

Age-Friendly Hennepin County

Action Plan Overview 2021



Acknowledgements

The Age-Friendly Hennepin County planning team invested significant time, energy, and expertise from their respective areas in developing this plan. Their commitment to the residents of Hennepin County is inspiring and commendable.

Project leads

- Mei Ding (Public Health)
- Laura Frederick (Housing and Economic Development)
- James Mara (Public Health)
- Lydia Morken (External consultant)
- Kassy Nystrom (Public Health)
- Catherine Stahl (Public Health)
- Abbie Zahler (Public Health)

Team participants

County Administration

- Brian Dorr (Human Resources)
- Denise Engen (Housing and Economic Development)
- Lisa Hackett (Human Resources)
- Kaade Wallace (Intergovernmental Relations)
- Tonja West-Hafner (Housing and Economic Development)

Disparity Reduction

- Susan Lee-Rife (Center of Innovation and Excellence)
- Julie Megli-Wotzka (Purchasing and Contract Services)

Health & Human Services

- Carmen Castaneda (Human Services)
- Neil Doyle (Veteran's Services)
- Dr. Paul Erickson (Northpoint Health and Wellness Center)
- Clifford Gibson (Human Services)
- Michael Herzing (Human Services)
- Joan Jung (Medical Examiner's Office)
- Markus Klimenko (Human Services)
- Jillian Kyles (Human Services)
- Dr. Melody Mendiola (Hennepin Health)
- Kristi Olzeske (Housing)
- Veronica Schulz (Public Health)
- Jernell Walker (Human Services)

Operations

- Colin Cox (Communications and Engagement Services)
- Kelsey Dawson Walton (Communications and Engagement Services)
- Jan Duffie (Resident and Real Estate Services_)
- Colleen Livermore (Audit, Compliance and Investigative Services)
- John Rode (Facility Services)
- Beth Leindecker (Information Technology)
- Emily O'Connor (Library)
- Jeffrey Strand (Resident and Real Estate Services)
- Dillon Young (Library)

Public Safety

- Bradley Thompson (Community Corrections and Rehabilitation)
- Mary Dickenson (District Court Administration)
- Tim Stout (Sheriff's Office)

Public Works

- Dan Patterson (Transportation Planning)
- Joe Scala (Engineering and Transit Planning)

Letter from County Administrator

Dear residents of Hennepin County,

I am pleased to present the Age-Friendly Hennepin County Action Plan, part of the county's new comprehensive approach to our role in a universal experience: aging.

As part of our commitment to this work, Hennepin County enrolled in the World Health Organization and AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities in 2019. The age-friendly movement is helping communities around the world seize opportunities and strategically respond to the challenges of an older population related to the built environment, social environment, service delivery and our overall culture around aging.

This work is aligned with Hennepin County's Disparity Reduction efforts. We used a health and racial equity lens in the age-friendly planning and applied an aging lens to disparities to ensure older residents — the county's fastest growing age group — are deliberately included as we seek to eliminate disparities based on race, income and factors like age.

Older adults drive local economies and make vital contributions to the social fabric of our communities. Local governments and communities have an enormous opportunity to innovate in ways that change both our perceptions and experience of aging in a way that will benefit individuals, the broader community and local government itself.

Age-Friendly Hennepin County strives not only to maximize the degree to which residents can live independently, but also to ensure that older people who need assistance have access to the right services – to allow everyone to live with dignity and autonomy in safe, supportive neighborhoods.

Ten other communities, including three cities in Hennepin County, have also joined AARP's age-friendly network. The opportunities for mutual support and coordination across levels of government open enormous potential.

This plan is designed to help Hennepin County take strategic, coordinated steps toward becoming a place where residents can thrive in older age. Concurrently, it allows us to move forward our efforts to impact racial disparities in our aging populations. We are proud to be part of the growing age-friendly movement, and to expand and advance our ongoing commitment to equity, inclusion and service to you, our residents.



David Hough
County Administrator

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Introduction

Age-Friendly Hennepin County is an effort to help the county prepare for and respond to unprecedented demographic shifts. Older adults comprise a greater share of our population than ever before, yet cities and counties were not planned with modern lifespans in mind. Further, as the county redoubles its commitment to racial equity and reducing health disparities, Age-Friendly Hennepin County will ensure that an aging lens is applied to that work, while simultaneously applying a health and racial equity lens to better understand and respond to the particular challenges and barriers faced by older people of color, those who have low-incomes, and others who routinely face discrimination and experience disparities.

A thoughtful, coordinated response to shifting demographics will benefit us all. Hennepin County recognized the need and opportunity for this work and took a significant step by joining the World Health Organization/AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities in 2019. With that program's framework as a guide, Hennepin County has developed this comprehensive plan for better understanding, respecting, and serving its changing constituency.

Science, medicine, and public health were busy throughout the twentieth century making it possible for people to live much longer than ever before, yet cities and counties developed without the choices needed to support an aging population and certainly not the aging of the largest cohort to be born on the planet.

