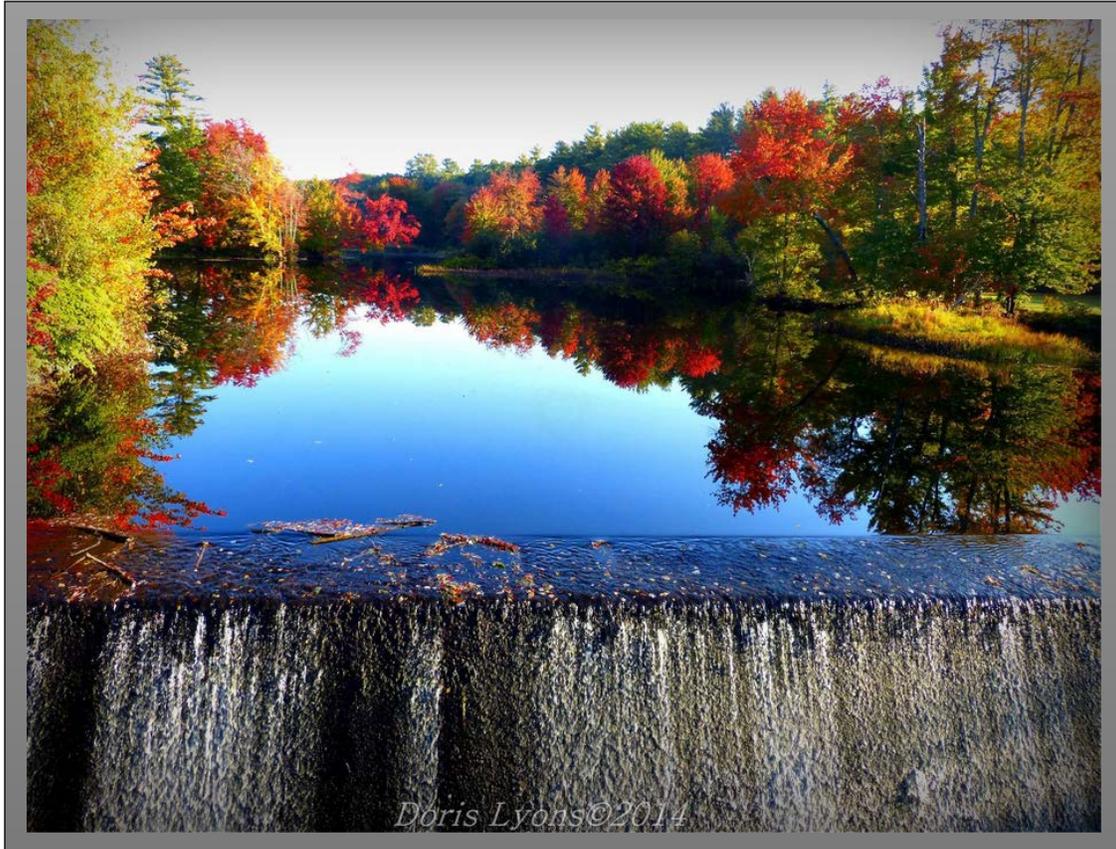


Town of Paris

Age Friendly Community¹



Paris, Maine

April 2018

¹ Photos obtained from the Town of Paris Strategic Plan, December 2014.

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Executive Summary

Introduction:

The Age-Friendly Initiative within the Town of Paris was spawned in 2015. At that time, the community of Paris was at a crossroads. Town government experienced a period of instability, taxes were on the rise, and community members rallied to identify measures to improve the stability – and livability – of the Town.

The Town commissioned a local business owner to conduct a survey, and establish a “Strategic Plan for Market Square,” the hub of business activity within the Town’s borders. The plan was completed and accepted by the Board in early 2015 and included many recommendations that are aligned with the overriding precepts of the Age-Friendly Community’s eight domains of livability.

Community members familiar with the Strategic Plan as well as the Age Friendly Initiative worked to earn entry into the Age Friendly Network of Communities. The Town Selectboard unanimously supported this effort, and Paris received its designation in the spring of 2015.

