



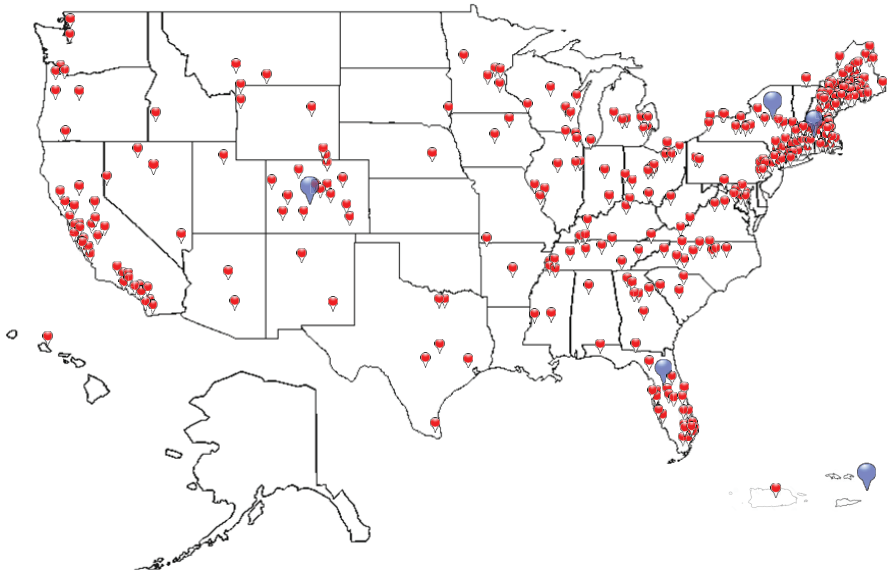
# AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

An age-friendly community is livable for people of *all* ages



[AARP.org/AgeFriendly](https://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendly)

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Real Possibilities



The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities reached the 400 member mark in September 2019. The red dots indicate town-, city- and county-level members. The blue pins identify state- and territory-level members. Check out the member list at [AARP.org/AgeFriendly-Member-List](https://www.aarp.org/agefriendly-member-list).



**Websites:** [AARP.org](https://www.aarp.org) and [AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/livable)

**Email:** [Livable@AARP.org](mailto:Livable@AARP.org)

**Facebook:** [/AARPLivableCommunities](https://www.facebook.com/AARPLivableCommunities)

**Twitter:** [@AARPLivable](https://twitter.com/AARPLivable)

**Free Newsletter:** [AARP.org/LivableSubscribe](https://www.aarp.org/livable/subscribe)

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 or older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. The AARP Livable Communities initiative works nationwide to support the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties, rural regions and entire states to be livable for people of all ages.

Cover photographs (clockwise from top): Washington, D.C., block party, provided by Van Ness Main Street; bike-sharing in Honolulu, by Colby Takeda, Blue Zones Project Hawaii; Age-Friendly Festival, provided by Age-Friendly Sarasota, Florida.

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09/19/19

- The population of the United States is rapidly aging.
- By 2030, one of every five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older.
- By 2035, the number of adults older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18.

That's why AARP staff and volunteers are working throughout the nation to engage and mobilize communities, share expertise, and deliver technical assistance to the towns, cities, counties and states in the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities**.

The work that happens within the network — which is a program within the larger **AARP Livable Communities** initiative — is hands-on and locally determined and directed. The common thread among the enrolled communities and states is the belief that the places where we live are more livable, and better able to support people of *all* ages, when local leaders commit to improving the quality of life for the very young, the very old, and everyone in between.

AARP engages with elected officials, partner organizations and local leaders to guide communities through the age-friendly network's assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

People of all ages benefit from the adoption of policies and programs that make neighborhoods walkable, feature transportation options, enable access to key services, provide opportunities to participate in community activities, and support housing that's affordable and adaptable. Well-designed, age-friendly communities foster economic growth and make for happier, healthier residents of all ages.

Established in 2012, the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities is the United States affiliate of the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for their own and the world's growing population of older adults. Enrollment in the AARP network includes automatic (but optional) membership in the World Health Organization network.

This booklet provides an overview of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, the enrollment process and the obligations of member communities. Turn the page to learn more. ▶



## FIRST IN THE NETWORK!

► In April 2012, Macon-Bibb, Georgia, became the first community to join the brand-new **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities**, thanks to the age-friendly efforts of AARP volunteer Myrtle Habersham, Bibb County Commission Chairman Samuel F. Hart (seated, left) and Macon Mayor Robert A.B. Reichert.