*Kathryn Lawler, "Age-Friendly Communities Go Big or Go Home,"
Public Policy & Aging Report 2015*

Advancing racial equity and reducing disparities

Age-Friendly Hennepin County supports the county's efforts to achieve health and racial equity and reduce disparities by intentionally focusing on the critical dimension of aging.

Minnesota frequently ranks high on quality-of-life measures, yet our state and the Twin Cities also have some of the worst racial inequality in the country. This is especially relevant in Hennepin County, which is home to 40 percent of the state's foreign-born population and people of color. Residents speak more than 100 languages, and approximately 24 percent of the county's population are people of color.

However, as in many other places, income, race, and ethnicity drive stark disparities in Hennepin County — including among older adults. Older people of color experience more food insecurity, prescription insecurity, unmet medical care needs, and frequent mental distress than their White counterparts. Further, older residents with low incomes experience more housing and transportation insecurity, more frequent mental distress, and higher rates of disabilities than those who are not low-income. (see Tables 1 and 2).

County leaders are acutely aware of these realities and have been focused intently on countywide efforts to advance racial equity and eliminate disparities. Following the killing of George Floyd, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution in June 2020 declaring racism a public health crisis that affects the entire county.

Age-friendliness is inherently focused on deliberate and expansive inclusion and equity. As we apply the aging lens to the county's work, we simultaneously apply the racial equity lens to better understand and respond to the particular challenges and barriers faced by older people of color, those who are low-income, and others who routinely face discrimination and experience disparities.

The integration of these approaches will evolve as the work progresses, with Age-Friendly Hennepin County using health and racial equity and disparities reduction as a foundation of its work. Already, numerous strategies within the plan address these issues, such as those related to culturally and linguistically appropriate services and using the Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) as part of community engagement, among others. Community engagement will be one of the most important ways that we both broaden and deepen our inclusion of racially and ethnically diverse older residents.

The Governor's Council for an Age-Friendly Minnesota made diversity, equity, and inclusion a centerpiece of the recommendations it delivered to Governor Walz in August 2020. The Council recognized that not only do older adults experience routine discrimination in some regards, but that the inclusion of older people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural communities and who are LGBTQ, disabled, veterans, rural, or part of other groups that experience health, social, and other inequities must be a starting point, and not an afterthought.

Table 1: Disparities by race and ethnicity among Hennepin County residents age 55+

Selected health indicators	Hispanic	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian or Asian-American	Southeast Asian (subset of Asian or Asian American)	Black or African American	White
Experienced unmet medical care needs during the past 12 months among those who needed care	20.8%	37.3%	24.4%	27.8%	31.8%	15.9%*
Having no usual place of care	24.1%	22.9%	13.3%	19.7%	23.5%	14.0%*
Experienced prescription insecurity during past 12 months among those regularly taking medication	19.6%	17.2%	10.5%	9.1%	16.1%	7.1%*
Experienced food insecurity during past 12 months	26.1%	25.8%	26.4%	48.2%	33.8%	5.6%*
Experienced frequent mental distress, where mental health was not good for at least two weeks during past 30 days	15.2%	17.6%	15.5%	21.8%	22.0%	8.6%

Source: SHAPE 2018 www.hennepin.us/shape

* Difference in rates between major racial and ethnic groups is statistically significant @ $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Disparities by income among Hennepin County adults age 55+

Selected health indicators	All adults 55+	Low-income adults 55+	Not low-income adults 55+
Have a disability	32.5%	51.0%	25.9%*
Feel isolated frequently	6.0%	12.4%	3.7%*
Experienced transportation insecurity	5.2%	16.2%	1.3%*
Experienced housing insecurity	5.3%	12.8%	2.9%
Reported unsafe neighborhood	6.5%	14.1%	3.9%*
Experienced frequent discrimination	2.6%	6.6%	1.4%*

Source: SHAPE 2018 www.Hennepin.us/shape

* Difference in rates between two income groups is statistically significant @ $p < 0.05$

COVID-19: Responses and resilience

Older adults experienced high rates of death and serious illness related to COVID-19 and Black, Indigenous and people of color experienced higher rates of infection than White people. Hennepin County responded rapidly and strategically in a variety of ways to protect older residents most at risk, which speaks to its commitment to its residents, ability to innovate under pressure, and its readiness for adopting a broader age-friendly initiative.

The Age-Friendly Hennepin County planning team made COVID-19 impacts and implications a regular part of its discussions, and several strategies stemming from pandemic response are present in this plan.

Examples include:

- Build on information technology advances developed for COVID-19 response in remote work and service delivery.
- For residents who receive county services, determine how to supplement virtual visits and appointments — necessitated by COVID-19 — with in-home visits and other supportive methods as necessary.
- Capture and build on lessons related to services being used to help older residents experiencing homelessness.

As we anticipate future emergencies — such as extreme weather, civil unrest, other public health crises — it is important to note that age-friendly communities are proving to be especially resilient, responding more quickly and effectively to system stresses and challenges. Partnerships and coordination between agencies and organizations, ready methods of communicating information and a greater knowledge of older adult needs are all examples of features common to age-friendly communities that help people and organizations not only develop rapid responses to crises but prevent and absorb more of the stresses.