About the Community²:

Initially settled in 1779, the Town of Paris was incorporated on June 20, 1793. Upon the establishment of Oxford County in 1805, Paris was designated the County Seat. Paris became known as South Paris due to the separation of postal offices in the primary town area and the historic Paris Hill region. The town encompasses a total of 40.97 square miles and is bounded by Norway, West Paris, Buckfield, Hebron and Oxford. The 51.4 mile Little Androscoggin River flowing through Paris is the largest body of water. Town population has slowly but steadily grown from 4,801 in 2000 to 5,183 in 2018. Factories were the mainstay of employment opportunities, but they are no longer.

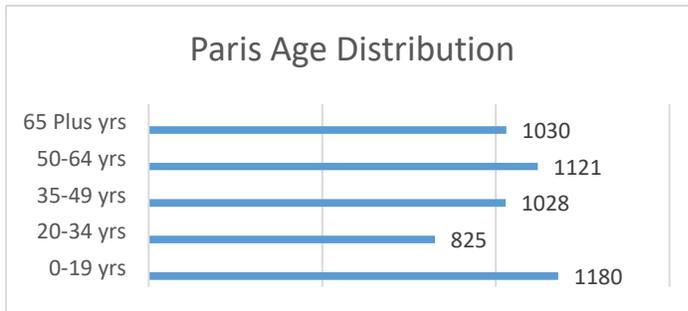
As a result of the doors closing on those factories, the Town faced a significantly different economic challenge. Residents commute to jobs outside of the area.

² A large part of the information presented here is reprinted from the narrative contained in the Town’s Strategic Plan for Market Square, December 2014.

Transportation continues to be a challenge. The lower number of local businesses results in lower tax revenues and concomitant limits to our financial resources.

Community Profile

The age distribution numbers from the 2010 census, as cited in the Town's 2014 Strategic Plan:



In other statistics,

- 10.9% did not graduate high school.
- 12.9% of household have include someone age 65 or older
- Median household income is \$35,483
- 17.2% live in poverty

The Birth of the Age-Friendly Efforts

In the fall of 2013, a group of concerned citizens and business owners formed and became the South Paris Revitalization Forum (hereinafter referred to as “the Forum”), and later morphed into the South Paris Revitalization Committee. While the goal of this committee was primarily based in economic development, the group recognized that the Town must not only address development of a welcoming business climate, but it must also address the needs of the residents and provide for their changing needs as they age and remain within our community. The Town must foster a community infrastructure to entice families to establish and establish Paris as a lifetime homestead, providing a continuum of services for its youth, working population, and seniors.

As is standard with Age-Friendly initiatives, the Town must integrate needs for each of the domains:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Communication and information
- Social participation
- Housing
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Transportation
- Community support and health services

Assessment of Community Needs that Guide the Age-Friendly Work

In June 2015, the Age-Friendly Community (AFC) committee received a grant from AARP to initiate efforts to assess the needs of the community. A Survey was developed to assess these needs, with individual inquiry into each domain area. In the summer of 2015, a multi-page survey was sent to 1000 residents, age 50 and older, seeking information regarding demographics, income, health and wellness concerns, and assessment of current availability of services. The Survey also assessed areas of social participation, volunteer and employment opportunities. The results of the Survey were professionally tabulated and are available in hard copy for review at the Town Office.

The Survey results were illuminating, refreshing, and disconcerting. The findings can be summarized in “Good News – Bad News” categories.

Good news → 70% of Town Residents rated the community as “excellent – very good – or good” with just 30% citing “fair – poor.”

Good news → 74% have resided in the Town for 15 years or more, with a whopping 32% at 45 years or more, and virtually all (98%) live in the state year round and only one sixth (17%) cited that they are extremely or very likely to move to a different home outside their community.

Good news → Three-fifths (60%) rate their health as “excellent – very good” and one quarter (27%) rate their health as “good.” Only 3% rated their health as “poor,” and 10% as “fair.”

