Philadelphia: An Age-Friendly, Livable City for All

2020 Livable Communities Action Plan and Assessment Report

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CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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JAMES F. KENNEY
MAYOR

February 6, 2020

Bill Johnston-Walsh, State Director
AARP Pennsylvania
One Liberty Place
1650 Market Street, Suite 675
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Bill Johnston-Walsh:

I am pleased to support the Livable Communities: Age-Friendly Philadelphia Action Plan, our city's blueprint to make Philadelphia an even greater city and livable community. This plan is the result of deep neighborhood engagement and the help of strong community partnerships.

Philadelphia is growing and expanding in many ways. It is now experiencing a new trend of consistent job and population growth, and we must harness its momentum to ensure that the benefits of this success reach people in every neighborhood of the city. Growing with equity presents us with many opportunities for our future. Above all, we share a responsibility to ensure these opportunities reach everyone in our city, across all ages and abilities.

We keep this goal in mind with every planning effort we embark on to make Philadelphia a more livable community for all ages, whether it's how to increase affordable housing options; how we make our streets safer and more accessible thru *Vision Zero*; how we improve parks and green spaces; or how we help enhance the quality of life for older Philadelphians.

As Mayor, it is my vision, my mission and my honor to improve the lives of Philadelphians of all ages. In partnership with AARP, we do this through the Age-Friendly Philadelphia Action Plan.

Sincerely,

James F. Kenney

Office of the Managing Director
BRIAN ABERNATHY
Managing Director

1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Suite 1430
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1683

February 11, 2020

I am excited to be launching Philadelphians Age-Friendly Action Plan. This plan is truly grounded in community input, gathered from listening sessions, workgroups, and contributions from the AARP Livable Communities Network. Together, we crafted a plan that will have a significant impact and deliver on our commitment to make Philadelphia a more livable community for all ages.

This plan focuses on specific goals the City of Philadelphia and its partners are committed to achieving within the next five years to continue to make our city a place where people can live and age well. It is important to note the amazing breadth of age-friendly work that is happening in our community beyond this plan. Becoming age friendly is a process of continual improvement and that requires action by all of us: community organizations, residents, business leaders, funders, and state and federal partners.

We could not do this work without the collaboration of community partners. The AARP Livable Communities Network's research and facilitation expertise, planning skills and thoughtful approach has helped us move towards our goals.

The collective commitment and leadership around livable and age-friendly communities is impressive, and we are especially thankful for their engagement. In 2012, we entered the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Network through AARP. I'd like to thank AARP Pennsylvania for being a driving force for this plan, conducting research, sharing best practices from other communities, and supporting our progress to date.

Most of all, we are grateful to Philadelphians, of all ages, who contributed their voices, their skills and their time to making this a meaningful plan. Without their leadership and participation, this project would not be possible.

On behalf of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Aging it is my honor to share this roadmap toward achieving an age-friendly livable community in Philadelphia.

Sincerely,

Nora Dowd Eisenhower
Executive Director
Mayor's Commission on Aging

C I T Y   O F   P H I L A D E L P H I A
C I T Y   C O U N C I L

April 16, 2020

The Committee on Intergenerational Affairs & Aging is pleased to partner with AARP Pennsylvania in rolling out Philadelphia's Age-Friendly Action Plan. We recognize that Philadelphia can only achieve its specific goals if city officials and our partners are committed to implementing changes over the next five years.

We thank AARP Pennsylvania for being a driving force for this plan, conducting research, sharing best practices from other communities, and supporting our progress to date. The collaborative and collegial relationships developed between community organizations, residents, business leaders, funders, and state and federal partners is impressive. As chair and vice chair of the Committee on Intergenerational Affairs & Aging, our committee looks forward to building these relationships further as we work to fulfill our commitment to making Philadelphia a place where people can live and age well.

Sincerely,

Kendra Brooks
Councilmember At-Large
Committee chair

Derek Green
Councilmember At-Large
Committee vice chair

COMMITTEE ON INTERGENERATIONAL AFFAIRS AND AGING

Executive Summary

Philadelphia, like most cities in the United States, is experiencing a major demographic shift. Increasing diversity in terms of age, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status presents us with both opportunities and challenges. In order to address the aging of our population and to create a welcoming, inclusive community, residents of all ages and a wide variety of community organizations engaged in a multi-year process to create an "age-friendly, livable communities for all" assessment and action plan.

An age-friendly, livable community is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, offers supportive community features and services for residents of all ages, and promotes physical and psychological well-being of residents across the lifespan. It is a place where people can live their entire lives, if they so desire, and where they feel welcome, connected, valued, and engaged.

Our efforts involved a multi-phased, multi-generational process to assess Philadelphia's "age-friendliness," beginning with a report submitted to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2012, which highlighted some of our age-friendly features as well as areas needing improvement. This was followed by an initial community assessment designed to examine Philadelphia residents' views on the eight "domains of livability" identified by the WHO. We gathered data through AARP's Age-Friendly Community Survey, which more than 1,100 residents aged 45+ completed, and four multi-generational focus groups. Based on this assessment and the city's priorities, a decision was made to focus on three areas: housing, transportation, and outdoor spaces and buildings. We conducted five community conversations in 2019 for additional input from residents across the city about these issues.

Action Plan: Summary of Key Strategies

We decided that Philadelphia would focus on three of the eight WHO domains—housing, transportation and open spaces and buildings—although the other five domains remain integral to the study.[1] Members of AARP's Livable Communities Network formed three committees to develop action steps for each of these areas.

Housing

- Expand the number of affordable housing units, particularly for older adults and people with disabilities.

- Increase efforts to provide property tax relief, particularly for longtime residents who have experienced significant increases in their real estate bills.

- Expand services that enable individuals, particularly older adults and people with disabilities, to make housing repairs and modifications.

- Increase the diversity of new and existing housing options, particularly for older people and individuals with disabilities.

- Improve walkable and transit accessible community resources and services that improve the quality of life for residents of all ages.

Transportation

- Ensure that public transportation is safe, affordable, reliable and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

- Save lives by improving traffic safety to achieve Philadelphia's Vision Zero initiative.

- Implement the City's Complete Streets policy to ensure safe access for walkers, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Ensure that parks and trails are accessible to people of all ages and abilities and have adequate amenities.

- Create additional green spaces in neighborhoods that currently are underserved.

- Ensure that public buildings (e.g. community/recreation centers, schools, libraries and health centers) are accessible for people of all ages and abilities and serve as civic gathering places.

- Ensure that commercial and residential areas are clean, safe, and green.

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[1] The remaining five domains are: "social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and community support and health services." See https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age-friendly-cities-communities/en/

Key Findings from the Assessment

- **Overall livability:** Survey respondents were generally positive about Philadelphia; 69.43% of respondents rated the City as a "good," "very good," or "excellent" place to live as they age.

- **Important features:** All age groups identified the following features of a livable community to be important: a safe environment, recreational opportunities for all ages, and reliable transportation. Middle-aged and older adults also considered affordable housing, outdoor places to gather, the inclusion of diverse populations in community activities, and a sense of social connectedness to be important.

- **Neighborhood-based services and programs:** Respondents identified the availability of educational, employment and volunteer opportunities, as well as culturally appropriate support services in one's neighborhood, as important. Some expressed concerns that resources and services are not evenly distributed across sections of the city.

