WHERE WE LIVE
COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES
100+ INSPIRING IDEAS FROM AMERICA'S MAYORS

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INTRODUCTION

WHERE WE LIVE influences who we become. So let me tell you a bit about where I have lived and how it has influenced me and inspired me to write this book.

I grew up in a northern New Jersey suburb where cities were places to go for special occasions. To me, New York City was magical—diverse, noisy, energetic. I remember taking my first trip to Yankee Stadium and thinking it was so green and beautiful. I enjoyed musicals and plays on Broadway, and I visited museums where I could see things I had dreamed or read about.

Also nearby was Newark, New Jersey, where my mother worked for an insurance company. To me, an avid reader, that city’s grandeur was its outstanding public library that placed no limit on the number of books you could check out.

These experiences provide the backdrop for my lifelong interest in cities.

Then in the summer of 1969, two years after the nationally reported devastating riots in Newark, I interned at the Greater Newark Urban Coalition. There I saw mayors and other elected officials solving real problems—vexing though they were—and seeking ideas and solutions. My summer of researching, fact-checking, and observing cemented my interest in cities. I returned to college and constructed my undergraduate and graduate degrees around urban studies. I was set on a path as a city planner—a discipline that combines policy with practicality and politics. Alas, a recession occurred on my way to that career goal and planning jobs were tough to find. I ended up in Washington, DC, where I worked for the federal government in a series of jobs focused on legislation and regulatory policy on Capitol Hill and in government agencies. In 2000, after a long federal career, I took a job at AARP. There, I was struck by three factors about people and their communities:

1. **People place a deep importance on the community they call home.**

   The Silent Generation (people born between the mid 1920s and early 1940s) focuses on the country and the world, according to AARP research. By contrast, later generations of Americans center on “me, my family, and my community.” While it doesn’t mean national issues aren’t important, it does mean that people’s interests and energies are more likely focused close to home.

2. **There’s strong belief in the collective good at the community level.**

   This fact was revealed when AARP asked its members whether they had supported or would support increased funding for public schools even if they had no children in the schools. The majority answered “yes.” That’s a powerful sense of legacy.

3. **Community efforts are almost always intergenerational and can be apolitical.**

   I discovered this through a series of visits I made to some of AARP’s state offices, where I met with volunteers and members. We talked about Medicare and Social Security, but we also talked about local transportation and parks and volunteering. Their attention was on where they lived. They were generally optimistic that whatever community improvements were needed could and would be done, and that solutions would be good for all generations.

COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES

As I began looking at demographic trends, I realized that one of the compelling challenges for mayors and other leaders throughout the country—particularly those in cities and towns—would be to construct communities that are livable for residents young, old, and in between. At AARP, we call these places “communities for all ages” or “livable communities.”

We recognize that work on “livability” will grow in importance as the nation’s population continues to age, thanks to the boomer population (people born from 1946 to 1964) and the enormous millennial generation (born between the early 1980s and early 2000s).

The U.S. population numbers almost 46 million people age 65 and older today, with 73 million projected by 2030. By then, fully one out of every five people will be 65 and older. According to U.S. Census projections, all 50 states will see an increase in the percentage of their 65-plus population.

This reality is borne out in our cities. Today, the 20 largest metro areas are home to almost 17 million people 65 and older. From 2010 to 2020, Los Angeles’s 65-and-older population is projected to increase 38 percent, Houston’s by 69 percent and New York’s by 32 percent. Some cities that already have older populations such as Prescott, Arizona, will grow 35
percent, with 30 percent of the city’s population 65 and older. Similarly, Asheville, North Carolina, will see a 37-percent increase, with 23 percent of residents 65 and older.

The demographics within that older population are also changing. From 2010 to 2050 the percent of Hispanics, African Americans or Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders age 65 and older will increase 597 percent, to more than 57 million, compared to just a 96 percent increase in the white population age 65 and older. At the same time, the total population age 85 or older will increase 231 percent to more than 19 million.

While we know the demographic trends, the people in these generations will also reshape the world of aging. For instance, boomers are more active than their parents were at the same ages and they have different demands for their communities. The millennials will likely live longer than their parents and are already changing the country. With the boomers, millennials and Gen Xers (born from the early 1960s to the early 1980s), there will be more people who came of age in the “do-it-yourself” era.

An aging population will likely place demands on local governments. When we take a step back, we see the wants and needs of the various generations are often similar.

Boomers and millennials, for instance, have similar preferences for walkable neighborhoods that include a variety of entertainment options, shopping and amenities, according to the Urban Land Institute. Both generations say they want to be near shops and restaurants and want easy access to public transportation. They prefer to live where there’s a variety of housing options and would move into a smaller home for a shorter commute.

Communities are at the center of this demographic shift, and they’re at the center of the shift in what people want, need and demand.

With these trends, I realized that AARP was in a unique position to help communities prepare. While headquartered in Washington, DC, AARP also has hundreds of employees and thousands of volunteers staffing offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. So in 2006 we began working on these issues with a pilot in two states: Vermont and Hawaii. Based on the response from our members and the success of the work, we made livable communities a key part of our social mission agenda.

Over the years, the work has grown as our staff and volunteers have engaged more and more. We have all been struck by the compelling and the obvious: Volunteers might eschew getting involved in a big national issue, but they don’t hesitate to pitch in to clean up a local playground or collect cans of food for the homeless in their neighborhood.

LOCAL LEADERS AS THE CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

While many people have very little trust and faith in the leaders they send to Washington, DC, most have abiding confidence in their local elected officials. According to Gallup, 70 percent of people trust their local government to make decisions versus 32 percent who trust Congress. This is because people want results—and town and city mayors just get things done.

One AARP member said to me that if Congress was in charge of snow removal, it would never happen. Legislators would debate whether the snow was actually snow. They would state their views on climate change, the measure would get filibustered, and the snow would never be plowed. By contrast, mayors jump to action, doing everything they can to get their streets clear.

So it isn’t surprising that as the country talks the talk about dealing with the impact of demographic changes, mayors are among the first to effectively address those changes.

Mayors and other community leaders don’t see the changing population just in charts and graphs or in the appendix of a budget document, like many in Washington, DC, do. Local leaders see the shifts every day in their neighborhoods, their kids’ schools and their community events. As mayors take action, they approach the situation with creativity and energy.

Where do these ideas come from? Everywhere. I’ve found tremendous entrepreneurial problem-solving in communities, and good ideas can emerge from residents getting together. Solutions can come from knowing what another city did. Many strategies come directly from the mayors themselves, based on what they see as they travel around their cities.

Continued
As my team and I began the search for examples of the actions mayors are taking to improve their communities, I was struck by the variety of efforts we found. Step by step, issue by issue, these mayors are making their communities places where residents of all ages can thrive.

Transportation, parks and public spaces, unemployment and entrepreneurship: After looking across a broad span of actions that mayors are tackling, we noticed some common triggers that motivate leaders to take action.

▸ A personal connection to an issue: As you’ll read in this book, some mayors’ experiences with weight loss inspired citywide initiatives. A mayor who is an avid cyclist invited constituents to join her for Rolling Town Halls. Personal commitments to reducing the carbon footprint have led to initiatives toward the same goal.

▸ Compelling data that identifies a problem: Some of the examples I highlight include launching efforts after seeing scientific data about wildlife decline, high obesity rates, a lack of affordable housing or low test scores by students.

▸ Economic development needs and budgetary realities: Some towns, for example, have adopted environmentally sustainable policies to save money and others have worked to revitalize neighborhoods to achieve the economic potential of communities.

▸ External funding sources: Federal and state grants and money from community foundations—such as the John T. Gorman Foundation in Maine, the Tufts Health Plan Foundation in Massachusetts and Kaiser Permanente in Hawaii—have helped communities achieve needed change.

▸ Nationwide initiatives: A national program can provide a framework for local leaders. For example, some mayors have implemented the national Climate Action Plan, or adopted Vision Zero agendas (a global effort to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries due to vehicular causes). Similarly, some leaders have leveraged national prizes and networks to drive their agendas, including through the Rockefeller Foundation’s Resilient Cities program, Smart Cities, and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities (aarp.org/agefriendly). AARP’s network is part of the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, which has participating communities in more than 20 nations.

▸ Community input and political imperatives: In many of the cases featured in this book, mayors heard from residents on issues of importance and built plans from there.

Above all, though, it’s the ideas—and the mayors who have or implement them—that create real changes and improve communities for older adults and people of all ages.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS—AND ISN’T
At AARP, we are focused on keeping the flow of ideas moving to help provide opportunities and innovation. While AARP’s work centers on people ages 50 and older, we are committed to creating communities that are livable for people of all ages. We recognize that positive community changes benefit people across all ages and, since no community is the same, there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

With that in mind, this book has a simple premise: to highlight the interesting and inventive ideas that mayors have implemented and by doing so, to inspire even more creativity and sharing of practices to help spur even more action.

Where We Live: Communities for All Ages details more than 100 initiatives that mayors have launched to improve their communities, respond to pressing issues and build partnerships.

This collection is not an academic study of planning, nor is it an academic analysis or a complete listing of ideas and smart solutions. Rather, this guide provides an overview of some of the interesting strategies that have worked and can be replicated or adapted in other places.

While many community leaders—including town planners, city council members, county commissioners and town managers—do wonderful work, I have chosen mayors as the focus for this project.

Each example is discussed within eight different topics: housing, transportation, environment, health, engagement, opportunity, culture and neighborhoods.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
I am more than certain that the 100+ ideas shared in this book are just the tip of the iceberg of the creativity in mayors’ offices across the country. My hope is that sharing the ideas in this book will jar loose even more examples and ideas of how we can make our cities and towns more livable. Please let me hear from you and...
learn about more of the great work that is happening across the country. If you have an idea or a project you think should be highlighted, email us at livable@aarp.org so we can add it to our collection of interesting, inspired and practical ideas from America's mayors.

It’s also my wish that as you read Where We Live: Communities for All Ages, you’ll see the creative ideas that are out there and then look at your community to where you can do something big or small to improve the community for the children, parents and grandparents who live there.

Keep up with our growing list of innovative ideas by visiting the award-winning AARP Livable Communities website at aarp.org/livable.

—Nancy LeaMond
AARP Executive Vice President of Community, State and National Affairs

Note: This book celebrates innovative ideas across the country, although they may not all be supported by AARP.

AARP TOOL KIT FOR CREATING GREAT COMMUNITIES

AARP offers numerous resources to help communities become great places for people of all ages. The award-winning AARP Livable Communities website at AARP.org/livable is the entryway to AARP’s suite of livable communities content and materials. You’ll find these resources, and much more:

- **AARP HomeFit Guide**: aarp.org/homefit
  *(English and Spanish)*: Smart solutions for making a home a “lifelong home” that’s comfortable, safe and a great fit.

- **AARP Imagining Livability Design Collection**: aarp.org/livability-design: A visual portfolio of tools and transformations for creating age-friendly places.

- **AARP Livable Communities A-Z Archives**: aarp.org/livable-archives: Offers lists and links to reports, action plans, studies and articles about housing, transportation, Complete Streets, walkability, livability, age-friendly places and more.

- **AARP Livability Economy Report**: aarp.org/livability-economy: A report showing how livability initiatives contribute to improved economic performance and a more vibrant, desirable and competitive environment for housing and commercial investment.

- **AARP Livability Index**: aarp.org/livabilityindex: Find the “livability score” of communities and places nationwide by entering an address.

- **AARP Livable Communities Policy**: aarp.org/livable-policy: Policies and research from the AARP Public Policy Institute address issues including land use, housing and transportation—all of which facilitate aging in place.

- **AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities**: aarp.org/agefriendly and aarp.org/agefriendly-member-list: A list of current members and a guide to how your community can join this World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities-affiliated program.

- Subscribe to our free award-winning AARP Livable Communities e-newsletter by visiting aarp.org/livable-newsletter.
- Follow us on Twitter @AARPLivable.
- Email us at livable@aarp.org.
HOUSING
SAFE, 
AFFORDABLE, 
ACCESSIBLE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Where we live—our homes—is a fundamental building block for everything from our jobs and schools to where we shop and socialize with friends and family.
WHERE WE LIVE

TAKEAWAYS

▸ Data-driven assessments are a critical foundation for comprehensive approaches. There is no quick fix to an affordable housing crunch. Effective policies are grounded in a thorough understanding of local housing and labor markets as well as population trends.

▸ Solutions require partnerships. Successful strategies balance government-sponsored and market-based alternatives and leverage the expertise and ideas of diverse stakeholders—from banks and builders to housing experts and community advocates.

▸ Small investments can reap big dividends. For instance, in-home services and home modifications—such as installing a zero-step entrance, a frameless shower, secure stair railings and grab bars—can help older residents live independently and safely in their homes.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES provide a range of housing options so people of all ages, incomes and abilities can live in a quality neighborhood and stay in their homes as long as they can.

Close to 90 percent of people over age 65 want to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible, according to a report by the AARP Public Policy Institute and the National Conference of State Legislatures. Supporting this goal requires reimagining everything from residential home design features to how housing is integrated into the community. Affordable housing is also critical because people’s financial stability is easily threatened by increases in rent, taxes or the cost of major home repairs.

Housing affordability and access have cross-generational benefits as well. Age-friendly upgrades can help people of all ages—parents with strollers, teens using crutches after a sports injury, or family caregivers supporting older relatives—and are investments for future generations. Housing in walkable places creates vibrant communities for young and old, and making affordable housing more available helps low- and middle-income individuals and families make ends meet.

Mayors across the country have recognized how important a person’s home is and they are taking actions to help people of all ages live in places that are safe, affordable and accessible. This chapter includes some of those examples.
“To create a thriving, healthy and innovative city, we must work harder to ensure that everyone who wants to live here is able to. ...Boston 2030 is more than just a thoughtful plan; it is a true blueprint for action.”