Good (great!) news → Residents are extremely satisfied with the quality and availability of medical care, with an overwhelming 87% stating that they have access to well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities.

Bad news → High taxes were cited by 60% of the community as an additional reason to leave the community.³

Bad news → Availability of assisted living/senior housing was the second biggest factor (16%) that would cause residents to leave the community.

Bad news → Just three in ten feel their community has affordable home health care providers and/or fitness activities geared towards older adults.

History of Age Friendly Work

Coincidentally after the publication of the Survey, but yet not specifically due to any individual action by the individuals who had been spearheading the AFC work, innumerable individuals, town committees, community service groups, and the Town leadership launched a variety of efforts designed to improve and enhance the quality of life for residents, as well as establish Paris as a welcoming community that takes care of its own. These new initiatives and accomplishments include:

Establishment of the Economic Development Committee

This Committee was tasked to identify strategies to attract new businesses – and the employee with their families – to the town. By improving the business climate by having new business, the tax base will become broader and will eventually alleviate some of the burden on the individual taxpayer. Initiatives directly from this Committee include:

- Assessment of TIFs to attract new business
- Sponsoring a slogan contest that resulted in establishing a Town identity as the “Heartbeat of the Hills”
- Design and erection of signage welcoming travelers at each major thoroughfare

³ Thankfully, as the Town governance has stabilized, the tax rate has also stabilized. The town budget has been controlled and monitored closely to keep the mil rate level.

- Joining the Oxford Hills Chamber of Commerce to further network and market the plethora of opportunities available within the Town
- Sponsoring a holiday decoration contest to highlight civic pride in our downtown.

Establishment of the One Paris Hill Committee

This Committee was established to develop plans to develop a waterfront area along the Androscoggin River into a public park to rent/launch kayaks, hike trails, and encourage residents to engage in community-based, outdoor recreational activities. The Committee has been working with Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in applying for grants to rebuild a boat dock and continues to explore ways to enhance recreational opportunities within our borders.

Transfer of the Fox School to Avesta Housing

The Town recently acquired a former elementary school from the local school district. The building, known as “The Fox School, is located immediately adjacent to the property of one of the Town’s nursing homes. The Fox School was sold in 2017 to Avesta Housing, which is renovating the building into an elderly housing facility anticipated to have twelve units.⁴

Establishment of the Deering Community Center

In 2016, the property sited immediately next to the Town library was donated by the former owner (a church), and a non-profit corporation was established to oversee its use. The Deering Center has now established itself as a unique, centrally located, and extremely versatile facility to host a variety of events for all area residents. While still in its infancy, the potential for this Center to become a hub for social and life-enhancing activities is tremendous.

Gardeners Growing Healthy Communities (GGHC) – Addressing Food Insecurity

In 2016, a group of master gardeners formed a 501(c)(3) organization to provide free fruits and vegetables to area residents. GGHC built a garden in South Paris with over thirty raised beds and planted all sorts of seeds for summer harvest. In 2017, they added an area for fruit trees. Each spring, GGHS offers classes for

⁴ Market Square, the adjacent nursing home, also recently upgraded its offerings to include a “Memory Care” facility for long term, independent living for seniors.

persons wishing to become master gardeners. While there is a cost to the classes, scholarships are available. The students engage in classroom learning and are then required to volunteer a certain number of hours each month in the gardens. In June, GGHC members, students, and others from the community assemble at the garden to harvest the bounty, weigh the produce, and transport it all to a local church for distribution. There are no income barriers to receive this free produce. GGHC members also draw product from partner gardens established at the Maine Veterans home and in Rumford, as well as from their personal homes.