- **Lack of awareness of resources and activities:** Respondents reported a lack of awareness of services, opportunities, and community events/activities, which suggests a need to tailor communication strategies to different age and cultural groups. Raising awareness of the diversity across Philadelphia could support understanding the complex needs of different neighborhoods.

- **Overall concerns:** Although there were some differences by age and neighborhood, respondents identified challenges related to both the built and social environments. The major areas of concern across groups related to the following: safety, reliable public transportation, maintaining housing livability through upkeep and maintenance, well-maintained outdoor spaces, and inclusion of diverse populations. Issues of affordable health and homeowner's insurance, isolation due to lack of transportation, and lack of technology skills were unique to older adults.

- **Challenges related to housing, transportation and outdoor spaces and buildings**:

  » **Housing:** Respondents identified the lack of affordable housing, increasing tax assessments, and availability of affordable home modification and repair services as issues across all neighborhoods.

  » **Transportation:** Philadelphians across the city expressed concerns about sanitation and safety when using public transportation, the deteriorated condition of roads and sidewalks, traffic safety, and lack of adequate and affordable parking.

  » **Outdoor spaces and buildings:** Residents highlighted a lack of green spaces and amenities in some neighborhoods and concerns about safety, poorly maintained and understaffed public facilities.

Demographic Profile

"Philadelphia is a growing city, undergoing a sweeping transition, most evident in the age and diversity of those who live there," a 2019 Pew Charitable Trusts reported. This growing diversity holds both opportunities and challenges for Philadelphia and its efforts to become an age-friendly city. The median age of its 1,567,442 residents is 33.8 years; 25% are under 20, 27% are 20-35, 24% are 35-54, and 24% are 55 and older. There are 276,000 Philadelphia residents age 60 years and older, representing 19% of the total population. Of the 60+ population, 36% are 75 and older, and 9% of the older adult population is over age 85.

Philadelphia is also racially and ethnically diverse: 42.9% of the population is African American, 35.3% is Non-Hispanic White, 12.4% is Hispanic/Latino, 6.9% is Asian, and 2.5% are mixed or from other countries. More than 200,000 immigrants, mostly from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, reside in the city; 23% of the immigrants speak a foreign language at home. Of the older adult population, 44% is White, 43% is minority-born in the United States, and 13% is foreign-born. According to a 2016-2020 report by the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, 64% of older residents in the Hispanic community have difficulty with English, and 81% of Asian older adults are not proficient in English.

In addition, 26% of Philadelphia residents live in poverty. More than 400,000 Philadelphians live below the federal poverty line (37% of children and 43% of Latinos). Over 40% of the city's older adult population lives in poverty; 8% lives in deep poverty (50% of Federal Poverty Guidelines).

Age-Friendly Commitment

Philadelphia is committed to making our community a better place for residents of all ages, abilities, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels. We define aging as a lifelong process and value inclusivity, connection, support and engagement across the life course. We want to be a city in which people of all ages

- have access to safe and affordable transportation and housing as well as outdoor spaces that promote healthy development,

- participate actively in community activities and contribute to civic life,

- receive the services they need, and

- are treated with respect.

Moving forward, residents, community organizations, and city departments will work together to make Philadelphia a place that is good for growing up and growing older.

Action Plan 2020

Our Process

AARP PA's Livable Communities Network (LCN), a group of representatives from a wide variety of community organizations and city Departments in Philadelphia, in collaboration with AARP PA consultants Nancy Henkin, Ph.D. and Teresa Elliott, MPA, assumed major responsibility for developing the Action Plan which is required for the WHO age-friendly designation. Following a review of the data from the initial Community Assessment Report and the subsequent five community conversations, LCN members formed three committees: Housing, Transportation, and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings. Each committee, with the guidance of a committee chair, developed a set of recommendations which were then integrated into a draft Action Plan and presented to the entire Livable Communities Network on July 9, 2019.

Our Plan

The Action Plan contains recommendations that align with plans that Philadelphia has developed, although some of the action steps may require additional resources to implement.

Housing

Housing that meets the needs of residents across the lifespan is a critical element in age-friendly cities. Over the last 10 years, Philadelphia has seen high levels of construction and renovation. Most of these new units, however, have entered at the high end of the market while the city's supply of affordable housing has decreased (Philadelphia City Council, 2019). One of Philadelphia's biggest challenges is to revitalize our existing housing stock. Nearly 90 percent of units are over 30 years old, and many need repairs and upgrades. Low-income homeowners often can't afford basic maintenance, creating unhealthy conditions particularly for children and older adults. Currently Philadelphia has approximately the same percentage of renters (51%) as homeowners (49%). Nearly 54% of renters spend at least 30 percent of their income on rent, a figure considered "rent-burdened" under federal guidelines (PEW, 2019).

Philadelphia has made great strides in the areas of home repair and affordable housing. Restore, Renew and Repair, a new home preservation program, helps homeowners access low-interest rate loans to invest in their properties. The Longtime Owner Occupants Program (LOOP) is a real estate tax relief program for eligible homeowners whose property assessments increased by 50% or more from the past year. The Basic System Repair program provides free repairs to correct electrical, plumbing, heating, structural, and roofing emergencies in eligible owner-occupied homes in Philadelphia.

In an effort to address the affordable housing crisis in Philadelphia, City Council recently voted to approve four important bills designed to create incentives for developers to include affordability in their projects or to make a contribution to the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund. They also would transfer $19 million in general funds to the Division of Planning and Development to develop new affordable homes, repair or preserve existing affordable homes, and support down payment and closing cost assistance.

Although progress is being made in this area, the lack of affordable housing, the rise in tax assessments, and the need for home modifications to facilitate "aging in place" remain major issues in our community. The following recommendations were developed to address the housing challenges in our city. They were drawn from the community conversations and/or the following plans:

- Philadelphia City Council, Narrowing the Gap.

- Philadelphia City Planning Commission Philadelphia, 2035: The Comprehensive Plan

- City Housing Action Plan

Overall Goal. To increase the supply of housing that is accessible, affordable (reflecting neighborhood income) and visitible for people of all ages.

1. Expand the number of affordable housing units, particularly for older adults and people with disabilities.

   1.1. Encourage the permanent appropriation of general funds to the Housing Trust Fund for development of affordable housing.

   1.2. Increase funding for the preservation of expiring affordable rental housing developments so that they continue to serve the communities where they are located.

   1.3. Evaluate the mixed income housing density bonus program to ensure that it is attractive to developers and encourages more on-site affordable housing units.

   1.4. Require that all multi-family housing developments using public land maintain a set percentage of affordable units.

   1.5. Ensure that the Land Bank is adequately funded so that it can prioritize the sale of public land for the development of affordable rental and homeownership housing.

   1.6. Increase availability of affordable rental units that are well-maintained and safe. Encourage private landlords to accept Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental subsidies.

   1.7. Evaluate drivers of construction costs and make recommendations for how to bring costs down (e.g. parking minimums, labor rate for affordable housing development).

   1.8. Increase outreach to communities of color, including limited English speaking elders, regarding affordable housing programs.

1.9. Make shallow rent subsidy pilot program permanent and expand to create more deeply affordable units for low-income seniors and others.

1.10. Make code enforcement of private rental units more effective to ensure that they are safe and healthy.

1.11. Encourage housing developers to use universal design concepts for new housing to support visitability and accessibility.

