



Age-Friendly Westerville

Action Plan

June 2021



PARTNERS



Westerville Age-Friendly Stakeholders

Westerville Area Resource Ministry (WARM)
Westerville City Schools
Westerville Bike Club
Westerville Education Foundation
Westerville Historical Society
Westerville Public Library
Westerville Rotary
Westerville Senior Association
Westerville Area Chamber of Commerce
Age-Friendly Communities Columbus & Franklin County
Alzheimer's Association
Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA)
Central Ohio Transportation Authority (COTA)
Center for Disability Empowerment
Concord Counseling Services
Delaware County General Health District
Delaware County Sourcepoint
Flaherty Law
Harris-Askins House
Leadership Westerville
Manor Care
Metro Parks
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
Mt. Carmel St. Ann's
National Church Residences
Oasis Senior Advisors
Otterbein University
Paramount Senior Living
Parkside Village Senior Living
Spectrum Senior Living
Status Solutions
Stonewall Columbus Trailblazers
Uptown Westerville, Inc.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many residents, community partners and staff who contributed their time and collaborated with us to develop priorities, goals and strategies for keeping our community a great place for all residents to live, work, play and retire.

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April 14, 2021

On behalf of the City of Westerville, I am pleased to present to you the Age-Friendly Westerville Action Plan. Westerville proudly joins AARP Ohio and the World Health Organization in becoming an Age-Friendly Community, promoting policies and implementing actions to make our community accessible to all ages and abilities.

Over the past three and a half years, our residents, stakeholders, community partners and staff have come together to listen, survey, analyze and develop this plan.

On this path toward becoming an Age-Friendly Community, we learned Westerville has much to celebrate. Our older residents are happy to live and age in the community they love. Yet, we also heard aging in place is not without challenges, which include affordable housing, local transportation options, intergenerational activities, and the need for a centralized hub of connection and communication. Westerville has made notable progress in some areas, but we understand there is room for improvement in other areas.

The Westerville Age-Friendly Action Plan identifies priorities for addressing challenges faced by Westerville residents as they age. We have established specific goals for making our outdoor spaces and public buildings more accessible, improving public transportation, addressing attainable housing concerns, reevaluating communication methods, and ensuring respect, inclusion and civic participation for our residents in all stages of life.

The development of this plan has been a collaborative process and, as we move forward, it will be no different. Implementation will not be possible without help from our community partners. This initiative has always been about working together to identify and address community needs, so that all residents remain engaged and age with dignity.

Our sincere thanks to all who contributed their time to develop priorities, goals and strategies.

Sincerely,

Monica Irelan, City Manager

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About Age-Friendly Westerville

In March of 2018, the City launched an Age-Friendly initiative to learn how local government and residents can work together to keep our community a great place for all residents to live, work, play and retire. Since then, the City has been working towards completing our designation as an Age-Friendly Community. Age-Friendly communities promote healthy aging and improve the health, well-being, satisfaction and quality of life for older adults. They are officially designated through the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. These organizations have identified eight livability domains that assess the age friendliness of a community.

The Eight Age-Friendly Domains:

1. **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings:** Provide access to recreational facilities.
2. **Transportation:** Provide accessibility to modes of private and public transportation.
3. **Housing:** Provide a wide range of housing options; including those for aging in place.
4. **Social Participation:** Provide access to activities for (older) residents.
5. **Respect and Social Inclusion:** Provide programs to support and promote diversity.
6. **Work and Civic Engagement:** Provide professional and volunteer opportunities.
7. **Communication and Information:** Provide various communication methods to keep older residents informed and connected to their community, friends and family.
8. **Community Support and Health Services:** Provide access to home care services and programs to promote wellness and active aging.



About Age-Friendly Westerville *Cont.*

Overview of Westerville's Seniors

Substantial data significant to the Age-Friendly Initiative had already been collected through the 2016-2017 Westerville Community Plan and the 2014 Westerville Parks, Recreation & Open Space (PROS) Master Plan. Findings within both plans indicate Westerville's population is aging. As a result of increased life expectancies and the baby boomer generation entering the 55 and over age group, it is projected that Westerville's 55+ population will grow to 32.4% by 2025 (currently at 31.9% as of 2016).

