



Local artist, Jane Bryant, painted this picture for the Watson Clinic Cancer Center. Jane (76) is a cancer survivor.

AGE-FRIENDLY LAKELAND

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Community Profile	4
Introduction to the Plan	6
1. How was the plan developed?	6
2. Who was involved in development of the Plan?	7
3. Who will manage implementation of the plan?	7
4. Other information important to the plan	7
Action Plan	8
Appendices and supporting documentation	9

Executive Summary / letter from Mayor or Elected Executive.

(Please see attached letter from City of Lakeland Commissioner, Don Selvage)

Community Profile



Founded in 1882 by land developer Abraham Munn and incorporated in 1885, Lakeland has built upon its historic character, heritage, philanthropy and volunteerism, offering its residents a true sense of place. From its pedestrian friendly downtown to quiet picnics on the shore of one of its lakes, Lakeland has something to offer each of its diverse residents.

Located in Polk County, approximately 35 miles east of Tampa and 55 miles southwest of Orlando along Interstate 4 (I-4), the City of Lakeland is home to just over 100,000 residents (250,000+ in metro Lakeland area) who experience a quality of life supported by a variety of arts and cultural opportunities. With many museums, theatres and several structures that appear on the National Register of Historic Places, Lakeland is also proud to boast the nation's largest single-campus collection of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture on the campus of Florida Southern College.

Lakeland currently enjoys many programs geared to our aging population offered by the City, the County and other community organizations. The City's 10-year growth management or "Comprehensive Plan" for 2010 - 2020 includes policies relating to Healthy Communities and Seniors as well as policies that work toward a walk and bike-friendly community, housing, safety and other age friendly principles. The City of Lakeland carries Bike Friendly, Walk Friendly, and Healthy Community designations. One example of how that impacts our community is a recent amendment to the development code to allow accessory dwelling units (granny flats) by right in a large area of the city subject simply to a compatibility review by staff.

On a regular basis, Lakeland residents have access to a variety of health fairs, educational workshops/symposiums and support groups offered by a variety of local organizations (both non-profit and for profit) and neighborhood associations. Many of these events target a senior audience as well as caregivers.

City Recreation offerings include a wide variety of classes/clubs including tennis, pickle ball, square dancing, bridge, golf, aquatics, shuffleboard and much more at multiple Lakeland community centers and pools. City programs are supplemented by private classes such as swim and silver sneaker fitness programs at the north and south Lakeland YMCAs.

Cultural offerings include Platform Art, Polk Museum, Lakeland Community Theatre, a monthly food truck rally and First Friday's downtown. Lakeland also enjoys regular antique car shows, gardening classes and more throughout the city. Lifelong Learning is a valued principal in Lakeland and is supported in a variety of ways including CATT/RATH Senior Scholars classes, Polk State Lifelong Learning Program, and other learning opportunities offered through Continuing Care entities

Transportation options for the aging population include door-to-door and fixed route transportation provided by the Lakeland Mass Transit District operating as "Citrus Connection," and door to door affordable and free transportation provided by non -profit organizations

Elderpoint Ministries, Faith in Action, and Volunteers in Service to the Elderly (VISTE). Some transportation services are also available specifically for veterans.

Meal services for older adults include delivered meals by Meals on Wheels and VISTE and Congregate dining made available through a county contract with MidFlorida Community Services at locations throughout Polk County, including the Catholic Charities Senior Activity Center in Lakeland and others. Various churches provide food banks and Catholic Charities and ElderPoint Ministries bring food goods directly into local food deserts.



The Polk Health Plan offers health care services to the working poor at clinics in Lakeland as does Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine (LVIM). Though much more is needed, multiple organizations such as churches, VISTE, Faith in Action and ElderPoint Ministries also assist with home repair, ramps and other basic needs.



Several professional organizations provide support to professionals who serve older adults. Most notably, Polk Better Living for Seniors (BLFS) conducts monthly meetings that provide networking and learning opportunities for area professionals. Other organizations include the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce, The Rath Center, and Central FL SCORE.

Lakeland plans to become more age-friendly by tapping in to existing organizations, programs and services already available assisting them in growing their programs and educating the community about their existence. Additionally, we will create strategic partnerships in both the for and not-for-profit communities to assist us in reaching directly into underserved neighborhoods to create specific strategies that address each area's specific needs in an intergenerational way. The Council has also explored how we might, as a community, continue to improve communication and the dissemination of information to our older residents and their caregivers/families.

Today, Lakeland continues to grow, develop and become one of the most sought-after places to live in the state. Employment opportunities are constantly emerging as many corporations, state-of-the-art healthcare facilities, institutes of higher learning and major national retailers become an active part of our thriving business community. Lakeland takes pride in the fact that our community and has its own identity. Retaining the charm of a small town, Lakeland is made up of great people from all walks of life and all age groups. We are proud to be a diverse

community. More than 25% of Lakeland's population is over 65. This demographic contribute to our robust community and Lakeland works hard to address the needs of all its residents.

(Note: Our elderly population is actually higher than the state average, which is higher than the national average. In some respects, we are today what many other communities will become over the next 10-20 years in terms of population demographics.)

Introduction to the plan

How was the plan developed?

Lakeland Vision is a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the community and address issues identified as priorities for the metro Lakeland area. Lakeland Vision has historically worked with the City of Lakeland to align goals and objectives for community growth, mobility and quality of life. Lakeland Vision and its director agreed to host a Senior Council effort beginning in 2010. A study conducted in 2010 identified several areas of opportunity as they relate to the aging population in Lakeland and a guiding document was created making it a priority of the group to address the following: seniors aging in place, transportation, housing, and health. The Senior Council became a designated task force under Mayor Howard Wiggs in 2014 and has since been renamed the Age-Friendly Council. Lakeland Vision brought together various partners to implement the AARP survey and subsequent action plan.