Route 26 Road Project

The Town Manager has worked closely with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to identify improvements to Route 26, the major thoroughfare through town. While this Route 26 project has been in the works for a number of years, the Town Manager continues to spearhead efforts to assure the safety of residents, including but not limited to:

- Implementation of crosswalk lighting
- Clear marking of crosswalks
- Assessment of lighting alternatives (LED v. traditional) for cost and utility purposes

Broadband Access

Two groups are currently taking steps to improve broadband access for the community. As a predominantly rural town, coverage is expensive and scattered. Efforts are ongoing through Norway-Paris Public Television and another group to expand and improve internet accessibility.

Accessibility and Enjoyment of Town Park for Elderly/Disabled Residents

The “gem” of the Town of Paris rests in an area known as Moore Park. The site hosts the Paris Veterans Monument, with three granite markers, plaques, and a sitting area for visitors to pay respects to the veterans who call Paris home. The Park sports an excellent playground for families to bring their children to play in a safe, gated area. The centerpiece of this gem is a beautiful gazebo, lit with festive holiday decorations during the Christmas season. A regular concert series by area music groups is scheduled and published each summer. Recent improvement to the Park:

- Installation of electrical outlets throughout the park
- Installation of Moore Park signage with area to announce upcoming events
- Establishment of handicapped-accessible toilets

Introduction of Town Programs to Assist Individual Residents

Town employees – most notably in the Town Office and Police Department – have established a number of initiatives to provide assistance to local residents (of any age):

- Project Snowflake: Coordinated through the PD, elderly or disabled residents can call in with a request for assistance with shoveling, roof clearing, etc. The PD will pair the individual with a volunteer to assist.
- Christmas toys: The Town Office solicited and obtained an incredible stockpile of Christmas gifts and toys for needy families, at no cost to the resident.
- School supplies: The Town Office maintain a location for donated school supplies to be made available to any town resident. Given the boon in “grandparents raising grandchildren,” this resource provides much needs assistance to those on a fixed income struggling to raise children.

In another excellent move by the Town leadership, a part-time recreational director has been hired to serve and provide oversight for the Town Recreation and Parks Committee. This Director has been phenomenal in taking an active role in implementing information regarding all town and community events and opportunities through social media.

Finally, the #1 need cited by residents that affects their ability to remain in Paris is control of taxes. The current selectboard, with the leadership of the new Town Manager, has Town spending under control. The annual budget has identified surplus funds from a variety of sources, and the most recent audit reported that the Town’s finances are stable and in good shape. While this effort to control taxes will continue to be at the forefront of priorities for this Board and the Town Manager, the perceived tax crisis of 2015 has abated.

Summary of Plan/Ideas for Each Domain

As noted above, the numerous improvements within the Town of Paris since being designated as “Age Friendly” have simply “just happened.” The Town was at

a crossroads – all could see needs and means for improvement – and many stepped up and made it happen. The following summarizes current work and identifies future opportunities for improvement in each area.

EIGHT DOMAINS OF LIVABILITY:

A. **OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS**

- Availability of safe and accessible recreational facilities
- Town progress:
 - o Paris One committee
 - o Route 26 road project

B. **TRANSPORTATION**

- Safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation
- Develop roster of trusted agents to serve as drivers for emergent needs
- Town progress:
 - o Liaison with Western Maine Transportation Services to set up/add routes for outlying medical appointments and shopping to L-A area

C. **HOUSNG**

- Availability of home modification programs for aging in place
- Identify and develop a comprehensive list of trusted agents for:
 - o Home-based care services
 - o Home repair services
- Range of age-friendly housing options
- Town progress:
 - o Avesta housing project
 - o Market Square shifting to Memory Care

D. **SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**

- Access to leisure and cultural activities
- Opportunities for older residents to socialize and engage with their peers as well as with younger people
- Town progress:
 - o Active liaison bridging the gap with town services

- Already established is Reverend Caffey's Senior Center which hosts seniors every Monday for a free lunch and activities. A donation of \$1 is appreciated.

E. RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Programs that promote ethnic and cultural diversity
- Multigenerational interaction and dialogue
- Thoughts on future:
 - o Develop Golden K (Kiwanis club for older folks who wish to do community service
 - o Tap into the local community service groups to expand their horizons to develop programs to assist elderly residents.
- Town/community efforts:
 - o Rev. Caffey's senior center on Paris Hill (inclusive)

F. CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

- Paid work and volunteer activities for older residents and opportunities to engage in the formulation of policies relevant to their lives
- Town progress:
 - o Many programs published on Town FB page

G. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

- Access to communications technology and other resources so older residents can connect with their community, friends and family
- Thoughts on future:
 - o Web site
 - o Interactive kiosk or other centralized informational booth
- Town progress:
 - o Potentially partner with Norway to establish a weekly TV talk show on local public television station

H. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

- Health clinics
- Programs that promote wellness and aging
- Town progress:
 - o Project Snowflake for seniors needing help

- Christmas donations: toy drives, winter clothing, ongoing donations, centrally located
- Backpack program (local program, but local residents also benefit from other area programs)

Challenges:

Information dissemination is the biggest challenge. The Town graciously granted the AFC team exclusive use of an area at the town office for publication of information relating to these efforts. This bulletin board has been of limited utility, as to benefit someone, that person needs to be able to get to the town office during normal working hours, to review the information.

The world is changing, and our elderly population is being left behind. Many have no internet access, so therefore no email, no Facebook or other social media, leaving them isolated and out-of-touch with this vibrant community. The local print media has been approached, and they are very receptive to establishing a regular feature to highlight resources available.

A **central point of contact** or committee is essential to provide ongoing oversight of all of these innovative and welcome improvements and serve as a resource for the individuals and committees doing the work, as well as individual committee members. Eventually, and ideally, a non-profit could assume responsibility for these efforts.

The services of a **fiduciary** would be helpful to hold/control monies that are raised by the AFC committee. To date, the Town bookkeeper has managed the grant funds that were received through the AARP grant. Approximately \$800 remains available.

Finally, a separate committee with a team of concerned and interested citizens needs to be established to ensure that the great work continues, and to identify unmet needs of the community.

The Plan from Here:

Establish an Ad Hoc Town⁵ Steering Committee that will accomplish the following:

⁵ Preferably, the steering committee would be a town-sanctioned committee with specific direction and “global” goals that can incorporate the many moving parts of these efforts into one comprehensive plan. Ideally, the reins of the efforts would eventually be passed to an existing or newly organized non-profit. This committee could assess not only the Age-Friendly objectives, but also “quality of life” factors for all ages.

- a. Develop a resource list of services and programs currently in place to assist our elderly population;
- b. Develop a comprehensive communication plan to get the word out, assessing the avenues of:
 - i. Direct mail
 - ii. Newspaper
 - iii. Internet
 - iv. Other social media
 - v. NPC-TV
 - vi. Cable programs
 - vii. Local hospital and long-term care facilities
- c. Identify potential grant opportunities to fund full-time coordinator with possible establishment of 501(c)(3) organization.
- d. Conduct liaison with other area towns to determine programs where development of a partnership and sharing of resources appear prudent.

Recommended Composition of the Committee:

- Shannon Moxcey
- Mike Dignan, Town Library and member of Deering Memorial
- Rev. Mary Beth Caffey, First Baptist Church
- Community Concepts representative
- Seniors Plus representative

Other potential partners for specific objectives/programs:

- Oxford County Sheriff's Office
- Paris Police Department
- Healthy Oxford Hills
- Western Maine Community Action
- Western Maine Transportation
- United Way
- Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice
- Career Center
- Advertiser Democrat
- NPC-TV

PARIS AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN SUMMARY TABLE

CATEGORY A: "Sustain and Maintain" - those activities of benefit to an age-friendly community that are already being implemented in