In addition, Westerville's rate of growth for the 55+ age group is higher than nationwide trends, and a little higher than our surrounding communities.

What is Age-Friendly Westerville?

Based on the forecasted increase in 55+ residents, what does this mean for needs in the community? People are living longer, which means there are greater healthcare & housing needs. The younger work-force cohort is smaller, which means there is less revenue source for services and infrastructure.

The City recognizes the importance of incorporating age-friendly components into existing and future development and resources. To successfully accomplish Age-Friendly Community designation, the City needs to provide planning, policies, services and support structures that enable Westerville residents to remain active and connected as they age. The goal through the initiative process was to establish an Age-Friendly Action Plan. The outcome of this plan would enable older adults to be more connected with services to further enhance their quality of life.

The Journey to Age-Friendly Westerville

Age-Friendly Communities follow a five-year process timeline. The general timeline below provides a five-year overview of the Age-Friendly designation process specific to Westerville.

Phase One:

- Obtain Written Pledge/Resolution from City Council
- Complete Membership Application
- Submit Written Pledge & Application to AARP
- Organize City Staff Task Force
- Obtain Acceptance into the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

Phase Two:

- Conduct Public Meeting #1 with Stakeholders
- Develop AARP Livable Communities Survey

Phase Three:

- Focus Group Meetings
- AARP Livable Communities Survey, Survey Analysis, Data Report
- Break-out Stakeholder Team Meetings

Phase Four:

- Task Force (City Staff) develop the Age-Friendly Westerville Action Plan
- Stakeholder Group to Review the Plan

Phase Five:

- Implement Westerville Age-Friendly Action Plan
- Monitor, Report, Reassess Age-Friendliness of Westerville

Public Outreach

Westerville began the assessment phases for our Age-Friendly initiative in 2019. In January of that year, at the first **Age-Friendly Westerville Stakeholder Team Meeting**, City staff asked attendees what Westerville is doing right, what we could do better, and what we are missing in terms of what we have or do not have going for our older residents. That conversation generated key preliminary takeaways to help kick-off the initiative process.

An **Age-Friendly Livable Community Survey** was created with support from Age-Friendly Delaware County and an established Age-Friendly Stakeholders team. Their survey included 80 questions, that were broken into eight sections based on the eight domains of a livable community. Cover letters were included in the mailings sent to residents in August of 2019.

The survey was sent to a randomly selected group of Westerville residents 55 and older using the Franklin and Delaware County Board of Elections Voter Registration Database; 1,200 residents were selected. This group was sent the cover letter, survey, and a pre-stamped envelope in which to return the survey. A few weeks later, a reminder postcard was sent to those who had not yet returned their survey. The survey was anonymous and all surveys were given a randomly generated identification number.

During September - December 2019, returned survey responses were de-identified and entered into a secure database. Data was cleaned and then analyzed using Google Sheets and Excel. A total of 466 surveys were included for a response rate of 38.8%.

During January - August 2020, staff assembled all the survey data into an assessment report. The report was one tool used to help shape the Age-Friendly Action Plan.

Focus Group Meetings were held during August of 2019. These public workshops allowed staff to spark conversations with our older residents and give them the opportunity to provide their perspectives. While no two people will have the same experience, the conversation generated four key preliminary takeaways:

- ***Residents are interested in local transportation options like a City circulator or shuttle service.***
- ***Residents are interested in opportunities for intergenerational activities through schools and Parks partnerships.***
- ***Many residents and senior service providers expressed concerns about housing costs.***
- ***Residents and senior service providers expressed interest in seeing a centralized hub of connection and communication being established.***

In November of 2019, as part of the Age-Friendly Westerville Initiative and in partnership with Opticos Design, AARP, and MORPC; the City of Westerville hosted a **housing workshop** focusing on affordable housing and Missing Middle Housing.

Age-Friendly Priorities, Goals & Strategies

Establishing the Plan

In September of 2020, staff convened the [Age-Friendly Westerville Stakeholder Team](#) (virtually). Eight meetings were held and each meeting topic revolved around one of the eight livability domains. The Stakeholders were asked to review and provide input on the community survey data and the feedback received from the older residents at the August 2019 Focus Group Meetings. They were also asked to provide input on additional factors that may have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subsequent to the September 2020 [Age-Friendly Westerville Stakeholder Team](#) meeting, staff pulled together draft action items for the Action Plan. These draft action items were shared with all Stakeholders via email. At that time, staff had asked for any and all feedback from the group.