—Marty Walsh, mayor, Boston, Massachusetts
BOSTON GAINED more than 28,000 new residents in the first decade of the 21st century, and data indicates that growth will continue. The Boston’s Metropolitan Area Planning Council estimates an influx of more than 91,000 people, some 49,000 households, with the population exceeding 700,000 by 2030. The council’s analysis projects a 13 percent increase in Boston’s workforce. And as baby boomers start to retire, residents older than 65 will head one-fifth of Boston households; an estimated 17,500 of these 22,500 households will decide to stay in their homes as they age. The council also looked at the housing needs of low-income residents and the impact of students of the city’s colleges and universities.

To keep pace with this population boom, Mayor Marty Walsh is championing Boston 2030, which aims to produce 53,000 new housing units: 44,000 new units appropriate for working Bostonians, 5,000 units for older residents, and 4,000 units to help stabilize rents and prices to keep housing affordable. In addition, the city will partner with colleges and universities to construct 16,000 new dorm beds to decrease the number of students in the private rental market.

Each aspect of the plan includes detailed action steps such as providing incentives to private builders, streamlining permitting, using surplus city land for new development, preserving existing low-income housing, negotiating with building trades to lower costs, and providing tools and resources to help Bostonians rent, buy and stay in their homes.

The city’s Inclusionary Development Policy, which requires developers to construct or fund affordable units alongside market-rate projects, is gaining traction. And the city’s Office of Housing Stability is developing new resources to support residents of rental apartments that are converted to condos.

Boston joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.
New York City has long been one of the most expensive housing markets in the country— and the world. By implementing a 10-year plan designed to create 200,000 affordable housing units across the city’s five boroughs, Mayor Bill de Blasio is trying to make it easier for low- and middle-income residents to stay in the Big Apple. His Housing New York project mobilizes the full spectrum of city government: 50 initiatives involve 13 different agencies and input from more than 200 stakeholders. Programs targeting specific segments of New York’s population are under way, including a $350 million program to finance 10,000 affordable housing units for low-income seniors and the development of 150 new live/work spaces for artists. De Blasio’s commitment to expanding access to affordable housing is in keeping with New York’s broader focus of supporting its older residents.

New York City joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.
Oakland, California
Mayor Libby Schaaf (2015–)
Housing Equity Roadmap

As Oakland’s housing market heats up, Mayor Libby Schaaf is making sure longtime residents aren’t left out in the cold. With an influx of new businesses and residents, Oakland is the nation’s sixth most expensive rental market—a reality that adds significant stress to the budgets of low-income residents. To address this problem, Schaaf is putting the weight of the mayor’s office behind the 41 actions outlined in the city’s Housing Action Plan, which was born out of the Housing Cabinet that Schaaf established less than one year into her term. The plan aims to protect 17,000 existing households from displacement and build 17,000 new units for residents at all income levels over the next eight years. To protect renters, Schaaf launched a new Safe Housing Inspection Program. This joint effort of the city’s fire and planning departments steps up the inspection of rental units and works with landlords to make needed repairs. Schaaf has also called on the city council to increase funding for tenant outreach and assistance to help those facing eviction or displacement.

Salt Lake City, Utah
Former Mayor Ralph Becker (2008–2016)
5,000 Doors

During Ralph Becker’s two terms as mayor, the data on housing affordability in Salt Lake City was clear—and disturbing. Home prices were skyrocketing. Fully one-quarter of the city’s renters devoted more than half their income to housing costs. These startling numbers were the impetus for Becker’s 5,000 Doors initiative, a five-year plan to add 5,000 new housing units for low-wage workers, middle-income families, older adults on fixed incomes and people with disabilities. Based on a thorough data-driven assessment, 5,000 Doors focuses equally on units for low-income renters and expanding home ownership opportunities for low- and middle-income residents. But the vision for the program extends much further. By involving stakeholders—including local banks, developers and community groups—the program kick-started an ongoing conversation and commitment to keep housing affordable through mixed-income development across the city.

Salt Lake City joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.
WHERE WE LIVE | HOUSING

San Diego, California (2014– )
Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer
HERO Program

Thousands of San Diego residents are making home improvements that lower their utility bills, thanks to Mayor Kevin Faulconer and the city’s HERO (Home Energy Renovation Opportunity) Program. Launched in July 2014, HERO helps homeowners finance energy and water-saving renovations and equipment upgrades. No upfront cash is required to purchase and install products such as new windows and roofs, drought-tolerant landscaping and energy-efficient or renewable energy heating and cooling systems. Instead, HERO fully funds the upgrades, and homeowners repay the investment through special assessments on their property tax bills. Payment terms are flexible, and interest charges may be tax deductible. In just over 18 months, San Diegans have completed nearly 2,500 home improvement projects through the program. In addition to long-term savings on home utility bills, HERO also supports Faulconer’s sustainability goals. The city is on track to meet its 2035 residential retrofit goals as early as 2019, and the program has already reduced emissions by 74,000 tons and conserved nearly 240 million gallons of water.

San Diego is in San Diego County, which joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2016.

Schenectady, New York
Mayor Gary McCarthy (2011– )
HOMES (Home Ownership Made Easy Schenectady)

Mayor Gary McCarthy believes in the power of home ownership to improve quality of life. To promote this vision, McCarthy launched HOMES—Home Ownership Made Easy Schenectady—a comprehensive program that provides financial incentives and educational workshops to first-time homebuyers. HOMES also hosts open house events for city-owned properties that are for sale. To help longtime residents remain in their homes as they age, the city of Schenectady, in partnership with local charitable organizations, connects older residents to a range of in-home services.

Washington, DC
Mayor Muriel Bowser (2015– )
Genesis Intergenerational Community and Safe at Home

In November 2015, Mayor Muriel Bowser said “welcome home” to the residents of Genesis, a unique, affordable, intergenerational housing community in Washington, DC. Active, service-minded older residents are the foundation of the community, which also includes families transitioning from foster care and others interested in living in a uniquely supportive environment. Residents commit to being good neighbors through required community participation activities such as running errands, watching or tutoring a neighbor’s child or organizing community dinners and art classes. The 27-unit building was developed by the District in partnership with nonprofit housing developer Mi Casa, the Generations of Hope Development Corporation, Latin American Youth Centers and Vida Senior Centers. With the Safe at Home program, Bowser leverages city resources to help older residents stay in their homes by offering qualified residents up to $10,000 in grant funding to make home improvements that will reduce the risk of falls and eliminate barriers that limit mobility.

Washington, DC, joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.
Genesis Intergenerational Community
Washington, DC
TRANSPORTATION

CONVENIENT AND SAFE OPTIONS
People want to be able to get around town easily and safely, so helping them do that is often top of mind for mayors across the country.
WHERE WE LIVE

TAKEAWAYS

▸ Infrastructure improvements are still job #1.
Filling potholes and keeping sidewalks repaired have always been critical jobs for local government. Today, these basic services are an important foundation for building multimodal transportation systems that serve all ages. As Mayor Kevin Faulconer of San Diego puts it, “If you think driving over a pothole is bad, try hitting one on a bike.”

▸ Cars need to safely share the road with pedestrians and cyclists. More people walking and biking means local governments must rethink their approach to safety on the road. From dedicated bike lanes and improved crosswalks to re-engineered traffic signals and pedestrian-safety programs such as Vision Zero (a global effort to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries from vehicular causes), mayors are taking a holistic approach to safety.

▸ Investments in public transit help keep people moving.
Reliable, efficient and low-cost public transit options benefit residents of all ages. Older residents stay independent and engaged with their communities. Young people have more choices to get to school, jobs and recreational activities, and workers of all ages spend less time stuck in traffic.

FROM PUBLIC TRANSIT to bike lanes and walking paths that encourage outdoor exercise, livable communities provide a variety of transportation options to connect people to jobs, schools, stores, doctors and social activities.

Without these options, many residents are cut off from opportunities to work, socialize and maintain a daily routine. This is particularly true for older Americans. Driving becomes challenging as we age and walking gets more dangerous. Pedestrian fatality rates start increasing significantly at age 45, and by age 75 a person is more than twice as likely as a 16- to 20-year-old to die by being hit by a car, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The benefits of improved transportation options are cross-generational. Young people have more options to get to school, families can take public transit to museums or walk to a park and workers of all ages can easily commute to their jobs. And making streets safe for cyclists can boost the bike-to-work movement and exercise opportunities.

This chapter includes examples of how mayors across the country are transforming transportation systems with a focus on expanding transit options and making walking and biking easier and safer.
“If we want our city to grow and develop, we have to look at transportation.”

—Jean Stothert, mayor, Omaha, Nebraska
OMAHA IS BOOMING—and Mayor Jean Sto-thert doesn’t want that boom to end in gridlock. New developments are springing up in Omaha’s downtown and midtown business districts. Academic and medical centers are expanding. But even in a region known more for wide-open spaces than concrete canyons, a building boom means more people commuting and more traffic.

Enter BRT. After a lengthy review and comprehensive analysis, next-generation mass transit is coming to Omaha in the form of a Bus Rapid Transit system—identified by residents as the most useful and preferred transportation investment.

Metro Transit and the City of Omaha are overseeing the modern mass transit effort—Nebraska’s first—which aims to serve 2,700 passengers the day the eight-mile system opens in 2018. Likened to light rail on wheels, the system is designed to provide a safe, reliable and efficient way to travel between downtown Omaha, major shopping areas, the University of Nebraska-Omaha and the region’s medical centers. Each BRT station will incorporate modern, architectural-quality design as well as amenities such as Wi-Fi, mobile charging stations and art installations.

Connections to more traditional bus lines and a proposed Urban Circulator is designed to make the BRT part of a broader transit system that provides mobility options across the city for residents of all ages and from all walks of life. The system could be a particular boon to the area’s 50+ population and the 16 percent of households near the BRT that currently don’t have access to a car.

And even better news: While the economic boom drove the development of the BRT, the BRT, in turn, is expected to further boost Omaha’s economy, spurring new jobs and attracting new businesses and residents to the city.
Altamonte Springs, Florida  
Mayor Patricia Bates (2008- )  
**Uber Partnership**

In March 2016, Mayor Patricia Bates launched an innovative transportation program: subsidized Uber rides within city limits. The yearlong pilot will provide discounted rides as a way to integrate the on-demand ride service into the city’s transportation network and get cars off the road. With a $50,000 commitment, public funds will account for $300,000, while private sponsors will cover the rest. Bates hopes the program, in addition to providing residents of all ages with a new way to get around town, will encourage citizens to take public transit. Residents receive a 20 percent discount on any ride that begins and ends in the city and 25 percent if it starts or ends at a SunRail commuter station.

Atlanta, Georgia  
Mayor Kasim Reed (2010- )  
**Upgraded Walking and Biking Projects**

Mayor Kasim Reed created an advisory committee focused on identifying ways to make Atlanta more bike-friendly and walkable for residents of all ages—as part of his commitment (and his city’s membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities) to make Atlanta an age-friendly place to live, work and play. Efforts include introducing a bike-share system, appointing a “Chief Bicycle Officer” and making
extensive infrastructure improvements. With support from organizations including People for Bikes, Reed is emphasizing the benefits of bicycling—from being a great way to get fit to improving the city’s environment.

Atlanta joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.

Birmingham, Alabama
Mayor William A. Bell, Sr. (2010-)
Complete Streets

For Mayor William A. Bell, Sr., improving Birmingham’s transportation system is all about making connections—among neighborhoods, citizens and community institutions. The foundation for building these connections, both physical and social, is the city’s Complete Streets initiative to develop transportation infrastructure that includes walking, bicycling and transit options. Developed by the National Complete Streets Coalition, the Complete Streets framework aims to make roadways safe for all users. One of Birmingham’s major successes is the development of the Enon Ridge Multimodal Corridor and Civil Rights Heritage Trail. When finished, the 29-mile system will include new sidewalks and bike lanes linking the city’s major employers, schools, transit and neighborhoods. Signage along roads and walkways will offer the community and visitors information about Birmingham’s role in the civil rights movement. Funded in part through a federal grant, the project also generated significant financial support from local businesses, foundations and nonprofits.

Birmingham joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.

Burlington, Vermont
Mayor Miro Weinberger (2012-)
Go for Gold

For years running, Mayor Miro Weinberger has taken a high-profile multimodal tour of Burlington, highlighting his Go for Gold initiative to make Burlington a world-class walkable city. Launched in 2013, Go for Gold projects include the installation of more than 750 feet of new sidewalks and pedestrian crosswalks with rapid-flashing beacons along the city’s Pine Street corridor, aimed at making walking around town safer for everyone from older residents to young families. New bike and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure is in the works with the help of a broad-based partnership including the University of Vermont, AARP Vermont, the state Health Department, the county planning commission and local business and nonprofit organizations.
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Mayor Andy Berke (2013-)
**Safe Streets**

A safe street must be safe for everyone—from cars and cyclists to pedestrians, road workers and residents in wheelchairs. That’s Mayor Andy Berke’s mantra for Chattanooga’s participation in the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Mayor’s Challenge. With the effort still in its early stages, Chattanooga has passed a Complete Streets ordinance to guide how the city designs, builds and improves its roads and transportation infrastructure. Citizen engagement is an important component, with three action teams focusing on neighborhoods, results and safety. Overall, the city aims to get people out of their cars by creating more pedestrian and bike-friendly transit networks and improving traffic laws.