1.12. Use green building standards to increase long term affordability for residents.

2. Increase efforts to provide property tax relief, particularly for longtime residents who have experienced significant increases in their real estate bills.

2.1. Ensure that no seniors or longtime home-owners lose their homes to tax foreclosures because of inability to pay rising tax assessments by

- Advocating to expand the Pennsylvania Property Tax and Rent Rebate Program to more older Philadelphians.

- Expanding funding for Save Your Home Hotline and housing counselors to help older adults and longtime residents access tax relief programs.

- Promoting existing programs such as the Longtime Owner Occupant Program (LOOP), Homestead Exemption, and the Senior Tax Freeze.

- Exempting rental income from school income tax when low-income homeowners are home-sharing.

2.2. Ensure that property assessments are fair, transparent, and equitable, and make the appeal process easier.

2.3. Provide legal services to resolve "tangled title" issues that threaten the ownership rights of individuals who inherited a property from a family member who left no will.

3. Expand services that enable individuals, particularly older adults and people with disabilities, to make housing repairs and modifications.

3.1. Increase resources for and use of the Basic Systems Repair Program, Adaptive Modifications Program, Weatherization Assistance Program, Healthy Rowhouse Project, and Utility Energy Programs to benefit renters and homeowners with limited mobility and very low incomes.

3.2. Promote the new Restore, Repair, Renew home preservation loan program as an alternative for homeowners who do not need a full subsidy and cannot wait for repairs.

3.3. Publicize a list of contractors that the city has subcontracted to do home repairs.

3.4. Educate private landlords and tenants on housing licensing process, compliance, and health and safety practices (e.g. indoor air quality, lead exposure).

3.5. Centralize and promote educational and financial resources for homeowners to improve and maintain their homes (e.g. 311 system, senior centers, Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs), Community Development Corporations (CDCs), block captain network).

- Expand the Save Your Home Hotline to include linkages to all housing-related problems.

4. Increase the diversity of new and existing housing options, particularly for older people and individuals with disabilities.

4.1. Improve and expand the Home Finder website to include more available units that are welcoming to residents who are 50+, are LGBTQ, have disabilities, and are limited English speakers.

4.2. Explore options for grandfamilies housing (older relatives caring for children), intergen-erational home sharing, and co-housing.

4.3. Promote the allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs or "granny flats") as a right in residentially zoned areas to increase affordability and allow more seniors to age in place.

4.4. Encourage transit-oriented housing development near large transit hubs across the city.

Current and Potential Partners:

- City of Philadelphia:
    - » Department of Planning and Development
    - » Division of Housing and Community Development
    - » Philadelphia Housing Authority
    - » Philadelphia Planning Commission
    - » Redevelopment Authority

- Banks

- Block Captains

- Business Improvement Districts

- CLARIFI

- Land Bank

- Neighborhood Advisory Committees

- Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC) and its members

- Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA)

- Registered Community Organizations (RCOs)

Transportation

A robust transportation system that is user-friendly for all age groups and safe, well-maintained streets are important components of age-friendly communities. Philadelphians, particularly young people and older adults, are highly reliant on public transit. One third of total residents and one half of residents in poverty do not have a car (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). As traffic congestion worsens, on-time performance of buses is falling. The existing fleet of trolleys is aging and not accessible to people with disabilities, and residents have expressed concern about sanitation and safety in subways. In addition to concerns about public transportation, we heard from residents of all ages about the condition of roads and sidewalks, traffic safety problems, and lack of adequate parking.

Our city recognizes that children, older adults, persons living with physical disabilities, and those living below the poverty line are impacted disproportionately by traffic deaths and severe injuries (City of Philadelphia, Connect, 2018). The City is committed to achieving its Vision Zero Action Plan and the goal of zero traffic-related deaths by 2030. In addition, through its Complete Streets initiative, Philadelphia is actively working to ensure that streets will be designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, and motor vehicle drivers. In order to address some of the challenges related to public transportation, SEPTA is redesigning its comprehensive bus network and exploring other strategies for improving public transit. Philadelphia prides itself on the fact that people 65+ can ride for free on all Transit Routes (e.g. bus, trolley, high speed, and regional rail), and the city has demonstrated a commitment to increasing the availability of bicycles for all age groups, particularly in underserved neighborhoods, through its Better Bike Share Partnership.

We recommend the following steps to improve the public transit system, increase traffic safety, and ensure that our roads and streets are in a state of good repair and welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds. They align with the following plans and/or are drawn from the community conversations:

- Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, 2018-2019 Listening Sessions

- City of Philadelphia, 2018, Connect: Philadelphia's Strategic Transportation Plan

- City of Philadelphia Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability, 2018, Indego Business Plan Update

- City of Philadelphia, 2017, Vision Zero: Three Year Action Plan

- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, 2017, Connections 2045 Plan for Greater Philadelphia

- Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 2015, Trail Master Plan

- SEPTA, 2015, Cycle-Transit Plan

- City of Philadelphia, 2012, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan

1. Collaborate with SEPTA to ensure that public transportation is safe, affordable, reliable and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

    1.1.   Significantly improve maintenance, cleanliness, security, frequency and reliability of SEPTA vehicles, stations, stops, and immediate surrounding areas.

    1.2.   Ensure that SEPTA drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding. Enforce regulations on illegally parked cars at bus stops.

    1.3.   Make SEPTA Key more family-friendly and eliminate cost for transfers.

    1.4.   Evaluate bus shelters for benches and/or lean bars.

    1.5.   Make all transit stations accessible, using universal design principles when possible.

    1.6.   Increase police presence on subways and at transportation centers.

    1.7.   Improve signage: use larger, more legible fonts; identify wheelchair accessible routes and location of rest rooms and elevators.

1.8. Improve reliability of paratransit system.

1.9. Educate people of all ages about ways to access public and private transportation options.

1.10. Conduct training for SEPTA drivers related to needs of older people and individuals with disabilities.

1.11. Encourage corporations to incentivize employees to take public transportation.

1.12. Expand communications about public transportation to multilingual communities.

1.13. Move toward a 100% electric bus fleet.

1.14. Prioritize transit and active transportation on city streets.

1.15. Continue to expand the availability of public use bicycles.

2. Reduce traffic deaths to zero by 2030 (Vision Zero).

2.1. Accelerate and expand Vision Zero capital projects on the High Injury Network.

2.2. Install speed bumps/cushions, enforce speed limits, and expand automated enforcement measures city-wide.

2.3. Offer communities the ability to easily request a robust suite of low-cost traffic calming measures.

2.4. Install leading pedestrian intervals in all signalized crossings on High Injury Network and extending amount of time for pedestrian crossings.

2.5. Maintain, highlight, and demarcate bus zones, cross walks, and bike lanes.

2.6. Increase the number of marked cross walks and institute an easier process for requesting mid-block crossings.

2.7. Increase traffic calming city-wide focusing on commercial corridors, park roads, and inter-sections around schools and senior centers.

2.8. Invest in and expand Vision Zero's current public education campaign that focuses on driver behavior.

2.9. Ensure that Transportation Network Companies and taxi drivers adhere to rules of the road, discharge/load passengers appropriately, and are regulated appropriately.

3. Ensure safe access for walkers, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities (Complete Streets policy).

3.1. Deploy enough resources to enforce regulations about double parking and parking on sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and bus stops.