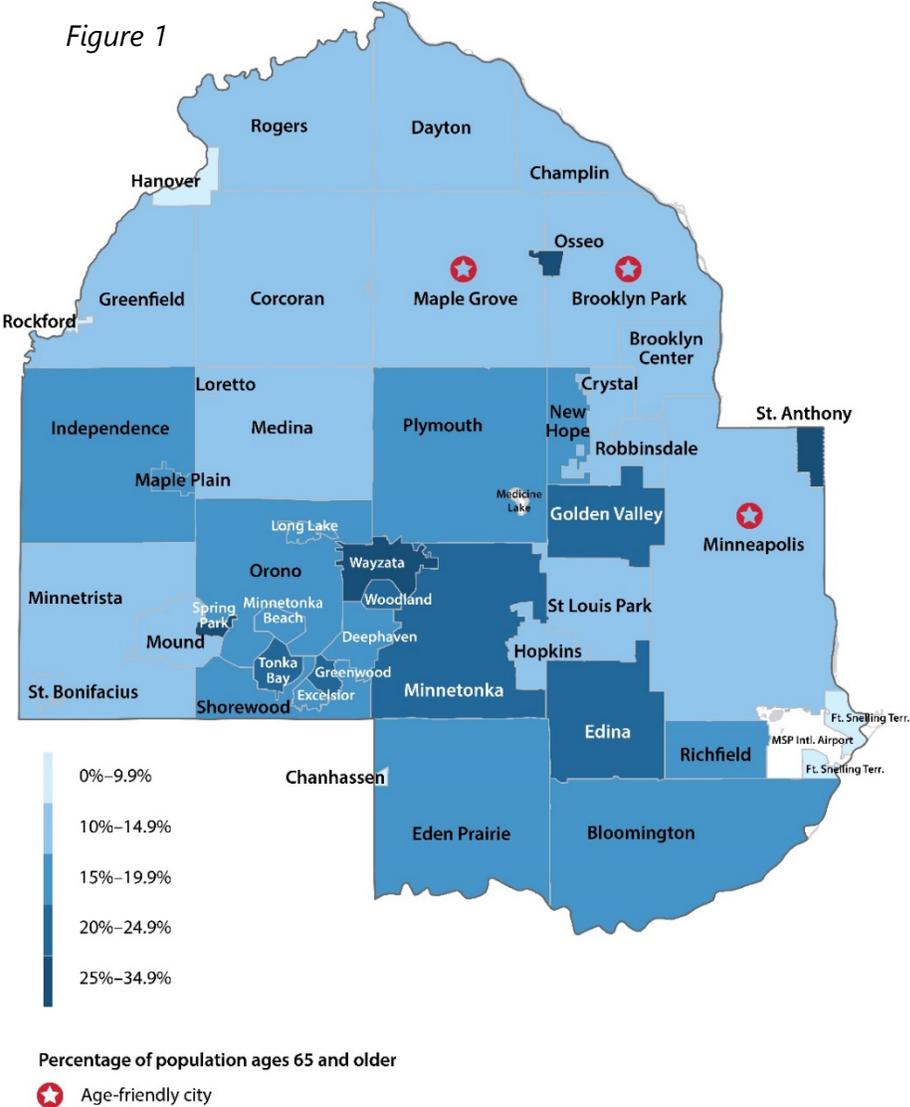
Recognizing Hennepin County's demographics

Hennepin County is Minnesota's most populous county, with 1.26 million residents and totaling nearly a quarter of the state's population. Nearly one-third of residents are people of color. It is the largest of Minnesota's 87 counties in budget, estimated market value and population. It is the 33rd largest county in the nation (out of 3100) and part of the nation's sixteenth largest metropolitan region.

Within 607 square miles of rural, urban and suburban areas are 45 cities, which range in population from Minneapolis' more than 425,000 people to cities with fewer than 1,000. Regardless of size, communities throughout Hennepin County are seeing a growing number of people 65 and older (see Figure 1).

While many indicators show Hennepin County residents are thriving, disparities exist in housing, health, justice, education, income, employment, and transportation, all social determinants of health, that impact quality of life for some residents, particularly people of color and low-income residents. Availability of affordable housing is a critical issue in Hennepin County.

Figure 1





Changing community profile

Demographic changes aren't what make age-friendly communities fundamentally important, it's what makes them more urgent.

The growth in the population of residents aged 65+ is outpacing Hennepin County's overall population growth. In 2020, adults aged 65+ outnumbered children in Minnesota for the first time in history, and more Minnesotans turned 65 in the past decade than in the previous four decades combined.

Aging Baby Boomers are driving the present shift toward an older populace, but this growth is also due to longer lifespans. This is not a short-term trend. We will have an older population for many years to come.

Our population also is becoming increasingly diverse, older adults included. Between 2015 and 2050, the percentage of White residents aged 65+ is projected to drop from 89% to 74%.

Planning for the whole lifespan is part of being truly inclusive. The fact that a greater segment of the population will be older makes it even more critical.

Valuing the contributions of older adults

Older adults are often perceived through a lens of needs. However, older adults make vitally important social and economic contributions to our communities. Ensuring that older residents can contribute to and be engaged in the community for as long as possible is a win-win for residents of *all* ages, as well as for local government.