Clarksville, Tennessee
Mayor Kim McMillan (2011-)
**nMotion 2015**

Mayor Kim McMillan’s step-by-step approach to reducing traffic includes a range of options to get commuters out of their cars and builds a regional effort to benefit all residents. The city’s successful van pool service, operated in coordination with the Middle Tennessee Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), paved the way for expanded commuter bus service and a study of potential rail service between Clarksville and Nashville. As chair of the RTA, McMillan is spearheading the region’s nMotion 2015 initiative to expand and improve affordable, accessible public transit options. In July 2015, the program launched an ambitious public engagement effort to solicit feedback and plan the region’s transportation future. More options mean shorter commute times and higher productivity for workers, easier access to education and job opportunities for the area’s young people and access to services and social activities for retirees.
Jersey City, New Jersey
Mayor Steven Fulop (2013- )
Bike Share

Thanks to Mayor Steven Fulop, Jersey City residents have a new way to move around town and get across the river to the Big Apple. In partnership with community leaders, Fulop developed and expanded a bike-share program that connects with New York’s 6,000 bike-share system. To Fulop, making the city bike-friendlier is an economic and social priority that gives residents more options to connect with family and friends in New York City as well as explore a wider range of cultural and professional options. Over time, the city plans to supply 350 new bicycles to the bike-sharing program, providing an environmentally friendly travel and recreation option for residents.

Los Angeles, California
Mayor Eric Garcetti (2013- )
Driverless Cars

Mayor Eric Garcetti has a vision: automated, driverless cars that give residents of all ages greater access to safe, convenient and affordable transportation. While the state department of motor vehicles develops appropriate regulations, Garcetti is working with UCLA to make its Westwood neighborhood a pilot location for this futuristic program. The city’s investment in rail and dedicated rapid bus lanes lay the groundwork for a future where residents—from students and young professionals to downsizing empty nesters and retirees—can move from place to place using a driverless ride-sharing system. The city is also partnering with companies such as Xerox to create a one-stop app for multimodal transportation options, making ordering a car, taxi, bicycle or driverless car and coordinating bus or rail travel as simple as ordering a pizza.

Los Angeles joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2016.
Macon-Bibb, Georgia
Mayor Robert Reichert (2007- )
Second Street Corridor

Mayor Robert Reichert has an optimistic vision for downtown Macon-Bibb as a vibrant walkable and bikable urban center. Construction crews have been busy since 2014 making that vision a reality. The multiphase project is transforming Second Street from four travel lanes plus on-street parallel parking to a more pedestrian, bike- and transit-friendly configuration of two travel lanes with bike lanes, reverse angle parking and improved sidewalks complete with shade trees and new benches. Nearby, a pedestrian bridge will connect multiunit housing with the local university campus, and the city is exploring a state-of-the-art electric bus system designed to make it easier for residents of all ages to get around town and connect with regional transit systems.

Macon-Bibb joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.

New York City, New York
Mayor Bill de Blasio (2014- )
Vision Zero

Mayor Bill de Blasio’s take on Vision Zero, which he launched in 2014, already appears to be saving lives. According to data released by his office about roadway fatalities and injuries, 2015 was the safest year in New York City history. The comprehensive initiative stepped up enforcement of traffic laws, improved coordination between local police and transportation officials and invested in infrastructure improvements such as new crosswalks and traffic signals and improved street lighting and signage. Vision Zero builds on a broader commitment—established in coordination with the New York Academy of Medicine and then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2010—to make New York an age-friendly city and improve safety for older citizens.

New York City joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.
Phoenix, Arizona  
Mayor Greg Stanton (2012– )  
**MultiModal Transportation**

Mayor Greg Stanton is leading his city to a more livable future with expanded transportation options for residents of all ages as the centerpiece. A light rail system introduced in 2008 reached its projected 2020 ridership target six years early, and a bike-share program launched in 2014 attracted more than 2,000 members in its first four months. The latest success is voter approval of a dedicated sales tax increase that will pay for a 42-mile expansion of the light rail system as well as additional bus routes and road improvements. This multimodal approach is designed to help Phoenix residents get to jobs, schools, health services and cultural and social activities without getting behind the wheel—a bonus for young and old alike.

San Diego, California  
Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer (2014– )  
**Fixing Roadways for All**

“If you think driving over a pothole is bad, try hitting one on a bike.” So says Mayor Kevin Faulconer, an avid cyclist—and an avid supporter of making his city more livable through infrastructure improvements that make it easier and safer for residents of all ages to get around. Repairs include repaving, filling potholes and improving efforts to track road conditions with a focus on bikers. This kind of simple infrastructure maintenance has a significant impact as citizens find navigating their communities on two wheels safer and more enjoyable.

*San Diego is in San Diego County, which joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2016.*
San Francisco, California
Mayor Edwin Lee (2011- )
**Vision Zero**

If you’re going to encourage residents to walk or bike instead of drive, you need to make sure they can do so safely. That’s the impetus behind Mayor Edwin Lee’s commitment to Vision Zero—achieving zero pedestrian deaths by 2024. To kick-start the program that launched in 2014, Lee set a target of completing 24 projects in 24 months—a goal that was met three months early. These projects include implementing turn restrictions on a busy section of downtown Market Street, installing painted safety zones and high-visibility crosswalks, modifying traffic signal timing and removing obstructions that impaired visibility at targeted intersections. The improvements are aimed at helping all San Franciscans—from students and workers, to parents with small children and older residents who walk or use transit instead of driving—get around the city.

*San Francisco joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.*

Seattle, Washington
Mayor Ed Murray (2014- )
**Vision Zero**

Mayor Ed Murray’s approach to Vision Zero adds a creative element to the global program by rewarding people for traveling safely, whether walking, biking or driving. A parent who drops off children in a designated safety zone, for example, could be eligible for a $5 gift card. This positive incentive program supplements more traditional efforts to make roads safer for all travelers that include lowering speed limits, redesigning intersections and changing traffic signal timing.
Utica, New York
Mayor Robert Palmieri (2011-)
**Sidewalk Improvement Program**

Thanks to improvements in the local economy, Mayor Robert Palmieri, in partnership with the Utica Common Council, was able to reinstate the city’s Sidewalk Improvement Program in 2015 after a three-year lapse. Through the program, the city covers up to half of property owners’ costs to repair the sidewalks in front of their homes or businesses. The improvements are aimed at enhancing Utica’s walkability and making the city clean and safe.

West Hartford, Connecticut
Former Mayor Robert Scott Slifka (2004-2016)
**ITNCentralCT**

Mayor Robert Scott Slifka’s initiatives demonstrate his commitment to creating accessible and affordable transportation options for all citizens. He started by funding local organizations to brainstorm new approaches for his city. One successful program launched as a result of this effort is ITNCentralCT, an independent nonprofit agency that provides 24-hour transportation to residents who are 60+ and those who have visual impairments. Delivering free rides since 2009, ITNCentralCT works in coordination with community and social service organizations to make sure that these residents can get where they need to go.
ENVIRONMENT

FRESH AIR, CLEAN WATER AND OPEN SPACES
Having fresh air to breathe, clean water to drink and open spaces to enjoy are fundamental for a population to thrive.
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES maintain a healthy environment for people today and generations to come. And what’s good for individuals can also be good for the environment.

In the 21st century, protecting and preserving natural resources doesn’t need to take a backseat to other priorities. Instead, being mindful of environmental impacts supports a range of goals—from boosting local economies to improving public health. Expanding and preserving parks and open spaces create opportunities for physical activity while protecting important habitats from destruction. Energy-efficiency initiatives can minimize pollution from fossil fuels while lowering energy bills for governments and consumers alike. And a focus on green jobs can put people to work while spurring next-generation innovations.

This chapter spotlights examples of how mayors are doing their part to lessen society’s impact on the environment while reaping other benefits for their constituents along the way.

TAKEAWAYS

▶ **Environmental conservation can help the planet and the budget.** Installing energy-efficient lighting on public roads; increasing the use of hybrid, electric and natural gas-powered vehicles; and upgrading water, heating and cooling systems in public buildings can make a significant dent in both energy use and long-term public spending. Similar upgrades in residential buildings help lower utility bills.

▶ **Going green can create jobs.** With growing markets for green products and services, mayors see an opportunity to spur economic development through environmentally conscious innovation.

▶ **“Think big, act small” can equal success.** Mayors across the country are encouraging small actions that add up to big impacts for our environment. Person by person, town by town and city by city, communities are making a difference to reduce waste, conserve energy and save habitats.
“Working together, residents and businesses act powerfully to create relevant change in our city’s future. ...As a vested part of our journey, I challenge you to join this collective effort to make our city a better, more sustainable place and, even more, a shining example of the right way to live and work.”

—Kasim Reed, mayor, Atlanta, Georgia
Mayor Kasim Reed (2010– )

Power to Change/One Million Acts of Green

MAYOR KASIM REED wants Atlantans to join him in the effort to make their city a model of sustainability. How to attain his goal? One Million Acts of Green.

Since becoming mayor, Reed has moved the city toward ambitious environmental goals: making the region’s airport one of the most sustainable in the country, improving the energy efficiency of the city’s commercial buildings through the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge and implementing a Climate Action Plan to mitigate the city’s impact on climate change.

But to really make a difference, he asked the city’s residents to join the effort. That’s what the innovative, citywide Power to Change/One Million Acts of Green initiative is all about.

At the start, the program engaged more than 300 stakeholders—including residents, nonprofits, government, business and academia—to develop a framework for action and break apart the complex idea of “sustainability” into understandable components. The resulting 10 impact areas (including air quality, water management, energy efficiency, land use, materials management, community education and business development) are further defined by goals and priorities that can be achieved through the cumulative effect of individual actions as well as business-government collaboration. Ideas range from incentives for buying and using electric vehicles to enhancing neighborhood recycling programs and water management programs.

The Power to Change mobilizes Atlantans as “sustainability ambassadors” who commit to take action on projects that benefit the 10 impact areas. Ambassadors log and track their actions through the Power to Change/One Millions Acts of Green website. By the start of 2016, nearly 1,000 acts of green had been completed, saving more than 36,000 pounds of greenhouse gases, nearly 5,000 gallons of water and 9,000 kilowatt hours of electricity.

Atlanta joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.
STANDOUT COMMUNITIES: CLIMATE

Berkeley, California
Mayor Tom Bates (2002– )
**Berkeley Climate Action Plan**

When Mayor Tom Bates wanted to reduce his carbon footprint, he sold his car. Constituents now see him biking, walking, and taking public transportation around town—and many are following his lead. Berkeley has the second highest walk-to-work rate and third highest bike-to-work rate among the nation’s mid-size cities. Increasing cycling and walking are components of the Climate Action Plan that Berkeley adopted. Other elements of the plan include reducing the amount of solid waste sent to landfills and increasing the number of green buildings and the use of renewable energy. To help residents meet the plan’s waste reduction targets, the city provides curbside pickup of compost, such as yard waste and food scraps, and distributes bins that accommodate paper on one side and glass and cans on the other.

Bridgeport, Connecticut
Former Mayor Bill Finch (2007–2015)
**Greening the City**

In 2010, then-Mayor Bill Finch brought together more than 100 organizations and individuals to map out the future of Bridgeport. Their vision: a better place to live with cleaner waterways and soil, less reliance on fossil fuels and more green jobs. That’s all captured in BGreen2020,
a blueprint of 64 actionable strategies to guide the community’s efforts. One innovative BGreen2020 project is the creation of a green jobs hub at an abandoned industrial site. The Eco-Technology Park is now home to the largest fuel cell facility in North America, a mattress recycling facility, a grease recycling and biofuel production plant, a natural gas vehicle fueling station, a permeable paving company, a biofuels home heating oil company, a tire recycling facility, a waste-to-energy facility and one of the city’s two sewage treatment plants. Other BGreen2020 initiatives range from providing loans to make homes more energy efficient to enhancing public transportation and improving stormwater management.

Cheyenne, Wyoming
Mayor Rick Kaysen (2009–)

Cheyenne Botanic Gardens

Cheyenne Botanic Gardens aims to be an oasis on the High Plains, and Mayor Rick Kaysen is one of its biggest boosters. A longtime advocate and member of the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens Foundation board, Kaysen champions an expansion and renovation effort. The centerpiece is a large conservatory featuring subtropical plants, a waterfall and a bonsai garden that is designed to give Cheyenne’s residents and visitors a welcome respite from the region’s long, cold winters. The improvement initiative also allows for enhanced environmental education programs and expands the center’s greenhouse, growing its capacity and making it more accessible to visitors of all ages and abilities. The project is funded primarily through a $16 million one-sixth penny sales tax approved by voters.

Des Moines, Iowa
Mayor Frank Cownie (2004–)

Greening the City

From the start of his administration in 2004, Mayor Frank Cownie put a focus on sustainability. He established an Energy, Efficiency, Environment and Conservation Task Force comprised of city staff and community leaders. Over the years, the task force led the charge to adopt a citywide sustainability plan and initiatives ranging from replanting parks with native grasses to adding hybrid and zero-emission vehicles to the city’s fleet. Des Moines—which was among the first cities to join both the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities—has also invested in green building initiatives, and the city regularly works in partnership with local builders and businesses on adaptive reuse projects that attempt to incorporate best practices for energy efficiency, materials recycling and sustainable water use.

Des Moines joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.
Evansville, Indiana
Mayor Lloyd Winnecke (2012– )  
**Clean Evansville**

When Mayor Lloyd Winnecke said he wanted to lead an effort to clean up Evansville, he meant it literally. Through antitrash and litter programs, he aims to boost the city’s economic development potential while helping the environment. Since the first cleanup day in January 2012 under the Clean Evansville initiative, Winnecke and 5,400 community volunteers, coordinated through the nonprofit Keep Evansville Beautiful, have collected more than 50 tons of litter and trash. The initiative has now expanded to local businesses, which can take a Clean Evansville Pledge, promising to keep their properties and the street in front of their businesses clean.

Laredo, Texas
Former Mayor Raul G. Salinas (2006–2014)  
**Energy Efficiency Efforts**

Under the leadership of then-Mayor Raul Salinas, Laredo took concrete steps to make the city cleaner, safer and more fuel efficient. The installation of 45 solar-powered trash compactors in the city’s downtown helps keep trash off the streets while reducing the number of trips each trash truck makes, saving 2,000 gallons of fuel each year and reducing emissions by 75,920 pounds. The city also replaced incandescent fixtures in the downtown area with brighter and more efficient LEDs, making streets safer while using 125 fewer watts in energy per bulb. Other projects include the installation of solar panels and upgrading HVAC systems in city buildings.

