program and spearheaded by the owner of Jay Peak Ski Resort. With \$500 million in investments, this project will undoubtedly strengthen the overall vibrancy and vitality of the region. The EB-5 program is a federal investment visa program to incentivize investment and create American jobs by setting aside a pool of EB-5 visa green cards for qualified foreign investors that invest capital into approved EB-5 projects. The growth projected to be associated with the EB-5 projects is sure to have a positive impact on the region’s economy.

As Vermont’s population ages and people stay healthy and active longer, its communities must adapt. Well-designed, livable communities promote health and sustain economic growth, and they make for happier, healthier residents of all ages. Newport is the first city in Vermont to

join [AARP's Network of Age Friendly Communities](#). Newport's Mayor, Paul Monette, in partnership with the City Council, supported the effort to have Newport join AARP's Network of Age Friendly Communities on December 6, 2013.

The Age Friendly Community Advisory Council first convened in the spring of 2014 and began working to draft a Community Survey using the template provided by AARP. The survey was sent to 4,000 Newport and Orleans County residents over age 45 in the fall of 2014 generating a 27% response rate. Results were received, compiled, and analyzed over the winter of 2014-2015, with a completed report delivered to the Advisory Council in April 2015. The survey asked recipients questions related to each domain, then analyzed the responses and provided a thorough review of the thoughts, needs and opinions of the respondents. The report also reviewed the top gaps in which features were considered important versus which existed, both overall and per domain.



The Advisory Council's efforts are focused on addressing isolation and emphasizing the importance of aging-in-place in a manner that is consistent with the region's vision of its future.

Why Newport is Pursuing Age Friendly Community Status

Newport, Vermont is a surprising place in some respects. Though located in a remote rural area, it is the only City in the Northeast Kingdom, the place of commerce as well as local, county and state government services located in seven-square miles with blocks of neighborhoods with a definite “urban” feel.

In 2009, Newport became the first municipality in Vermont to receive a grant from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for a five-day charrette providing a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) with national experts in community planning and design. It was a transforming, powerful event for Newport, bringing significant community participation that turned into partnerships advancing positive impact.

Two years later, the R/UDAT returned to Newport to assess progress and provide more expert advice for improvements. One Newport citizen said, "When you have people working together, things can happen and do happen. That's the most important change that has occurred -- a change in attitude. All of a sudden nothing is impossible."

Within a short amount of time members of the Newport community came together to develop form-based code that promotes mixed-use buildings while honoring the fabric of the historical architecture in downtown. Again, Newport became a leader in Vermont as the first and only municipality that has adopted form-based code, a significant economic development and land use tool.

Newport is internationally renowned for its [successful downtown community gardens, Fresh Start Community Farm](#), that utilize intergenerational care of the entire growing season. Click here for the Vermont PBS showcase of Newport as a destination for a field to fork culinary experience.

While [Newport is chronically challenged with unemployment](#) and the highest poverty level in the state, these are matched with powerful resilience and capability to work together for solutions.

In 2013, the Orton Family Foundation brought a CommunityMatters workshop to Newport that included 45 of Newport’s community and business leaders for a one-day workshop designed to serve as a critical step in building local “civic infrastructure” in Newport.

Civic infrastructure is the underlying structure and capacity communities need to deal with critical public issues effectively. Civic infrastructure consists of the opportunities, activities, and arenas that allow people to connect with each other, solve problems, make decisions, and celebrate community. Born from the CommunityMatters workshop was Community Commons, a monthly meeting of community members with occasional special guests who bring expertise

to share for discussion about community concerns, reminding people that they have the power to advance positive change in their families, neighborhoods, community and local government.

Civic and social participation are critical to Newport's vitality, there are a number of opportunities for the public to engage with business and community leaders, elected officials and amongst their neighbors through the following: online discussion boards on Facebook and Front Porch forum; and various community, civic and faith-based meetings.

Why is Newport pursuing Age-Friendly designation from AARP?

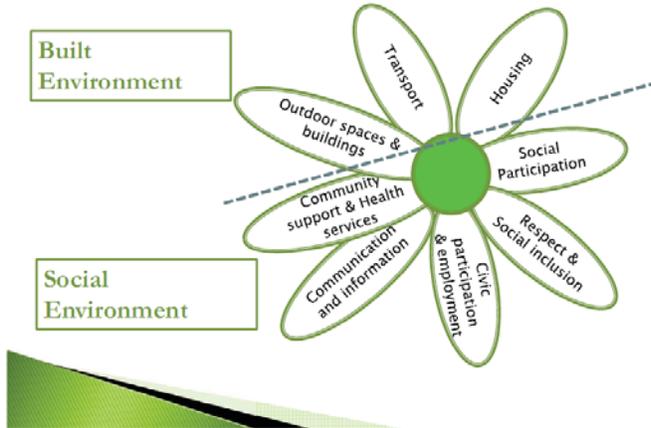
Newport's leaders, stakeholders and citizens recognize the value of proactively addressing the needs of its valuable aging population. They are united in a commitment to create real change that will improve the lives of residents across the age spectrum. Older residents are living longer, more healthy and active lives, while contributing to the rich fabric of the community in a host of ways. If coordinated, Newport's many community assets -- including citizens and community members who live, work and play here -- will result in measurable improvements in the community's quality of life. With direction, focus and consensus, this work will move the city toward becoming a destination for healthy, active living for people of all ages. Newport will be recognized as a world-class city. This effort will help chart a path that supports Newport's future economic and community development.



Newport's Domains of Age Friendliness

An international effort to develop a framework to assist communities in becoming Age Friendly identified eight key areas of interest that were of particular concern for older adults. These eight areas were detailed further serving as the concentration areas of the eight domains of livability for the Age Friendly Community program. Newport's Age Friendly Community Advisory Council decided that the best way to develop an Action Plan was to focus on the current gaps and needs within each domain area, which was the task of each work group focused on a domain. Together the work groups and community stakeholders discussed the needed enhancements and improvements of each of the domains with the greatest gaps and needs within Newport. This effort by the work groups was used to develop recommendations and implementation items to be included in the Age Friendly Community Action Plan.