Older people play vital roles in the workforce, in caring for — and increasingly raising — grandchildren, and as entrepreneurs, family caregivers and volunteers. In fact, one impact of COVID-19 that many communities struggled with was the loss of a huge older adult volunteer corps that performs critical functions at organizations from libraries to food shelves to animal shelters. Many of those volunteers took a break from their work due to the pandemic.

Older adults are also a huge economic force. The term “longevity economy” was coined to represent the sum of all economic activity connected to Americans 50 and older, a group that accounts for more than half of all U.S. spending.

According to AARP, Minnesota’s 50-plus population will drive economic growth for the next 30 years. In 2018, the 50-plus population accounted for 36 percent of Minnesota’s population, yet contributed 42 percent — or \$154 billion — of the state’s total GDP, and this trend is predicted to continue for three decades.

Establishing an Age-Friendly Hennepin County

The age-friendly communities’ movement is growing quickly. Hennepin County now is one of more than 500 U.S. communities and eight states to have joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.

In Minnesota, seven cities (including Maple Grove, Brooklyn Park and Minneapolis in Hennepin County) and four counties are members, and the State of Minnesota is taking steps to enroll at the state level.

There is great potential for different levels of government and community partners to coordinate and collaborate toward shared age-friendly goals.

With leadership support from county administration, Hennepin County enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and launched a cross-departmental age-friendly planning initiative.

Hennepin County is well-positioned to take on this work. We are a forward-thinking, well-managed and well-resourced organization that already does a great deal of work that supports age-



friendliness. Our community engagement work is robust and ready to incorporate system-wide older adult inclusion, and we can also build on our strong relationships with cities.

Our age-friendly strategies help Hennepin County achieve its five overarching goals:

- **Healthy:** People are healthy, have access to quality health care and live in a clean environment.
- **Protected and safe:** People are safe from harm through prevention, early intervention and treatment services, and through enhanced public safety.
- **Self-reliant:** People achieve success with the support of essential services, have access to affordable housing, access to and training for technology resources, and opportunities for life-long learning.
- **Assured due process:** People are assured equal protection of the laws through an adversarial and respectful system designed to assure fairness and reliability in the ascertainment of liability, guilt, and innocence.
- **Mobile:** People and goods move easily and safely throughout the county and the region, via an integrated system of transportation.

Engaging staff and learning from data

Staff from across the county (listed in the acknowledgements section of this report) met regularly over the course of nine months to discuss and identify opportunities to bring the county into a new era in how it perceives and includes older residents.

This process focused on assessing the internal work of Hennepin County government and identifying opportunities for the county to adapt and build upon its own work to become more responsive to and inclusive of older adults.

The voices and lived experiences of community members, especially older adults, are foundational to developing age-friendly communities. Hennepin County's Survey of the Health of All the Population and Environment (SHAPE) survey data provided a rich source of data that played a defining role in the team's assessment of need and opportunity across the county.

SHAPE data, collected by Hennepin County every four years, provides incredibly valuable information used to assess residents' general health and inform the county's priorities, strategies, and how resources are allocated. Questions cover a wide range of topics addressing health, access to healthcare, lifestyles, behaviors, and social-environmental factors that impact health.

Brainstorming and applying frameworks

The planning team considered:

- SHAPE data on a wide range of issues that affect community health and health disparities among older residents¹
- Connections to and integration with the county's Disparity Reduction work, including application of the Racial Equity Impact Tool and alignment between the county's seven disparity domain areas and AARP's domains of livability
- The intersection of aging issues across county departments and lines of business, including how departments could strengthen coordination toward shared age-friendly goals
- Research produced as part of the Hennepin County Aging Initiative, undertaken in 2010 to help the county anticipate and understand the potential effects of changing age demographics
- The work of existing age-friendly community initiatives in Hennepin County
- Alignment with other county plans, policies and priorities
- The role of a county (versus other government entities) in impacting older residents' lives
- Learnings and best practices from communities around the U.S. who are members of the AARP age-friendly network, including from those in Hennepin County cities
- Work being undertaken by the Governor's Council on an Age-Friendly Minnesota, to which Age-Friendly Hennepin County presented on its own work in June 2020

Building off previous county efforts referred to as "healthy aging," Age-Friendly Hennepin County now follows a five-year framework laid out through the AARP age-friendly network. The major stages in the process are planning, implementation and evaluation. The process is designed to be repeated to achieve a cycle of continuous improvement.

¹ Survey of the Health of All the Population and Environment (SHAPE) data is collected by Hennepin County every four years and serves as a rich resource for understanding various aspects of residents' health and well-being.

Bringing the work to life

Defining themes in our work

The action plan was developed using two key frameworks to guide the process. The first was [Hennepin County's Disparity Reduction vision and domains](#), the social determinants of health around which the county focuses its Disparity Reduction work. To maintain connectedness to our disparity work, we are leading our age-friendly work through Hennepin County's health domain work.