Madison, Wisconsin
Mayor Paul Soglin (2011– )  
**Increasing Pollinator Presence**

At the direction of Mayor Paul Soglin and the Madison City Council, a city task force developed recommendations to help stop the alarming decline of bee colonies and other pollinators. The task force spent its first year conducting research and reviewing practices that contribute to a problem impacting U.S. food and agriculture systems. Its recommendations, released in September 2015, include concrete steps the city can take to support habitats friendly to pollinators such as using specific plantings on city property and changing how frequently city properties are mowed.
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Mayor Betsy Hodges (2014– )

Zero Waste Minneapolis

Mayor Betsy Hodges’s efforts to make Minneapolis a zero-waste city began with her inauguration’s One Minneapolis Celebration, which attracted 2,000 people and produced only 24.3 pounds of trash (or less than one-fifth an ounce per attendee), with 628 pounds of material composted and 640 pounds recycled. Minneapolis residents of all ages are encouraged to be “zero heroes” by buying products with less packaging, bringing coffee mugs to work, repairing and maintaining durable goods instead of replacing them and creatively reusing materials such as greeting cards and paper products. For more complicated approaches, like composting, the city hosts educational events for residents and businesses. In 2015, a policy task force was designated to create additional strategies to move Minneapolis toward zero waste.

Minneapolis joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.

New Bedford, Massachusetts
Mayor Jon Mitchell (2012– )

Green Economy

Mayor Jon Mitchell is working to position New Bedford to be a national leader in renewables and green jobs. The city has been able to boast the most installed solar panels per capita in the continental United States, and New Bedford is looking to capitalize on its coastal location by harnessing offshore winds into energy. A partnership with technology corporation Siemens plans to help upgrade 100 city-owned buildings with energy-efficient windows and heating and cooling systems and replace 10,000 street lights with LEDs. There’s more to come as the city organizes itself to support a green future. The city’s energy officer provides in-house technical and policy expertise, and the city has hired a chief financial officer to keep an eye on the bottom line. “The infusion of talent,” Mitchell says, “was critical to finding innovative ways to navigate around our fiscal realities—and do more, with less.”

New Bedford joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.
New Orleans, Louisiana
Mayor Mitch Landrieu (2010–)
**Resilient New Orleans**

The devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 highlighted New Orleans’s unique vulnerability to environmental forces. Ten years later, Mayor Mitch Landrieu unveiled a comprehensive, forward-looking resilience strategy in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation and its 100 Resilient Cities Program. Measures include restoring the coastal wetlands to protect New Orleans from future flooding as well as implementing a regional urban plan to protect against floods and reduce the sinking that occurs in communities below sea level. The city also supports a range of awareness programs that promote responsible environmental stewardship and ways to mitigate climate change.

Raleigh, North Carolina
Former Mayor Charles Meeker (2001–2011)
**Environment and Sustainability**

In 2011, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce named Raleigh the most sustainable midsized community in the nation thanks, in large part, to then-Mayor Charles Meeker. Under his watch, Raleigh launched a green building worker-training course, installed 30 electric vehicle charging stations and developed what was then one of the nation’s only two convention centers with a Silver LEED rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. Meeker also introduced NeighborWoods, a program that works with residents to plant more than 10,000 trees throughout the city.

Salt Lake County, Utah
Mayor Ben McAdams (2013–)
**Improving Air Quality**

With about half of Salt Lake County’s air pollution caused by motor vehicles, Mayor Ben McAdams encourages residents to get out of—or tuneup—their cars. A 2015 pilot project conducted in partnership with the Salt Lake County Health Department and Utah Transit Authority gave away 2,000 UTA transit passes worth $10 each. The county’s vehicle repair assistance program helps low-income car owners fix engines that fail emissions tests. As an incentive for residents who own or might consider buying an electric vehicle, a fast charging station located at the county government building is open to the public.

_Salt Lake City joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015._

San Diego, California
Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer (2014–)
**Climate Action Plan**

Mayor Kevin Faulconer wants San Diego to be a “smart city” that adapts and responds to a changing world. That means taking on the challenge of climate change with an ambitious Climate Action Plan. The plan sets a high bar for success. By 2035, the city seeks to supply all electricity from renewable sources, cut greenhouse gas emissions by 49 percent and use purified wastewater to provide one-third of its water needs. A partnership with Sun Edison aims to capitalize on the city’s abundant sunshine by installing solar panels on publicly owned sites—25 locations to start and 40 more on deck for the project’s second phase. And a Pure Water plan is under way through a 20-year capital improvement and technology program to turn wastewater into a safe and reliable source of drinking water.

_San Diego is in San Diego County, which joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2016._
St. Louis, Missouri
Mayor Francis Slay (2001– )
Milkweeds for Monarchs

Monarch butterflies are making a comeback in St. Louis, thanks to Mayor Francis Slay. His Milkweeds for Monarchs program rebuilds critical butterfly habitat across the city, an effort to improve the region's environment and agricultural system. Launched on Earth Day 2014, the project's focus is simple and tangible: planting one-square-yard gardens of a milkweed mix, the sole food source for Monarch caterpillars. In its first year, the city created 50 milkweed gardens in public parks and at local firehouses. Slay built on this early success with a call for residents to build 200 more gardens and expand the program into the city's schools.

St. Louis is in St. Louis County, which joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2013.

Yonkers, New York
Mayor Mike Spano (2012– )
Sustainability

As part of his commitment to make Yonkers a sustainable city, Mayor Mike Spano led an ambitious multiphase project to uncover a part of the Saw Mill River that had been buried in the 1920s. The riverbed was rebuilt with native plants, and new parks and pedestrian plazas replaced a parking lot and other above-ground structures. Aquatic life—including American eel, white perch and herring—is now returning to the restored river. Infrastructure upgrades improved water quality by separating the city’s storm and wastewater sewer systems.

Yonkers is in Westchester County, which joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.
WHERE WE LIVE
HEALTH
FROM FOOD TO FITNESS
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA
It’s no secret that many Americans are struggling to stay healthy. That struggle can be exacerbated or significantly helped by where a person lives.
COMMUNITIES THAT put a premium on health—by increasing opportunities for physical activity, making healthy foods available, easing access to health care and helping residents manage chronic conditions and mitigate risk factors—reap benefits across the generations.

Healthy, well-fed children go to school ready to learn. A healthy workforce is more productive. Older adults who exercise and eat a well-balanced diet have fewer health problems. And active residents of all ages are more engaged with one another and with their community.

This chapter zeroes in on examples of how mayors are stepping up to help residents eat better, exercise more and live healthier lives.

**TAKEAWAYS**

▸ **Exercise and weight loss are easier when they’re fun.** Mayors are working to make fitness fun for people of all ages through weight-loss challenges, community-wide walking, running and biking events and other creative programs.

▸ **Changing the built environment encourages physical activity.** Public parks, walking and biking trails, sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly communities make it easier for residents of all ages to get outside and get moving.

▸ **Healthy food is a key component of healthy living.** Access to healthy food options can be key to a healthy city. Mayors are working with local restaurants, grocery stores and community partners to highlight healthy options and make them more accessible.

▸ **Educating the next generation about healthy living is critical.** Partnerships with local schools help kids start early, learning the importance of sound nutrition and physical activity.
“With an obesity rate exceeding 25 percent, we have failed as a community to set a high enough standard for ourselves. It is not just us. This is a nationwide problem. But it is a problem that I believe this community can address.”

—Mick Cornett, mayor, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
A DECADE AGO, Mayor Mick Cornett famously announced that he was putting his city on a diet. Spurred by his own experience scoring an obese rating on a federal health index website and stung by Oklahoma City’s inclusion on a list of the nation’s fattest cities, Cornett challenged residents to join him and lose a combined one million pounds.

Cornett’s dynamic presence and creative presentation put a national spotlight on his weight-loss challenge. He announced the challenge standing in front of elephants at the Oklahoma City Zoo. The initiative’s website—thiscityisgoingonadiet.com—carried on the colorful imagery, showing the city’s total weight loss as numbers of elephants while, at the same time, providing useful information about nutrition and exercise ideas for kids and adults. Residents who registered on the site were able to track their progress through interactive health journals that calculated calories burned through activities and exercise.

The city reached its goal of one million pounds lost, but, to Cornett, that was just the beginning. The weight-loss challenge started a community conversation about obesity and health. The next step is all about the long-term.

Building on a tax-financing structure and capital improvement program used by his predecessors to redevelop downtown and revitalize the city’s schools, Cornett rallied support for initiatives that create new opportunities for recreational and other health-related activities: development of a 70-acre downtown park; construction of new sidewalks to foster a more pedestrian lifestyle; creation of new senior health and wellness centers; and development of a riversport rafting and kayak center on the Oklahoma River.

These new projects are all part of Cornett’s broader vision: moving Oklahoma City from “fattest” to “fittest” and, in the process, making the city a more attractive destination for businesses and residents alike.
STANDOUT COMMUNITIES: HEALTH

Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Mayor Melvin L. Holden (2005- )
Mayor’s Healthy City Initiative

Having seen the impact of diabetes, heart disease and cancer in his own family, Mayor Melvin Holden knows firsthand the critical importance of living—and encouraging—healthy lifestyles. Holden convened a group of community stakeholders to identify ways that the city can help its citizens get fit and stay healthy. The group recommended that instead of launching a stand-alone program, the mayor create a mechanism for collaboration among local organizations that provide health services and resources. The result is the Mayor’s Healthy City Initiative, a nonprofit that has more than 70 organizational partners ranging from hospitals and schools to other nonprofits and local businesses. This broad-based partnership expands the reach of the initiative, in an effort to give Baton Rouge residents—young, old and in between—improved access to appropriate health services and programs.
Charleston, West Virginia
Mayor Danny Jones (2003– )
**Power Walking 150**

Mayor Danny Jones’s Power Walking 150 initiative is moving Charleston toward a healthier future—literally. In its inaugural 2014 session, 1,000 participants logged 150 miles running, walking or biking in 150 days. Building on this community-wide kick start, the program invites people of all ages and abilities to incorporate walking or other physical activities into their daily routines. In addition, local partners sponsor a year-round schedule of fun events including group walks, runs and bike rides to get the community outside and moving.

Eugene, Oregon
Mayor Kitty Piercy (2004– )
**Paid Sick Leave**

On July 1, 2015, Eugene’s paid sick time ordinance went into effect—a law signed with pleasure by Mayor Kitty Piercy on the day it passed the city council. Under the new law, most workers in Eugene receive up to 40 hours of paid sick leave to use if they are ill or need to care for a sick family member. This can be especially important for family caregivers helping older loved ones stay in their homes, and it carries benefits across all ages as young parents need the same type of flexibility.

Fort Worth, Texas
Mayor Betsy Price (2011– )
**Blue Zones Project**

Mayor Betsy Price signed Fort Worth up for the Blue Zones Project—a national program focused on making healthy choices easier in local communities—to make her city a healthier, happier place to live, work and play. Through partnerships with local businesses, schools and community organizations, Fort Worth is making wellness a priority across the city. Now residents of all ages have more healthy food options at restaurants and grocery stores. Local schools offer expanded nutrition and physical education programs for children. Businesses place a stronger focus on the health of their employees. And the city is implementing policies that encourage healthy choices and exercise. The program is a win-win, aimed at lowering health care costs, creating opportunities for residents to engage with each other across generations, increasing productivity and improving quality of life.

Fort Worth joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.
Hernando, Mississippi
Mayor Chip Johnson (2005- )
**Healthy Living**

Since taking office more than a decade ago, Mayor Chip Johnson has made health and wellness a top priority. From establishing a new and improved city parks department, which has built five major parks and recreation facilities, to investing in infrastructure that makes the community more accessible to pedestrians and bikers, Johnson is working to lead his city into a healthy future. His Eat Right, Play More initiative promotes healthier school lunches and vending machine options. His Complete Streets policy mandates a sidewalk for every city road. And his efforts to encourage exercise through public activities and incentives led Hernando to being named the Healthiest Hometown in Mississippi in 2010.

Houston, Texas
Former Mayor Annise Parker (2010–2016)
**Bayou Greenways**

In 2013 Mayor Annise Parker announced the start of the ambitious Bayou Greenways 2020 initiative, a public-private partnership to create an expansive system of parks along the city’s major waterways. When completed, Houston residents of all ages will have access to 3,000 acres of public green space connected by 150 miles of trails suitable for hiking and biking. The Bayou Greenways project also aims to promote a healthy environment by improving the city’s water and air quality.

*Houston joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.*

Lansing, Michigan
Mayor Virgil Bernero (2006- )
**Lansing Loses a Million**

It’s not every day that a mayor gets on the scale in full view of his constituents. But that’s exactly what Mayor Virgil Bernero did to kick off Lansing Loses a Million, a program to help residents track their activity, weight and health and connect them to their neighbors. The program, one of the city’s age-friendly initiatives, is a public-private partnership with organizations such as the YMCA that encourages participation by providing free day passes to exercise facilities. Residents who join the challenge get access to free diet, sleep and exercise tracking tools as well as fitness and nutrition coaching.