The Age Friendly Community – Eight Domains:



Below is a list of the domains of age-friendly the Newport Advisory Council developed their Action Plan to address:

- Domain 1: Town Information
- Domain 2: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Domain 3: Transportation
- Domain 4: Job Opportunities
- Domain 5: Health Services
- Domain 6: Housing
- Domain 7: Caregiving
- Domain 8: Social Participation – Social Inclusion, Education Opportunities, and Volunteering

Domain 1: Town Information

Current Conditions:

From the 2014 Community Survey, 91% of Newport residents age 45 and over go first to the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) Council on Aging (formerly the Area Agency on Aging) for information, with 86% also seeking information from family and friends. 70% would also turn to AARP, while nearly as many (69%) turn to senior centers and local government offices. The toll-free 211/United Way information service is the least common information source with 29%, despite the fact that it is a catchment for all the services available in the region across the age spectrum.

Survey participants also responded to a question about features of importance for information, with access to community information in one central source being the most sought after with 72% responding it is “extremely /very important.” Information delivered in person to shut-ins and free access to computers and the internet in public places was also largely important with 69% each. Clearly displayed, large print information was still important to respondents with 61%, and 56% thought an automated source such as a toll-free number was important. Information in different languages was less important with 35%.

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

Currently, access to the internet is provided at no cost at the Goodrich Memorial Library on Newport’s Main Street in half hour increments. A free community calendar has been set up by Newport’s Mayor, Paul Monette, and is housed on the City’s municipal website, and the Newport City Council meets twice a month, with meetings open to all. Several bulletin boards are scattered across the city, open to the public for posting community events. Newport has an active Front Porch Forum community, and several Facebook groups exist for the purpose of event sharing. The main senior meal site, Cornucopia, offers a community meal at noon on Fridays, free for seniors and \$5 each for non-seniors, and is a good distribution point for information. Cornucopia also coordinates Meals on Wheels for Newport, which include community information as part of deliveries. A toll-free number, 211, which is run by United Way, is active in the region and stays up to date with information, but is lacking in usage.

Opportunities:

In the Town Information domain, four features were found to have the largest gaps between availability and importance to residents, showing the largest opportunities for the improvement. These features are:

- Information delivered in person to those who are homebound.
- Clearly displayed printed information with large lettering.
- Automated information source like a toll-free number, such as 211.
- Access to community information in one central source.
- Community information available in multiple languages.
- Free access to computers and the Internet in public places.

The Advisory Council explored the following current conditions that serve as opportunities for improvement and will be factored:

- Leveraging the trust and reliability of the NEK Council on Aging to be a resource of information for community members
- The value of monthly community meetings available to the public.
- Access and familiarity with 211
- Various social media sites and radio stations
- Awareness of Front Porch Forum

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Develop a monthly or quarterly news memo to be included in Meals on Wheels deliveries and to be distributed by “home visitors” when visiting home-bound people.

Action Step 1: Coordinate with community partners to develop a “news brief” that includes information and links to other centralized sources of information.

Action Step 2: Populate and maintain the Access Information Map that includes primary links and contact information for agencies, organizations, automated information lines, and programs.

Action Step 2: Develop distribution plan with community partners.

Action Step 3: Begin and maintain distribution.

Inputs: NEK Council on Aging, VT 211, Green Mountain United Way, Support & Services at Home (SASH) Program, local meal programs i.e. Meals on Wheels, local case managers, options counselors, senior companions, and the ecumenical community

Lead: NEK Council on Aging

Indicator: Increase number of seniors/homebound receiving community information by 20%.

Timeframe: January 2016 - May 2016.

Goal 2: Develop and share a message on “best practices” for the development and distribution of printed and spoken information that is accessible to all.

Action Step 1: Research best practices for accessible information.

Action Step 2: Include the need for community information to be available in French as well as English as a “best practice.”

Action Step 3: Develop brochure, pamphlet or flier for businesses, organizations and agencies.

Action Step 4: Print brochure.

Action Step 5: Distribute brochure to businesses, organizations and agencies.

Inputs: NEK Council on Aging, AARP Vermont

Lead: NEK Council on Aging.

Indicator: Increase the number of businesses, organizations and agencies utilizing best practices for information sharing by 25%.

Timeframe: January 2016 – June 2016

Goal 3: Create awareness campaign to highlight VT 211 and the Senior Helpline 1-800-642-5119

Action Step 1: Coordinate with community partners to include this information in other outreach.

Action Step 2: Maintain post on NEK Council on Aging website.

Inputs: NEK Council on Aging, VT 211, Green Mountain United Way, Support and the SASH Program.

Lead: NEK Council on Aging

Indicator: Increase utilization of automated numbers by seniors and disabled by 10% by the end of 2016.

Timeframe: January 2016 - June 2016.

Goal 4: Increase awareness of public computer and internet access.

Action Step 1: Write press release on availability of computer and Internet resources open to the public. Include need for additional resources and encourage community gathering areas to use survey data to seek additional funding and support to increase local resources.

Inputs: NEK Council on Aging, AARP Vermont

Lead: NEK Council on Aging

Indicator: Increase number of public locations offering free public access to computers and the Internet by 5%.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2017.

Domain 2: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Current Conditions:

Newport is home to Lake Memphremagog, a 32 mile long lake crossing the Canadian border. Newport has a multiuse recreation path running the eastern side of the lake all the way to the border, with the option to cross and access a large network on the Canadian side. Newport is home to Gardner Park, located near Newport's Designated Downtown with ball parks, playgrounds, and lake access. Prouty Beach is home to a large campground, playground, lake access, a disc golf course, and the recreation path runs through it. Fresh Start Community Farm is the city's network of community gardens, started in 2011.

In the fall of 2011, The Vermont Planning Association held its annual meeting in Newport. In conjunction with the meeting, walkability expert Dan Burden (Walkable and Livable Communities) and transportation expert Gary Toth (Project for Public Spaces) held workshops discussing aspects of Newport's downtown. Dan Burden led a large group on walking tour of downtown, highlighting narrow streets, community gardens, sidewalks and crosswalks.

The Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain includes public spaces such as parks and public buildings, as well as streets and the general "public domain." The 2014 Community Survey

clearly revealed what features are important to Newport residents in this domain. The top features include the following:

- Well-maintained, accessible public buildings (84%*)
- Sidewalks in good condition and safe (82%)
- Well-maintained, accessible public restrooms (73%)
- Neighborhood watch programs (60%)
- Separate paths for bicyclists and pedestrians (60%)
- Well-maintained, safe parks within walking distance (54%)
- Parks with adequate benches (46%)
- Pet friendly parks (44%)

*Percentage of residents who believe this feature is “extremely/very important”

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

Our Town, Slow It Down: Newport City Renaissance Corporation (NCRC) is the organization coordinating Newport’s Designated Downtown program with the state Agency of Commerce and Community Development. NCRC’s Design Committee has been active for almost 10 years with Age-Friendly and health-related projects such as increasing bike parking downtown, drafting Newport’s Form Based Code, and coordinating the first year of the community gardens. The Design Committee, in partnership with AARP Vermont and the Vermont Department of Health, organized a community-wide event in March of 2015 called “Our Town, Slow It Down” to initiate community dialogue around the safety of Newport’s streets and neighborhoods. Volunteers and teams were drafted to complete short- and long-term projects such as asking the city to implement pedestrian cones in crosswalks, better speed enforcement city-wide, recreation path extensions, and overall culture change.

Fresh Start Community Farm: Fresh Start Community Farm started in 2011 with a small municipal planning grant to the Newport City Zoning Department. A small group of coordinators worked with the neighborhood and landowner, surveying residents about their needs and wants, soliciting donations of funds, goods and services to turn a former mud parking lot into a thriving community garden. Since 2011, the Farm has continued to grow, with a leadership board, a farm coordinator, and five sites in the Newport/Derby area under the farm name. The first site, Summer Street, is located in a dense, urban neighborhood surrounded by buildings on all sides. One neighboring building is a senior housing provider, and another is an adult day care. Residents and clients of both enjoy the garden, which has been designed for wheelchair accessibility where possible and offers raised beds. Other sites also offer raised beds and wide paths and the farm is committed to continuing to improve senior accessibility as funds and manpower allow.

Safe Routes to Schools (Newport Elementary): While Safe Routes to Schools is a program geared specifically for school children, the benefits of the program will also improve safety, walkability and accessibility for all. The program works with school and city leadership as well as parents, caregivers and community groups to address barriers facing children walking and/or biking to school. With 80% of its children living within a one mile radius of the school, the program aims to encourage a larger percentage to walk or bike instead of being driven or bussed. The

program is working with nationally known engineers to address safety concerns such as unsafe crosswalks, poorly maintained and/or nonexistent sidewalks, and traffic light timing.

Gardner Park Restoration Committee: The Gardner Park Restoration Committee is a passionate, driven group of community members who are working to improve Newport's large downtown park, Gardner Memorial Park. The Committee has currently raised several thousand dollars through community fundraisers and is working with the City's Parks and Recreation Department to design an improved, safer park. The group is still in the design phase, allowing community members to continue to suggest ideas and is open to age-friendly park ideas.

Opportunities:

The largest gaps between importance and presence of features in the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings domain include:

- Neighborhood watch programs
- Well-maintained public restrooms accessible to people of varying physical ability.

Additional gaps in this domain include public parks with adequate benches, separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians, well-maintained sidewalks, well-maintained and safe parks within walking distance of your home, well-maintained, accessible public buildings and facilities, and pet friendly parks. Accessibility was highlighted throughout the community survey, although public restrooms ranked as a high concern the Advisory Council members determined that it was best to address this need through the first goal identified below, which will allow the lead organizations to determine how many resources are available and what is the utilization rate in order to make the best recommendations concerning public restrooms moving forward.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Increase utilization of Newport's recreation opportunities.

Action Step 1: Audit outdoor spaces and resources (public spaces, public restrooms, benches, walking paths, benches, parking spaces, bins and lighting, pedestrian crossings, etc.). Develop user-friendly map or pamphlet of available resources and distribute to the community.

Action Step 2: Collaborate with community partners to develop a community toolkit for neighborhood connectivity.

Inputs: VT Department of Health's local office, NCRC Design Committee, AARP VT, Newport City Parks and Recreation, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services.

Lead: Design Committee

Indicators: Decrease rate of adults in the Newport Vermont Department of Health District Office with no leisure time activity from 28% to 26%ⁱ.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2017

Goal 2: Enhance Gardner Park’s age-friendliness by addressing issues of accessibility by referencing the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) checklist for facilities and outdoor spaces for guidance¹

Action Step 1: Sustain level funding for Gardner Park to ensure that it continues to be a strong asset for Newport City residents for recreational and social outings that bring community members together throughout the year.

Action Step 2: Collaborate with Newport Parks and Recreation and Gardner Park Restoration Committee to provide input on the Gardner Memorial Park restoration, utilizing portions of the Age-Friendly Cities Checklist and additional age-friendly parks best practices.

Action Step 3: Using the inventory from Goal 1, identify strengths, gaps and areas of improvement. Present information to the City Council and the community at large to inform future planning.

Inputs: VT Department of Health’s local office, NCRC Design Committee, AARP Vermont, Newport Parks and Recreation, Northeast Kingdom Learning Services.

Lead: Gardner Park Restoration Committee

Indicators: Increased visits to Gardner Park among seniors and people with disabilities by 5%.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2018.

Goal 3: Leverage support from community partners, local businesses, City Council and the Age-Friendly Transportation Team to develop a citywide plan for healthier transportation options referencing VT’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning Manual and Complete Streets Guide².

Action Step 1: Support the planning process with VT State Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) and community partners to develop a Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan for Newport.

Action Step 2: Partner Organizations maintain and sustain “Our Town Slow It Down” as an annual event with focus on mobility by using the forum as a check-up on progress and to promote public participation and support for future improvements.

Action Step 3: In collaboration with the Transportation Team, explore effectiveness of current traffic calming measures and identify specific sites for future traffic calming.

Action Step 3: Maximize wayfinding for persons of all abilities.

Action Step 4: Research funding and partnership opportunities to enhance active transportation infrastructure, i.e., bus shelters, benches, crossing signals, signage, etc., in the city, in collaboration with the Transportation Team using VT’s MUTCD guidelines³.

¹ ADA Checklist can be found: <http://adachecklist.org/>

² VT’s Pedestrian Bike Planning Manual:

http://vtransengineering.vermont.gov/sites/aot_program_development/files/documents/Itf/PedestrianandBicycleFacilityDesignManual.pdf

VT’s Complete Streets Guide:

http://healthvermont.gov/family/fit/documents/Complete_streets_guide_for_VT_communities.pdf

Inputs: Age-Friendly Transportation Team, NCRC Design Committee, Dept. of Public Works, NEKLS, VT Agency of Transportation (VTrans), Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA), SRTS Steering Committee.