Objectives	Town Progress/ Project to Date	Action Steps	Metrics	Status
Domain: Respect and Social Participation				
Goal: To maintain and increase participation in Rev. Caffey's senior center on Paris Hill				
A.1. Promote inclusive senior center programing, particularly those programs that celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity	Rev. Caffey's senior center on Paris Hill (inclusive)	Who: Communication sub-committee What: Will promote participation in the senior center and programming offered at the center.	Increase in participation in Rev. Caffey's senio center on Paris Hill	ongoing
Domain: Community Support and Health Services				
Goal: To support current town programs that promote wellness and aging.				
A.2. Support of Age - Friendly programs offered by the Town of Paris, other groups, and individuals	1. Project Snowflake 2. Christmas donations: toy drives, winter clothing, ongoing donations, centrally located. 3. Backpack program Additionally, to identify and support the many programs other groups that are already providing services by partnering, sharing resources and information, etc.	Who: Communication sub-committee What: Will promote existing programs and services.	Increase in donations and people requesting help. Increase in participation in programs and services.	ongoing
Domain: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings				
Goal: To support the Town of Paris effort to increase availability of safe and accessible recreational facilities.				
A.3. To provide volunteers, publicity and support for Paris One Committee and the Route 26 Road Project	1. A member of the AF Committee will attend meetings of the Paris One Committee; 2. To provide age-friendly advice to the governance committee of the the Route 26 Road Project	Who: Sarah Glynn What: Will attend meetings and provide advice as projects move forward.	Yes/No: Inclusion of age-friendly goals in town projects to increase safe and accessible recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.	ongoing

Domain: Transportation

Goal: To develop safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation

<p>A.4. To support town efforts to liaise with Western Mountain Transportation to set up-add routes to outlying medical appointments and shopping in the L-A area. ☐</p>	<p>1. A member of the AF Committee will attend meetings of the Paris One Committee; 2. To provide age-friendly advice to the governance committee of the the Route 26 Road Project</p>	<p>Who: Sarah Glynn What: Will attend meetings and provide advice as projects move forward.</p>	<p>Yes/No: Inclusion of age-friendly goals in town projects to increase safe and accessible recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
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Domain: Housing

Goal: To support the Town of Paris efforts to provide a range of age-friendly housing options

<p>A.5. To support town efforts to provide housing options for older, income-qualified residents and supportive housing for people living</p>	<p>1. Avesta housing project; 2. Market Square shifting to Memory Care.</p>	<p>Who: Sarah Glynn What: Will attend meetings and provide advice as projects move forward.</p>	<p>Yes/No: Inclusion of age-friendly goals in town housing projects.</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
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CATEGORY B: Action items that will be implemented in the next 12 months.

Objectives	Town Progress/ Project to Date	Action Steps	Metrics	Status
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Domain: Civic Participation and Employment

Goal: To increase awareness of paid work and volunteer opportunities and to give older residents a way to actively engage in the formula

<p>B.1. Development of an Advisory Council (AC)</p>	<p>The Town of Paris has appointed a municipal staff person to attend all age-friendly meetings and support the work. Sarah Glynn has been appointed Chair.</p>	<p>Who: Sarah Glynn, Town Manager and Select Board, Town of Paris, diverse community representatives. What: Put in place a fully-functioning group that both reports to the Town of Paris and oversees the progress of the Action Plan</p>	<p>Yes/No: Advisory Council in place</p>	<p>Re-Forming</p>
<p>B.2. Increase awareness of paid work and volunteer opportunities</p>	<p>The Town of Paris publishes many opportunities on the town Facebook Page</p>	<p>Who: Economic Security and Community Engagement Sub-Committee What: 1. Survey local businesses and voluntary organizations to determine if there is a need for older workers and volunteers. If there is a need, to identify what the need is. 2. Develop a working group to get word out about paid and volunteer opportunities</p>	<p>Yes/No, workgroup formed. Survey results; number of opportunities publicized and increased participation in paid and volunteer opportunities.</p>	

Domain: Respect and Social Participation

Goal: To increase multigenerational service opportunities.