3.2. Deploy enough resources to enforce regulations pertaining to construction obstruction of sidewalks and bike lanes to ensure pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

3.3. Build a 40 mile high-quality bike lane network.

3.4. Continue to invest in the repavement of streets to reach a rate of 130 miles of resurfaced streets a year to address crumbling roads and potholes.

3.5. Expand pedestrian-scale street lighting and convert all streetlights to LEDs.

3.6. Invest in repair of city-owned sidewalks and explore a cost-sharing program to incentivize the repair of privately-owned sidewalks by property owners.

3.7. Fund an improved level of "state of good repair" of existing and new bicycle infrastructure through more regular maintenance.

3.8. Improve the 311 reporting system to (a) provide more detailed "requests" around street and sidewalk conditions and (b) provide better and more timely customer service when responding to requests.

3.9. Discourage parking minimums to encourage better mobility.

3.10. Rationalize parking management policies to create more efficient use of curb space.

3.11. Continue expansion of safe micro-transportation to ensure a base of active mobility options is available throughout the city.

Current and potential partners:

- City of Philadelphia
  - » Commerce Department
  - » Managing Director's Office
  - » Office of Transportation, Infrastructure and Sustainability
  - » Parks and Recreation Department
  - » Police Department
  - » Streets Department
- Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
- Clean Air Council
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Lyft
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Philadelphia Corporation on Aging (PCA)
- Philadelphia Parking Authority
- Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia
- School District of Philadelphia
- SEPTA
- Taxi Limousine Commission
- Traffic Enforcement Officers
- Uber
- Vision Zero Alliance

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Vibrant outdoor and public spaces are key elements of an age-friendly community. Every neighborhood should have a basic green infrastructure that includes tree planting, public and community gardens, and green storm water management solutions. Urban green spaces can have both environmental and health benefits for residents in a city. In addition to offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and attenuating storm water, they provide spaces for physical activity, recreation, social interaction, and stress relief. Research suggests that green spaces also decrease feelings of depression and worthlessness (South, 2018) as well as contribute to a reduction in gun violence. Philadelphia is fortunate to have many parks, a trail and greenway network that spans more than 200 miles, and waterfront areas. However, our assessments suggest that accessibility, attractiveness, the quality of facilities, and security vary greatly across the city. In many low-income neighborhoods, residents of all ages lack access to open spaces that are clean, safe, and easily accessible.

Public buildings that can serve as civic gathering places for residents of different ages, backgrounds, and socio-economic levels are also important to children, teens, and adults of all ages. Libraries, recreation/community centers and health centers can provide opportunities for people to learn, play and work together. These can be spaces where people from different generations and walks of life can build mutual respect. However, public facilities across the city differ in terms of their physical structure, programming, staffing, and utilization. Our assessment findings suggest that much needs to be done to renovate and reinvigorate these important public buildings so that they can foster a greater sense of community.

The City of Philadelphia has taken concrete steps to improve the quality of open spaces and public buildings. There are more than 400 neighborhood parks, recreation centers, and libraries in Philadelphia. They serve as safe spaces for people to learn, play, exercise, and access important services. Through Rebuild, a new initiative made possible by the Philadelphia Beverage Tax, hundreds of millions of dollars are invested in making physical improvements to parks, recreation centers, and libraries.

In order to increase neighborhood safety and reduce gun violence, Philadelphia developed a new plan called the Road Map to Safer Communities. Strategic plans in urban agriculture, urban forestry, and the Food Policy Advisory Council are also being developed. The city also supports the cleaning and greening of vacant lots through a variety of programs, and a new Zero Trash and Litter Cabinet was recently established to reduce the waste entering landfills or conventional incinerators, combat litter, and enhance the cleanliness of streets and public spaces.

We recommend the following action steps to address concerns about outdoor spaces and public buildings. The recommendations align with the Philadelphia Trail Master Plan, Green2015, Philadelphia 2035, and Office of Sustainability's Greenworks, and are drawn from the community conversations.

Overall Goals. (a) To enhance the quality, quantity, and accessibility of green spaces in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia; and (b) to improve the physical infrastructure and programming at public facilities such as libraries and recreation centers.

1. Ensure that parks and trails are accessible to people of all ages and abilities and have adequate amenities.

   1.1. Install benches in shady areas and other furniture that would promote social interaction and physical activity (e.g. tables for chess or dominoes, adult and child exercise equipment, picnic tables).

   1.2. Improve maintenance of equipment in parks and overall sanitation.

   1.3. Increase number of restrooms, trash cans, and water fountains in public spaces.

   1.4. Improve signage such as trail/mile markers and translate into multiple languages in areas that are populated by culturally diverse residents.

   1.5. Complete Circuit and city trail projects that encourage alternative modes of mobility in order to increase accessibility for people of all ages and abilities.

   1.6. Increase security by improving lighting, adding cameras, and increasing foot/bike patrols in parks and other public spaces.

   1.7. Install public art on trails, in neighborhood parks, and at park entrances.

   1.8. Install water features such as fountains and "spraygrounds" in public spaces.

   1.9. Ensure that parks are connected to neighborhoods and increase number of accessible entrances to all parks.

2. Create and preserve green spaces in neighborhoods that currently are underserved.

   2.1. Ensure adequate funding for the creation and ongoing maintenance of green spaces.

   2.2. Bring blighted, vacant land properties to "cleaned and greened" status so that they can be converted into productive use as pocket parks, community gardens, farmers markets, parklets, plazas and works of public art. Make these processes more transparent and streamlined.

   2.3. Increase number of planters and other beautification efforts along commercial corridors where this is a priority.

   2.4. Engage community residents of all ages in

the planning and design of new green spaces.

   2.5. Convert sites such as school yards, recreation centers, and library branches into neighborhood green spaces accessible to the public outside of school/center operating hours.

   2.6. Expand Circuit Trails network to low-income neighborhoods with limited access to green spaces.

   2.7. Require a community greening implementation plan for private developers (e.g. 1% for community greening in any development receiving tax benefits or city support).

   2.8. Use public space to increase access to fresh food, particularly in neighborhoods with barriers to food access.

3. Ensure that public buildings (e.g. community/recreation centers, schools, libraries, and health centers) are accessible for people of all ages and abilities and serve as civic gathering places.

   3.1. Improve signage that shows where restrooms, elevators, and ramps are located.

   3.2. Create welcoming spaces through vibrant programming in recreation and senior centers that promote interaction across ages and cultures.

   3.3. Support use of local public facilities as community hubs and multi-use centers that provide programming for all age groups.

   3.4. Co-locate public facilities and organizations that serve different age groups and/or offer different services.

   3.5. Engage youth and older adults in the planning of Rebuild and other capital projects.

   3.6. Improve maintenance of sidewalks in front of all public spaces.

4. Ensure that commercial and residential areas are clean, safe, and green.

   4.1. Improve and increase funding for the maintenance of city-owned pavements and sidewalks.

   4.2. Promote neighborhood safety and beautification programs that engage residents of all ages.

   4.3. Increase foot patrol in residential areas.

4.4. Increase number of smoke-free zones in public spaces.

4.5. Invest in city-wide clean-up programs.

4.6. Educate residents of all ages about the benefits of green spaces and how to address problems/concerns.

4.7. Install seating along commercial corridors.

4.8. Expand programs such as "play streets" and Philly Free Streets in order to encourage outdoor activities for children and families.