◀ In 2017, grant funds from the **AARP Community Challenge** (see below) helped a Macon neighborhood turn a vacant lot into a community park with outdoor games, seating and tables so people of all ages can visit and play together. "Chess allows people to open their minds," said Antonio Lewis-Ross, president of South Macon Arts Revitalization Technology (SMART). Outdoor game tables "bring people together and gives them something to do other than just hanging around."

Learn about the AARP Community Challenge at [AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](http://AARP.org/CommunityChallenge).



Photographs by Matt Odum (top) and Julio S. Gonzalez

## Introducing the Age-Friendly Network

The **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** serves as a catalyst to educate local leaders (both elected officials and engaged residents) and encourage them to implement the types of changes that make communities more livable for people of all ages, especially older adults.

The network provides cities, towns, counties and states with the resources to become more age-friendly by tapping into national and global research, planning models and best practices.

Membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities means that a community's elected leadership has made a commitment to actively work with residents and local advocates to make their town, city, county or state an age-friendly place to live.

### A community's age-friendly leaders and champions will likely include:

- Elected officials
- Government agencies
- Nonprofit organizations and foundations
- Academic institutions
- Local businesses and Chambers of Commerce
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Community coalitions
- Residents and lots of volunteers

### A few important points:

- Communities in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities are not retirement villages, nursing homes or assisted-living facilities. Nor are they planned communities or age-restricted housing developments.
- Membership in the network does not mean AARP endorses the towns, cities, counties or states as places to live. Nor does it mean the member communities and states are currently age-friendly and great places to retire.

## The Benefits of Membership

Members of the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** become part of a network of towns, cities, counties and states that are committed to enhancing the lives of people of all ages and enabling older residents to have rewarding, productive and safe lives.

### Membership in the network:

- Helps local leaders identify and understand community needs
- Serves as an organizing structure for making community improvements
- Fosters partnerships among community groups and local stakeholders
- Provides leadership opportunities for volunteers
- Enables changes that benefit people of all ages

### In addition, membership provides a community with:

- Public recognition for committing to becoming age-friendly
- Resources for identifying and assessing community needs
- Access to technical assistance and expert-led webinars
- Support and best practice materials from AARP

### According to a membership survey, after enrolling in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities:

- 60% of member communities achieved a change in public policy, most often by integrating an “age-friendly lens” into community planning
- 34% achieved a private-sector investment or action — such as by local retailers and restaurants securing “age-friendly business” designations, commitments by builders to expand their use of age-friendly design standards, and partnerships with taxi services to provide discounted rides to older adults
- 85% described other successes, such as raising awareness about livability issues, increasing collaborations within the community, and implementing educational and engagement programs

\* Survey distributed to members of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities (February 2019)

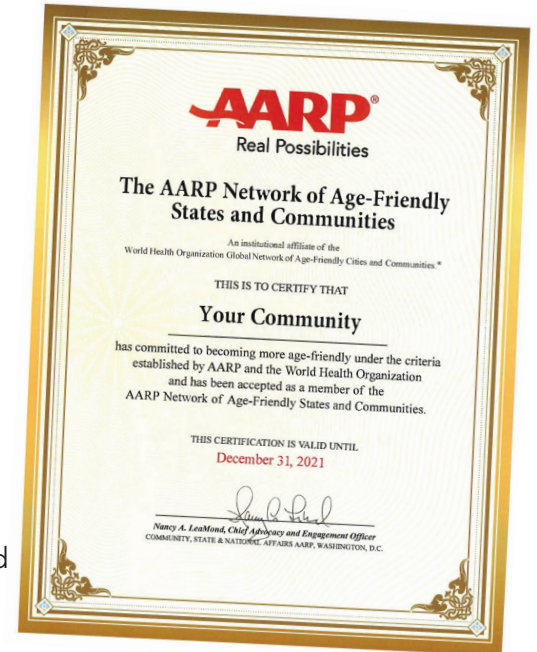
## Joining the Network

Communities enroll individually, as part of a region or as a state.\*

All towns, villages, townships, boroughs, cities, counties and states seeking to enroll in the AARP age-friendly network are required to submit a membership application.

In addition, the community must provide a letter of commitment signed by the jurisdiction’s highest elected official (e.g. a governor, mayor, county executive).

Communities with council or commission forms of government typically pass a resolution in support of membership in the network.



▲ An enrollment certificate is issued once a community’s application has been reviewed and accepted by AARP.

### There is no fee to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

- Find membership details and an online application: [AARP.org/AgeFriendly](https://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendly)
- Interested communities can contact their AARP State office: [AARP.org/States](https://www.aarp.org/States)
- See the list of enrolled communities: [AARP.org/AgeFriendly-Member-List](https://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendly-Member-List)

\* State enrollment in the network does not confer automatic membership on that state’s local communities.