*Lansing joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.*

Louisville, Kentucky
Mayor Greg Fischer (2011- )
**Healthy Hometown Movement**

With more than half of Louisville’s adults overweight, Mayor Greg Fischer is taking action. His Healthy Hometown Movement addresses the obesity epidemic through a range of programs. Simple changes to city infrastructure—like increasing the number of bike racks across the city—encourage physical activity. Partnerships with local stores increase healthy food options. A menu-labeling program is designed to give diners at local restaurants nutritional information and encourage healthier recipes. And since 2005, the program has awarded more than $500,000 in grants to more than 100 community groups focused on obesity prevention as well as other health priorities such as substance abuse prevention and mental health.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Mayor William Peduto (2014- )
**Live Well Pittsburgh**

On his 100th day in office, Mayor William Peduto kicked off Live Well Pittsburgh, a community-wide
wellness initiative that is part of a broader effort, Live Well Allegheny, led by County Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker, to help make Allegheny County the healthiest county in the nation. Through Live Well Allegheny, schools are building wellness and nutrition education into the curriculum in partnership with area hospitals, while older residents are stepping up their physical activity through exercise classes and community run/walk events. Restaurants can receive a “Live Well” seal of approval by limiting transfats and offering healthy menu items. Live Well Pittsburgh’s initial focus is on making sure that families are covered with quality low to no-cost health care—its Healthy Together campaign—and that youth across the Pittsburgh area are connected to programs for summer and after-school meals—its GrubUp initiative. In line with the county’s vision for the region, new dedicated bike lanes throughout the city make biking safer for everyone—from kids with training wheels to commuters to older cyclists who may ride at a slower pace. Peduto’s commitment to building a healthier city doesn’t stop there. As he said when he launched the Live Well Pittsburgh initiative, he is dedicated to mobilizing all aspects of city government—from planning and public works to parks and recreation—to give Pittsburgh residents “the opportunity of a healthy, well-lived life.”

*Pittsburgh joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.*

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**Phoenix, Arizona**

**Mayor Greg Stanton (2012- )**

**FitPHX**

Phoenix is encouraging its residents to get fit with FitPHX, a citywide health initiative led by Mayor Greg Stanton and other community leaders. The program matches private and public institutions with government resources to create healthy living events focusing on nutrition education, exercise and worksite specific recommendations. Programs developed through FitPHX include Meet Me Downtown, weekly group runs and walks to help make exercise a multigenerational social experience, and FitPHX Energy Zones, free nutrition and fitness education classes in local middle schools.

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**Portland, Maine**

Former Mayor Michael Brennan (2011-2015)

**Mayor’s Initiative for a Healthy and Sustainable Food System**

In Portland, farm-to-table has taken on new meaning. Then-Mayor Michael Brennan spearheaded the city’s Initiative for a Healthy and Sustainable Food System. The program transformed the Portland food ethos while encouraging local economic growth and spurring cooperation between consumers, local growers, private companies and policymakers. Community gardens, planted and maintained in partnership with local farmers and nonprofits, include a public orchard boasting 40 fruit trees. School lunches now include 50 percent local produce.

*Portland joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.*
Spencer, Iowa
Mayor Reynold Peterson (2004- )
Blue Zones/Healthiest State Initiative and Downtown Revitalization

In 2012 Mayor Reynold Peterson made Spencer the first city in Iowa to take the Blue Zones pledge to encourage healthy lifestyles. The city invested in community gardens, the promotion of healthy foods in grocery stores and new infrastructure including $200,000 worth of sidewalks to encourage walking. On top of the numerous personal benefits, the city has seen a 20 percent drop in health insurance claims for city workers, reinforcing the upside of public investments in health.

St. Paul, Minnesota
Mayor Chris Coleman (2006- )
8 to 80 Vitality Fund

Mayor Chris Coleman initiated the 8 to 80 Vitality Fund—a program to improve the city’s infrastructure and public spaces—as a way to make outdoor activities in St. Paul safer and more accessible to residents of all ages and abilities. Focusing on street reconstruction, new bike trails and lanes, development of green spaces and more, the fund aims to enhance the city’s quality of life. The project is based on the work of Gil Penalosa, a well-known livability advocate and consultant, and was recognized by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation as part of the organization’s Knight Cities Challenge—a competitive grant program that asks residents to submit their ideas for making cities successful.

St. Petersburg, Florida
Mayor Rick Kriseman (2014- )
Healthy St. Pete

For Mayor Rick Kriseman, improving the health of St. Petersburg citizens means promoting healthy options across four lifestyle categories relevant to all ages: Live, Eat, Shop and Play Healthy. Live Healthy promotes policies to increase access to health care, health education and nutritious food. Eat Healthy offers tips to create healthy meals and runs programs like Fun Bites to bring healthy options to concession stands. Stores, restaurants and farmers’ markets are partners in Shop Healthy to increase access to healthy food. And Play Healthy develops and promotes fun community activities to encourage exercise.
Seattle, Washington
Mayor Ed Murray (2014- )
**Increasing Access to Mental Health Care**

Less than a year into his term, Mayor Ed Murray responded to the need to increase access to mental health care in Seattle. Working with Governor Jay Inslee, who dedicated $37 million between 2015 and 2016 to increase the number of beds at two state psychiatric and community hospitals, Murray has rallied local businesses and community leaders to support state efforts. Because many of Seattle’s homeless struggle with mental illness, the mayor partnered with organizations to advocate for reforms and increased funding for low-cost housing options and improved health services. By working to increase access to effective mental health services, particularly for the homeless or those in need, Murray continues to act as a leader for the improved wellness of his community.

York, Pennsylvania
Mayor C. Kim Bracey (2009- )
**Eat, Play, Breathe York**

The health of York residents is a priority for Mayor Kim Bracey, who grew up in the city she now leads. Since taking office, she has led a comprehensive program under the banner Eat, Play, Breathe York in partnership with local and national organizations. A Complete Streets policy adopted in 2011 focuses on improving the city’s transportation infrastructure in ways that promote physical activities such as biking and walking—something that benefits York citizens of all ages and from all walks of life. And in 2014, the city won a $100,000 grant to help combat childhood obesity. The funds are directed largely to York’s elementary schools so they can increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables, expand physical activity programs and develop school gardens to give kids hands-on opportunities to learn healthy eating habits.
5

ENGAGEMENT

CONNECTING

PEOPLE TO

THEIR NEIGHBORS

AND LEADERS
WHERE WE LIVE ENGAGEMENT

MAYOR BETSY PRICE (YELLOW HELMET)
ROLLING TOWN HALLS
FORT WORTH, TEXAS
Community means more than people living in the same geographic area.
 FROM SOCIAL ACTIVITIES to civic action, having the opportunity to connect and feel welcomed strengthens our social fabric. A livable community fosters interactions among people and between people and institutions—face-to-face or online—that adds value to our lives and supports community involvement with local government.

Opportunities to connect with neighbors, meet new people and contribute ideas and skills to local institutions help people of all ages thrive. Creating new ways for residents to get involved in their communities brings diverse voices into conversations about how to make a community stronger and what programs and policies local government should prioritize. People not only need to be heard but expect to be heard by their leaders on the issues that matter the most, and frustration can arise when people feel like they aren’t being heard. Engagement creates an atmosphere where neighbors help neighbors, government listens to its citizens and no one of any age is left behind.

This chapter offers examples of how mayors are reaching out to local residents and helping them connect with one another and with their government.

TAKEAWAYS

▸ People need to be heard. Sometimes all it takes to increase civic engagement is to create a platform for citizens to voice a concern or talk about a new idea. Some mayors take a high-tech approach, using websites and other technology to build communications channels for their constituents. Others are decidedly low-tech, making face-to-face interactions a priority.

▸ Communication is a two-way street. It’s just as important for government institutions to demonstrate that they’ve gotten the message, reporting back to their constituents on everything from how tax dollars are spent to what progress was made on key initiatives.

▸ If you build it, they will come. Strong communities provide gathering places that give residents an opportunity to meet, mingle, learn and volunteer. These hubs of activity bring people together, whether it’s for exercise classes at a community center, a lecture series at the local library or a forum to ask candidates questions. Online communities can be just as powerful, reaching a wider audience.

▸ Small acts of kindness can add up to something big. Neighbors help each other in ways big and small—donating blood, shoveling snow, reading to children or making contributions through professional or volunteer experiences. Mayors are recognizing and encouraging these actions because they add up to something much more—a connected community of citizens who care about each other.
“Compassion and citizenship are intertwined.”
—Greg Fischer, mayor, Louisville, Kentucky
Mayor Greg Fischer (2011– )

Compassionate Louisville

**WHEN MAYOR GREG FISCHER** took office, this former businessman set out a clear set of values that would guide his administration. One of those values—compassion—has become his signature initiative.

To Fischer, compassion is a critical element of building a strong community. It’s people helping people, asking for nothing in return. It’s treating everyone, of all ages and from all walks of life, with respect. He traces his focus on compassion to his parents: his mother, who he says helped other people all the time, and his father, who treated everyone, “from the head of a company to Sam the shoeshine man,” the same.

In 2011, Fischer signed a resolution committing Louisville to a multiyear Compassionate Campaign that seeks to empower and engage members of the community to help their neighbors in ways big and small. The program builds on an active network of nonprofit organizations and education institutions and encourages acts as simple as shoveling snow or reading to children as well as larger efforts such as participating in community beautification projects and mentoring programs.

One of the campaign’s key initiatives is the mayor’s annual Give a Day week, which calls on Louisville residents to donate time during the week to community service: donating blood, volunteering at a local food bank, working with Habitat for Humanity on homebuilding projects and engaging in other activities. In recent years, more than 160,000 people of all ages from all parts of the city participated in Give a Day.

Give a Day aims to make getting involved easy and bring people together who otherwise would never meet. Fischer hopes that will move the city closer to his goal of compassion: helping residents of all ages, from all walks of life, meet, work on common goals and develop greater understanding of and respect for each other.
Fayetteville, Arkansas
Mayor Lioneld Jordan (2008- )
Age-Friendly Fayetteville

Mayor Lioneld Jordan, in partnership with the University of Arkansas and the local chamber of commerce, is spearheading a multiyear effort to transform this college town into a truly age-friendly city. The first step is a five-year assessment and planning process, currently under way, that engages community members in multiple ways. An online survey gauges perceptions of the city, and a series of focus groups—90-minute discussion sessions with 10 local residents aged 45 and up—solicit input on how Fayetteville can better support an aging population. To collect data for a community needs assessment, teams of college students are fanning out across the city inspecting parks, buildings, roads and transportation options. Fayetteville hopes that by engaging its citizens and taking a comprehensive look at the city, it will be able to adapt its structures and services to be more accessible to older residents.

Fayetteville joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2013.

Fort Worth, Texas
Mayor Betsy Price (2011- )
Rolling and Walking Town Halls

Mayor Betsy Price puts a premium on face-to-face interaction with her constituents. But she knew she needed a creative approach to get residents of all ages engaged and involved. An avid bike rider herself, Price started inviting residents to join her on rides around the city for what she called Rolling Town Halls. The rides—usually five to seven miles, lasting about 45 minutes—have generated productive discussions on issues of interest to residents, from
ways to implement recycling programs to steps residents can take to deal with bird infestations. To engage with residents who are more comfortable on two feet than two wheels, Price launched Walking Town Halls—one-mile walks that focus on a street-level look at neighborhood improvements and needs. Launched in 2011, the programs continue, with multiple walking and rolling sessions scheduled each month.

Fort Worth joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.

Holyoke, Massachusetts
Mayor Alex Morse (2012- )
Senior Residence Touring Initiative

Soon after he was elected at age 22, the youngest mayor in Holyoke’s history reached out to the city’s oldest residents to make sure their voices are heard. Together with the city’s police chief, Mayor Alex Morse launched a Senior Residence Touring Initiative, personally visiting with residents 50+ where they live, since many would not otherwise be able to travel to city hall. The tour fulfills a campaign promise made in response to residents’ interest in staying connected with the mayor and other city leaders. Public safety and crime prevention were the primary topics of Morse’s first tour, resulting in important feedback that was used to create plans for a safer community.

Indianapolis, Indiana
Former Mayor Greg Ballard (2008-2016)
Band of Neighbors

When the national crowd-sourcing review company Angie’s List is headquartered in your city, it’s only natural that you turn to technology to crowd-source public safety. Mayor Greg Ballard partnered with Angie’s List to create an online forum to help neighbors connect with neighbors and local police stop crime. The secure network, called Band of Neighbors, is free to use and tailored to the city’s 840 different neighborhoods. To make sure that discussions are relevant, only residents of a particular neighborhood can participate in that community’s forums. Similarly, law enforcement or other announcements are posted only to discussions for the affected area. The network is designed to help residents of all ages stay connected and feel safe in their homes and their neighborhoods.
Las Vegas, Nevada
Mayor Carolyn Goodman (2011– )
Mayor’s Faith Initiative

Mayor Carolyn Goodman is leveraging Las Vegas’s faith community to start community conversations around the city’s toughest problems. The Faith Initiative, launched in 2012, connects faith leaders, community volunteers, nonprofit organizations and government agencies and engages them to work together. Initially, 120 faith leaders joined with city officials to develop a framework for ongoing engagement around problems that impact a broad spectrum of Las Vegas residents—addiction, strengthening families, jobs, education, homelessness and human trafficking. The city continues to play the role of convener, providing support and guidance to the initiative’s representatives, who meet monthly to keep up the momentum. Specific programs developed through the Faith Initiative include parenting classes, school partnerships and a series of community forums about addiction.

Miramar, Florida
Former Mayor Lori Moseley (1999–2015)
Senior Centers

To keep its aging population energized and engaged in community life, Miramar operates two senior centers that serve as hubs for a range of activities. Under the direction of then-Mayor Lori Moseley, the city expanded one center and established the second, hiring Spanish-speaking staff to serve the city’s large Latino population. Local residents come together for cultural activities and group wellness programs. The Generation 2 Generation program strives to promote lifelong learning and connections between children and the 50+ community, with special holiday celebrations and a Rainbow Readers club, where members share their knowledge and love of reading with elementary school students.