Lead: Transportation Team and NVDA.

Indicators: Completion of the plan and securing funding opportunities. Presented to City Council by December 2017 and adoption by the Council by the end of 2018.

Timeframe: January 2016 – December 2018.

Goal 4: Maintain and increase capacity of Fresh Start Community Farm.

Action Step 1: Collaborate with Fresh Start Community Farm Coordinator to assess need for volunteers.

Action Step 2: Assess community gardens for age-friendliness and accessibility.

Action Step 3: Connect with RuralEdge to assess resident utilization of gardens and assess need for onsite gardens.

Action Step 4: Develop toolkit to assist neighborhoods to demonstrate how residents can grow food in their own space and showcase opportunities that allow people to garden in their homes, apartments, and neighborhoods.

Inputs: Fresh Start Community Farm, AARP VT, NCRC Design Committee, NEKLS

Lead: Fresh Start Community Farm

Indicators: Increase Fresh Start volunteer capacity by 20%.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2017.

Domain 3: Transportation

Current Conditions:

The main form of transportation for Newport residents is to drive themselves, with 88% choosing this option. However, a large portion also walks (47%), 23% drives with others, and 21% rides a bike.

Rural Community Transportation (RCT) is the region's public transportation provider, covering the three counties of the Northeast Kingdom: Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties. RCT is free for elderly, disabled, and Medicaid transportation, and for shuttle and shopping routes. Only 6% of Newport's population makes use of RCT's free public transit. Taxis follow closely behind, while 1% of those surveyed use special transportation for people with disabilities and GoVermont! or car share.

³ VT Agency of Transportation's guidance using the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for crosswalks and pedestrian signage:

http://vtransengineering.vermont.gov/sites/aot_program_development/files/documents/highway/TrafficOpsCrosswalk_Guidelines_2004.pdf

Newport residents ranked features of transportation systems and streets by importance, which are listed below with the percentage of respondents ranking each feature “extremely/very important:”

- Safe, well-lit streets and intersections for all users (88%)
- Well-maintained streets (87%)
- Clear traffic signs (85%)
- Enforced speed limits (83%)
- Affordable public transportation (80%)
- Special transportation for people with disabilities and seniors (79%)
- Adequate public parking including handicapped parking (79%)
- Well-maintained public transportation (78%)
- Safe public transportation stops/areas (76%)
- Accessible, timely, convenient public transportation (75%)
- Accessibility to public transportation outside Orleans County (70%)
- Audio/visual pedestrian crossings (63%)
- Driver education/refresher courses (48%)
- Go Vermont or Care Share (40%)

Transportation costs for the average Newport household is \$12,381 per year, which is much higher than the average U.S. household at \$10,791 per year – this can represent a financial burden for many residents, especially for households living on a fixed income. Residents who purchase homes in a less expensive neighborhood can find themselves paying more for gas and cars if they do not have access to other transit options and their neighborhood isn’t walkable and live far from jobs and services⁴. Walkable, safe streets are an important component to enhancing the livability Newport. The Vermont pedestrian fatality rate for those 65 years and older is 2.90 per year, ranking our state as fifth in the country. In the five-year interval from 2009 to 2013, 27 pedestrians were killed on Vermont’s roads, with nearly half (48%) over the age of 65 years⁵. There is opportunity to improve pedestrian safety by enhancing walkability and access to transit, which will decrease transportation costs – with the ultimate goal of improving quality of life for residents living in Newport.

Opportunities:

In the Transportation and Streets domain, the largest gap between surveyed importance and existence in the community was the ability to easily connect with other public transportation services outside Orleans County. A large need exists to connect the Newport area with health care providers in the Champlain Valley (over 80 miles away) and the Dartmouth Health Care System in Hanover, NH, across the Connecticut River from I-91 and Norwich, VT (over 100 miles away). Additionally, Amtrak services are available at White River Junction and Waterbury, VT, but currently there is no public transportation option linking Newport with either of those opportunities. The Greyhound bus line also services White River Junction, as well as South Burlington, but again, no public transportation option exists linking Newport to either terminal.

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013 *Location Affordability Index*.

⁵ Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2007-2011 *Fatality Analysis Reporting System*

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

Our Town, Slow It Down: As mentioned in the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain, NCRC's Design Committee has been working on age-friendly streets and sidewalks for several years, most recently with the Our Town, Slow It Down community forum in March 2015. Projects and topics of consideration include addressing crosswalk safety, traffic light timing and sound, traffic speed city-wide, appropriate and accessible handicapped parking, street lighting, etc. The *Our Town, Slow It Down* is a community workshop aimed at building awareness, understanding, participation and support among the public with the goal of identifying short-term, low-cost improvements that will enhance mobility for residents across the age spectrum.

Safe Routes to Schools: The Safe Routes to Schools program was described in the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings domain. The program, while directed toward school age children, will inherently benefit seniors and the community at large by enhancing safety, walkability, bikeability and accessibility for walking routes identified between the school and neighborhoods.

Rural Community Transportation (RCT): RCT is the region's non-profit public transportation service. RCT utilizes buses, wheelchair accessible vans, taxis, and volunteer drivers to provide services to Northeast Kingdom residents. As the Medicaid transportation provider in Caledonia, Essex, Orleans, Lamoille and Orange county RCT provides rides to eligible individuals with no other means of transportation to medical appointments. RCT also provides rides to individuals 60 and over or disabled under the Elderly and Disabled (E & D) programs through our local area partners. Free shuttle bus services are available to anyone wishing to ride between St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville; and between Newport and Derby Line. These routes may deviate up to 1/4 mile to pick up passengers with 24-hour advance notice. In addition, four free shopping routes are available in this region. RCT also operates a Commuter bus between St. Johnsbury and Montpelier.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Increase utilization of existing public transportation services in the region by all populations.

Action Step 1: Host public NEKTV interview about public transportation.

Action Step 2: Assess community knowledge of public transportation system at community transportation forum.

Action Step 3: Develop opportunistic strategy for education events to promote RCT and other modes of transportation.

Action Step 4: Review Rider/Bus Guidance and bus schedule brochure to ensure comprehensibility for all ages and abilities.

Action Step 5: Identify and coordinate with local organizations, agencies and businesses to share and amplify RCT information.