Next, staff moved towards drafting the Age-Friendly Westerville Plan. In February 2021, staff again met with the [Age-Friendly Westerville Stakeholder Team](#) virtually. The purpose of the meeting was to review and provide input on the proposed action items in the draft plan. A second draft plan was established after that meeting, and shared with the Stakeholder team again via email.

The action items in the Plan reflect feedback received at the public workshops, data from the Community Survey, and Stakeholder input.

About the Plan

Through the list of eight livability domains outlined by AARP in partnership with WHO, this project assesses the age-friendliness of Westerville and sets forth an action plan to strengthen the quality of life for Westerville seniors. The Action Plan outlines where we are now and the vision for establishing Age-Friendly Westerville. Through our public outreach, the City has used the feedback to establish Priorities, Goals & Strategies to become a more age-friendly community. There was considerable cross over between the domains.

These goals and strategies are intended to ensure Westerville remains a great place for residents of *all* ages!



Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Public spaces play an important role in determining the quality of life for all residents. People need pleasant and clean places to gather, socialize, relax, and be entertained. This necessity is fulfilled in both indoor and outdoor environments. Green spaces and accessible buildings are available in age-friendly communities to accommodate the requirements of older residents.

Where Are We Now: Westerville currently maintains close to 600 acres of park land, which includes 29 existing Westerville Parks and Recreation facilities. There are also two major metropolitan parks within and bordering the City. Uptown, the heart of the City, is a great resource and key to our sense of place. The character and vibrancy of Uptown is an asset today, and has potential to contribute more to the community in the future.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Based on a comparative analysis of the City's demographics, current parks and recreational facilities, surveys and citizen input, facility and program trends from both the Community Plan and PROS Plan, it had been determined that additional park amenities are needed. These needs include a southeast neighborhood park (5-10 acres needed) and a community park on the east side of the City (30-40 acres). In addition, the City envisions commitment to intentional design of attractive natural and built environments with people-centered community design. The City also wishes to uphold a strong sense of community, creating timeless places of beauty for people.

Existing City Goals:

- Ensure each resident lives within a quarter mile of a public park or trail.
- Establish the brand of a City within a Park (treating public infrastructure and private investment as the if City is being designed as a park).

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Increase accessibility to outdoor recreational opportunities:*

○ Add benches to trails:

- Establish a standard number of benches that should be along trails.
- Pinpoint specific locations for benches.
- Research and apply for grants / bench programs with support from the City's Parks and Recreation Department.
- Collaborate with local groups such as Age-Friendly Delaware County to incorporate similar standards from their requirements.
- Research best benches for older residents. Including benches with arms for support.

○ Add water fountains to trails:

- Identify funding sources for installation of water fountain infrastructure.
- Establish a standard number of water fountains that should be along trails.
- Pinpoint specific locations for water fountains.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused both Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks and Westerville City Parks to cover outdoor fountains due to sanitary reasons. More inclusive options are needed (i.e. bottle refilling spaces are more sanitary and less-wasteful).

❖ *Encourage residents to utilize outdoor spaces during all seasons:*

○ Provide organized activities:

- Collaborate with local groups such as Metro Parks.
- Facilitate program coordination with resident-organized fitness groups.
- Work with City's Community Affairs Department to help Parks & Rec Department / Planning & Development Department launch a campaign on upcoming activities in the community.
- Coordinate with community partners to create a cohesive effort when promoting virtual events.
- For winter months explore the idea of providing heat in public spaces to encourage people to be outside.
- Explore the idea of winter hiking group activities.
- Increase communication on how to report to the Parks and Recreation Department a need for clearing snow and debris from the trails.
- Increase communication to residents on importance and responsibilities of clearing their sidewalks of snow and ice.
- Collaborate with Leadership Westerville on their Snow Angels Initiative.

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 2: Transportation

Access to affordable transportation is critical in order to successfully age in place and meet the varying needs among older residents. Many older residents drive beyond the age of 60. Some older residents rely on public transportation or other community transport modes. Driving should not be the only way to get around. The condition of pavement and safe pedestrian crossings also play a role in the ability to walk in the local area. Age-friendly communities provide access to diverse, affordable and reliable modes of transportation.