Current and potential partners:

- City of Philadelphia
  - » Commerce Department
  - » Community Life Improvement Program (CLIP)
  - » Department of Public Health
  - » Division of Housing and Community Development
  - » Green Stormwater Infrastructure program
  - » Parks & Recreation Department
  - » Philadelphia Planning Commission
  - » Streets Department
  - » Tree Philly (Parks & Recreation Department)
  - » Water Department
  - » Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet

- Fairmount Park Conservancy
- Free Library of Philadelphia
- Jefferson University Landscape Architecture Program
- Land Bank
- Mural Arts Philadelphia
- National Park Service
- Philadelphia Corporation on Aging
- Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee (PMBC, network of block captains)
- Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
- Philadelphia Art Museum
- Parkway Council Foundation
- Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations and its members
- Rebuild
- Soil Generation
- The Parks Alliance
- Trust for Public Land
- Urban Tree Connection

Implementing Our Action Plan

Neighborhood Matters

Our community assessment process confirms that "where you live" affects the quality of life at all ages. Philadelphia is known as a City of Neighborhoods, so examining the extent to which features of a livable community exist in different parts of the city is critical. Moving forward, the city will work closely with community organizations, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, to implement neighborhood-appropriate solutions to challenges related to the built environment, the social environment, and community services.

Engaging All Generations

The voices of multiple generations, not just older adults, in the age-friendly assessment and action plan has been critical to this effort's success. It is important to continue engaging residents of all ages in our process and to address issues from a lifespan perspective rather than designing solutions for separate age groups. This multigenerational and inclusive planning approach will help us meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's elders.

Addressing Diversity and Inclusion

An age-friendly and livable community is more than good housing, transportation, and outdoor spaces. The desire of people to live in neighborhoods wherein neighbors support and appreciate each other transcended location and age. As our city's diversity continues to increase, we are committed to creating vehicles to promote understanding and empathy across age, race, and ethnic groups. Providing culturally appropriate services and translating materials in different languages are necessary steps in creating a city that is both livable and welcoming.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

As we implement our plan, we will continue to build cross-sector partnerships among organizations serving different age groups and constituencies. Our outreach to a network of organizations will hopefully result in a broad, multigenerational base of support around issues such as affordable housing, accessible transportation, safe outdoor spaces, and other areas of common concern. Through this inclusive process, disparate segments of our community will recognize their intercon-nectedness and come together for the common good.

Moving Forward

The continued partnership of AARP PA, city departments, community-based organizations, and residents of all ages will be critical to the successful implementation of this action plan. The Livable Communities Network and its three committees will meet on a regular basis over the next several years to ensure and assess progress. As we move forward, we are committed to deepening and broadening our efforts to support and empower all generations and make Philadelphia a good place for growing up and growing older.

Philadelphia: An Age-Friendly, Livable City for All

Community Assessment Report
Phase 1: Assessing the Eight World Health Organization Domains

Methodology

We gathered data for the initial community assessment from several sources. These included a 2015 Ralston Center report documenting the needs of older adults in the West Philadelphia neighborhood surrounding the University of Pennsylvania and Ralston Center itself. They also include the distribution and analysis of the AARP PA Livable Communities Survey (2015) and focus groups in four neighborhoods.

In 2014–15, Ralston Center held three focus groups and eight listening sessions in West Philadelphia with older adults (active and homebound) and direct service providers as part of their Age-Friendly West Philadelphia Initiative. Findings suggested that resources must target those most in need, as opposed to a "one size fits all" approach, because the senior population is so diverse, particularly in terms of economic and health status. Findings also identified social isolation as a major issue, particularly for older adults with chronic physical and mental health issues. Quality of services, unsafe or unclean public spaces, affordable housing, resources for homeowners who want to age in place, and public transportation were among the concerns West Philadelphia residents shared.

From 2015–2016, the Mayor's Commission on Aging (MCOA) distributed an online and shortened version of AARP PA's Livable Communities Survey to older Philadelphia residents. This survey focused on three domains: transportation, housing, and employment.

Approximately 890 adults responded. Most of them were 50+; 15% were 75+. The survey found that 49% were White/Caucasian, 45% were Black/African American, 1.6% were Asian, and the rest were "other." Approximately 5% were of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino origin.

During the same time period, AARP PA distributed the full version of the Livable Communities Survey, which included questions on WHO's eight domains, to 3,000 AARP members. A total of 337 completed surveys were returned. Of those, 82% of respondents were between 50 and 74, 16% were over 75, 46% were White/Caucasian, 44.5% were Black/African American, and 8% were "other."

In 2017 the MCOA and AARP PA conducted focus groups in four diverse Philadelphia neighborhoods to better understand the challenges and opportunities related to building an "age-friendly/ livable community for all ages." They constructed intergenerational and multicultural groups to examine commonalities and differences across populations and to ensure that they heard diverse voices from each neighborhood. The selected neighborhoods were diverse in racial/ethnic composition and income level. AARP PA and the MCOA worked with community organizations in Philadelphia's eastern, north, south, northeast, and northwest sections to recruit participants. Of the 66 focus group participants, 14 were under 25, 21 were between 26 and 54, and 31 were over 55.

What We Learned

Overall Livability

Of the 893 respondents to the MCOA survey, 9.63% see Philadelphia as an "excellent" place to live as they age; 27.10% see it as "very good," 32.70% as "good," 22.40% as "fair," and 8.17% as "poor."

Top-Rated Features of a Livable Community

The AARP PA 2016 survey rated health and wellness, transportation and streets, housing, and outdoor spaces and buildings as the most important community features for residents age 45+. The multigenerational focus groups provided additional information on differences by age groups, as well as differences by neighborhood. A safe environment, recreational opportunities for all ages, and good transportation were the features mentioned most.

Differences in Importance of Features by Age Group

Youth. Young participants in the focus groups indicated that safe neighborhoods, recreational activities, and access to good transportation were most important to them. Other important features included good schools, job opportunities, and being around positive people.

Middle Age. Middle-aged participants discussed the importance of safe neighborhoods and accessible transportation, as well as affordable housing, outdoor places for people to gather, inclusion of diverse populations in community activities, and social connectedness.

Older Adults. Older adults identified safety, access to reliable transportation, affordable housing, home repair services, connectedness to neighbors, proximity to businesses, green spaces, and support for people with disabilities as important aspects of a livable community.

Top-Reported Community Needs

We cannot definitively state the top community needs due to the three sources' different aims.

According to the AARP PA 2016 report, the top four community needs are:

1. job opportunities (job training and range of jobs);

2. outdoor spaces (well-maintained and accessible public restrooms);

3. community information (clearly printed); and

4. civic engagement (volunteer training).

The MCOA report focused primarily on the challenges related to transportation and streets, housing, and jobs. The focus groups conducted in four diverse communities suggested that people of all ages were mostly concerned with safety, transportation, affordable housing and home repair services, and respect/inclusion. A deeper examination of the focus group data revealed some of the differences based on the age of participants.

Differences in Challenges by Age Group

Youth. The young participants identified violence/crime, access to recreational activities, lack of jobs, and overcrowded schools as the major challenges they faced in their neighborhoods.