Action Step 6: Coordinate with 211 for transportation referrals (collaborate with Town Information committee)

Action Step 7: Coordinate with NVDA to host promotional event during Way 2 Go Challenge in May 2016.

Action Step 8: Coordinate with Newport Parks and Recreation to host a youth bus ride in order to familiarize youth with the RCT system. Coordinate with Vermont Department of Health and other agencies to host “ride-alongs” for employees so they may learn where the routes actually go and on what time schedule so they are able to inform and refer people to RCT as a transit solution.

Inputs: Rural Community Transit (RCT), NVDA, NCRC Design Committee, Newport Parks & Recreation, VT Department of Health, North Country Hospital

Lead: RCT

Indicators: Increase ridership of RCT among Newport residents and neighboring towns by 5%.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2017.

Goal 2: Increase transportation routes for Newport/Derby to connect to services in and beyond Littleton and Woodsville, NH, and health care services in White River Junction, VT.

Action Step 1: Assess current routes and ridership on each route and survey for demand.

Action Step 2: Research funding and partnership opportunities to increase transportation routes for Newport/Derby to connect to services in and beyond Littleton and Woodsville, NH, and health care services in White River Junction, VT.

Inputs: RCT, NVDA, NCRC Design Committee

Lead: RCT

Indicators: Obtain funding to increase routes connecting beyond Orleans County.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2017.

Goal 3: Increase opportunities for safe and active transportation.

Action Step 1: Pursue/research increased number of bus shelters and bike racks in the community.

Action Step 2: Increase awareness of bike racks on RCT Shuttles and RCT bus shelters.

Action Step 3: Document and evaluate priority areas addressed at 2015 Our Town, Slow It Down community forum. The evaluation will inform the strategy for the 2016 Our Town, Slow It Down public forum.

Action Step 4: Research audio crossing options by referencing the MUTCD guidelines⁶.

Action Step 5: Pursue pedestrian safety improvements at crossings with documentation and evaluation of countdowns and longer crossing times with reference to Vtrans’s planning and design manual.

Action Step 7: Explore effectiveness of current traffic calming measures and identify specific sites for future traffic calming opportunities⁷.

⁶ Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices: <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>

⁷ Traffic calming is a system of design and management strategies that increases safety by slowing motor-vehicle traffic, often without reducing overall traffic volumes. The efforts create a balanced environment for all users of

Action Step 8: Document and evaluate seasonal safety maintenance measures of sidewalks and explore opportunities to improve safety by referencing Vtrans’s pedestrian and bicycle program recommendations⁸.

Action Step 9: Document and evaluate accessibility and location of handicap parking spaces in Newport City with reference to the ADA guidelines.

Inputs: Newport City Planning Commission, AARP Vermont, NVDA, VTrans, Newport City Public Works, Safe Routes to School, Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL), and the business community.

Lead: NCRC Design Committee

Indicators: Reduction of crashes among pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2018.

Domain 4: Job Opportunities

Current Conditions:

With 42% of Newport residents age 45+ working full (32%) or part-time (10%), there are 30% who are retired and not working, while 10% are retired but occasionally work. Ten percent are not in the labor force. The majority of those who continue working do so because they need or want the extra income (83%). Seventy-six percent work to pay for health insurance premiums or co-pays, and 74% work to maintain health insurance coverage. Seventy-two percent need income to pay for prescription drugs, while 71% work to build up savings. Some continue working to qualify for an increase in Social Security (69%) or to fulfill employer pension requirements, and some (67%) work for personal fulfillment. Job features Newport residents find important include a range of flexible opportunities, jobs adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities, and training opportunities for older adults to learn a new skill within a current job or train in a different field of work. All three were very similar in importance, with 73%, 72%, and 70% ranking them “extremely/very important.”

Opportunities:

The largest opportunities for improvement in the Job Opportunities domain include a range of flexible job opportunities, job training for older adults to learn new job skills within their jobs or to train in a different field, and jobs adapted to people with a range of disabilities.

the road. Another benefit is that it can give a street a transformative sense of place, thus boosting social interactions, housing and retail businesses. The changes help reduce pollution, noise and even crime. *Resources:*

- Institute for Transportation Engineers. “Traffic Calming Library.” Retrieved June 5, 2014 from <http://www.ite.org/traffic/default.asp>
- Federal Highway Administration. *FHWA Course on Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation*, Lesson 11, Traffic Calming. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/univcourse/pdf/swless11.pdf
- Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (2008) *Streets and Places: Using Streets to Rebuild Communities*. http://www.pps.org/pdf/bookstore/Using_Streets_to_Rebuild_Communities.pdf
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. *Traffic Calming and Crime Prevention*. <http://katana.hsrb.unc.edu/cms/downloads/ENG>

⁸ VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian Program: http://vtransengineering.vermont.gov/sections/ltf/bike_ped

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

Several agencies and programs exist in the region working to address barriers for various populations to access employment. These include the VT Department of Labor, VT Association of Business Industry & Rehabilitation (VABIR), Vocational Rehab, Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Creative Workforce Solutions, Vermont Associates, Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA), VT Small Business Development Center, Northern Counties Investment Corporation (NCIC), and free courses offered through the Community College of VT for Vermont citizens 65 and older

The North Country Career Center offers a wide variety of educational opportunities to adults as well as high school students, from specific trades or skills to health careers, automotive training, computer and financial literacy, arts, culinary, and languages. The Adult Learning courses have a variety of fees and hours and are open to the public.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Assess the needs, beliefs and practices of Orleans County employers toward older workers and those with disabilities or special needs/considerations.

Action Step 1: Create work group for outreach to top 50 employers in Orleans County.

Action Step 2: Through business outreach, the work group will document and evaluate the needs, beliefs and practices of employers.

Action Step 3: Identify champions and success stories.

Action Step 4: Create a report highlighting success stories and current practices, as well as documenting gaps and needs, illustrating how Orleans County employers recruit and retain older workers as well as people with a range of disabilities, special needs or considerations.

Inputs: VT Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR), Vocational Rehab, VT Dept. of Labor, North Country Career Center (NCCC), Creative Workforce Solutions, NVDA.

Lead: VT Dept. of Labor

Indicators: Report, with spreadsheet and narrative, completed.

Timeframe: January – July 2016.