New Orleans, Louisiana
Mayor Mitch Landrieu (2010– )
Budgeting for Outcomes

Mayor Mitch Landrieu wants the city’s budget to reflect the needs and concerns of all New Orleans residents. To make sure everyone has a voice in the process, he and the city council hold community meetings in each council district to hear directly from residents. The entire process is results-oriented, with city agency budgets built around what it will take to achieve residents’ priorities. Each community meeting is preceded by a separate event where citizens can meet one-on-one with city officials to talk about specific ideas and concerns.
Portland, Oregon
Mayor Charlie Hales (2013- )
Dashboard

Mayor Charlie Hales takes a data-driven, high-tech approach to sharing information with his constituents. An innovative website he calls Portland’s Dashboard lets residents track the progress of priority initiatives. The Dashboard highlights key indicators and up-to-date data in at-a-glance charts, graphs and infographics to show where the city is making strides—and where things are falling short. Hales sees the dashboard as an important tool for government accountability as well as a way to encourage community involvement in developing public policy. But most of all, the dashboard is a mechanism to create a shared sense of accomplishment across all geographic and demographic boundaries. “Information is power,” hails the dashboard, “and these metrics can help citizens hold city leaders accountable.”

Portland joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.

Topeka, Kansas
Mayor Larry Wolgast (2013- )
Topeka MindMixer

Topeka residents have a new way to interact with the city’s public officials: a virtual town hall website that allows citizens to communicate directly with city leaders online. Mayor Larry Wolgast spearheaded the project to make government more transparent, accessible and responsive. Powered by MindMixer, a civic-minded tech start-up, the site’s chat forums are interactive real-time discussions about local issues among members of the community and city officials. Often, city leaders pose questions to prompt a virtual dialogue: How would you rate your feeling of safety? For every $1,000 of community funds, how would you divvy up the money? Do you support proposed utility rate increases? Putting the forums online is aimed at giving more people—from busy working parents to tech-savvy seniors—a chance to engage without having to travel or attend an in-person forum.

Wilmington, Delaware
Mayor Dennis P. Williams (2013- )
Wilmington Awards

Every year, the city of Wilmington celebrates the community engagement of local residents with the Wilmington Awards, a recognition program established by Mayor Dennis Williams. The awards are presented to individuals of all ages who have excelled in the arts, business, education, athletics, environment, health or science as well as those who have made significant contributions to the faith community and human and civil rights and through community service. In 2015 Williams created the annual Thomas L. Cottingham Good Samaritan award for acts of bravery and kindness. The inaugural award went to a resident who gave his life protecting a woman and her baby from a knife-wielding attacker.
OPPORTUNITY
EMBRACING DIVERSITY AND PURSUING POSSIBILITIES
WHERE WE LIVE

MAYOR RICHARD BERRY (RIGHT)
RUNNING START FOR CAREERS
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
Opportunity is the foundation of the American dream. We all want to live someplace where we can fulfill our potential.
WELCOMING COMMUNITIES give residents an equal chance to improve their well-being through employment, education, skill development and—in the 21st-century economy—access to technology.

Today’s older adults want to lead active lives that keep them connected and engaged with communities that support their goals. Some people transition to new careers or start businesses later in life. In fact, older adults are the fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs, according to the Kaufmann Foundation. Others look for opportunities to explore new ideas, develop new skills or volunteer to help their neighbors and share a lifetime of experience.

Achieving financial security requires education, skill development and career opportunities that keep pace with the demands of a global, technologically driven economy. Strong communities give Americans of all ages, from all backgrounds, ample opportunities to succeed.

This chapter highlights examples of how mayors are building ladders of opportunity that support residents as they strive for their piece of the American dream.

TAKEAWAYS

▷ 21st-century opportunities are built on 21st-century technology. In the Internet age, mayors are harnessing the power of technology to encourage innovation and the jobs of the future—from wiring cities with ultra-high speed connections and helping older residents develop computer skills to sponsoring tech-driven contests that inspire young people to dream big.

▷ Policies that support working families and fight poverty strengthen communities. When poverty persists and working families struggle to make ends meet, mayors are using a range of programs and policies to help fill the gaps and reverse declines.

▷ Partnerships with businesses boost employment and workforce development. Local governments, led by mayors, are building public-private partnerships that support entrepreneurs, put people to work and teach young people real-world job skills.

▷ Every child should be ready for school and have the tools to succeed. Mayors are enlisting their communities in innovative programs to make sure all children develop critical literacy skills.
“Every home and every business in our community has fiber optic cable hooked up and access to the fastest Internet. We have tried to make sure that everybody not only has that access, but uses it.”

—Andy Berke, mayor, Chattanooga, Tennessee
SPOTLIGHT ON CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

Mayor Andy Berke (2013– )

Gig City

THE CITY OF CHATTANOOGA earned the nickname “Gig City” thanks to the vision and commitment of three successive mayors who championed citywide ultra-high-speed Internet connectivity.

The groundwork for today’s lightning-fast Internet speeds was laid in 2003 by then-Mayor Bob Corker (now a U.S. Senator), who partnered with the city’s public electric utility to develop a high-speed broadband network serving the city’s downtown business core. Offering faster Internet speeds at a lower cost was part of Corker’s digital vision for attracting new businesses and maximizing the productivity of local companies. The effort put Chattanooga on par with much larger cities when it comes to infrastructure that supports a 21st-century economy.

Then under Mayor Ron Littlefield, the city’s high-speed network expanded to reach all residents in the Electric Power Board’s service area. This “fiber to the home” program made Chattanooga a destination for tech-driven entrepreneurs. It also created a new high-tech smart grid that increases the reliability and resilience of the area’s power supply and promotes a host of high tech efficiencies.

Today, Mayor Andy Berke is leveraging the city’s unique tech infrastructure through the Enterprise Center, a dedicated organization that supports innovation, entrepreneurship and digital inclusion. The center anchors the city’s Innovation District, a 140-acre downtown hub for Chattanooga’s knowledge-based, entrepreneurial economic development initiatives.

With the city’s leaders putting the critical infrastructure in place, dozens of start-up companies are building their businesses in Chattanooga, and the Innovation District has become home to nonprofits and venture funds that support further start-up development.
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Mayor Richard Berry (2009- )
Running Start for Careers

Shortly after taking office, Mayor Richard Berry created the Running Start for Careers program to help students stay in school and develop practical skills with an eye toward future employment. Through this public-private partnership between high schools and local businesses, students earn both high school and college credits toward graduation while gaining valuable experience working in high-demand industries such as construction, finance and health care. The program is working to prepare students for future careers while helping make sure they stay in school. In 2014 the high school graduation rate in the city’s public schools was 62.5 percent, but 98 percent of the Running Start for Careers participants received their high school diplomas.

Buffalo, New York
Mayor Byron Brown (2005- )
Serious Computer Game Design Competition

Computer games are more than just entertainment in Buffalo. In March 2015, Mayor Byron Brown hosted the city’s first Serious Computer Game Design Competition to encourage technology-focused innovation. A group of local college students won the $5,000 prize with a “create your own adventure” game that helps young people see how simple choices can have an impact on their lives far into the future. Brown hopes to work with the winning team to develop a version of the game for Buffalo schools and youth programs.

Buffalo is the county seat of Erie County, which joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.
Cheyenne, Wyoming
Mayor Rick Kaysen (2009- )
**Wyoming’s Digital Capital**

Mayor Rick Kaysen and local economic development planners are working hard to turn Cheyenne into Wyoming’s digital capital with new high-tech jobs that create opportunities for local residents. Already, employers including Microsoft, satellite communications provider EchoStar, data hosting service Green House Data and the National Center for Atmospheric Research have opened large data centers that take advantage of Cheyenne’s cool climate and affordable electricity resources. Next up are start-ups attracted to the city’s fiber network infrastructure and increasingly tech-savvy workforce. By diversifying the local economy, Kaysen is working to expand opportunities for Cheyenne’s residents.

Denver, Colorado
Mayor Michael Hancock (2011- )
**Entrepreneurship**

Small businesses, averaging 19 employees per company, make up over 40 percent of Denver’s total employment. Mayor Michael Hancock wants that number to grow. Through the city’s Jump-Start economic development programs, Hancock puts a major focus on supporting the city’s entrepreneurs. A small-business lending program has helped 129 businesses start and grow, creating more than 1,200 jobs. Business Assistance Centers provide targeted training in accounting, finance and marketing. With Americans aged 55 and older launching almost a quarter of new businesses nationally, according to the Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity, the entrepreneurial focus aims to benefit Denver residents of all ages: Older residents looking to start a new business get the support they need while younger workers have new job opportunities in a growing economy. Denver joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.

Detroit, Michigan
Mayor Mike Duggan (2014- )
**Grow Detroit’s Young Talent**

Mayor Mike Duggan’s Grow Detroit’s Young Talent program is a one-stop-shop to promote summer jobs for the city’s youth. Local businesses commit to offering six-week job experiences to help students acquire important real-world skills, and the city does the rest: recruiting students for each position, handling payroll and work readiness training, providing free city transportation to get to and from jobs and matching $1,000 in hourly wages. In its inaugural year, the program exceeded its goal of placing 5,000 young people in jobs; 5,594 entered the program in July 2015.
Grand Forks, North Dakota
Mayor Michael Brown (2000- )
**Safer Tomorrows**

It’s hard to thrive in a community where you don’t feel safe. Safer Tomorrows, an initiative led by Mayor Michael Brown, strives to decrease children’s exposure to violence and foster a community where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. One of just four programs in the country funded by the U.S. Department of Justice Defending Childhood Initiative, Safer Tomorrows focuses on prevention, intervention and data collection through a variety of school and community-based programs. For example, prevention-focused classes aim to help students in Grand Forks schools understand and address bullying, Internet safety, healthy relationships and dating violence. And intervention programs provide parents of infants and young children at risk of abuse with resources and support through intensive weekly home visits.

Kansas City, Missouri
Mayor Sylvester “Sly” James, Jr. (2011- )
**Turn the Page Reading Program**

Mayor Sly James is a strong believer in what he calls the “magical power” of reading. In fact, he credits his childhood love of books for his life’s success. Now he’s helping Kansas City’s children discover the same magical power. His Turn the Page initiative mobilizes the community to help every child read proficiently by third grade. The data-driven program focuses on three key areas shown to boost a child’s reading ability: school readiness, summer learning and school attendance. Through partnerships with a variety of organizations and a grassroots volunteer movement, Turn the Page organizes book donations, intensive summer reading programs, individualized tutoring and training tools for parents. Since the program’s inception, third-grade reading scores have improved dramatically, with 49 percent of students scoring proficient in 2015, up from 33 percent in 2011—putting the city well on its way to the goal of 70 percent proficiency by 2017.
Los Angeles, California
Mayor Eric Garcetti (2013-)
**10,000 Strong**

Mayor Eric Garcetti created the 10,000 Strong Initiative to improve job opportunities to veterans in the Los Angeles area. A vet himself, Garcetti is leveraging partnerships with more than 100 companies and 40 nonprofit and public sector organizations to place 10,000 veterans in jobs by 2017. His office is also taking the lead coordinating job training, health care and housing services for veterans through partnerships and ongoing coordination with public and private service providers.

Los Angeles joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2016.

Miami, Florida
Mayor Tomás Regalado (2009-)
**Elevate Miami**

Mayor Tomás Regalado is making digital inclusion a top priority to help Miami residents leverage today’s high-tech tools. More than 30 city parks and the city’s senior centers are now equipped with computer labs providing free access for users across the city. Free classes at these locations aim to help working-age and older adults learn how to use computers and access the Internet or brush up their skills. To improve access even further, Regalado’s administration is working with technology companies and Internet providers on low-cost alternatives to help residents and businesses buy their own computers and devices.

Minneapolis, Minnesota
Mayor Betsy Hodges (2014-)
**Working Families Agenda**

With stagnant wages and other pressures putting the squeeze on Minneapolis workers, Mayor Betsy Hodges is championing a Working Families Agenda. While her initial proposal addressing fair scheduling, wage theft (denial of wages or employee benefits rightfully owed to an employee) and paid sick leave has been scaled back, Hodges isn’t giving up. Striving to build consensus, she is actively engaged in discussions with businesses and workers to develop policies that ease the economic crunch on Minneapolis families and build a strong foundation for the future.

Minneapolis joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.
Providence, Rhode Island
Providence Talks

To make sure all children have the tools they need to succeed in school, Providence is starting early—and talking a lot. Providence Talks, an innovative citywide program, enlists adults across the community to talk to preschool children. Research shows that hearing at least 21,000 words a day develops a young child’s vocabulary to prepare them for school. Started under former Mayor Angel Taveras, the program was the Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayor’s Challenge Grand Prize Winner in 2012, securing $5 million to launch a pilot project. In 2015 Mayor Jorge Elorza expanded Providence Talks with a goal of reaching 2,500 families in two years. The program provides resources including home visits, free books and “word pedometers,” which help families keep track of words used in their households.

Rochester, New York
Mayor Lovely Warren (2014–)
Anti-Poverty Initiative

Rochester has the third highest child poverty rate in the nation, and Mayor Lovely Warren is committed to doing something about it. She is making the fight against poverty a central theme of her administration, developing new solutions to supplement the city’s job training programs and a state antipoverty task force. Her Office of Innovation is focused on data—looking at factors that drive poverty—and soliciting stakeholder input to develop new initiatives. One innovative idea under development is the creation of cooperatives—employee-owned neighborhood businesses—that give workers an opportunity to share in decision-making and business profits. Warren is spearheading the initiative with a comprehensive study, dedication of resources to help new cooperatives get up and running, and commitments from local institutions to contract with cooperatives for locally sourced goods and services. For example, local hospitals may contract with a neighborhood cooperative to provide laundry services.
Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Mayor Mike Huether (2010– )

**Sioux Falls Has Jobs!**

Sioux Falls has successfully attracted businesses and created jobs. Now it needs to find people to fill them. Mayor Mike Huether launched the SiouxFallsHasJobs.com campaign to highlight job opportunities in the area through billboard and kiosk advertisements as well as a website for job seekers. Businesses looking to hire workers use the website to promote job openings and connect with applicants.

