

# The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities: An Introduction

As the U.S. population ages and people stay healthy and active longer, communities must adapt.

Well-designed, livable communities promote health and sustain economic growth, and they make for happier, healthier residents — of all ages.

## WHAT MEMBERSHIP IS AND ISN'T

Communities in the AARP age-friendly network are not retirement villages, gated developments, nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

Membership in the network does not mean that the community is, currently, "age-friendly" or a great place to retire.

Membership in the network is *not* an endorsement by AARP. What membership *does* mean is that a community's elected leadership has made the commitment to actively work toward making their town, city or county a great place for people of *all* ages.

## BACKGROUND

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1,000 communities.

## AARP's ROLE

AARP's participation in the program advances efforts to help people live easily and comfortably in their homes and communities as they age. AARP's presence encourages older adults to take a more active role in their communities and have their voices heard. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

AARP works with local officials and partner organizations around the country to identify communities for membership in the Age-Friendly Network. (See the article "AARP Age-Friendly Communities Selection Criteria" for details.) AARP then facilitates the community's enrollment and guides its representatives through the network's implementation and assessment process.

Combined with the resources provided by AARP — either through [aarp.org/livable](http://aarp.org/livable) or the AARP Public Policy Institute — the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program supports AARP's goal of being recognized by elected officials and others as a leading resource for how to improve the livability of communities for people age 50+ and their families. The program emphasizes both the built and the social environment. The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program is a tool that can be used by AARP staff and others to help local leaders prepare and ultimately change their communities to become great places for everyone to live.

## THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

Members of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities become part of a global network of communities that are committed to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives.

The benefits of membership include:

- Access to a global network of participating communities, as well as aging and civil society experts
  - Access to key information about the program, such as the latest news and information about best practices, events, results, challenges and new initiatives
  - Opportunities for partnerships with other cities, both domestic and international
  - Mentoring and peer-review evaluation by member cities
  - Public recognition of the community's commitment to become more age-friendly
  - Speaking engagements at conferences and events hosted by AARP and promotion through AARP's media channels
- There is no fee to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

# AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Program Cycle

## STEP 1: ENTERING THE NETWORK

The purpose of the AARP Age Friendly Communities is to serve as a catalyst to educate, encourage, promote, and recognize improvements that make cities, towns, and counties more supportive not only of their older residents but for residents of all ages. Our intent is to provide American cities, towns, counties with the resources they need to become more age-friendly, tapping into national and global research, models, and best practices.

### AARP's Value Added

- Providing an understanding or definition of the issue/need for change (framing the issue);
- Providing an understanding of economic and social benefit of a more livable community;
- Resources on AARP.org/livable – Future Livability index (all phases)
- Success Criteria
- Streamlined admission into Network

## STEP 2: PLANNING PHASE (Year 1-2)

This step has four elements:

- Establishment of mechanisms to involve older people throughout the Age-Friendly city cycle
- A baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city.
- Development of a 3-year city wide plan of action based on assessment findings
- Identification of indicators to monitor progress

### AARP's Value Added

- Decision making and organizational guidance
- Access to network of communities /Best Practices
- Assessment and survey Tools, identification of key community indicators
- Volunteer network to support/organize aspects of effort

## STEP 3: IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION (Year 3-5)

On completion of the planning phase, and no later than two years after joining the Network, cities will submit their action plan to WHO for review and endorsement. Upon endorsement by WHO, cities will then have a three-year period of implementation.

At the end of the period of implementation, cities will be required to submit a progress report to WHO outlining progress against indicators developed in Phase 1.

### AARP's Value Added

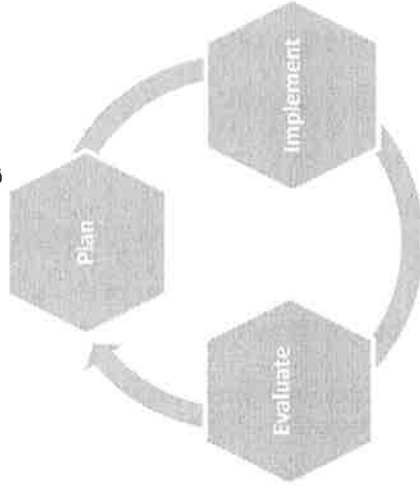
- Evaluation tools
- Organized training and networking events
- Resources on AARP.org/livable
- Access to network of communities /Best Practices
- Volunteer network to support/organize aspects of effort

## STEP 4: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS (Year 5+)

Upon completion of phase 3, cities will be able to continue their membership to the Network by entering into further implementation cycles.

### AARP's Value Added

- Access to network of communities /Best Practices
- Volunteer network to support/organize aspects of effort
- Resources on AARP.org/livable



A continuous cycle of improvement