The second framework is [AARP's eight domains of livability](#), which similarly encompass global issues like housing, transportation, health, and employment, and also capture topics particularly relevant to an aging population, such as outdoor spaces and buildings. Together these frameworks helped the planning team incorporate Disparity Reduction and an aging lens so that both would be fully reflected in the final goals and strategies.

The resulting action plan includes twenty-three strategies and nearly 100 actions developed by the team through this planning process. We have based this plan's goals and strategies in three foundational themes: prosperous, livable and resilient (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



Prosperous

Older adults, with a particular focus on those experiencing income-driven disparity, are financially secure, have a high quality of life, and have what they need to contribute to society, including good jobs and meaningful volunteer opportunities.



Resilient

Older adults and communities are adaptable to changes, shocks, and stresses. High-quality services that prioritize stability, independence, and disparity reduction are readily available.



Livable

Older adults have affordable, appropriate housing and are mobile and connected. Diversity is embraced, and well-being is not determined by age, race, gender, income, or neighborhood.

These themes, which originated from the 2040 Hennepin County Comprehensive Plan,² create the conditions that empower residents, especially older ones, and those experiencing disparities, to live in good health and stability, even during times of stress. Data reveals that residents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and who have low incomes experience notable inequities in health and mental health access; economic, housing, food, and transportation insecurity; and social isolation.

Working through these themes will help us to create a system and an environment where those disparities are eliminated and all residents experience a Prosperous, Resilient, and Livable Hennepin County. Our lens is an age-inclusive one, which will be increasingly important as the population continues to shift older and diversify.

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² Hennepin County's 2040 Comprehensive Plan ([viewable here](#)) serves as an overarching policy framework for managing long-term change and the evolution of Hennepin County from today through 2040.

Advancing the work to the next level

A series of meetings and conversations within the Age-Friendly Hennepin County planning team — in large groups, small groups and one-on-one sessions — revealed some overarching lessons that are important to understanding the nature of age-friendly work and determining how to advance it within Hennepin County:

- This is systems-level work. An “aging lens” must be consistently and routinely applied to our planning, funding, services, and policy decisions.
- Equity work encompasses aging, and age-friendly work advances health and racial equity, and disparities reduction.
- Great opportunity lies in coordination across the county’s lines of business.
- This work aligns with and reinforces the county’s five overarching goals as well as many existing plans, objectives, and priorities.
- Hennepin County has many “levers” to pull to make change in different ways — as a funder, employer, influencer, regulator, service provider, and researcher, among others.

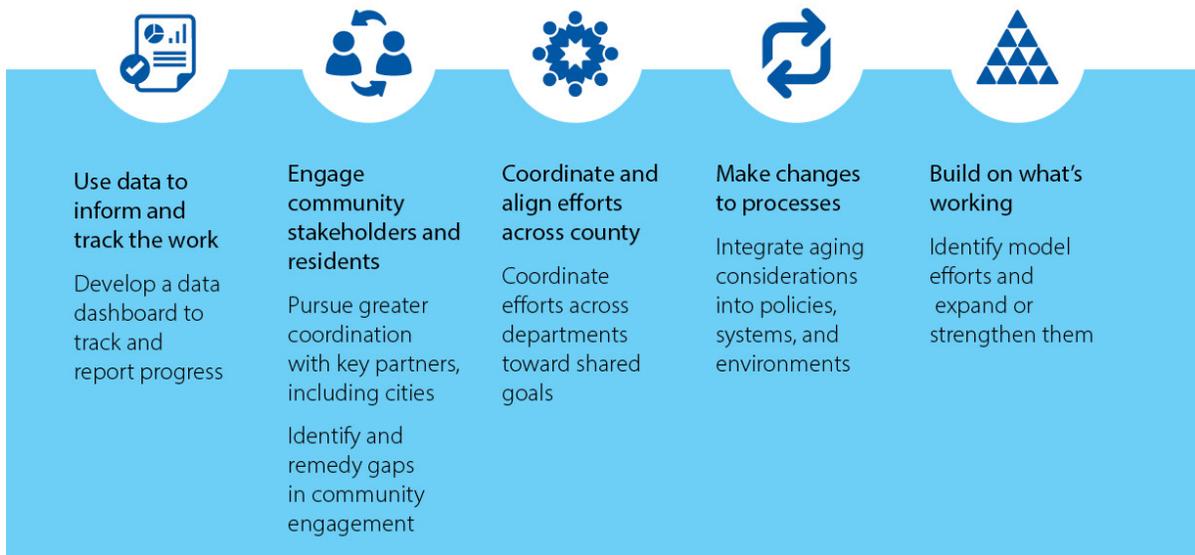
Instead of competing for limited resources, age-friendly work will help advance many of the county’s existing goals, initiatives and work.

Analyzing and using existing work to help meet goals

Age-friendly work is broad in scope. It touches many departments, lines of business and the way we engage the community. It includes both short-term actions and longer-term plans and requires us to change our own work as well as encourage our partners to adapt theirs.

For these reasons, our action plan includes strategies of different types (see Figure 3). Together they encompass system-level change that will be reflected in policies and the built, social, and service environments.

Figure 3



Hennepin County has invested great time and energy in establishing ambitious goals and providing a high quality of life for our residents and communities in a respectful, efficient and fiscally responsible way.