Goal 2: Consider strategy for effective ways to share this information to employers (e.g., breakfast/lunch panel, public forum).

Action Step 1: Using results from report in Goal 1, plan at least one event for employers to share success stories with other businesses.

Inputs: VABIR, Vocational Rehab, Dept. of Labor, NCCC, Creative Workforce Solutions, NVDA

Lead: Job Opportunities Team members

Indicators: Receive commitment from 5 employers to commit to consider adoption of age-friendly best practices for hiring.

Timeframe: July 2016 - July 2017

Domain 5: Health

Current Conditions:

According to the 2014 Community Survey, Newport residents overwhelmingly believe they are in excellent, very good, or good health, with 84% responding in those categories. Most (62%) say they exercise every day or several times a week and 13% once per week. Nearly all responded that remaining physically active for as long as possible is important to them. Additionally, Newport residents value well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities with respectful and helpful staff, including a variety of health care professionals and specialists and conveniently located emergency care. Home health care providers that are affordable, well-trained and certified are also important. Easy to find information about health and supportive services are also valued, as are conveniently located services, health and wellness programs and fitness activities geared toward older adults. A lesser proportion (45% each) strongly valued visits from the faith community and health care professionals speaking different languages. Newport residents value having home delivered meals for older persons, prescription drug delivery, and senior meal sites as the most important health and nutrition features. Food pantries, farmer's markets and grocery delivery services were also important, with educational resources and community gardens also somewhat important.

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

North Country Hospital is located in Newport City, offering both inpatient and outpatient care from the hospital itself. Inpatient care includes medical/surgical care, the intensive care unit, and the birthing center. Outpatient care is varied, ranging from cancer treatment to cardiology to sleep disorders. Emergency care is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week at the emergency department. North Country Hospital also oversees several primary care practices, including family practice and pediatrics across Orleans County. Specialty clinics include cardiology, neurology, OB/BYN, orthopedics, pulmonary rehabilitation, sleep disorders, surgical, and urology services. The hospital also coordinates the Wellness Center, a fitness center offering a variety of health and fitness classes for all ages and fitness levels, as well as several nursing homes in the region.

Vermont Department of Health is located in downtown Newport and serves Orleans and northern Essex Counties. Services offered include breastfeeding and mother-to-mother support, infant, child, and family health and support services, Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program services, eligibility services for 3SquaresVT, ReachUp, and Medicaid, Ladies First and Vermont WIC.

Mental health services for the area are provided by Northeast Kingdom Human Services. Department include Children, Youth and Families; Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Developmental/Intellectual Services, and Community Rehabilitation and Treatment.

Northeast Kingdom Home Care offers in-home caregiving services, including personal care such as bathing, cooking, and cleaning, as well as nursing care. The Meeting Place is an adult day care facility in downtown Newport, offering services for adults during normal business hours.

Newport residents have access to a network of health and human services, diminished in part due to recent budgetary cuts that have occurred on the state level to the Agency of Human Services which has primarily impacted the travel required to access specialty care and oral health services. Many residents travel to Dartmouth Hitchcock in New Hampshire (over 100 miles away) or to the University of Vermont's Medical Center in Burlington, VT (over 80 miles away for specialty treatment). This is particularly challenging for seniors on fixed income who no longer drive, and for low-income residents with unreliable transportation options.

Opportunities:

Grocery delivery services are a large opportunity in this domain, though it presents some large challenges to any group attempting to address it. The second largest gap, according to the community survey, is the need for educational resources on nutrition and healthy food preparation. Close behind is the desire for community gardens. Although healthy food delivery services, such as Meals on Wheels, was identified as a significant gap in the community survey the Advisory Council members thought it was important to first address utilization of the Meals on Wheels and SNAP benefits by determining why they are underutilized and focus on raising awareness of the services available. In the Town Information section under goal one, it specifically addresses the need to increase outreach and education about these services.

Recommendation and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Support the Upper Kingdom Food Access food education committee to increase educational opportunities related to healthy food growing, purchase, storage and preparation.

Action Step 1: Connect with the food education committee and familiarize with their efforts.

Action Step 2: Consider participation in advocacy to local and state agencies and organizations, community outreach, for general support.

Inputs: Fresh Start Community Farm, Upper Kingdom Food Access committee, AARP VT, VT Department of Health

Lead: VT Department of Health

Indicator: At least one new age-friendly educational strategy, in Newport, is implemented, documented and evaluated.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2016

Domain 6: Housing

Current Conditions:

The majority of Newport residents over age 45 own their homes (89%), with most living in a single family home (77%). Ten percent rent, with 7% occupying shared housing or other accommodations. Less than 10% live in mobile homes or apartments. Importantly, more than a third will need to make some type of major repair or modification in order for them to continue to live there as long as possible. These changes include upgrades to bathrooms such as grab bars, handrails, higher toilets, or non-slip tile. Some will need to improve heating systems and other weatherization. There is a need for a medical emergency response system, improved access with a ramp, elevator or wider doorways and improved lighting. Renovations to put bedrooms, bathrooms, or kitchens on a first floor are other adaptations for age-friendly livability improvements.

The community survey found a most important feature for Newport residents is the availability of trustworthy, affordable and quality home repair contractors. Quickly following in importance is available home repair services for low-income and older adults. Valued features include affordable housing options for varying income levels, well-maintained and safe low-income housing, seasonal services such as lawn care and snow removal, and homes with easily accessible entrances, wide doorways, grab bars, and first floor bathrooms and bedrooms.

Housing is a central component of livability. Although monthly housing costs in Newport are affordable at \$746 per month compared to the median US cost at \$999 per month (this includes taxes, rent, mortgage fees, and utilities), there is a lack of housing options for a range of low – and moderate-income residents⁹.

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

RuralEdge is a rural regional housing non-profit organization, committed to breaking the cycle of poverty in the region's communities. RuralEdge accomplishes this by providing caring and quality housing and community development, property management, financial services, and education in order to attain economic, social and environmental sustainability. In downtown Newport, the agency owns and manages three properties for people who are over 60 years-old and people with disabilities, as well as two multi-family properties. RuralEdge, in partnership with other organizations, also operates the award-winning Support and Services at Home (SASH) program for the Northeast Kingdom.

Memphremagog Rentals provides approximately 400 rental units throughout the Northeast Kingdom, with a large number available in Newport. Most units are affordable residential housing, with a small amount of commercial units.

