

AARP INTERNATIONAL

**AGE-FRIENDLY REPORT:**

# **INSPIRING COMMUNITIES**

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**16 case studies from  
the United States and  
around the world**

**AARP**<sup>®</sup>  
Real Possibilities

## **A Livable Community**

“... is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and offers supportive community features and services. Once in place, those resources enhance personal independence, allow residents to age in place, and foster their engagement in the community’s civic, economic and social life.”

— *AARP Policy Book*

**By 2050 more than 20 percent of the world’s population will be age 60 or older. Because of that, many cities, towns and communities across the globe are already working to address the needs of their older residents *and* prepare for future generations. AARP International looked at efforts in the United States and worldwide to identify projects and programs that are worth sharing and, when possible, replicating.**

The *2015 Age-Friendly: Inspiring Communities Report* presents a collection of age-friendly “good practices.”

We call them “good” rather than “best” practices simply because we can’t possibly compare every age-friendly initiative in the world, nor would we want to. After all, any community effort to effectively meet the needs of older residents is a welcome one.

The 16 communities featured in the report are working toward becoming more age-friendly, either as a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities\* or the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities – or both.

The report is organized according to which of the World Health Organization’s “8 Domains of Age-Friendliness” the work most represents. (The domains are explained on the next page.)

However, since the efforts underway in each community touch upon needs in multiple domains, we identify those sub-domains as well. The case studies, as well as resources and contact information for each, are available online at [aarp.org/livability-examples](http://aarp.org/livability-examples).

Individually and together, these case studies show the inspiring work communities are undertaking and promoting to meet the needs of older adults. Creating great places for people of *all* ages enables older residents to participate in community life.

\* The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

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# The 8 Domains



## Domain 1

### Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

People need places to gather — indoors and out. Parks, sidewalks, safe streets, outdoor seating and accessible buildings (think elevators, stairs with railing, etc.) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.



## Domain 2

### Transportation

Driving shouldn't be the only way to get around. Public transit options can be as expansive as a train system or as targeted as a taxi service that provides non-drivers with rides to and from a doctor's office.



## Domain 3

### Housing

Most older adults want to age in place. Doing so is possible if homes are appropriately designed or modified — and if a community includes affordable housing options for varying life stages.



## Domain 4

### Social Participation

Regardless of one's age, loneliness negatively affects a person's health and sense of wellbeing. Isolation can be combatted by the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.



### Domain 5

#### Respect and Social Inclusion

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



### Domain 6

#### Civic Participation and Employment

An age-friendly community provides ways older people can, if they choose to, work for pay, volunteer their skills and be actively engaged in community life.



### Domain 7

#### Communication and Information

Age-friendly communities recognize that not everyone has a smartphone or Internet access and that information needs to be disseminated through a variety of means.



### Domain 8

#### Community and Health Services

At some point, everyone gets hurt, becomes ill or simply needs a bit of help. While it's important that care be available nearby, it's essential that residents are able to access and afford the services required.

# Revitalizing a Treasured Public Space



## Tattnall Square Park

MACON-BIBB, GEORGIA | UNITED STATES

Tattnall Square Park is a 16-acre public park in downtown Macon, Georgia. Established in the mid-19th century, both Macon and Tattnall Square Park fell into decline during the 1970s and 1980s.

In 2011, the grassroots non-profit community organization Friends of Tattnall Square Park began thinking about ways to improve the park and, more specifically, how to create an engaging landscape that would be safe and welcoming for all users. The revitalized park now serves as a beautiful public place that's visited and enjoyed by people of all ages.

### THE DETAILS

In 2012, the Friends of Tattnall Square Park received a Knight Neighborhood Challenge Grant, which enabled the purchase of 200 new trees.

At the same time, residents of the City of Macon and the County of Bibb voted to consolidate their governments in order to both save money and avoid a replication of services. The new community, called Macon-Bibb, enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

As part of that effort, AARP Georgia and the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute assessed the walkability, livability and age-friendly features of the community surrounding the park. The resulting report helped engage key players (including the local government) and provided recommendations for how to improve the park and the roads adjacent to it. Among the enhancements thus far:

- The addition of prominent, ADA compliant gateways help to define the park's boundaries and entrances.
- Wider, smoother sidewalks were installed to better serve older pedestrians and people pushing strollers.
- The park has new benches, seating areas (many made of stone) and a drinking fountain.

- The park's interior is now vehicle-free and accessible routes into the park have been added.
- Construction of a modern roundabout has helped make the surrounding streets safer by slowing fast-moving traffic around the park.

Other efforts involve replacing or upgrading the park's lighting, re-installing a park fountain (the 1915 original was removed in the late 1960s), converting surfaces from asphalt to greenery and building spaces for outdoor gathering, ceremonies and performances.

### THE COSTS

In addition to inspiring thousands of hours of volunteer labor, about \$2.5 million has been spent on the park so far (from 2012 to 2015). Most of the funds have come from community grants and donations.

### THE RESULTS

Tattnall Square Park is an example of how to make a park come alive for an entire city in just three years. Hundreds of supporters and partners helped to make the park a beautiful and age- and culturally-diverse public space and display of community pride.

In 2014, the City Parks Alliance recognized Tattnall Square as a Frontline Park, a designation that promotes "inspiring examples of urban park experience, innovation and stewardship." Several annual events — including children's programs and the Sidewalk Chalk Festival — attract visitors to the park.

As Andrew Silver, chair of Friends of Tattnall Square Park, explains: "People of all ages can enjoy nature, without being a consumer, without purchasing anything. It's free. Up to 1,000 people visit the park every week to enjoy the open space and trees."

**Also an example of:**  
**Domain 4: Social Participation**  
**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Making Streets and Sidewalks More Walkable



## Block-By-Block Walk and DC311 Mobile App

### WASHINGTON, DC | UNITED STATES

Residents of the nation's capital have been taking to the streets — in order to improve them.