The work of Age-Friendly Hennepin County is an integral component of the county’s Disparity Reduction goals and is closely aligned with existing efforts (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Age Friendly Hennepin County will support efforts to:	Related initiative
Protect and engage people, especially vulnerable communities; Deliver services in times of disruption	Climate Action Plan
Prevent and reduce homelessness among older adults	End Homelessness
Improve access to financial, social and public health services	Resident Services Delivery
Create a built environment that invites walking, biking, using transit and community connection	Active Living
Design roadways and nearby areas for all ages and abilities and uses	Complete Streets
Improve access and training for technology to increase social connection and access to services.	Digital Inclusion

Incorporating community engagement

Community engagement is central to the county and this initiative. We are building on Hennepin County's strong foundation of community engagement and will use practices designed to reduce health and racial disparities.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities framework is also anchored in community engagement that connects this work to the lived experiences of older adults.

The initial phase of Age-Friendly Hennepin County focused on an internal examination of the county's work. This included community engagement and an exploration of how the county approaches engaging older residents, including those from the county's many racial, ethnic, and cultural communities.

During the next phase of work, and using a spectrum adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP), we will add an external focus and begin to engage the community. Using the IAP2 Spectrum, we aim to move beyond informing the community and will involve, collaborate with, and empower community members. This will be undertaken in two primary ways. First, numerous goals, strategies, and actions in the plan specify engaging and collaborating with partner organizations, cities, and other stakeholders. As we implement the plan, we will be establishing and strengthening relationships, learning from partners, and identifying opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration.

Second, an internal age-friendly community engagement team will be dedicated to ensuring the voices of older residents are reflected in this work. That team will work alongside the core implementation team, the age-friendly coordinator, and will use the Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) as one of its community engagement planning tools.

Engagement in action

All lines of business engage with older residents and related stakeholders. The nature and depth of the engagement varies from staff participation in stakeholder groups to direct resident engagement to community advisory boards.

Despite the strength of the county's community engagement efforts, there is a need and opportunity to be more deliberate related to older residents. This should include heightened involvement in department strategic and project planning, specifically:

- Collaborating with older adults on a regular basis to learn about their experiences with county services/programs and integrating their feedback to the degree possible
- Consulting with older adults on how to prioritize needed improvements
- Informing older adults about service and program changes at various points in the process

Future considerations

Community engagement goals have been woven into numerous strategies within this action plan. The work will focus on the population experiencing disparities in particular domains. For our transportation efforts, the plan articulates the need to “ensure that community engagement, consultations and input reflect older adult voices and experiences.” In transportation, low-income community members experience much greater insecurity than those with higher incomes. This level of commitment will be needed in the planning phases of projects across all domains to ensure that Hennepin County is best responding to and serving its older residents.

This plan also focuses on five of the eight AARP domains of livability (see next section for more detail). While the other three domains — listed below — are reflected in various strategies, they also are naturally embedded in community engagement. We will continue to build our community engagement strategies as they relate to these domains, but initial examples include:

- **Communication and information:** Examine how we share information: including our messaging, language, translation and cultural components, as well as communication channels – and the access to technology and ability to use it.
- **Social participation:** Support the county’s efforts related to mental health by determining outreach strategies for older adults, particularly those identified as low-income, who are at higher risk for loneliness and isolation.
- **Respect and social inclusion:** Seek input from older adults and apply it to policies and systems to demonstrate respect and ensure that older adults will trust and want to use county services.



Examples of guiding themes in action

We started our work by looking at five [AARP domains](#), their intersection with Hennepin County disparity domains, and developing goals and strategies for each. The five AARP domains are Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Community Support and Health Services, and Work and Civic Engagement. We captured and highlighted our work under the three guiding themes and identified more than 90 different action steps to support the goals and strategies.

Figure 5



The following is a selection of strategies and actions under each of the three themes, and further organized by focus area. Each strategy is linked to one or more corresponding Hennepin County Disparity Reduction domains and AARP livability domains. A highlight follows each theme to provide an example of existing county work that embodies age-friendliness.



Strategy	Disparity Reduction domain(s):	AARP domain(s):
Opportunity focus		
Encourage the creation of a age 50-plus Employee Resource Group (ERG) to gain an understanding of and plan for the needs of older employees	Employment	Work & civic engagement
Develop and maintain a list of retired employees interested in returning for contractual/project-based work opportunities	Employment; income	Work & civic engagement
Expand programs that support healthy behaviors, particularly for residents experiencing disparities (e.g., FOOD Rx, Step-to-It Challenge, Latino Seniors Active Living Project, etc.)	Health	Community support & health services
Develop a one-stop-shop where interested residents can access comprehensive, up-to-date information about volunteer opportunities across the county	Health; employment	Work & civic engagement
Actively include older jobseekers in efforts to connect residents to county workforce opportunities.	Employment	Work & civic engagement
Partnership focus		
Identify community partners providing transportation-related services (e.g., Senior Community Services) and determine how Hennepin County can help connect residents to services by, for example, brokering communications.	Transportation; health	Transportation; community support & health services
Identify appropriate points of contact in other jurisdictions and partner organizations so that older residents' issues can be addressed in an efficient and coordinated manner.	Health; housing	Community support & health services; housing