Where Are We Now: Westerville is primarily a car-dependent City with limited public transportation options. While limited, public transit is an option in Westerville. Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) previously ran five bus lines through Westerville. COTA recently reduced from five to three more frequent routes, with one being a bus-rapid-transit (BRT) line. Additionally, in August 2020, the City partnered with COTA and launched a COTA//Plus two-year pilot program intended to assist with the 'shuttle' service requested by the community and to help supplement the Westerville Senior Center vans, who currently offer different services on different days. This program includes 'travel trailing' at the Westerville Senior Center. COTA has been providing this training to help residents understand how to use the service and call for a COTA//Plus ride.

As COTA service expands, so does the likelihood of public transit being a more viable option for older residents. Recently, the City developed a transit-oriented design strategy area with supporting zoning regulations and design guidelines along existing transit corridors, transit stops and BRT stops. In addition, the Westerville Senior Center currently provides transportation to and from activities. Private transportation services remain a choice for residents. Services such as taxis and ride-shares can provide mobility to those who cannot or do not choose to drive. As far as sidewalks and roads, Westerville has adopted a Complete Streets program (2012) and has 30 miles of paved recreational trails throughout the City. The path system includes recreational trails, side paths, bicycle lanes, and Sharrows (shared bike lane). The City has built this infrastructure over many years and it makes it fairly easy to walk and bike to most places.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Improve mobility, getting everyone where they need to go by providing multiple transportation choices. Promote connecting people to places with an extensive parks and trail system and transit stops to education and business centers. While Westerville has great pathways, bikes and sidewalks, there are recreational trails missing connections and easements; especially east to west routes. There are plans to increase connectivity through the Westerville B&W (Bike & Walk Route). These plans involve increasing both connectivity and coverage in the coming years. The recent project to connect the Cleveland Avenue corridor through a BRT system terminates at the Ohio Health Medical Campus along Polaris Parkway. This service offers a frequent and regular connection to downtown Columbus via Cleveland Avenue. It is the City's desire to provide residents the opportunity to take transit to recreation, shopping, and medical facilities.

Existing City Goals:

- A recently accepted City-wide Mobility Plan expands upon the current Mobility section from the Community Plan as a standalone mobility plan for Westerville. Some initiatives included in this Plan are mobility education and outreach, promote equitable access to mobility through Complete Streets, promote First/Last mile strategies, and enhance pedestrian crossings.
- Continue to expand Westerville's recreational trails. Provide sidewalks and bike facilities on all streets and connections to key destinations and transit stops. Adding trail miles will ensure every Westerville resident is within 1/2 mile of a trail, and that these trails connect with neighboring and regional trail systems.

Transportation

Transportation Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Increase access to alternative transportation:*

- **Provide a Local Circulator/Shuttle for all ages:**
 - Provide transportation during evening hours and on the weekends, to Uptown Farmers' Market and other community events like Fourth Fridays. In addition, the same transportation service should also provide front door drop-off points during daytime hours, evening hours, and on the weekends.
 - In August 2020, the City partnered with COTA and launched a COTA//Plus two-year pilot program. The City will continue to look at opportunities to extend the program after the pilot program expires.

❖ *Increase access to mobility support and aids:*

- **Pilot a program for affordable Rental Walkers/Wheelchairs and Bikes (in addition to 3-wheel options) - at least in Uptown and Senior Living Communities:**
 - Conduct supplemental survey to determine demand.
 - Explore potential partnership with Uptown retail establishments.
 - Explore potential sponsorship by Uptown Westerville, Inc.
 - Explore investing in new technology for mobility aids.
 - Coordinate with medical and legal professionals to ensure liability is managed.

❖ *Encourage drop-off facilities:*

- **Explore the possibility of requiring easier turn arounds and exits as part of the development review process, as well as multiple handicap ramps for entry. Drop-off facilities are more of a way to strategically manage public spaces such as Uptown:**
 - Designated drop-off locations will be necessary in the future as long as ride-share services are popular. As new developments are being constructed in the City, this should be factored in.