In multigenerational teams of three or more, Washingtonians use the city's free mobile app, DC311, to report broken or uneven sidewalks, missing curb cuts, traffic signals that don't allow time for a safe crossing and other problems that make life hard for pedestrians, especially if they're older or have a disability.

### THE DETAILS

The D.C. Mayor's Office, as part of its collective action to become an age-friendly community, began the Block-by-Block Walk program by targeting micro-neighborhoods of about 2,000 residents. (In Washington, D.C., such areas are referred to as SMDs or Single-Member Districts.) The neighborhoods' elected representatives helped recruit volunteers, including students from three local universities, to walk each area.

Most teams include a member who is over the age of 60, but every group has someone 50-plus. Groups recruit people with disabilities, and members bring adaptive devices including wheelchairs, strollers, canes and walkers to help flag problems such as missing curb cuts. The city supplies training materials and distributes questionnaires and checklists to the participants.

Volunteers walk within a three to five block perimeter, most remaining in their immediate neighborhoods. They travel routes they know well and consider whether pedestrians can safely access needed services and amenities.

By using the city's DC311 smartphone app, which was launched in 2011, the Block-by-Block Walk volunteers can report problems directly to the District's Department of Transportation (DDOT). If necessary, residents can also call the district's 311 service, where an agent is on duty 24/7.

The DC311 app is a perfect companion to the Block-by-Block Walk efforts because:

- Problematic places can be easily photographed.
- GPS pinpoints the location of the problem.
- Reports can be sent directly from a smartphone to 311.

### THE COSTS

Age-Friendly DC, which is part of the D.C. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, manages the walks and helps to organize volunteers. The Office of the Chief Technology Officer covered the expense of developing the DC311 app and manages the related 311 website. The Office of Unified Communication staffs the 311 call center and sends reports to the district government agency for completing requested repairs.

Volunteers either use their own smartphones to enter requests or they fill out paper surveys that are later entered online.

### THE RESULTS

In 2014, the program's first year the Block-by-Block walk proved a great success, with more than 500 volunteers participating.

More than one-third of all Single-Member Districts within D.C. were at least partially walked and more than 850 repair requests were reported.

Also an example of:  
**Domain 2: Transportation**  
**Domain 4: Social Participation**  
**Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion**  
**Domain 7: Communication and Information**

# Educating Older Adults About Using Public Transit



## Edmonton Transit Education Programs and Tools

EDMONTON, ALBERTA | CANADA

Within two decades, one out of three people in this western Canadian city will be at least 55 years old. To meet their transportation needs, Edmonton has created a set of interlinked programs to fully utilize its accessible buses and light rail system.

Although Edmonton joined the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in 2010, the city has been a pioneer of age-friendly transit for decades. Every transit operator in the system is trained to respond to customer mobility issues and the needs of older customers.

### THE DETAILS

Edmonton's transit education programs introduce older adults, in some cases for the first time, to the ease of travel by public transportation. They include:

- **Mobility Choices**, created in 1994, teaches new and existing customers (primarily older adults and people with mobility issues) how to use public transit. Individual and group trainings are offered. Local agencies that provide services for the aging population and people with disabilities can get “train the trainer” training.
- **Seniors On the Go**, introduced in 2007, is a summer program that provides groups of older adults with fun, interactive lessons about using public transit.
- **Seniors' Transportation Information Hubs** are wall-mounted or carousel displays that hold pamphlets about the transit system and services for older adults. The hubs are located in, among other areas, shopping malls, housing complexes and activity centers.
- **Seniors Driving and Beyond** workshops provide information about mature drivers and driving options, transit options and how to plan for a person's retirement from driving.

The following free tools are also available to all:

- **Mobility cards** are used to signal to approaching buses that a passenger will need to use the ramp or kneeling feature of the bus.
- **Customer communication cards** allow riders to, as they board a bus, discreetly request a stop announcement or inform the bus driver of balance, speech, visual or hearing difficulties.

**Bus Hailer Kits** allow riders to display their bus route number on a card as a way to signal their route needs to drivers. The cards also help people with cognitive difficulties to remember their bus numbers.

### THE COSTS

The education programs, which are free to participants, are administered by one full-time staff member at Edmonton Transit along with a seasonal summer program coordinator. Edmonton Transit covers all training costs.

### THE RESULTS

Follow-up surveys show that older adults who participated in the programs had achieved a greater understanding of the transit system and were more likely to use it in the future.

Says Margaret Dorey, accessible transit coordinator for the Edmonton Transit System: “Some people hadn't used the transit system in 30 years — and now they do!”

Also an example of:

**Domain 4: Social Participation**

**Domain 6: Civic Participation and Employment**

**Domain 7: Communication and Information**

# Better Benches and Bus Stop Shelters



## The CityBench and Bus Shelter Programs

NEW YORK, NEW YORK | UNITED STATES

Over the past decade, New York City's programs to improve its sidewalk benches and bus stop shelters have transformed the experience of waiting by providing 1,500 new benches along with 3,500 new or improved shelters.

### THE DETAILS

Bus stop benches that are attractive and comfortable encourage ridership and have the added benefit of providing a resting place for pedestrians. Starting in 2012, New York City's Department of Transportation (DOT) undertook a high profile search for bus stops that needed new or improved benches, emphasizing locations where older riders were likely to board.

Senior centers throughout the city suggested places where a bench would be useful and the DOT studied other areas with a high concentration of older people, such as neighborhoods where many are aging in place. The department also flagged locations within a quarter-mile from hospitals, community health centers and municipal facilities. In addition, the city provided a simple online form for residents to request and recommend bench locations.