⁹ Source: *Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation and the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2012 National Housing Preservation Database.*

Opportunities:

The largest opportunity for age-friendly impact, according to the community survey, is a home repair service for low-income and older adults, also addressed in the Social Isolation domain. The need for seasonal services is noted, also addressed in Social Isolation. Affordable, well-maintained and safe low-income housing are also large gaps addressed in this domain.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Increase senior housing with services in Newport and immediately surrounding area.

Action Step 1: Document and evaluate current and potential sites that include: access to transit/services, access to parks, social integration/community building (e.g., co-located with family housing), and opportunities for adaptive reuse or mixed use.

Action Step 2: Conduct feasibility studies.

Action Step 3: Research, document and evaluate funding sources for increasing a range of age-friendly housing options.

Action Step 4: Identify type and scope of supportive services to be provided.

Inputs: RuralEdge, NVDA, VT Housing and Finance Agency (Low Income Housing Tax Credit program), North Country Hospital, NEK Council on Aging

Lead: RuralEdge

Indicator: Site(s) and funding secured for new housing units.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2020

Goal 2: Upgrade existing single family homes using Housing Quality Standards¹⁰ and other livability upgrades through loans and grants.

Action Step 1: Compile list of resources available.

Action Step 2: Create materials for distribution to investors, donors, and contractors.

Action Step 3: Prepare an outreach strategy for reaching community members (door to door, mailings, community meetings, etc.).

Inputs: USDA Rural Development, RuralEdge (Revolving Loan Fund), NVDA, NETO Weatherization, Efficiency Vermont, VT Center for Independent Living (VCIL)

Lead: RuralEdge

Indicator: At least 5 applications for upgrades received from home owners.

Timeframe: January - July 2016

Goal 3: Create a team to document and evaluate current housing stock needs.

Action Step 1: Create a diverse team concerned with creative age-friendly housing opportunities.

Action Step 2: Document and evaluate current housing stock strengths and needs, including community policies, i.e., current zoning.

¹⁰ HUD Guidelines: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/hudclips/guidebooks/7420.10G/7420g10GUID.pdf>

Action Step 3: Make recommendations to Newport City and developers for possible changes to permits, zoning, etc., that would enhance age-friendly, livable solutions for housing.

Inputs: NVDA, VT Housing and Finance Agency, RuralEdge, City of Newport, contractors and real estate developers

Lead: RuralEdge

Indicator: Comprehensive report that includes input and next steps from the diverse team providing inputs.

Timeframe: January 2016 - September 2016

Goal 4: Engage the community about alternative housing models (e.g., home sharing, village to village model, co-housing, and cooperative housing) at community events to enhance and expand the efforts of community leaders and agencies exploring viable alternative housing models for Newport.

Action Step 1: Participate in community events to share information, listen and learn from the community about alternative forms of age-friendly housing and livability features.

Action Step 2: Use unmanned listening posts to gather more input and insight from community members.

Inputs: NEK Council on Aging, RuralEdge, SASH, Cathedral Square Corporation Home Share program, referring agencies, realtors, Age Friendly Advisory Council, community members.

Lead: Design Committee NCRC, Age Friendly Community Advisory Council.

Indicator: Participation in least three community events. Document and evaluate options for next steps

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2016.

Domain 7: Caregiving

Current Conditions:

Informal caregiving of either aging relatives or relatives' children is common in the Newport area. A quarter (24%) of residents say they have provided care in the past (10%) or are currently providing care (14%). Those who have provided care at any point usually do so for immediate family members, typically parents or spouses/partners. Some provide care for friends, children, siblings, or other family members. A total of 44% provide care with the person living in their home. The length of time a person provides care ranges, with most (59%) providing care for at least three years and a quarter for at least 10 years. The majority of caregivers spend 20 hours or less per week providing care (72%), with a few (8%) spending 40 hours or more per week.

Most caregivers have had to make changes to their lives in order to provide care, including changing a work schedule or taking time off (52%), make changes to their home (35%), use personal savings (32%), stop working, take a leave of absence, or move from full-time to part-

time work (23%). Six percent have had to move into another home. Newport residents ranked assistance with accurate medical information and assistance with government forms as two most helpful resources for caregivers. Information for caregiver resources, assistance with understanding medical mills, transportation assistance, respite, and caregiver support groups are also important.

Of the Newport survey respondents, 54% were grandparents and a quarter help with daily responsibilities of caring for grandchildren. Most of these would find information on fun activities to do with grandchildren helpful, along with information on talking to their grandchildren about important issues, with financial and legal resources for those raising grandchildren most helpful. Support groups, referral services, and assistance with connecting with grandchildren on social media were also valued.

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

The Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging offers programs and support for two groups of caregivers: family members of an aging adult who requires care, and grandparents and other relatives over age 55 who are raising a relatives' child. Support includes a workshop series for relatives caring for a family member with dementia and respite grants.

Family caregiver support includes, and not limited to:

- Three different respite grants
- One-on-one coaching
- At-home training and support for dementia caregivers
- Caregiver classes

Caregiver classes offered include:

- *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, a workshop series for family caregivers in which participants learn how to take care of themselves, lower stress, communicate effectively, solve problems, set goals, and reduce feelings of depression, anger, and/or guilt
- *Best Friends™ Approach to Alzheimer's Care* workshops for family and professional caregivers caring for a person with dementia
- Alzheimer's Association programs sponsored by the NEK Council on Aging

The Vermont Support and Services at Home (SASH), an innovative program nationally recognized as a model for caregiving, works to help older adults stay in their home. The program provides personal coordinated care primarily for adults over 65 to enable them to continue to live safely and comfortably at home. Services include:

- Preventative health care and services coordination
- Self-management education and coaching, particularly related to chronic conditions such as diabetes and arthritis
- Transitions support after a hospital, nursing home, or short-term rehab facility stay

In addition, the Alzheimer's Association provides a caregiver support group. A Kinship Caregiver Support Group is also available, along with respite grants and support for kinship caregivers.

Opportunities:

Support is available for caregivers in the Newport region, though coordination is needed, as navigating the various agencies can be overwhelming. Education about caregiver abuse is also needed for the medical community, other health professionals and the community at large.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Increase case management for elders experiencing caregiver abuse, family caregiver abuse and financial abuse using a restorative approach.