B.3. Development of multigenerational interaction and dialogue	see "Respect and Social Inclusion: Maintain for current program"	Who: Economic Security and Community Engagement Sub-Committee. What: Develop Golden K (Kiwanis club for older folk who wish to do community service).	Yes/No: Golden Circle started	
		What: Tap into local community service groups and schools to expand their horizons to provide service opportunities for older residents working with younger people and healthy, able-bodied people working to help frail older residents to age safely in their homes for as long as they want to.	Number of schools and community groups contacted in the first year. Number of successful partnerships and participants thereafter.	

Domain: Communication and Information

Goal: To increase access to communication technology and other resources so that older residents can connect with their community, fr

B.4. Partner with Norway to establish a weekly TV talk show on local public access station.		Who: Communicaton Subcommittee. What: Schedule a meeting with Norway to determine interest and capacity for creating a weekly program on the public access station.	Yes/No: Meeting Scheduled	
B.5. Develop an Age-Friendly website		Who: Communicaton Subcommittee. What: Identify a web developer to work with the committee to create a site with information about resources and activities/programs.	Yes/No: Webiste up and functional; thereafter website analytics	
B.6. Create an interactive kiosk or other centralized information booth		Who: Communicaton Subcommittee. What: Identify a web developer to work with the committee to create a site with information about resources and activities/programs.	Yes/No: Meeting with town; grant identified. Kiosk created. Thereafter, number of people using the kiosk/taking material.	

Domain: Community Support and Health Services

Goal: To increase access to programs that promote wellness and aging.

B.7. Street Safety: Placement of Stanchions on crosswalks on Main St.		Who: Sarah Glynn; Maine DOT, DPW, Town of Bethel What: to make motorists within the village of Bethel more aware of crosswalks	Number of stanchions placed. Perceived safety of pedestrians.	
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B.8. Morning Greeting Program		<p>Who: Economic Security and Community Engagement Sub-Committee</p> <p>What: Create a system for Seniors in the area to feel more secure that someone will check on them if they fail to respond to or check in with daily calls</p>	<p>Number of callers and "callees" recruited.</p> <p>Qualitative data asking how calls have affected both people receiving and making calls.</p>	
B.9. Resource Directory		<p>Who: Communication Sub-Committee</p> <p>What: to create a comprehensive on-line and printed directory of services available to seniors in our community</p>	<p>Number of calls for assistance to library, town office</p>	
Domain: Transportation				
Goal: To develop safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation				
B.10. To develop a roster of trusted agents to serve as drivers for emergent needs	see "Transportation: Maintain for current program"	<p>Who: Transportation Subcommittee</p> <p>What: Will attend meetings and provide advice as projects move forward.</p>	<p>Yes/No: Inclusion of age-friendly goals in town projects to increase safe and accessible recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.</p>	
Domain: Housing				
Goal: To provide safe, reliable resources for older residents who want to age safely and comfortably in their own homes				
B.11. To identify and develop a comprehensive list of trusted agents to support people's desire to age in place.	see "Housing: Maintain for current program"	<p>Who: Housing Sub-Committee</p> <p>What: Identify and develop a comprehensive list of trusted agents for home based care services and home repair services.</p>	<p>Yes/No: Creation of vetted list of contractors and service providers.</p>	
Domain: Social Participation				
Goal: To increase access to opportunities for socialization				
B.12. To liase bridging the gap with town services.	see "Respect and Socail Inclusion: Maintain for current program"	<p>Who: Sarah Glynn and Activity Committee, working with Town Recreation Dept.</p> <p>What: Identify and develop a comprehensive array of services to increase socialization oportunities.</p>	<p>Number of programs implemented and participation.</p>	

CATEGORY C: Long-term Action Items. These are complex projects requiring many resources. We will actively seek partnerships to

Objectives		Action Steps	Metrics	Status
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Domain: Social Participation

Goal: To increase access to opportunities for socialization

<p>C.1. Community Center (virtual or distributed)</p>		<p>Who: Economic Security and Community Engagement Sub-Committee What: to support the development of a “distributed” community center, making use of various facilities and building more programs, until such time as a physical center can be developed</p>	<p>Development of a data base identifying all spaces in the area that may be used by the public</p>	
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