In redesigning the basic bench, planners asked, "What makes a bench age-friendly?" For one thing, the bench must fit a variety of body shapes; for another, the armrest needs to be designed and placed in a way that helps a person to sit and stand up again.

The program to improve shelters has been active since 2006. As with the benches, the location of new or improved shelters resulted from a citywide call for community input. In order for the shelters to serve everyone, their design takes into account mobility issues, such as the need for a wide-enough entry and exit to accommodate people using wheelchairs.

### THE COSTS

For the benches, a Bus Livability Grant from the Federal Transit Administration funds 80 percent of the \$2.4 million cost. The New York City DOT covers the remaining expenses (approximately \$600,000 so far) to install and maintain the benches.

For the bus shelters, a creative private-public partnership has funded the entire bill. In exchange for being able to sell advertising space on each bus shelter, Cemusa, a Spanish company with its North American headquarters in Manhattan, replaced the existing bus shelters and installed new ones, all at no cost to the city. Cemusa also pays a fee to the city for the right to advertise and the company covers maintenance and repair costs.

### THE RESULTS

More than one-third of New York City's bus stops now sport new or improved shelters, shielding passengers from wind, rain and snow. Bus passengers (and others who may need to catch their breath during a long walk) can also use the new benches.

Nick Peterson, a project manager for DOT, sums up the bench program with this thought: "Yes, we target mobility impaired and older New Yorkers through the CityBench Program, but these benches are good for everybody. They make the city a richer place."

Michelle Craven, another executive with the department, points to the added visibility that a shelter gives to the bus stops and says, "Providing shelters and benches for waiting passengers greatly improves the transportation experience of all bus riders and pedestrians."

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Also an example of:  
Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings  
Domain 4: Social Participation

# Making Big Sense of Small Homes



## Accessory Dwelling Units

PORTLAND, OREGON | UNITED STATES

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are small, independent housing units created within single-family homes or on their lots. Although these homes are small, in many communities the complexities of building one are a big deal.

On top of zoning constraints and construction costs, some municipalities charge pricey fees that can make the project untenable.

That's no longer the case in Portland, Oregon, which in 2010 significantly reduced (or "waived the largest") municipal fees and adjusted the city's zoning codes to make it easier for a homeowner to add an ADU to his or her property. An overriding reason for the change: to help residents age in place.

An ADU can be located inside the main house (such as with a lower-level apartment), attached to the house (think of an apartment over the garage) or as a detached structure (a backyard cottage is one example).

"Older adults can stay in their neighborhoods," explains Eli Spevak, owner of Orange Splot, a housing development company. "They can maintain their social connections, have access to their support system, be in a familiar environment and live in a home that both meets their needs as they age and is in proximity to the primary dwelling."

### THE DETAILS

As a result of Portland's zoning code change, the allowable size of an ADU increased to 75 percent of the size of the main property or no larger than 800 square feet.

Before 2010, Portland homeowners wanting to build an ADU were subject to \$10,000 or more in System Development Charges — to cover city services including water, parks and transportation. The city has suspended those charges until 2016.

Homeowners are using ADUs in a variety of ways. For instance, one of the more common scenarios involves an older couple building an ADU to retire into while renting out the main house for income. An ADU can also be put to work as the

rental, thus providing extra income so a retiree can afford to remain in his or her home. In other scenarios, the ADU serves as a residence for a homeowner's elderly parents.

Because an ADU is typically part of the same property as the main home, they can't be bought or sold separately.

### THE COSTS

While the reduction in fees has been absorbed by the city, Portland continues to receive revenue from building permits and other payments still required by the construction.

The cost of building ADUs is borne by the property owner. Despite the fee waiver, ADUs remain expensive to build, says Alan DeLaTorre, a researcher at Portland State University: "Homeowners still need to pay for the costs of building a secondary dwelling, including materials and hiring people to carry out the design and the construction."

### THE RESULTS

About 10 times as many ADUs are now built each year in Portland as compared to before the city changed its fees and zoning rules. The change has even inspired some niche tourism, with bike tours taking cyclists on visits to the most innovative units, introducing the concept to anyone who's curious.

As builder Spevak notes: "If you've toured an ADU, you'll be more likely to build an ADU."

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**Also an example of:**  
**Domain 4: Social Participation**  
**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Living Together Benefits Young People and Old



## Intergenerational Living

LYON, RHÔNE-ALPES | FRANCE

With just under half a million people, Lyon is France's third largest city. Its greater metro area, with a population of about 2.2 million, is second only to Paris.

For some Lyon residents, a city housing program creatively replicates the benefits of belonging to a multigenerational family household.

At a dozen independent living residences that serve older adults, college students are invited to move in and pay discounted rent in exchange for socializing with the building's older residents. Another program helps fill rooms in the houses of older adults with empty nests.

### THE DETAILS

There are 18 residences in the City of Lyon for independent older adults, 12 of which welcome students to live on their top floors. The move was inspired by a national safety directive preventing older adults from living above a certain floor level.

A consortium of local universities helps match apartments and students, who need only commit to one hour a week of simply chatting with the older residents, playing board games with them, accompanying them on walks or other activities. A city agency educates the students on aging issues and regularly checks in with them.

This intergenerational, independent living program builds on a 10-year-old national initiative — called “One Roof, Two Generations” — that encourages older residents to rent empty rooms in their homes to students and young professionals for free or at very affordable prices. In exchange, the young people interact regularly with their hosts and assist with chores including shopping, cleaning and maintenance.

### THE COSTS

The City of Lyon renovated and adapted all 18 of its residences for older people at a cost of €40 million.

The buildings include age-friendly accessible features, such as handrails, grab bars and raised toilet seats.