# What Makes a Community “Age-Friendly”?

The most livable communities are those that enable residents to thrive at every age and every life stage — in other words, they are age-friendly.

However, the availability and quality of certain community features — commonly referred to as the **“8 Domains of Livability”** — do have a particular impact on the well-being of older adults. The domains framework can be used to organize and prioritize a community’s work to become more livable for older residents as well as people of all ages.

While many members of the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** tackle all eight domains at once, others choose to focus on fewer or combined domains.

## 1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

People need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.



## 2. Transportation

Driving shouldn’t be the only way to get around. Pedestrians need sidewalks and safe, crossable streets. Dedicated bicycle lanes benefit nondrivers and drivers alike. Public transit options can range from the large-scale (trains, buses, light rail) to the small (taxis, shuttles or ride share services).



## 3. Housing

AARP surveys consistently find that the vast majority of older adults want to reside in their current home or community for as long as possible. Doing so *is* possible if a home is designed or modified for aging in place, or if a community has housing options that are suitable for differing incomes, ages and life stages.



## 4. Social Participation

Regardless of a person’s age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.



## 5. Respect and Social Inclusion

Everyone wants to feel valued. Intergenerational gatherings and activities are a great way for young and older people to learn from one another, honor what each has to offer and, at the same time, feel good about themselves.



## 6. Work and Civic Engagement

Why does work need to be an all or nothing experience? An age-friendly community encourages older people to be actively engaged in community life and has opportunities for residents to work for pay or volunteer their skills.



## 7. Communication and Information

We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-friendly communities recognize that information needs to be shared through a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy — and not everyone has a smartphone or home-based access to the internet.



## 8. Community and Health Services

At some point, every person of every age gets hurt, becomes ill or simply needs some help. While it’s important that assistance and care be available nearby, it’s essential that residents are able to access and afford the services required.



# The Age-Friendly Process and Program Cycle

Members of the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** commit to an assessment process and cycle of continuous improvement,\* the steps of which typically require the member community to:

1. Establish a way — such as through a commission, advisory panel or focus groups — to include older residents in all stages of the age-friendly planning and implementation process
2. Conduct a community needs assessment (AARP can provide survey examples, templates and an online tool in English and Spanish)
3. Develop an action and evaluation plan based on the assessment results
4. Submit the plan for review by AARP
5. Implement and work toward the goals of the plan
6. Share solutions, successes and best practices with AARP
7. Assess the plan's impact and submit progress reports
8. *Repeat!*

\* Community-level members plan work on a 3-year cycle; state-level members operate on a 4-year cycle.

## AARP Livable Communities Resources

- Learn about AARP's livability and age-friendly work: [AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/Livable)
- Find network-related information and materials: [AARP.org/AgeFriendly](https://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendly)
- Download or order free publications: [AARP.org/LivableLibrary](https://www.aarp.org/LivableLibrary)
- Read about our "quick-action" grant program: [AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](https://www.aarp.org/CommunityChallenge)
- Follow us on Twitter: [@AARPLivable](https://twitter.com/AARPLivable)
- Like us on Facebook: [@AARPLivableCommunities](https://www.facebook.com/AARPLivableCommunities)
- Calculate your community's livability score: [AARP.org/LivabilityIndex](https://www.aarp.org/LivabilityIndex)

Stay informed! Subscribe to the free, weekly, award-winning  
**AARP Livable Communities e-Newsletter: [AARP.org/LivableSubscribe](https://www.aarp.org/LivableSubscribe)**

## In a livable community, people of all ages can ...



Go for a walk



Cross the streets



Ride a bike



Get around without a car



Live safely and comfortably



Work or volunteer



Enjoy public places



Socialize



Spend time outdoors



Be entertained



Go shopping



Buy healthy food



Find the services they need



... and make their city, town or neighborhood a lifelong home.

[AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/Livable)



▲ The handout pictured here is available in five languages — English, Chinese, French, Korean and Spanish — as a free, printable download. Visit [AARP.org/Livable-Poster](https://www.aarp.org/Livable-Poster).



Learn how your town, village, township, borough,  
city, county or state can join the  
**AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.**  
[AARP.org/AgeFriendly](https://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendly)



State of Florida



San Rafael, California



Vicksburg, Mississippi



State of Colorado



U.S. Virgin Islands



Ithaca and Tompkins County, New York



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

See the complete list of enrolled communities: [AARP.org/AgeFriendly-Member-List](https://www.aarp.org/AgeFriendly-Member-List)

To locate and connect with your **AARP State Office**,  
visit [AARP.org/States](https://www.aarp.org/States) or call 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277)

Email **AARP Livable Communities**: [Livable@AARP.org](mailto:Livable@AARP.org)



AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age.

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