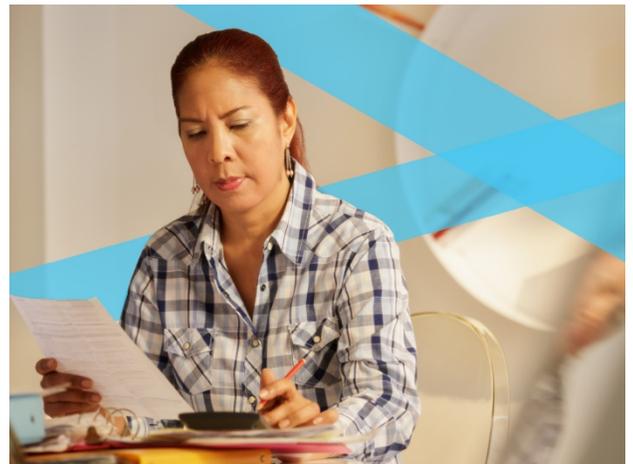
Identify ways for the county to encourage, educate, or incentivize cities and other partners to incorporate age and ability considerations into their own transportation work.	Transportation	Transportation
Integration focus		
Integrate older adults into Hennepin Pathways employment program.	Employment	Work & civic engagement
Create and communicate organization-wide HR policies that align with age-friendly principles throughout the organization to ensure that all departments understand and can take advantage of them.	Employment	Work & civic engagement

Highlight

Tax-Forfeited Land Navigator program

The Navigator program is a unique partnership between two Hennepin County departments: Human Services and Resident and Real Estate Services. It provides navigation services for residents facing tax-forfeiture due to delinquent property taxes.

Navigators help residents resolve their delinquency, as well connect them to resources and assistance that help them address challenges that impact their ability to pay their property taxes. The result is that most residents served are able to stay in their homes. The program can be used by homeowners of all ages, but the majority are between 50 and 70 years old, with the median age being 65.5. Since 2016 through 2020, the program received more than 350 referrals.





Strategy	Disparity Reduction domain(s):	AARP domain(s):
Stability focus		
Provide additional support to older residents, particularly those with unmet medical or mental health needs, in applying for and maintaining healthcare coverage so they can consistently access needed services and programs.	Health	Community support & health services
Identify and build on what the county learned from its COVID-19 response strategies related to human services to help older adults achieve long-term stability more effectively.	Health	Community support & health services
Coordinate with community agencies to ensure people are seen face-to-face when they are unable to access virtual services	Health	Community support & health services
Expand the Alternative Care Housing Access and Moving program to increase the number of persons benefiting from the program each year	Housing; health	Housing; community support & health services
Inclusion focus		
Explicitly name older adults in county plans and policies as stakeholders to be considered and engaged in plans and decisions related to outdoor spaces and buildings.	Health	Outdoor spaces & buildings
Strengthen and expand partnerships with community partners and community-based cultural organizations to provide more culturally- and linguistically- appropriate services to racially and ethnically diverse older residents.	Health; housing; transportation	Community support & health services
Use findings from the Transit Coordination & Assistance Project (TCAP) grant — focused on transportation for Human Services clients — to advance and inform Age-Friendly HC goals, including how transportation is linked to disparities in other areas.	Transportation	Transportation

Innovation focus		
Build on model programs, such as the Tax-Forfeited Land Navigator Program, and use them to inform creation of new, collaborative responses to resident needs	Housing; health	Community support & health services; housing
Use high-impact strategies — such as Hotels to Housing — gleaned from COVID-19 response to supporting homeless older adults to inform future efforts and investments serving this group.	Housing; health	Community support & health services; housing

Highlight

Laptops for older adults during COVID

Hennepin County dedicated \$1 million of federal CARES funding to purchase 8600 laptops for older adults, youth, jobseekers, and others in need. Laptop recipients have access to tech support through an area nonprofit. Older adults are anticipated to benefit from greater access to telehealth and social connections, among other things.





Livable

Strategy	Disparity Reduction Domain(s):	AARP Domain(s):
Human-centered mobility focus		
Create infrastructure and experiences that encourage walking, with special attention to pedestrian crossings	Transportation; health	Transportation; outdoor spaces & buildings
Enact policy, and allocate necessary resources, to add benches and trees wherever possible to provide the seating and shade protection that encourage older people to be out walking and connecting with the community	Transportation; health	Transportation; outdoor spaces & buildings
Ensure older adults are deliberately reflected in the county’s transportation planning, funding, design, and other decisions, and urge external partners to do the same	Transportation	Transportation
Expand existing accessibility audits to include exteriors and sites in addition to interior spaces and add age-friendly design features to audits to make the county’s buildings and facilities more inclusive	Health	Outdoor spaces & buildings
Access focus		
Leverage Housing Stabilization Services, a new Medical Assistance benefit, to provide greater support for healthy aging by developing a network of housing service providers with aging expertise to help maximize the degree to which older residents can benefit from these comprehensive services.	Housing; health	Housing; community support & health services
Expand grants/financial assistance for accessibility improvements to allow homeowners to remain living at home.	Housing	Housing
Ensure that older adults across races, ethnicities, cultural groups, income levels, and abilities, as well as LGBTQ residents, are specifically considered and engaged in transportation decisions, including use of Racial Equity Impact Tool .	Transportation	Transportation