On December 21, 2016, our application to AARP to become a designated Age-Friendly community was submitted. In March of 2017 Laura Cantwell of the Florida AARP awarded the City of Lakeland with the designation of an Age-Friendly City during a City Commission meeting. We began to survey our community shortly thereafter, bringing Jeanne Hebert on board to spearhead the survey gathering effort. We utilized social media, visited many community events, Ethnic celebrations and community coffees to reach as many older adults as possible. We utilized an online survey and printed surveys to allow for a broad spectrum of participants. We sent email blasts through groups and organizations, encouraging older adults to take the survey online. We went to large mobile home parks (350+ residents), Continuing Care Centers, large and small, and neighborhood meetings. If they did not want to do the survey online, trained volunteers assisted them as they filled out the survey. As we collected the paper surveys, we enlisted the help of Lakeland Senior High students to input the responses. The students received volunteer service hours for their efforts and were a tremendous help. Much attention was given to make sure we reached each zip code in the city, each ethnic group represented in our city and a variety of ages from 45 to 100. The survey was conducted from late March 2018 to December 2018 collecting about 650 responses and reaching all our goals to have a representative survey reflecting our diverse community.

In January of 2018 Dr. Larry Ross of Florida Southern College analyzed the survey results and created a summary to use in the strategic planning process. In Spring 2018 Dr. Ross facilitated several strategic planning sessions enabling us to identify priorities based on survey results. Dr. Ross also assisted in forming our Mission and Vision statements. **Sidenote: In the initial stages of strategic planning it was our intention to combine our efforts with the Rath Center, however, after thoughtful consideration by both parties it was decided that it would be in the best interest of all to maintain our identities and partner instead. It will be a very valuable partnership, indeed.*

The next months were spent discussing possible action plan items and updating the City of Lakeland and Advisory Council of our progress. In October we identified our action plan and created a timeline for the beginning of its implementation (January 2019).

Who was involved in development of the Plan?

Age Friendly Lakeland Executive Committee:

Don Selvage – Former City Commissioner and Committee Chair

Laura Rodriguez – Executive Director, Lakeland Vision

Jeanne Hebert – Coordinator, Age-Friendly Lakeland

Liz Craven – Publisher, Elder Care Magazine and Lakeland Vision Board Rep

Steve Bissonnette – President, VISTE (Volunteers in Service to the Elderly)

Celeste Deardorff – Community Development, City of Lakeland

Tom Wodrich – Chief Planner, City of Lakeland

Who will manage implementation of the plan?

The Executive Committee plans to hire a part-time Director to create strategies and lead in the implementation of those strategies. Additionally, a steering committee comprised of 15-20 strategically diverse community leaders and citizens will be formed to provide insight and assist with the implementation of the Action Plan.

Other information important to the plan

For many years we have been aware that our community has much to offer the aging population, but we have also been painfully aware that Lakeland residents don't know that many of these programs and services already exist. Furthermore, they don't know where to begin to find them. It has been a constant desire in Lakeland for many years to have a brick and mortar senior center, a resource hub, that can connect residents with resources. As a part of our long-term plan, that had been placed on the back burner. However, during this process the Executive Committee has been actively pursuing strategic community partnerships to create

synergy and awareness of our city's Age-Friendly efforts. We have enjoyed the continued support of the City Manager and City Commission as well as the greater Lakeland community. Through many conversations and connections, some great opportunities have presented themselves that will allow us to further our mission, hopefully in a much shorter time frame than originally planned. We are currently pursuing a plan to co-locate with a planned Cultural Enrichment Center proposed and led by City Commissioner Phillip Walker. A mutually beneficial partnership that will allow both groups to address their individual missions in a beautifully creative way creating endless opportunities for multi-cultural, intergenerational engagement. Additionally, we are in conversation with the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce to possibly co-locate the Cultural Center and Age Friendly Lakeland in their planned 15,000 square foot Business Resource Center. We are unsure of what the outcome will be, but there is an abundance of positive energy in our community inspiring collaboration such as this and we will continue to pursue all possibilities we begin to implement our Action Plan

The Action Plan

The Name

Age-Friendly Lakeland

Tag Line

Connecting Older Adults to Resources and Services

Vision Statement

A community where older adults and their families are equipped with the necessary resources to age in place.

The Mission Statement

To promote, educate and advocate for older adults and their families.

Domains will we address

Domain 7: [Communication and Information](#)

STRATEGIES/ ACTIONS	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a 15-20-person Steering Committee of strategically diverse professionals and citizens at large. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have representation from industry segment, ie: legal, City Management, financial, 55+ residents, law enforcement, etc...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for and hire a part-time director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create specifics of the action plan items and implement under the guidance of the Executive Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Neighborhood Outreach Program and Volunteer Database: Connect through the existing City of Lakeland Neighborhood Coalition to identify 2-3 neighborhoods to begin with. 	<p>Identify a “Champion” in each neighborhood and assist them in discovering specific needs of their neighborhood and volunteers to assist them. Then we will connect them to specific resources and programs that will serve their specific needs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources and referrals for senior programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be provided in a multi-faceted way – ie: online, via phone, in print and in-person

Appendices and supporting documentation *(please click on the icon below)*



Application-Lakeland AARP-AFC.pdf



AFL Survey Summary Report 2018.pdf