Middle Age. In addition to safety concerns, middle-aged participants suggested that lack of financial resources, affordable housing, good public schools, recreational programs, reliable transportation, and support services for limited English-speaking people were major needs in their neighborhoods.

Older Adults. Older adults face many of the same challenges as other generations, particularly related to safety concerns. However, the issues of affordable health and property insurance, isolation due to lack of transportation, and lack of technology skills were unique to this age group.

Differences in Challenges by Neighborhood

The neighborhood in which one resides can profoundly affect the quality of life for all age groups, but most importantly for children, youth and older adults. Accessibility of services and trust among neighbors have been shown to influence health and emotional well-being. We intentionally conducted focus groups in different planning districts to better understand how income and demographic variables influence residents' perspectives on neighborhood challenges.

Planning District North. In this community, 9% of the residents are foreign-born; 94% are minority; approximately 38% of all residents have incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level. The crime rate in Eastern North is one of the highest in the city. Participants in all age groups reported safety as the primary concern.

Planning District South. In this part of South Philadelphia, 16% of residents are foreign-born; 53% are minority; 19% of all residents have incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level. Participants identified social inclusion, particularly of diverse ethnic groups, as a challenge.

Planning District Upper Northwest. In this area, 5% of residents are foreign-born; 75% are minority; 19% have incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level. The focus group participants, who were mostly from Mt. Airy and Germantown, emphasized the importance of neighborliness and social connectedness.

Planning District Central Northeast. This part of the Northeast has 24% foreign-born residents and 40% minority residents; 13% of all residents have incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level. Many of the focus group participants focused on the perceived disparities in services and resources.

Key Issues in Each Domain

Based on the surveys conducted by MCOA and AARP PA, as well as the data gathered from the four focus groups, the following issues emerged in each of the eight domains.

1. Transportation and Streets

Access to reliable public transportation, traffic safety, and well-maintained streets and sidewalks affect the mobility of people at all stages of life.

Survey Results. The MCOA survey indicated that 70% of respondents drive themselves, 77% use public transportation, and 78% walk to places for shopping, errands or appointments. Table 1 lists the key features related to transportation, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 1

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Transportation and Street Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Accessible and convenient public transportation	77.87	89.88
2. Affordable transportation	77.92	77.10
3. Well-maintained public transportation vehicles	74.82	68.58
4. Reliable public transportation	78.11	71.84
5. Safe public transportation stops or areas	80.50	61.36
6. Special transportation services	71.60	68.14
7. Well-maintained streets	75.83	45.00
8. Easy to read traffic signs	73.29	65.89
9. Enforced speed limits	71.07	38.92
10. Public parking lots, spaces, and areas to park	63.64	48.77
11. Affordable public parking	63.30	37.94
12. Well-lit, safe streets, and intersections for all users	81.78	49.45
13. Audiovisual pedestrian crossings	63.58	32.10
14. Driver education/refresher courses	50.00	29.39

The top gaps between "importance" and "presence" include

1. well-lit streets and intersections (32.33%)

2. enforced speed limits (32.15%)

3. audio-visual pedestrian crossings (31.48%)

Survey results suggest that traffic safety issues should be addressed for older adults to age well in their communities.

Focus Group Perspectives. An analysis of the focus group data supported the above survey findings and revealed additional concerns about the quality of the transportation system in Philadelphia and traffic safety issues.

Public Transportation. Participants of all ages noted inconsistent bus schedules and lack of signage when bus stops change locations. Many older people identified lack of bus shelters with benches, difficulties mounting the bus steps, and lack of designated seating for senior citizens as concerns. Other concerns included the length of time it takes for older people to get a SEPTA card, as well as issues related to subways (e.g. cleanliness, and lack of or difficulty finding elevators in subway station).

Streets/Traffic Safety. Many participants cited the need for more traffic lights on corners with frequent accidents, as well as the need to increase the time allotted for pedestrians to cross streets. Participants also indicated that potholes and road construction cause problems in many neighborhoods, and they recommended additional streetlights that are stronger in intensity and more crossing guards near schools in several neighborhoods.

Parking. Most participants indicated that parking is very limited in the city and people play "car politics." Some of the older adults reported a limited number of handicapped spots, particularly at senior centers.

2. Housing

The availability of affordable housing and reliable home repair services is essential to age-friendly communities. Philadelphia's aging infrastructure and gentrification in targeted areas affect both the quality of housing and feelings of belonging among the residents.

Survey Results. In the 2015 MCOA Survey, 57.79% of respondents reported that they had lived in the area for 45 years or more. Almost 60% said they wanted to remain in their community as they aged, which is lower than national AARP surveys. Approximately 46% said they were not at all or not very likely to move to a new home when they retire; 51% said they were not at all or not very likely to move to another area. Their primary reasons for moving out of the area were

1. finding a home in which to age independently;

2. looking for an area with a lower cost of living;

3. moving to a different-sized house; and

4. fearing for personal safety. (Many older adults said they would have to make home modifications, primarily in their bathrooms, as they aged.)

Table 2 lists the key features related to housing, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 2

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Transportation and Street Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Contractors who are trustworthy, do quality work and are affordable	67.29	37.75
2. Well-maintained homes and properties	61.81	70.45
3. A home repair service for low-income and older adults	61.30	22.17
4. Seasonal services for low-income and older adults	55.78	28.35
5. Affordable housing options	58.32	32.09
6. Homes with elderly friendly equipment installed	55.12	29.40
7. Well-maintained and safe low-income housing	75.83	45.00

The top gaps are

1. home repair services (39.13%)

2. well-maintained and safe low-income housing (33.28%)

3. contractors who are trustworthy (29.54%)

The large gaps in almost all categories suggest that affordable housing and home repair services are major challenges for older residents and should be addressed to help people age in place.

Focus Group Perspectives. Once again, the focus group data supported the survey findings related to housing and revealed the following additional concerns.

Affordability. Focus group participants of various ages discussed affordable housing as an issue. Some cited gentrification as a reason for increasing home and rental apartment costs.

Lack of Senior Housing. Many focus group participants pointed to the lack of senior housing in some neighborhoods and the long waiting lists.

Home Repairs. Participants commented that the housing stock is very old in many neighborhoods and that they had difficulty finding affordable home repair services.

3. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Residents of all ages want safe, accessible outdoor spaces that enable them to participate in community life. Several issues affecting the quality of life in neighborhoods across the city emerged.

Survey Results. Table 3 lists the key features related to outdoor spaces and buildings, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 3

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Outdoor Space and Building Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Sidewalks that are in good condition	98	49
2. Well-maintained public buildings that are accessible	97	45
3. Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians	95	50
4. Well-maintained and safe public parks	95	49
5. Public parks with enough benches	94	37
6. Neighborhood watch programs	94	35
7. Well-maintained public restrooms	94	17

The top gaps are

1. well-maintained public restrooms (77%)

2. neighborhood watch programs (59%)

3. public parks with enough benches (57%)

The large gaps in almost all aspects of this domain indicated a need to make public spaces safer and more accessible for older adults.

Focus Group Perspectives. The mixed-age participants in the focus groups emphasized slightly different issues related to outdoor spaces. Although some concerns were neighborhood-specific, many were consistent across the city. Residents of all ages and backgrounds expressed safety concerns.

Sidewalks and Lighting. Participants described sidewalks in some neighborhoods as cracked, uneven, and difficult to walk on. Many people have fallen on sidewalks throughout the city.