Two local nonprofits help administer the “One Roof, Two Generations” program. Depending on which organization a participant works with, he or she will pay a one-time fee of €100 (about \$435 U.S.) before moving into a rented room or welcoming a new housemate. The other group collects €10 to make a match, then charging additional fees to provide services once cohabitation begins.

### THE RESULTS

There are approximately 1,000 apartments in the 12 city-owned residences for older people that are taking part in Lyon's program. About 100 apartments in these buildings are set aside for the students. Both older and younger people confirm that intergenerational living is an enriching experience.

“We encourage intergenerational living because we want our older people to have choices — to live alone, to live with a student, to move into our independent residences, but to age in place for as long as possible,” says Françoise Rivoire, Lyon's deputy mayor. “It's up to the older generation to decide, but at least now they have options.”

Also an example of:

Domain 4: Social Participation

Domain 6: Communication and Information

Domain 7: Respect and Social Inclusion

Domain 8: Community and Health Services

# Promoting a Positive Story of Aging



## Age-Friendly Manchester Cultural Offer Program

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND | UNITED KINGDOM

Established in 2007, the Age-Friendly Manchester Cultural Offer Program was created to extend the reach of Manchester’s world-class arts and culture scene to the city’s older residents.

An impetus for the program was to reduce the feelings of loneliness and isolation that older people often experience due to participating in fewer cultural and social activities. (Studies show that the problem can be especially acute for those living on low incomes or with long-term, limiting health conditions.)

The Cultural Offer Program promotes “a positive story of aging,” says Paul McGarry, strategic lead, Age-Friendly Manchester. “The program is saying to a city, ‘We have these resources. How can older adults use them?’”

### THE DETAILS

Age-Friendly Manchester runs the Cultural Offer Program in collaboration with nearly two dozen local partners, including the Bridgewater Hall, the Hallé Orchestra, the People’s History Museum, the Royal Exchange Theatre and the Whitworth Art Gallery.

In addition, more than 130 volunteer “Culture Champions” work within their networks and communities to promote Age-Friendly Manchester’s cultural activities and events, such as concerts, tours, an older people’s choir (pictured), creative writing classes, play readings and an array of intergenerational projects. A few highlights:

- The Whitworth Art Gallery offers workshops where people can socialize and learn about crafting techniques such as woodblock carving, sculpture, printing and watercolor painting.
- On Thursdays the Manchester Art Gallery lets a group of older residents take over the space to host an evening of art, storytelling, music and more.

- The Library Theatre’s Storybox Project helps people with dementia and their caregivers through storytelling and role-play workshops that aid with concentration and short-term memory.
- The Manchester Museum’s “Museum Comes to You” service brings interesting artifacts out into the community to stimulate interest in its collections.
- There’s also My Generation, a nightclub for people age 50-plus (though under 50s are welcome, too). The idea is to draw older people into Manchester’s famous night life by providing a place for them to socialize and enjoy live music.

### THE COSTS

Age-Friendly Manchester covers the Cultural Offer Program’s basic costs. Grant funding comes from a variety of nonprofits including the Baring Foundation.

### THE RESULTS

The organizations that partner with the Cultural Offer Program have been meeting the challenge in other ways, such as by offering special discounts for older people. In addition, the program works closely with various specialists, including researchers.

Among the recent research efforts: A handbook about cultural engagement activities and older men. And a study showing that, on average, each Manchester-based Culture Champion engages more than 20 other older residents, helping them stay connected and involved in the community.

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**Also an example of:**  
**Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion**  
**Domain 6: Civic Participation and Employment**  
**Domain 7: Communication and Information**  
**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Making a City's Streets Safer and Sociable



## Brownsville CycloBia

### BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS | UNITED STATES

At least four times a year, miles of streets in downtown Brownsville, Texas, are closed to cars and trucks so residents (and, increasingly, visitors) can gather to bike, walk, jog, dance, socialize and simply have fun.

The recurring city-sponsored event is inspired by the *ciclovías* — or open streets events — that have long, successful histories in cities including Bogotá, Colombia, and Guadalajara, Mexico.

In Brownsville, a city of 175,000 along the United States-Mexico border, the “CycloBia” (spelled with a “B” for Brownsville) serves two important needs: The first is to improve the collective health of the city’s residents, a high proportion of whom are poor, obese and struggling with diabetes. The second is to enhance the city’s overall sense of community.

“Our CycloBia gets people off the couch and out and about being active. It stimulates the economy, it’s fun and — best of all for the participants — it’s free!” explains Rose Gowen, a Brownsville physician and elected city commissioner.

### THE DETAILS

The Brownsville CycloBia is organized by the city’s Department of Health in collaboration with local businesses, service agencies and nonprofits. The city police and traffic departments assist with road closures and security and more than 50 volunteers help with the event. “This is truly a city collaboration,” says Kendra Stine, wellness manager for the City of Brownsville.

To avoid the summer heat, a few of the CycloBias are held in the evening. (The daytime events typically run from noon to 5 p.m.) Free bike rentals are available for the many residents who do not own bicycles.

Three or four “reclovias,” or recreation stations, located along the route offer fun and helpful services ranging from bike repair and refreshments to Zumba sessions, face painting and educational kiosks.

### THE COSTS

The Brownsville CycloBia is a free event that’s financed by the city as well as by grants, donations and in-kind services. The main expenses are for advertising, promotional items, logistical support (administrative staff, security, trash collection, traffic management) and rented facilities, such as portable restrooms.

### THE RESULTS

The first Brownsville CycloBia was held in the fall of 2012 and welcomed 4,000 people. Since then, each event has attracted more than 10,000 participants.

Before the CycloBia, “many people in Brownsville did not have bicycles or did not know how to ride a bike,” says Art Rodriguez, the city’s director of public health. “Those who could ride a bicycle mostly did so as a means of transportation, not for enjoyment and physical activity.”