Tulsa, Oklahoma
Mayor Dewey Bartlett (2009– )

**Mentoring to the Max**

Mayor Dewey Bartlett has a new equation for success in Tulsa: teens + businesses = expanded opportunities and a growing economy. The city’s Mentoring to the Max program matches area high-school students with businesses offering jobs and internships that focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The program is designed to reap benefits across the board. Young people supplement their education and expand their horizons with hands-on experiences. Businesses have eager, skilled workers. And the city develops a highly trained workforce that will help attract more businesses to grow the local economy.

Virginia Beach, Virginia
Mayor William D. Sessoms, Jr. (2008– )

**Financial Empowerment Initiative**

In 2010, Mayor William Sessoms set out to help 500 Virginia Beach families become “financially fit.” This initial effort has grown into the city’s ongoing Financial Empowerment Initiative, designed to help Virginia Beach residents understand how to manage their finances, build savings and avoid debt. Participating residents take monthly classes and receive individual coaching to develop personal financial plans. Other citywide activities include savings challenges, tax assistance and a Financial Planning Day staffed by volunteer Certified Financial Planners.
WHERE WE LIVE

ELEVATE THE ARTS TO ELEVATE THE COMMUNITY

7

CULTURE

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
Cultural programs bring communities together through shared experiences.
PUBLIC ART installations, arts education in schools, exposure to music, dance, theater and the visual arts: Culture in our communities fosters creativity and enhances recreational opportunities for citizens of all ages.

Expanding access to cultural offerings creates a more vibrant, interesting community for local residents—whether it’s taking a painting or dance class, watching a play, listening to a concert or enjoying a new sculpture in a public park. Public art also gives communities a sense of place, making them destinations where people of all ages want to stop for a moment rather than rush through on their way to a meeting, a job or an appointment.

Taken together, investments in the arts can help increase social engagement and creativity among residents of all ages.

This chapter profiles examples of different ways our nation’s mayors are promoting the arts in their communities.

**TAKEAWAYS**

- **Public art and cultural centers enhance communities.** Across the country, mayors are using the arts to enliven their communities and create new destinations for community events.

- **It’s never too early—or late—to get engaged in the arts.** Arts programs in schools foster creativity and an appreciation for culture at an early age. But learning and exploring the arts shouldn’t stop with graduation. Residents of all ages benefit from access to classes, exhibits and events.
“The arts create new ways to experience our city and play an important role in our community.”
—Kim Driscoll, mayor, Salem, Massachusetts
Mayor Kim Driscoll (2006– )
Salem Public Art Master Plan

“GREAT CITIES don’t happen by accident. They take careful, thoughtful planning and a proactive approach,” says Mayor Kim Driscoll. “For our city to thrive, we have to plan the work and work the plan.”

This analytical, nose-to-the-grindstone philosophy is a hallmark of Driscoll’s approach. So when community feedback identified public art as an important component to revitalize Salem’s Essex Street pedestrian mall, Driscoll put the pieces in place to “plan the work.”

The Public Art Master Plan is a blueprint for how the city will incorporate art into the planning and development process for Essex Street and beyond.

As home to the Peabody Essex Museum, numerous cultural organizations and several public arts festivals, Salem already had a strong history of supporting the arts. The Master Plan builds on this foundation, helping the city manage growth of its art initiatives and solidifying Salem’s identity as a regional hub for culture and creativity.

To cultivate ongoing community support, developers of the master plan engaged local organizations and a working group of residents, arts professionals and other stakeholders. Two community workshops were held to solicit input and feedback on the plan’s recommendations.

Unveiled in 2013, the final plan is comprehensive and action-oriented, with recommendations ranging from administrative—such as how to structure solicitations, select art projects and manage the city’s art collection—to substantive, including recommendations for public art sites and criteria for each potential installation.

Driscoll has moved quickly to put the plan’s ideas into action with the appointment of a public arts planner and seven-member Public Art Commission.

Salem joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.
Carmel, Indiana  
Mayor Jim Brainard (1996– )  
**Arts & Design District**

Arts and culture are no longer just for urban areas. That’s the thinking behind Mayor Jim Brainard’s move to create an Arts & Design District and new City Center in Carmel’s suburban downtown. Working in collaboration with community leaders and investors, Brainard created public and private grant partnerships to generate funding for new theaters, public spaces, galleries and more. The emphasis on artistic offerings simultaneously spurred economic growth, increasing tourism and creating a hub that gives residents of all ages new opportunities for social and cultural activities.

Columbus, Ohio  
Mayor Michael B. Coleman (2000–2016)  
**ARTS CLASSifieds**

For more than a decade, Mayor Michael Coleman has cultivated a vibrant arts and culture scene in Columbus. In partnership with local organizations, the city’s digital database of arts programs, ARTS CLASSifieds, allows residents to quickly find arts education classes and activities offered by 363 different providers. A follow-up initiative created a grant program that funds public art projects. Taken together, Columbus’s focus on the arts is designed to build community spirit and bring about a culture of creativity that benefits residents of all ages.

*Columbus joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.*
Gary, Indiana
Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson (2011- )  
**ArtHouse: A Social Kitchen**

“I believe that public art—combined with design, community engagement and private and government investment—can transform the way we imagine a city,” says Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson. This vision is becoming reality with the ArtHouse project that’s transforming an underutilized 15,000-square-foot building into a cultural center showcasing visual and culinary arts. Funded in part by a grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Public Art Challenge, the city is partnering with artist Theaster Gates to develop creative design solutions for the building. When completed, ArtHouse will feature three commissioned works of visual art and serve as a hub for cultural programs and culinary arts training. Freeman-Wilson hopes that in the long-term, the new public space will kick-start additional economic development in the downtown area.

Loveland, Colorado
Mayor Cecil A. Gutierrez (2009- )  and Former Mayor Ray Reeb
**Art in Public Places**

Through successful public-private partnerships and generous donations, artwork is now embedded in the Loveland community through creatively designed benches, bike racks, bridges and landscaping that enhance the lives of all residents. In 1985, during then-Mayor Ray Reeb’s term, Loveland became the first Colorado city to pass an Art in Public Places Ordinance, designating one percent of the city’s capital investment budget to purchase and maintain art installations. Local leaders and sculptors came together to create the Loveland High Plains Arts Council—and later the Visual Arts Commission—to showcase neighborhood artists, promote local foundries and organize festivals and parks that engage the community. Subsequent mayors continued to nurture Loveland’s love of public art. In 2015, when the Art in Public Places program celebrated its 30th anniversary, Mayor Cecil A. Gutierrez could boast that his city was home to 465 sculptures and 2-D pieces.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
**Mural Arts**

Philadelphia’s Mural Arts Program—featuring several thousand works of public art—has generated high-profile new public artwork for decades. Begun in 1984 as the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network by then-Mayor W. Wilson Goode, the program started as an innovative way to curb the problem of rampant graffiti. Jane Golden, a young artist hired by Goode, built relationships with graffiti artists and channeled their creativity toward planning public art projects instead of defacing public and private property. The first mural project, which covered both sides of a pedestrian bridge linking West Philly to Center City, was completed in 1985. Today, financed by a combination of public and private funds, the program has expanded under Golden’s continued leadership into an organization that includes youth art education and re-entry programs along with a dedicated community murals department that focuses on public projects in partnership with community organizations. _Philadelphia joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012._

Suwanee, Georgia
Mayor Jimmy Burnette (2011- )
**Suwanee SculpTour**

Mayor Jimmy Burnette is supporting the arts in his city through the annual Suwanee SculpTour, a series of original outdoor sculptures displayed downtown. SculpTour offers the community an affordable and family-friendly way to incorporate art into daily life, encouraging residents and visitors to explore the small city (population 16,000) by viewing the installations along a one-mile walking tour. In partnership with local artists and private sponsors, Burnette is helping create beautiful, communal public spaces for neighbors to spend more time outside while encouraging economic activity in downtown restaurants and shops. When the temporary exhibits end, the city works to add at least one SculpTour piece to its permanent art collection.
NEIGHBORHOOD
A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY
What makes a neighborhood a place where we want to live? All the things highlighted in this book.
EASY ACCESS to jobs, stores, schools and social activities. Parks to enjoy and markets that offer healthy food, helping people make smart choices. Access to culture that keeps local life interesting. Transit options that make getting around safe and easy. Opportunities to learn, work and contribute to society. An engaged population and responsive government.

These elements have appeal across generations and provide the blueprint for sustainable, vibrant communities. Staying in their homes and neighborhoods as they age—connected to friends, family, activities and services—helps older residents thrive. And, more and more, people of all ages want to live in neighborhoods that are easy to navigate on foot or by transit, with nearby shops and parks as well as cultural, educational and employment opportunities.

After decades of sprawl—with housing situated far from commercial and cultural corridors—mayors nationwide are refashioning our towns and cities for young and old.

This chapter offers examples of how mayors are putting all the principles of livable communities into action, transforming communities and revitalizing neighborhoods in ways that benefit residents of all ages.

**TAKEAWAYS**

- **Going back to basics lays an important foundation.** In some communities, years of economic stress have taken a toll that requires a back-to-basics approach—improving public safety and the delivery of government services, or tackling the blight of vacant properties—to lay a foundation for the future.

- **Walkable, thriving hubs give communities a sense of place.** From downtown urban areas to small town main streets, walkable hubs anchored by amenities ranging from arts venues and shopping districts to public parks and community centers help define a neighborhood’s identity.

- **Figuring out the financing is half the battle.** Some of the projects are large-scale public initiatives that marshal local, state and federal funding. Others use tax incentives to encourage private developers and businesses to take the lead.

- **Community engagement makes a difference.** Underlying successful initiatives is a commitment to engaging local residents. Soliciting input and translating residents’ priorities into action gives people a stake in neighborhood improvements and trust that their local government is on the right path.
“We must have safe, quality homes for families. ...Then comes new development and job creation...and with that comes economic growth. ...I know with all the smart leadership we have in this city, that if we come together and get behind the right plan, that together we can make great things happen in the southern half of our city.”

—Mike Rawlings, mayor, Dallas, Texas
Mayor Mike Rawlings (2011– )
GrowSouth Initiative

WHEN MIKE RAWLINGS first ran for mayor in 2011, he made revitalization of the sprawling city’s southern tier a central part of his campaign platform. This businessman-turned-mayor saw tremendous untapped potential in the area that comprises roughly half of Dallas’s land area and is home to 45 percent of the city’s population but contributes only 15 percent of its tax base.

Soon after he was elected, he launched GrowSouth, a broad-based initiative aimed at maximizing the area’s economic development potential with significant investment and infrastructure improvements.

But a strong foundation is generally necessary before a growth strategy can take root. While progress has been made, troubling trends persist: poverty, a declining number of middle-income families and a lack of affordable housing and jobs. Attacking these problems and strengthening neighborhoods is essential for the broader effort to succeed.

To turn the tide in three struggling communities, Rawlings added new strategies to the GrowSouth plan.

Neighborhood planning boards in each of the three designated areas are setting goals and priorities based on their community’s unique character, opportunities and challenges. To identify obstacles and cut through red tape, each community gets its own “general manager,” with a direct line to City Hall and access to the city’s nonprofit and corporate leaders.

Rawlings calls this approach the GrowSouth Collective Impact Model. By building from the ground up—empowering communities to demand more from their government and leveraging resources of neighborhood organizations, government and nonprofits—he hopes these communities will be able to grow and improve.

Dallas joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2014.
Albany, New York
Mayor Kathy Sheehan (2014–)
Downtown Revitalization

Well before construction of a new convention center begins downtown, Mayor Kathy Sheehan began work to make sure that city residents benefit from the new facility and the potential it brings to downtown Albany. Sheehan views the convention center as much more than a single building; she sees it as an opportunity to redefine Albany as a destination, attracting new jobs and improving the economy.

Baltimore, Maryland
Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake (2010–)
Vacants to Value

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake initiated Baltimore’s Vacants to Value project to tackle the urban blight plaguing her city. The 2010 U.S. Census identified more than 16,000 vacant properties in Baltimore—a situation that contributed to crime and an overall sense of neglect in the city’s neighborhoods. Now the city is demolishing vacant houses, turning the properties into green spaces, new housing developments and commercial investment opportunities. In early 2016, five years after the initial investment, Rawlings-Blake and Governor Larry Hogan announced new funding to continue the program. By stabilizing these distressed communities, Rawlings-Blake aims to make it easier for older residents to age in place while expanding opportunities for all.
WHERE WE LIVE | NEIGHBORHOOD

Charleston, South Carolina
Former Mayor Joseph P. Riley (1976-2016)

Attention to Urban Detail

He may not take the credit, but Charleston wouldn’t be Charleston without Mayor Joseph Riley. In his 10 terms in office, Riley made his top priorities the design details that give the city its unique character and preservation of public spaces. A prime example is his decision, in the late 1970s, to reject plans for high-rise offices along Charleston’s harbor. While the proposed development would have brought in new tax revenue, Riley instead created a waterfront park that revitalized the area and is enjoyed by residents and visitors—young, old and in between. Other local initiatives include award-winning designs for public housing. On a national level, Riley is one of the founders of the Mayor’s Institute on City Design, a collaborative effort of the National Endowment for the Arts, American Architectural Foundation and United States Conference of Mayors.

Concord, New Hampshire
Mayor Jim Bouley (2008- )

Concord Main Street Project

Getting the community on board for a complete redesign of Concord’s Main Street is one of Mayor Jim Bouley’s signature accomplishments. The ambitious project makes downtown more pedestrian-friendly by reducing the road from four lanes to two, widening sidewalks and installing cobblestone medians and brick crosswalks. The addition of trees, planters, benches, streetlights and signage enhances the overall aesthetics of the area, so spending time downtown—whether shopping, dining or strolling—is more appealing. Bouley was instrumental in building community support for the project through a series of public meetings and the appointment of a 17-member advisory committee. The city completed a five-block stretch of the new Main Street in November 2015, with the next phase of construction started in spring 2016.