The challenges for people with disabilities are particularly great. Some older participants also mentioned fear of falling as a challenge, particularly in the winter.

Parks. Although the city has many parks, they are underutilized, according to most of the focus group participants. Older adults expressed fear of going to the parks in all neighborhoods except the Northwest.

Buildings. Most neighborhoods have recreation centers and libraries. Participants indicated that recreation centers are often crowded and geared more for elementary school children than adolescents. Although some recreation centers and older adult centers are located next to each other, programming between older adults and children/youth is limited. In addition, concerns about safety prevent some people from going to libraries and centers.

4. Respect, Inclusion, and Social Participation

Respect, inclusion, and social participation are important elements to consider for Philadelphia, due to its growing social, economic, ethnic and demographic diversity. Social connectedness can positively affect individual health and well-being, as well as community safety.

Survey Results. Table 4 lists the key features related to respect, inclusion, and social participation, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 4

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Respect, Inclusion, and Social Participation Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Activities that offer senior discounts	95	36
2. Activities that are affordable to all residents	95	32
3. Widely publicized reliable information about activities	95	29
4. Activities specifically geared towards older adults	94	33
5. Activities that involve both younger and older people	94	32
6. A variety of cultural activities for diverse populations	93	29
7. Local schools that involve older adults in events and activities	91	21
8. Conveniently located venues for entertainment	90	44
9. Social clubs such as book, gardening, craft, or hobby	88	27
10. Continuing education classes	87	29

The top gaps are

1. local schools that involve older adults in events (70%)

2. widely publicized reliable information about activities (66%)

3. a variety of cultural activities for diverse populations (64%)

As in other domains, there are large gaps between what older adults consider important and what they believe exists in their communities regarding the social environment. This suggests the need to raise awareness about what activities are available and to develop a broader continuum of activities that are affordable, culturally appropriate, intergenerational, and stimulating.

Focus Group Perspectives. The focus groups enabled residents of different ages and backgrounds to share their perspectives on Philadelphia's social environment. Data indicate that although many opportunities exist, an increase in respect, inclusion, and social participation would make Philadelphia a more welcoming place for all ages, races and cultures.

Respect. Participants of all ages spoke about the tendency for people to stereotype based on age. Young people believe they are judged based on their age and/or appearance. Young adults also said their workplace does not always value them due to negative stereotypes about millennials or assumptions that young people "don't have the skills or knowledge" to do their job. Older participants felt that younger generations disrespected

them at times. However, many older adults also spoke positively about young people and how they appreciated being asked about their lives. Many of the older adults were critical of parents who did not teach respect. Ultimately, both youth and older adults agreed on the importance of mutual respect and that how you approach someone from another generation "makes all the difference."

Inclusion/Connectedness. Participants of all ages cited the importance of living in a neighborhood in which residents know and support each other. The level of perceived support from neighbors varied, depending on what neighborhood people live in and the length of time they have lived there. Increasing age and ethnic diversity was cited as both an opportunity and a challenge, and some renters expressed lack of inclusion in neighborhood decision-making. Many others spoke of cross-

racial/ethnic tensions and the difficulties that immigrants and refugee elders faced, particularly in South Philadelphia. These discussions revealed that immigrants already felt little ownership of space and culture and that the current political climate makes it even harder for them to integrate into the broader community.

Social Participation. The group discussions focused much more on neighborhood activities than city-wide ones. The extent of activities varied greatly across the four locations. In Northwest and South Philadelphia, all age groups emphasized the importance of bringing people together for fun days, cleanups, food events, and community fairs. However, some participants noted that events that target just one group in a community (e.g., an "oldies-but-goodies" night) do not help in building cross-age connections.

5. Civic Engagement

Research suggests that contribution to one's community through volunteering, political action, or advocacy can positively affect one's well-being. Many civic engagement opportunities seem to exist in the Philadelphia area; however, the assessment process identified several barriers to engagement.

Survey Results. Table 5 lists the key features related to civic engagement, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 5

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Civic Engagement Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Opportunities for older adults to participate in decision-making roles	92	24
2. Volunteer training opportunities to better perform volunteer role	91	14
3. A range of volunteer activities to choose from	89	23
4. Easy to find information on available local volunteer opportunities	89	18
5. Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	89	16

The top gaps are

1. volunteer training (77%)

2. transportation to and from volunteer opportunities (73%)

3. easy to find information on available local volunteer opportunities (71%)

These gaps suggest a need for a stronger civic engagement infrastructure to ensure that older adults are prepared for and able to access a range of meaningful volunteer activities. Awareness of the opportunities and support for existing volunteer programs could increase the perception that these resources are present in the community.

Focus Group Perspectives. Most focus group members said many opportunities to get involved in their communities exist, ranging from overseeing a free lunch program at a park to advocating for community improvements. Often people get involved in their community in response to a crisis.

Yet, in many neighborhoods, the level of civic engagement is low. Participants reported the following barriers to civic engagement:

Fear of leaving one's immediate surroundings. One respondent said, "People want to be engaged, but when they hear about the area, they say, 'It's a dangerous area, so we can't do that.'"

Difficulty accessing information. Often volunteer opportunities are posted on social media or websites. However, many older adults are not comfortable accessing information on the Internet or on social media.

Lack of involvement of all ages in decision-making. Several young people expressed their desire to be involved in planning community events rather than just participating in them. Local leadership development programs for residents seem scarce.

6. Job Opportunities/Employment

Although employment opportunities are important for residents of all ages, data from the surveys and focus groups indicate that young people (particularly those with criminal records) and immigrants face the greatest challenges in finding good jobs.

Survey Results. Table 6 lists the key features related to job opportunities and employment, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 6

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Job Opportunities/Employment Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	46.57	50.76 Not sure
2. Job training opportunities for older adults	46.15	54.85 Not sure
3. Jobs adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	53.37	65.83 Not sure

Focus Group Perspectives. Both youth and older adult focus group participants reported limited job opportunities and job training programs in their neighborhoods, particularly for immigrants and refugees who may not have the skills needed to obtain specific jobs. For young people, criminal records are major barriers to employment. In many low-income areas, young people who have been convicted of minor felonies are ineligible for many jobs. For those returning from prison, the challenges are even greater.

7. Community Information

Age-friendly communities make sure that information about services and community events is easily accessible. However, many people reported a lack of awareness about events and activities.

Survey Results. Table 7 lists the key features related to community information, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 7

The Reported Importance and Presence of Key Community Information Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Access to information in one central location	95	19
2. Information delivered in person to people with difficulty leaving home	94	18
3. An automated community information source	94	22
4. Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed	94	17
5. Free access to computers and the internet in public places	93	57
6. Information that is available in different languages	87	20

The top gaps are

1. printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed (77%)

2. access to information in one central location (76%)

3. information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home (76%)

These wide gaps suggest a need to improve and diversify the communication vehicles used to disseminate information. Ensuring availability of information in multiple languages and large print will help older adults access services and participate more fully in community life.

Focus Group Perspectives. How people obtain information about community programs, services, and opportunities differs between generations. Young and middle-aged people reported that they use social media to get information. Although some older adults are computer-savvy and can navigate social media sites, other said announcements in local newspapers and church bulletins or word of mouth were the most effective ways of distributing information. Focus group participants also indicated that providing information in different languages is a critical step in promoting the inclusion of immigrants and refugees. They suggested that signage in areas that have a large ethnic group should be translated into the language of that group.