Action Step 1: Working with partners, choose an approach: a) restorative justice training for current case managers and care coordinators or b) hire an individual to pilot this case management model in Orleans County.

Action Step 2: Research opportunities and obtain funding for case manager work and community outreach and education.

Action Step 3: Clearly define the model and the role of the case manager.

Action Step 4: Begin providing recommendations about case management to existing caregiver support groups, classes, respite grants and other support services.

Action Step 5: Outreach to the community including hospitals, banks, and agencies to educate about services and set up referrals.

Inputs: Orleans County Restorative Justice Center, NEK Council on Aging, SASH, North Country Hospital, Northeast Kingdom Human Services

Lead: Orleans County Restorative Justice Center

Indicator: Program begins receiving referrals.

Timeframe: January 2016 - October 2016

Goal 2: Increase physician and professional recommendations for current caregiver support and educational offerings.

Action Step 1: Assess and improve current outreach materials on current caregiver support and educational offerings.

Action Step 2: Research and obtain additional funding for outreach and materials.

Action Step 3: Meet with medical and other professionals who interact with family caregivers and ask them to recommend caregiver support offerings on a regular basis.

Action Step 4: Share promotional materials at community meetings and seek professional recommendations to family caregivers.

Inputs: NEK Council on Aging, Alzheimer's Association, medical providers, Vermont 211, SASH, AARP, NKHS,

Lead: NEK Council on Aging

Indicator: Number of people registering for NEK Council on Aging's caregiver education programs increases by 15%.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2016

Domain 8: Social Participation

Social Inclusion, Education Opportunities, and Volunteering

Current Conditions:

According to the 2014 Community Survey, most residents over age 45 interact with friends and neighbors several times a week. A large percentage (69%) go to stores to socialize with others, with restaurants also being popular with 59%. About a third socialize at church, with local clubs, parks, libraries, and senior centers also on the list. About one in ten do not get out to socialize. Over half (56%) say they do not participate in any continuing education classes, with 17% making use of workplace offerings and 12% going online. Ten percent take classes on the college level, with other sources of continuing education including the faith community, North Country Career Center, local organizations and businesses, community or senior centers, and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Most important to Newport residents is affordability of activities for all residents. Activities with accurate and widely publicized information that offer senior discounts and include a variety of ages are sought after.

Volunteering and civic engagement is also important to residents, with the most important feature being transportation to and from volunteer activities if needed. Easy to find information on local volunteer opportunities, a range of activities to choose from, opportunities for older adults to participate in decision making bodies and volunteer training opportunities are all features Newport residents found important.

Current Age-Friendly Projects:

Fresh Start Community Farm, Newport's community garden network, works with The Meeting Place on Second Street in Newport and other aging neighbors with the Adopt-A-Grandparent program, matching elders with neighborhood kids over the summer months to trade gardening wisdom with youngster's energy. Several locations of the gardens have a combination of older community members as well as students from the North Country Career Center planting, weeding and harvesting vegetables. In addition, the gardens provide a welcoming environment to all during the growing season, gardeners or not.

The Forever Young Club in Newport is a membership organization that provides a lunch for seniors and the community on Wednesdays at the Newport Municipal Building. Cornucopia, a program run by Umbrella, provides lunch for seniors and the community on Fridays, as well as cooking Meals on Wheels for the Newport area. Other senior meal sites in the area include Barton, Derby, Glover, Island Pond, North Troy, and Orleans. The Memphremagog Art's Center and the 99 are art galleries and community centers open to the community and offer a variety of classes and programs open to all. The NEK Council on Aging offers a senior companionship program for seniors needing assistance with simple activities of daily living and companionship.

Other examples of opportunities for the public to participate in the community include the following but not limited to: Community Commons is a monthly discussion forum open to the community to discuss any topic of interest to the community. The event is held at the Gateway Center on the third Wednesday of each month from 6-8 pm, with an optional potluck. The

Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS) hosts “Wacky Wednesdays” on Wednesdays from 1 – 3 pm at the Learning Center at One Main Street, which is an open computer program and device question and discussion hour for anyone who has questions beyond the basics. In addition, NEKLS has a variety of adult education classes for anyone wanting to broaden their knowledge base, as well as offering GED and high school completion programs. The Community College of Vermont offers senior citizens the opportunity to enroll in free courses.

Opportunities:

A range of opportunities exists in this domain, including a variety of activities for older adults, conveniently located venues and transportation, as well as activities that are affordable and geared toward older adults.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

Goal 1: Intentionally coordinate a clearinghouse of handyman-type services (i.e. stacking wood, shoveling snow, dog-watching, odd jobs, etc.) similar to Angie’s List.

Action Step 1: Set up a team to coordinate outreach to agencies and neighborhood community members to research trusted people to provide services.

Action Step 2: Research and develop clearinghouse. Utilize Front Porch Forum, Facebook, traditional multi-media channels and community word of mouth.

Action Step 3: Develop clearinghouse and distribute information to the community using Front Porch Forum and other forums.

Inputs: NEKLS, and The 99 Gallery

Lead: NEKLS

Indicator: Clearinghouse developed and information distributed.

Timeframe: January 2016 - December 2016

Goal 2: Maintain strong public and civic participation in community discussion forums.

Action Step 1: Work to promote and publicize the opportunities available to the public to engage in community discussions held by various community, civic and faith-based groups.

Inputs: Orleans County Restorative Justice Center, AARP VT, NEKLS, Community National Bank, and the City of Newport.

Lead: Orleans County Restorative Justice Center

Indicator: Increase in participation in monthly community meetings.

Timeframe: Indefinite

Conclusion

The Newport Advisory Council's Age-Friendly Action Plan includes recommended goals with action steps identified with groups and particular organizations who are taking the lead on the implementation of the recommended goal. The Work Plan that will be developed will map out the goals which will be updated as the status of each implementation action item is addressed. Both the Work Plan and the Age-Friendly Action Plan are designed to be an active, living document. The Plan will be updated accordingly as priorities change, action items are addressed, and new stakeholders are brought to the table, and as new recommendations are added. The Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that goals are being met and to discuss any barriers or opportunities that have come into play over the last year. The annual review will also allow the Advisory Council to measure success and to help document Age-Friendly progress over the course of the five-year designation period.

ⁱ Vermont Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Survey Data:
<http://healthvermont.gov/hv2020/IA/PhysicalActivity/HSA/atlas.html>