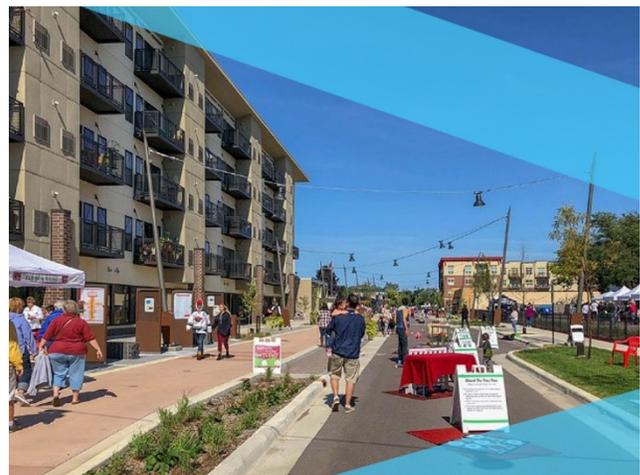
Connection focus		
Incorporate age-friendly considerations into the library’s planning processes. Apply age, health, race-equity lens to evaluate how resources are expended.	Health	Community support & health services
Identify key intersections on county roadways and assess for pedestrian safety and experience. Priority intersections include those near key destinations such as clinics, grocery stores, libraries, local parks, community centers, place of worship, etc.	Transportation; health	Transportation; outdoor spaces & buildings

Highlight

The ARTery in Hopkins

The ARTery is a bike, pedestrian, and vehicle connection and community space in downtown Hopkins on 8th Avenue between a planned light rail transit station and the city’s historic downtown. This award-winning project was the result of the work of numerous partners, including Hennepin County.

The county’s role included supporting plans for a vibrant walking and biking environment; increasing the city’s capacity to plan, engage, and implement; providing technical assistance and funding; and leveraging other work, funds and partnerships.



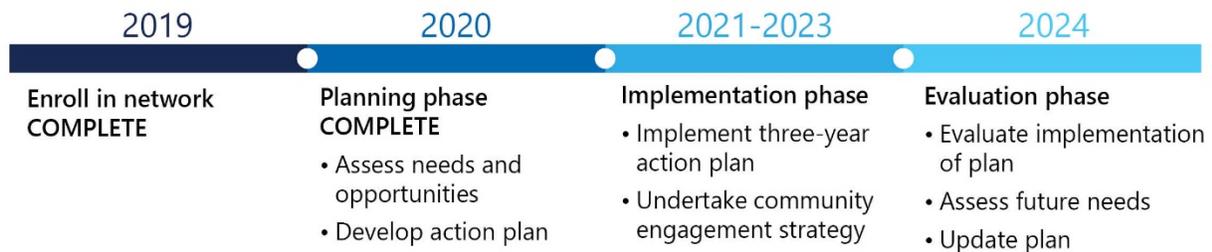
While projects like the ARTery were not recognized as age-friendly at the time, defining elements of the ARTery represent age-friendly fundamentals: a “pedestrian-seductive” design, designated bicycle track, vibrant downtown business district, public transit access, and inviting and accessible outdoor gathering spaces, among others.

Plan implementation

A county-wide implementation team will support this work, which will be advised and overseen by county leadership. Throughout the implementation process a health and racial equity lens will be applied using the Racial Equity Impact tool in various strategies and work plans. Evaluation of the strategies — led by a data workgroup — will occur throughout the process with an intentional evaluation period occurring at the end of each cycle.

Timeline

The age-friendly network process includes three distinct phases following enrollment in the network. The idea is that communities will repeat this process as part of a cycle of continuous improvement, as there is no distinct finish line.





Conclusion

The Age-Friendly Hennepin County Action Plan is a key strategy in our Disparity Reduction health domain work and is intended to influence, initiate, and accelerate changes we can make at the county level, and to encourage other organizations to do the same. While much of this work is incremental, it holds great possibility to transform our communities over time.

As more communities and levels of government take up age-friendly planning, its impact grows. In Hennepin County, three cities were already members of the AARP age-friendly network at the time this plan was developed: Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove and Minneapolis. Further, the Governor's Council on an Age-Friendly Minnesota has officially recommended that the State of Minnesota enroll in the age-friendly network at the state level in 2021. This would be a major step forward and bring a new level of commitment and support for older residents across the state. We look forward to working with all these partners and more.

This plan lives in the health domain as part of our Disparity Reduction work and will help Hennepin County strengthen its inclusion and equity work by applying an aging lens to all we do. Age-Friendly Hennepin County will help to deepen our efforts by adding a specific focus on older residents.

Planning for needs across the lifespan has always been important, but as the population ages, it becomes even more critical. Hennepin County must be a place where people can live with autonomy and dignity at all stages of life. This plan is an important step in that direction.