Seven out of 10 CycloBia participants surveyed by the city revealed that if they weren’t at the CycloBia, they probably would have been involved in a sedentary activity. (A follow-up survey indicated that 45 percent of returning attendees increased their weekly physical activity as a result of their CycloBia participation.)

Another local benefit, according to Dr. Gowen, is that “downtown merchants and restaurants along the route have seen substantially higher sales receipts on CycloBia days and nights.”

Brownsville’s CycloBia has paid off in other ways: In 2014, the event helped the city win both the National Civic League All-America City Award and the Robert Wood Johnson Culture of Health Prize.

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#### Also an example of:

**Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

**Domain 2: Transportation**

**Domain 7: Communication and Information**

**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Building a Playground for All Ages



## Grandparents Park

### WICHITA, KANSAS | UNITED STATES

Built on two empty, adjacent, city-owned lots in a residential area of Wichita, the Grandparents Park opened for family fun in July 2013 — all because a community assessment, conducted as part of Wichita’s membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, identified that local residents really wanted and would benefit from having such an outdoor space.

#### THE DETAILS

During the assessment, which was conducted by AARP Kansas and the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute, many residents shared that they were the daytime caregivers of their grandchildren.

They spoke about not having a place to walk or play in their neighborhood, other than on old sidewalks in various states of repair. They wished they had easy access to a safe and attractive place where they could spend time outdoors with their grandchildren, get some exercise and socialize with other adults.

“For people to get together and feel included in their community, they need a place where they can see one another,” says Andrea Bozarth, AARP Kansas associate state director of community outreach. “A park is a perfect location for gathering, socializing and being healthy.”

The city of Wichita agreed to convert the empty lots, which were eyesores the city was spending money to maintain, into a half-acre public park. (The lot size is 0.56 acres, which measures out as 280 feet by 100 feet.)

In the first year of the project, the city added landscaping, a fence, sidewalks, walking trails and outdoor exercise equipment that is specifically designed for older adults. Year 2 brought playground equipment for preschoolers, park benches and the unveiling of the Grandparents Park sign. A drinking fountain was installed during the park’s third year.

#### THE COSTS

The city provided the lots and maintains the park at no cost. Installation of the trails, exercise equipment, drinking fountain, benches, signage and fencing cost about \$22,000 and were paid for by AARP Kansas, which funded the project as part of its livable community work in Wichita. Local businesses contributed money or in-kind goods.

#### THE RESULTS

Grandparents Park is easily accessible from all parts of the neighborhood by foot, bicycle, stroller or car.

In addition to being a place for free play, relaxation and exercise, the park is used for organized special events and activities, such as educational workshops and a multi-week walking program organized by AARP Kansas.

The uniqueness of the park has resulted in positive attention from the Los Angeles Times, the Milken Institute, Grandparents.com, Forbes magazine and The Huffington Post, among others.

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#### Also an example of:

**Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

**Domain 4: Social Participation**

**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Helping Make Dreams Come True



## The “Dreams Never Get Old” Bulao Movement

### TAIPEI CITY | TAIWAN

*“Aging should not stop you from daring to dream.”*

That sentiment, expressed by Doris Lin, chief executive officer of Taiwan’s Hondao Foundation, is the guiding principle that provides surprising and fulfilling opportunities for Taiwanese people age 65 and older.

From motorcycle riding to a baseball league, from activities for veterans to Broadway-style stage shows, the Bulao movement engages thousands of older citizens — and teaches younger Taiwanese that dreams have no expiration date.

### THE DETAILS

When a contest was announced in 2007 inviting older motorcyclists to join a motorcycle tour around Taiwan, more than 100 people applied. The average age of the 20 individuals chosen: 81.

All but three of the “Grandriders” finished the trip, traveling 730 miles in 13 days and sparking a movement that became known as Bulao. (The word translates into English as “forever young.”) The motorcycle journey was chronicled in the documentary *Go Grandriders*, which captured the imagination of many in Taiwan and encouraged the ride’s organizers to make the motorcycle outing an annual event.

The Hondao Senior Citizen’s Welfare Foundation had initiated the tour and still organizes the motorcycle trips. The foundation has since expanded the concept into several new activities, among them:

- The Bulao Baseball League was created so older people could play the game, which is a beloved sport in Taiwan. The average age of the Bulao league players is 68. Younger volunteers serve as catchers or play other positions that require significant agility.

- In the Bulao Soldiers program, World War II veterans visit with young service members and share their stories. The veterans wear their uniforms and take part in military formations with the young recruits.
- The annual “Bulao Broadway Show” gives older adults the opportunity to showcase their talents before an audience of 10,000 people at the most famous stage in Taipei City. The more than 300 performers from throughout Taiwan are selected from video auditions.
- The nine-day Yilan Forever Young Festival features a variety of programs, including fashion shows and musical performances by people 65 and older.

### THE COSTS

The Hondao Foundation, a charitable organization that develops and delivers community care for older people, leads and helps secure funds for the “Dreams Never Get Old” Bulao programs. Donations are also solicited from the public and corporations.

### THE RESULTS

Younger people report being greatly inspired by the older Taiwanese they meet. By many accounts, the Bulao movement has begun to change public perceptions and attitudes toward older people and aging.

According to a Hondao Foundation survey, 91 percent of respondents had changed their negative beliefs about aging into more positive ones after learning about the “Dreams Never Get Old” activities.

Also an example of:

Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Domain 2: Transportation

Domain 7: Communication and Information

Domain 8: Community and Health Services

# Keeping Older Employees on the Job



## Human Resources Policies and Initiatives

STOKE-ON-TRENT, STAFFORDSHIRE | UNITED KINGDOM

Already world renowned as the birthplace of England’s pottery industry (Wedgwood, Spode and others), Stoke-on-Trent is rapidly earning a reputation as a hotbed of economic growth and innovative approaches to promoting the employment of older workers.