8. Community Services/Health and Wellness

An array of high-quality, affordable support services contributes to a livable community for all ages. Older adults particularly value a strong healthcare system with qualified health providers.

Survey Results. Table 8 lists the key features related to community services and health and wellness, the percentage of respondents who considered them important, and the percentage who indicated that these features were present in their communities (MCOA survey).

Table 8

The Reported Importance and Presence of Community Service/Health and Wellness Features

Features	% Important	% Present
1. Well-maintained hospitals and healthcare facilities	98	72
2. A variety of healthcare professionals	98	64
3. Conveniently located emergency care centers	98	56
4. Conveniently located health and social services	98	50
5. Easy to find information on local health and supportive services	98	37
6. Fitness activities specifically geared toward older adults	98	43
7. Well-trained certified home health providers	98	30
8. A service that helps seniors find and access health services	98	35
9. Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff	97	65

The top gaps are

1. well-trained certified home health care providers (68%)

2. a service that helps seniors find and access health services (63%)

3. easy to find information on local health and supportive services (61%)

Although the gaps in this area are not as large as those in some of the other domains, survey results indicate a need for assistance in navigating the health system and finding qualified health workers to support people in their homes.

Focus Group Perspectives. Rather than focusing solely on health and wellness, participants discussed a wide range of services that support all age groups. Across the four neighborhoods, participants identified the following needs:

- more programs to deal with isolation of older adults/getting them out of their houses;

- more services for homeless people and for people leaving prison;

- more violence-prevention programs;

- more safe spaces for youth to gather and for adults to support them;

- more support to caregivers (e.g., respite services, adult day care, hospice care; and

- more support for limited English speakers (e.g., citizenship, ESL).

Phase 2: Narrowing the Focus on Housing, Transportation, and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Methodology

Based on the community assessment and the city's priorities, it was decided that we focus primarily on three domains: Housing, Transportation, and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings. In order to get more detailed information from community residents on how they viewed each of these areas, we conducted five community conversations and a Telephone Town Hall with AARP members in Philadelphia. Over 109 residents, many of whom were 55+, participated in conversations in North Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, Northeast Philadelphia and Center City. Over 250 AARP members joined the Telephone Town Hall.

What We Learned

Participants in the five community conversations confirmed many of the findings from our initial broader assessment. Due to the focus on just three domains, participants had many opportunities to share personal stories and to make recommendations. The following is a summary of our learnings in each of the categories.

Housing

Affordability. Across all neighborhoods, participants identified the lack of affordable housing as a major issue. Of concern is the rise in tax assessments, especially in areas that are experiencing gentrification. Many long-time residents receive annual increases in their real estate taxes based on the Actual Value initiative. These annual increases can be challenging for people on fixed incomes who often cannot afford to pay additional taxes. Participants also identified rising rental rates and the lack of affordable senior housing as challenges. Some expressed concerns about large residential developments that do not include "affordable" units for older adults. They also noted that many people do not know where to turn for services or help.

Tax Abatement. Many participants expressed concerns about the 10-year tax abatement, suggesting that the City favors the rich over long-term homeowners.

Home Modifications. Participants identified the need to help people stay in their homes as they age as an issue that deserves more attention. Home modifications such as widening doors and staircases, installing grab bars, and putting bathrooms on the first floor are often necessary but expensive. Many participants shared how difficult it is to find affordable, reliable contractors. Most people did not know about Philadelphia's Renew program which helps homeowners access low-interest loans to invest in their properties.

Transportation

Public transportation. Participants identified sanitation and safety on buses and subways as two major concerns. Participants felt that subways are not clean and that SEPTA doesn't enforce rules about eating and littering on buses. Many people feel unsafe in subways and on the El. Additional concerns included buses that do not stop close to the sidewalk or exactly at a bus stop, arrive on schedule, or lower the platform enough. Participants also mentioned difficulties negotiating steps at subway stops, lack of parking at regional rail stations, and the unreliability of the para-transit system.

Road and sidewalk conditions. Participants cited road and sidewalk maintenance as a major problem in most neighborhoods. Issues included: contractors dumping trash on sidewalks, pervasive potholes, sidewalks with major cracks and tree roots, and unenforced regulations that require homeowners to repair their sidewalks. These conditions are particularly dangerous for older people, individuals with disabilities, and bicyclists.

Traffic safety. Participants shared their concerns about traffic deaths and the need for more stop signs and speed bumps. Bikes and bike lanes were discussed in all the conversations. Some participants felt that the location of some of the bike lanes creates safety hazards for older adults and children. The importance of bicyclists obeying traffic rules and strategies for handling dirt bikes and four-wheelers was emphasized.

Parking. Participants expressed concerns about people parking on sidewalks, in crosswalks, and on both sides of the street. They also felt that there are not enough handicapped spaces in the city. They cited more speed bumps and stop signs as well as increased police presence on buses and at transportation centers as major issues for people of all ages.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The availability of green spaces and perceptions of parks varied by neighborhood. Both the Northeast and Center City residents felt there is an adequate number of parks/green spaces that are welcoming to all ages and cultures. North Philadelphia residents discussed the lack of green spaces and shared their concerns about safety and poor maintenance. West Philadelphia and South Philadelphia participants focused on lack of safety and amenities such as restrooms, benches in shaded areas, and poor maintenance. Participants identified libraries as safe places that are important for all age groups. However, some raised concerns about physical deterioration, lack of staffing, and lack of current books in some neighborhood branches.

Appendix

A. Community Partners for Focus Groups and Community Conversations

1. AARP Pennsylvania
2. Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha for Everyone (APM)
3. ASPIRA of PA
4. Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
5. Center In the Park
6. Congreso de Latinos Unidos
7. Dixon House
8. The Enterprise Center
9. Fairmount Community Development Corporation (CDC)
10. Frankford CDC
11. Germantown Boys and Girls Club
12. Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
13. Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE)
14. Intensive Prevention Services in the Department of Human Services
15. KleinLife
16. Marconi Older Adult Center
17. Mt. Airy CDC
18. New Foundations Charter High School
19. The North Broad Street Renaissance
20. Northeast Older Adult Center
21. Northeast Village
22. Northern Liberties Neighbors Association
23. People's Emergency Center
24. Point Breeze/Gray's Ferry Neighborhood Advisory Council
25. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
26. Ralston Center
27. Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition (SEAMACC)

B. Livable Communities Network Members

1. AARP Pennsylvania
2. Arcadia Land Company
3. Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia (BCGP)
4. The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia
5. Clean Air Council
6. Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
7. Drexel University College of Nursing and Health Professions
8. Economy League of Greater Philadelphia
9. Fairmount Community Development Corporation CDC
10. The Food Trust
11. HACE
12. Mt. Airy CDC
13. The North Broad Street Renaissance
14. Old City District
15. Passyunk Avenue Revitalization Corporation
16. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS)
17. Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)
18. Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC)
19. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
20. Ralston Center
21. SEAMACC
22. SEPTA
23. Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals

Action Plan Committee Chair

Housing: Maria Gonzalez, HACE

Transportation: Sarah Stuart, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings: Shalimar Thomas, North Broad Street Renaissance

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Acknowledgments

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