Detroit, Michigan
Mayor Mike Duggan (2014- )

Strategic City Planning

Going back to basics is job #1 for Mayor Mike Duggan. He is taking up the challenge of revitalizing Detroit’s neighborhoods by improving city services, tackling the blight of vacant homes and cultivating entrepreneurship in the city’s commercial corridors. In his first year in office, he oversaw the installation of more than 18,000 streetlights and reduced emergency response times to the lowest level in five years, helping residents feel more secure. An aggressive outreach effort to homeowners improved neglected homes, while abandoned properties were sold or torn down. And a new wave of entrepreneurs is creating a virtuous cycle. As they open businesses in commercial areas, they join a growing community of committed residents of all ages working together with the support of city government to bring Detroit back.

Las Vegas, Nevada
Mayor Carolyn Goodman (2011- )

Downtown Revitalization

Mayor Carolyn Goodman wants Las Vegas to be a great place to live—not just a great place to visit. Witness her plan to create an urban village in the city’s downtown area. The Symphony Park project, a 61-acre development in the heart of downtown Las Vegas, features walkable blocks with street-level retail divided into four districts: the Civic District, home to parks and a performing arts center; the Specialty District, for hotels and retail; the Residential District, with a variety of single and multifamily homes; and the Medical District, which includes an outpost of the renowned Cleveland Clinic. Providing opportunities to live, work, shop and play across generations is designed to make Las Vegas a thriving community that people want to call home.
**Miami, Florida**
*Mayor Tomás Regalado (2009- )*  
**MiMo Biscayne Plan**  
Championed by Mayor Tomás Regalado, the MiMo Biscayne Plan is transforming a stretch of Biscayne Boulevard into a walkable urban village. Once the gateway to Miami and a hub of activity, the area suffered following the construction of Interstate 95. Today, the boulevard is coming back to life, but upgrades are needed to make it a safe and attractive thoroughfare for local residents and visitors. The MiMo Biscayne Plan is to create a Main Street spirit that uses a block-by-block best-practice approach. Landscaped medians, on-street parking blocks, wider right-of-ways, more pedestrian crosswalks and streetscape furnishings are designed to make Biscayne Boulevard a vibrant gathering place for residents and visitors of all ages.

**Pembroke Pines, Florida**
*Mayor Frank Ortis (2005- )*  
**Pembroke Pines City Center**  
Fulfilling a decades-long vision, Mayor Frank Ortis is spearheading the creation of a new downtown center in Pembroke Pines. The project includes a new city hall building, a state-of-the-art performance and conference center and an art gallery nicknamed “The Frank” in honor of Ortis. Residents will find community workshops, lectures, seminars and classes that make culture accessible, approachable and affordable. In partnership with private real estate developers, the revitalized city center is envisioned as an urban-style cultural and lifestyle hub for the community that will spur new economic growth through the inclusion of retail, restaurants and hotels.

**Providence, Rhode Island**
*Mayor Jorge Elorza (2015- )*  
**Providence Neighborhood Revitalization Act**  
Hard hit by the Great Recession, Providence neighborhoods are on their way back with help from Mayor Jorge Elorza. Just months after he was sworn in, Elorza announced the Neighborhood Revitalization Act, a new tax-incentive program designed to foster business development in underserved areas. Projects in 19 neighborhoods are eligible under the program, which includes incentives for community involvement and local hiring. The program aims to benefit citizens of all ages, with older residents able to access nearby services while younger residents find new career opportunities close to home.

**Santa Ana, California**
*Mayor Miguel Pulido (1994- )*  
**Public Safety**  
Santa Ana is a much safer place today than it was when Miguel Pulido first ran for mayor in 1994. Back then, a resident showed candidate Pulido a brick wall he had built to protect his family from neighborhood violence. Today, crime is down 64 percent, thanks to Pulido’s initiatives including recruiting and retaining highly skilled police officers, focusing on community policing and using new technologies to detect and deter crime. The new feeling of safety in the community benefits residents of all ages. Pulido is now making cross-generational programs an important part of his public safety agenda, urging expansion of after-school programs and improving city parks and recreation programs.
Tampa, Florida
Mayor Bob Buckhorn (2011- )
**Neighborhood University**

Strong neighborhoods built by strong community leaders are the key to great cities, according to Mayor Bob Buckhorn. To cultivate a network of these leaders, he launched Tampa’s Neighborhood University, an innovative, 12-week program that gives local residents an upclose look at city government and how they can play a role in the progress made by their neighborhood—and the city. The program, which reaches across the entire community and involves citizens of all ages, has graduated more than 150 leaders, building relationships and knowledge that will help move Tampa forward on a range of priorities. While leadership programs are common across the country, Buckhorn’s unique neighborhood-centric approach is designed to help create more focused engagements with residents.

West Sacramento, California
Mayor Christopher Cabaldon (1998- )
**Urban Infill**

Mayor Christopher Cabaldon, as he says, “put his mortgage where his mouth is” when he bought a row house in the Bridge District, a redeveloped industrial area in downtown Sacramento. His promise to move into the new development was a challenge to engage developers in his vision for transforming the urban center into a walkable community. When complete, the Bridge District will house 10,000 residents who will be able to walk or take a streetcar to nearby offices, shops and restaurants. Through his own example and a focus on a walkable downtown with transit and amenities, Cabaldon is building a community where people of all ages can thrive and connect with one another.

*West Sacramento joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2015.*

Wichita, Kansas
Mayor Carl Brewer (2007- )
**Grandparents Park**

Proving that you’re never too old or young to play, Mayor Carl Brewer partnered with AARP Kansas to create a Grandparents Park in his city’s Tri-S neighborhood. With a large number of the neighborhood’s older residents taking care of young grandchildren during the day, the area needed a safe, fun outdoor play and recreation space within easy walking distance. The park project transformed two city-owned empty lots with playground equipment for the kids, paved walking trails and an exercise station geared toward people aged 50 and older. Now local residents can come to the park to walk their dogs, play with their children and grandchildren, exercise and enjoy the outdoors.
Under Mayor Michael Nutter, Philadelphia joined the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in 2011. The move toward age-friendliness began with reinvigorating the Mayor’s Commission on Aging and drafting a strategic plan to outline the city’s vision on aging and livability. From connecting older people to city services to helping them age in place, the commission works with other city agencies and external partners including the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging to meet the needs of all Philadelphians.

Transportation—safe, affordable and reliable—is a critical component. To that end, in 2009 Nutter signed a Complete Streets Executive Order, which outlined how the 2,600 miles of streets in Philadelphia should be designed, built and maintained to improve safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as cars. Philadelphia was the first city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to have a Complete Streets policy. Since then, the mayor’s office helped to create hundreds of miles of bike lanes and made improvements to intersections, crosswalks and traffic signals.

Increasing access to public transit was also a priority. In 2013, approximately 200,000 Philadelphians aged 65 and older were enrolled in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority’s free-ride program. All SEPTA buses, trolleys and trains are wheelchair accessible and have lower platforms to make boarding easier. The city’s transportation infrastructure includes bus shelters, making transit an even more attractive choice.

Nutter also focused on creating transit-oriented development, placing new, high-density residential and mixed-use developments near transit hubs for the benefit of residents of all ages. One example is the Farmers Market at Frankford Transportation Center, where grocery stores are few and far between.

Another vital aspect of the mayor’s approach to age-friendliness was to bring food as well as parks and recreation resources closer to citizens. Nutter set the goal of bringing recreation resources and local fresh food within ten minutes of 75 percent of residents.

Appointed by Nutter, the Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council, in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, developed Get Healthy Philly. The program works with farmers’ markets, food cart vendors, the grocery industry and corner stores to bring healthy and affordable foods to low-income communities.

Throughout his tenure, Nutter worked to foster an environment where people do not feel limited by their age. Across the city, 23 senior community centers and 11 satellite centers host weekly events for older people, such as book clubs, art classes and karaoke, at little to no cost. The KEYSPOTS program offers computer and Internet training classes at participating library branches and KEYSPOT centers, which helps keep older people engaged in the broader community.

Philadelphia joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.

In New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s office joined with the City Council and the New York Academy of Medicine to launch Age-Friendly NYC, a citywide effort to discover and implement ways to make the city friendly to New Yorkers of all ages.

To assess needs, the city and the academy conducted town hall meetings and focus groups with older New Yorkers and those who serve them about the ups and downs of aging in New York City. Out of that process, the mayor’s office developed 59 city-led initiatives designed to make New York even friendlier for people of all ages.

These initiatives, which involve more than a dozen city agencies and numerous community partners, cover four main areas: community and civic participation; housing; public spaces and transportation; and health and social services.

One initiative is TimeBanksNYC, an innovative approach to the concept of neighbors helping neighbors. Any New Yorker can search a database of activities and services to choose from, and, in turn, post activities and services to offer. For example, a person can offer to tutor in math while taking advantage of dance lessons offered by a different member.

Bloomberg’s administration also reimagined...
the concept of senior centers, which historically had focused on providing meals and space for social activities. Using public and private funds, the city government provides innovation grants to create new models of service at approximately 50 senior centers. For example, the city partnered with the New York Sports Club, a citywide network of health clubs, to offer fitness classes in senior centers at no cost along with discounted club memberships to older New Yorkers. In addition, the mayor’s office launched an initiative in senior centers citywide to offer studio space to artists in return for their services, such as teaching art classes.

Bloomberg also examined innovative ways to use existing resources to make it even easier for older New Yorkers to travel throughout the city. A new program called MarketRide uses school buses during nonschool hours to transport older adults from senior centers to supermarkets.

New York City joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in 2012.

Newark, New Jersey
Former Mayor Cory Booker (2006–2013)

BEFORE CORY BOOKER became mayor in 2006, Newark had suffered from a lack of investment, a shrinking population and business tax base, budget shortfalls and high crime rates. City employees—hampered by poor working conditions, crumbling infrastructure and a lack of leadership—needed management tools that would help them do their jobs and serve city residents.

First on Booker’s agenda was fixing the operations of city government to ensure improved delivery of basic services to city residents. Under his leadership, Newark developed a data-driven assessment and management system, BrickCitiSTAT, modeled after a similar program in Baltimore. Reports of missed trash pickups declined dramatically, and the productivity of city inspectors charged with enforcing health and safety regulations nearly doubled.

Next on the list was attracting funding for a range of projects aimed at rebuilding infrastructure, improving schools and enhancing public safety and community development. With a budget deficit and additional financial constraints, Booker turned to innovative public-private partnerships including significant support from the philanthropic community. He designated a philanthropic liaison to engage foundations in funding public projects. The $48 million in foundation funds raised through the efforts of the liaison combined with $400 million in charitable funds raised by Booker himself helped launch a range of projects including a job-placement and support initiative for ex-offenders and significant investments in Newark’s school system. A partnership with the Trust for Public Land turned three unused city-owned land parcels into parks and playgrounds.

In 2013 Booker launched a Teachers Village in the heart of Newark’s business district. The multi-building development houses residential units for city teachers, retail outlets and three charter schools. Funded in part with a $110 million investment by Goldman Sachs Investment Group, the combination of affordable housing for valued employees, space for private economic growth and new educational assets highlights Booker’s holistic approach to improving his community. Throughout the city, a building boom included a number of new grocery stores, the city’s first new hotel construction in years and some 2,500 new units of affordable housing.

Booker also leveraged federal programs for the benefit of his city. Based on Let’s Move, First Lady Michelle Obama’s signature health initiative, Let’s Move Newark! is a citywide effort to bring together business, nonprofits, schools and health-care groups to develop a plan to combat childhood obesity and promote healthy lifestyle choices. The program prioritizes neighborhood access to fresh produce, physical activity programs and increased education on nutrition.

A grant from Nestlé is helping to fund, among other initiatives, a bilingual public health nutritionist to teach families the basics of improving diets of young children, including infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Understanding that residents need safe, efficient and affordable ways to get around the city, Booker led the charge to improve the city’s transportation infrastructure. An update of Newark’s master plan introduced a Complete Streets policy aimed at making roads and sidewalks safer. Booker also oversaw the creation of Newark’s first bicycle lanes, which foster a healthier lifestyle for residents and a greener environment that everyone can enjoy.

Booker was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2013.
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AS EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer, Nancy LeaMond oversees AARP's Community. State and National Affairs group, with responsibility for driving the organization's social mission on behalf of Americans 50+ and their families. LeaMond leads government affairs and legislative campaigns for AARP, widely seen as one of the country's most powerful advocacy organizations. She manages public education, volunteerism, multicultural outreach and engagement, and she leads major AARP initiatives that include supporting family caregivers through advocacy, education, and innovative programs and expanding AARP's local footprint in communities across the country. She also manages a team of 700 staff and more than 17,000 volunteers across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

During her tenure with AARP, LeaMond has led several landmark campaigns, including Divided We Fail, Health Action Now, You've Earned a Say and Take a Stand. She is a nationally recognized leader on health, retirement security and other issues important to older Americans. Her career spans 40 years in the governmental and nonprofit sectors. Prior to coming to AARP, LeaMond served as the Chief of Staff and Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Congressional Affairs at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). In this role, she oversaw operations and management of the 200-person agency and coordinated public affairs, private sector outreach, policy development and legislative strategy for the enactment of landmark trade legislation. She successfully managed legislative efforts that helped secure passage of major presidential legislative initiatives, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Uruguay Round (GATT) and China MFN.

LeaMond worked extensively on health care and pension issues before entering the trade field, including time in the Public Health Service, the Medicaid program, the Department of Commerce, the Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Education, and on Capitol Hill as chief of staff to a senior member of Congress in the Democratic leadership. In addition, for five years, LeaMond served as president of the Congressional Economic Leadership Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan forum for education and dialogue with members of Congress on economic competitiveness and trade issues.

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