A 2013 workforce report for the Stoke-on-Trent City Council revealed a net loss of employees age 50 and older due to retirement. At the same time, Stoke-on-Trent was working to become an age-friendly city. The two things combined drove the council’s efforts to better accommodate the needs of older workers.

The commitment has been exemplified by the Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s frontline participation in the European Union-funded WorkAge project, which aims to address a potential brain drain of older workers in the U.K. as people move toward retirement. As part of the project, a study at Nottingham Trent University is pursuing strategies to help employers re-engage with their older employees.

“These people hold vital, irreplaceable skills and knowledge,” says Maria Karanika-Murray, a psychologist at Nottingham Trent who’s part of the research team. “A lot of organizations don’t understand that they can save money without losing skills and knowledge, and that the key to engaging and retaining older workers is about adjusting to their needs.”

### THE DETAILS

Stoke-on-Trent has been at the forefront of promoting age-friendly human resources policies and initiatives so older workers, and others, can get the support they need to be productive, healthy employees who contribute to the community.

As an employer, the Stoke-on-Trent City Council guarantees a job interview to all applicants who

meet the essential requirements for a position, no matter their age. The council also offers an array of benefits to enhance the well-being, engagement and work ability of older employees, including:

- Flexible work arrangements to help employees maintain work-life balance, especially those who need to provide care for their spouses or parents.
- Free 24/7 help (through the “Carer’s Emergency Scheme”) if an employee who is a caregiver has a personal emergency and needs someone to step-in and assist his or her care recipient.
- Workplace training about topics including fall prevention and dementia awareness.
- Lifestyle education for employees with health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.
- A free 20-week physical fitness program and free access to the City Council’s sport and leisure centers.

### THE COSTS

The WorkAge project is funded by a €1.1 million grant (approximately \$1.6 million U.S.) from the European Union’s Program for Employment and Social Solidarity. The Stoke-on-Trent City Council is a government body funded through local taxes.

### THE RESULTS

The Stoke-on-Trent City Council won an AARP Best Employers International Award in 2014.

“We value older staff — and the experience, knowledge and skills they bring — as an integral part of our workforce,” said Councillor Abi Brown. “As part of our vision of being a great working city, we work hard to ensure that we are leading the way as an age-friendly employer.”

Also an example of:

- Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion
- Domain 7: Communication and Information
- Domain 8: Community and Health Services

# Building Bridges Across Age and Cultures



## Project SHINE

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA | UNITED STATES

Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders) was founded almost 30 years ago after Nancy Henkin, the founder and past director of the Intergenerational Center at Temple University, read about an elderly Laotian woman who had apparently felt so lonely and isolated after arriving in the United States that she decided to take her own life.

“I did a little research and realized that older immigrants and refugees were really invisible in our community,” Henkin recalls. “People were focused on teaching English to young students, but thinking about how to integrate older people with limited English skills was just not on anyone’s radar.”

The Temple University program pairs student volunteers with elderly immigrants in center-city Philadelphia to help ease their transition to a new culture. At local ethnic-based community organizations, senior centers, churches, temples and coffee shops, Project SHINE volunteers can be found teaching conversational English, life skills, citizenship preparation and health literacy skills to immigrants and refugees, who gather to socialize, enjoy a hot meal, grab a take-home snack, or receive help with the myriad problems such newcomers typically face.

But the teaching flows both ways. “The students also learn a lot from the seniors,” says Philip Lai, the center’s director. Adds Henkin: “It’s an incredible cross-cultural, cross-age experience where both young and old teach and learn. It’s a win-win situation.”

### THE DETAILS

Every semester, student volunteers from bilingual or bicultural families come to Project SHINE through work-study programs, classes or by word of mouth.

After receiving English as a Second Language training, plus culture and communication training, the young people begin meeting with older

immigrants or refugees at community-based venues. The volunteers work with their older “students,” either one-on-one or in very small groups.

In Philadelphia, Project SHINE partners with more than a dozen community-based organizations that serve varied immigrant and refugee populations. Other partners include senior centers, churches, temples, community centers and housing developments.

### THE COSTS

Project SHINE receives major support from the Corporation for National & Community Service, the MetLife Foundation and the New York Life Foundation. Program funds also come from local grants and donations from colleges and universities.

The program’s strong relationships with community-based partners help it find and connect with older immigrants and refugees.

### THE RESULTS

Headquartered at the College of Education at Temple University, Project SHINE is active in 16 states. Each semester more than 100 students provide at least five hours a week of service. The students typically teach conversational English, but some work on health literacy and, since many of the older adults have never touched a computer, there is a high demand for technology training.

The experience can be inspirational — even transformative. One older learner explained that the student he worked with “was the first American I’ve really gotten to know.” People who participated in Project SHINE as students still point to the impact the program has had on their lives.

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Also an example of:  
**Domain 4: Social Participation**  
**Domain 7: Communication and Information**

# Finding a Place of Their Own



## Men's Sheds

### LANE COVE, NEW SOUTH WALES | AUSTRALIA

Most people think of a shed as a small backyard building used for gardening, storage or as a workshop. But in Australian culture, a shed is typically a man's home away from home.

In 1998, the Lane Cove Men's Shed was one of two pioneering sheds (the other is in Tongala) that helped spark a full-fledged movement of spaces where older, mostly retired men from all walks of life can gather to socialize and talk while working on practical building and woodworking projects.

As Ted Donnelly, president of the Lane Cove Men's Shed and former president of the Australian Men's Shed Association, says about shed members: "They open up about their lives, their relationships, their health. They build friendships and trust."

### THE DETAILS

A 2013 survey of 245 men's sheds in Australia found that, among other things, sheds provide men with:

- a place to access health information
- a chance to discuss issues related to their well-being
- opportunities to participate in the community
- a social support network and sense of belonging
- a mechanism to acquire or develop new skills

Men's sheds are as varied as the men who gather in them. (Some sheds are open to women, too.) In Australia, the median age of a "shedder" is about 70. The membership of each shed can range from a handful to around 150.

A shed's coordinator typically has the technical and social skills to get the group started and develop a membership. The coordinator welcomes men to work on projects of their choice, on their own time. No one is paid and most decisions are reached by consensus.

Each shed is based on the needs of the community and of the men who join. Some sheds are

just places to drink coffee and chat. Other sheds provide mentoring for recently incarcerated men; still others mentor men struggling with addiction. There are sheds for men with physical or cognitive disabilities and sheds to help men find jobs or learn computer skills.

### THE COSTS

Men's sheds usually charge a modest annual membership fee (from roughly \$4 to \$20 in U.S. dollars) and many sheds receive funding from a mix of nonprofit and local or federal government grants.

Some sheds receive generous funding from nonprofits such as Beyondblue and the Movember Foundation in exchange for distributing information about prostate cancer and other men's health issues. (In Lane Cove the local municipal council provides the shed with an annual grant of about \$1,000 U.S.)

Men's sheds raise money through fundraising events such as barbecues, by selling their woodwork creations or by charging for handyman jobs or repairs done by members.

### THE RESULTS

Since many men's sheds participate in community service projects, such as making toys or building benches and tables for public places, a shed's benefits aren't limited to the shedders. For instance, a men's shed in Sydney recycled bicycle parts and other materials to build 1,200 wheelchairs for children in Cambodia.

Today there are hundreds of men's sheds worldwide, mostly in Ireland, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, with a handful of others in Denmark, Sweden and North America.

Also an example of:

**Domain 4: Social Participation**

**Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion**

**Domain 6: Civic Participation and Employment**

**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Caring for the Caregivers



## The Livable Communities Caregiver Coaching Program

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK | UNITED STATES

Westchester County, an economically diverse and geographically vast northern suburb of New York City, is home to the award-winning Livable Communities Caregiver Coaching Program, which provides professional training to volunteers who then mentor family caregivers.

Once trained, the “caregiver coaches” play an “enhanced good neighbor role” by helping often-overwhelmed family caregivers understand their options and make informed decisions about caring for an older or disabled loved one in their own or their relative’s home. The coaches become a stabilizing force and sounding board.

### THE DETAILS

The nurses, social workers and geriatric care managers who teach the 12-hour caregiver coaching curriculum are volunteers, as are the coaches they train. Although having caregiving experience is a plus, anyone can volunteer to become a caregiver coach.

In addition to attending the training, coaches are required to make a one-year commitment to the program and go to monthly meetings. How much time each coach devotes to a family caregiver varies.

The program, which was launched in 2010, is based on a curriculum developed by Westchester County’s Department of Senior Programs and Services, Fordham University’s Ravazzin Center on Aging and representatives from aging agencies. The training usually takes place once a week for three weeks.

Caregiver coaches are taught about the aging process, the challenges caregivers face, potential scenarios they might encounter as coaches, common solutions and specific coaching techniques, such as how to convey factual information clearly. The coaches are also provided with a resource-filled guide full of information about topics such

as making a home safe and the need for caregivers to take care of themselves. Several program rules help to protect both the coach and the caregiver. For instance:

- The family caregiver and the caregiver coach can never meet in person.
- The coach and caregiver may communicate only by telephone.
- The caregiver coach should never go into the family caregiver’s home or meet the care recipient.

### THE COSTS

The program received a start-up grant from the Westchester Public/Private Partnership for Aging Services. With the curriculum up and running, the program is then carried out by volunteers, which helps to control costs and make the program sustainable.

### THE RESULTS

Westchester’s caregiver coaching program offers a vital service to family caregivers throughout the county. As a phone-based program, it can be replicated in other communities and is especially useful for rural areas or regions where getting around is a challenge.

As many as 65 coaches are trained each year. “We can’t count how many people have benefited from this program, because once the coaches are trained, they are forever sharing that information,” says Colette Phipps, research analyst at the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services.

The program’s awards include those from the National Association of Counties and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. The caregiver coaches have given extremely positive feedback about the program and training.

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**Also an example of:**  
**Domain 6: Civic Participation and Employment**  
**Domain 8: Community and Health Services**

# Putting a Fun Spin on Staying Healthy



## 50 & Better Senior Health Fair

DES MOINES, IOWA | UNITED STATES

Every year, Des Moines University Medical School's 50 & Better Senior Health Fair offers older Iowans free medical screenings and health information in a friendly, social atmosphere.

The idea for the health fair originated with students in the university's Geriatrics Club, which organizes the event with the help of the medical school's clinicians and staff and more than 100 other student volunteers. Des Moines University Medical School (DMU) is the largest medical school in Iowa and the nation's second-largest osteopathic school.

Exhibitors provide free screenings, talk about health topics of interest to participants, and provide information about available community services.

### THE DETAILS

The fair is both a health event and a social event. "There is a lot more going on than screenings," says Dr. Yogi Shah, DMU's associate dean of global health and a founder of Age-Friendly Des Moines. Attendees bring friends, enjoy the free refreshments, take ballroom-style dance lessons, play games and learn new things (chair yoga, for example).

Among the free medical screenings are those for blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and lipid levels, colorectal cancer, depression, skin cancer, vascular disease and vision. Other services range from foot exams, nutritional information and sleep assessments to bone density scans, medication reviews and osteopathic treatments.

Visitors to the fair can get a flu shot as well as a physical fitness assessment that analyzes their balance and gait, body mass index, flexibility and strength. At the checkout area, DMU students sit with the attendees to review the results of their screenings and assessments and answer any questions they may have. Depending on their needs, visitors might also meet with a physician for on-site counseling and advice. Some of

the factors that have helped make the 50 & Better Senior Health Fair a success:

- DART, the Des Moines public transit system, provides free transportation to the fair.
- The fair typically includes more than 50 health care, activity and educational booths.
- Assistance is available for people who are in wheelchairs or have other mobility issues.
- If the line at a booth is too long (the medication review and skin cancer screenings are especially popular), a person can add his or her name to a wait list and come back later.

### THE COSTS

The medical school's Geriatrics Club, which receives up to \$4,000 a year in university funding, covers many of the health fair's costs. The club also hosts fundraising events.

DMU and its medical clinic provide the equipment, tables and chairs used at the health fair, for which exhibitors and vendors pay \$100 to participate. (Fees are waived for some nonprofit partners.) Students, doctors and staff volunteer their time.

### THE RESULTS

More than 300 older adults attend each 50 & Better Senior Health Fair. Many, according to event evaluations, say they intend to change their health behaviors based on information received at the fair.

By working with the older patients, the student volunteers gain experience and the time they served counts toward the "touch hours" required as part of their medical training.

Also an example of:

Domain 4: Social Participation

Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion

Domain 7: Communication and Information

# Building a “Community for a Lifetime”



## City of Auburn Hills Community Center

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN | UNITED STATES

Auburn Hills has been working hard to become an ideal place for people of any age or ability to live, work and play. In 2013, the city was designated by the Michigan Aging & Adult Services Agency as a “Community for a Lifetime.” That same year Auburn Hills became the first municipality in Michigan to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

### THE DETAILS

At the heart of the city’s initiative “to transition into a city where all generations are welcome” is the Auburn Hills Community Center. Opened in 2007, the center offers a variety of services, activities and programs to keep older residents healthy, socially-engaged and informed. For example:

- The center is home to the city’s Meals on Wheels program, in which volunteers deliver daily meals to people ages 60 and over who are unable to adequately prepare meals at home. The center also offers an onsite meal program where older people can come for lunch three times a week.
- There’s a robust health and fitness program that includes volleyball, golf, tai chi, balance, yoga, walking activities, a diabetes management program, a gym and a game room with a billiard table.
- Educational and social opportunities include professional storytelling, guest lectures, parties, arts and crafts classes, brain aerobics, language lessons, photography and computer training.
- Volunteers provide free estate planning and legal advice and can help older residents prepare their income tax returns.

Community center participants don’t even have to leave home for some services, including lawn mowing, yard maintenance and snow plowing. There’s even a home repair program. The

center also offers transportation for dialysis, chemotherapy, shopping and other business or medical appointments. In addition, the center has a travel program that arranges trips to theaters, museums and casinos, as well as to such faraway places as Panama and China.

### THE COSTS

Residents of Auburn Hills pay for the community center through their local taxes. Most of its health programs and other services are free to residents. Yard maintenance, day trips and fitness classes charge a fee to cover the costs of instructors, equipment or gas.

### THE RESULTS

The Auburn Hills Community Center reports that about 14,000 people age 50 and older participate in its programs each year. More than 400 people volunteer at the center on a regular basis. Half of those volunteers are older residents, while many of the remaining helpers are high school and college students.

“Participants encourage other older people, especially those with visual or physical disabilities, to participate,” says Karen Adcock, the city’s senior services director. “The community center has become the go-to place for older people.”

The center is also a model of collaboration, involving key city departments, the state of Michigan, local businesses, schools and various health, aging and mobility agencies and organizations.

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Also an example of:

Domain 2: Transportation

Domain 4: Social Participation

Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion

Domain 6: Civic Participation and Employment

Domain 7: Communication and Information

## About This Report

The 2015 *Age-Friendly: Inspiring Communities Report* is a collaboration of AARP International and AARP Livable Communities in support of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program.



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## Age-Friendly and Livable Communities Resources

### **AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Tool Kit**

This self-service guide hosts the network's member list, explains how a community can join and provides step-by-step details about the work involved.

[aarp.org/agefriendly](http://aarp.org/agefriendly)

### **AARP Livable Communities**

An award-winning website featuring livability resources from AARP and others. (Be sure to subscribe to the free AARP Livable Communities Monthly eNewsletter.)

[aarp.org/livable](http://aarp.org/livable)

### **AARP Livability Index**

With this online tool users can enter an address or postal code to find the livability score of any neighborhood, town, city, county or state in the United States.

[aarp.org/livabilityindex](http://aarp.org/livabilityindex)

### **AARP International**

A global resource about health and economic security information and advocacy, this website includes a channel entirely about Age-Friendly Communities.

[aarpinternational.org](http://aarpinternational.org)

### **AARP Public Policy Institute**

Livability policies address issues such as land use, housing, transportation and broadband — all of which facilitate aging in place.

[aarp.org/livablepolicy](http://aarp.org/livablepolicy)

### **World Health Organization**

The meeting place for the WHO's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and a global platform for exchange and learning.

[agefriendlyworld.org](http://agefriendlyworld.org)

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families.

## Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the assistance and contributions of the following organizations.

AARP Georgia  
AARP Iowa  
AARP Kansas  
AARP Oregon  
ACT Office for Ageing (Australia)  
Australian Men's Shed Association  
City of Auburn Hills, Michigan  
City of Brownsville, Texas  
City of Lyon, France  
D.C. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services  
Des Moines University  
Edmonton Transit System (Canada)  
Federation University Australia  
Friends of Tattnall Square Park  
Lane Cove's Men's Shed  
Manchester City Council (England)  
Mercer University  
New York City Department of Transportation  
Orange Splot, LLC  
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality  
Portland State University  
Silver Linings Global  
Stoke-on-Trent City Council (England)  
Temple University  
Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

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