Transportation *Cont.*

❖ ***Implement better communication on public transportation:***

- **Provide training and education on using public transportation.**
 - Explore potential for hosting training through the Senior Center.
 - Utilize COTA's travel trainers to provide assistance.
- **Provide multi-modal educational handouts.**
- **Explore potential partnership with Concord Counseling Services on their transportation services.**
- **Explore potential partnerships with MORPC on their older adults and transportation study/initiative.**
- **Provide education on the benefits of biking for seniors and education on biking laws.**
 - Partner with advocacy groups focused on alternative transportation options.
 - Explore potential to partner with Metro Parks, Westerville Bike Club, AARP and COTA.

❖ ***Implement inclusive public infrastructure:***

- **Explore designing/updating public infrastructure for the aging population.**
- **Provide pedestrian refuge islands and raised islands to better delineate turn lanes.**
- **Create advanced intersection warning and street name signs.**
 - Include reflective borders on signal heads to improve visibility on roads and intersections.
- **Increase the size and letter heights on signs.**
- **Provide longer pedestrian crosswalk times.**

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 3: Housing

Older residents have diverse housing preferences and needs. Age-friendly communities should have a broad spectrum of housing options available to meet those needs. Many older residents wish to remain in their own home or at least in their own community as they age. Achieving this is possible if their house is designed or modified for aging in place, or if their age-friendly community has diverse housing for various stages of life.

Where Are We Now: While more than 70% of all housing stock in Westerville is single-family homes, single-person households are the fastest growing type in Westerville. Households made up of persons living alone increased by 27% from 2,000 with 725 new households. This growth in single-person households is common in communities that are either attracting young adults and/or have an aging population. A majority of these new single-person households in Westerville are made up of older residents. Housing that caters to older residents typically has smaller units and is located in less car-dependent amenity-rich environments. As the City's median age is increasing at a faster rate than the county, state, and nation; this aging could correspond with a change in housing availability. Along those lines, Westerville has an increasing demand for senior housing. In 2018, the City had less than 10 senior communities, or housing development reserved for residents age 55 and over.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Build complete neighborhoods. It is desired that Westerville ensures existing houses are viable and that we evolve the existing housing stock. Neighborhoods should include transportation options, access to basic services and recreational options to complement housing options. Housing choices need to meet the diverse needs of the community, including Westerville's increasing older population. Neighborhoods should provide residents the opportunity to walk or take transit to recreation, shopping, and medical facilities.

Existing City Goals:

- Develop programs for Home Maintenance and Repair / Aging in Place. The programs will create community partnership which would educate and encourage maintenance and upkeep of current housing stock. Public education is vital to understanding all tools and programs available, including HUD renovation for seniors.
- Integrate new housing with safe and convenient access to goods and services, schools, open space, recreational facilities, public transportation and civic amenities.
- Incorporate senior living accommodations in walkable neighborhood developments, allowing long-time residents to age in place. In order to maintain an engaged and active lifestyle, senior housing will be integrated, not secluded or isolated.
- The City recently passed an ordinance banning source of income discrimination from landlords to tenants.

Housing

Housing Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Increase the number of attainable housing units at all price points:*

- Address shortage of affordable senior housing, especially to extremely low-income individuals.
- Preserve naturally occurring affordable housing stock.
- Utilize MORPC's detailed analysis of Westerville's housing submarkets.
- Conduct Future Housing Study.
 - More focus on accommodating those who are not as secure. To maintain and grow the Westerville population, there must be accommodations for those who want to downsize, have lower incomes, etc.
- *Westerville Helps Program* was launched in 2020 and currently addresses 4 topics (Parks & Rec, Utility Billing, Sidewalk Maintenance, Home Improvement). Moving forward, the City will examine whether more services can be provided and whether more funding can be secured.
- Establish an ordinance to protect discrimination against tenants because of their source of income (*federal vouchers for low-income residents*).

❖ *Increase variety of housing options:*

- Promote the need for neighborhoods with better accessibility. These tend to be walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Future housing study to be done.
- Create an evaluation tool to review proposed housing projects to ensure they address walkability, missing housing types, and other housing needs for older residents.
- Promote opportunities for Missing Middle Housing.
- Promote the need for housing developments that include more fully ADA compliant units.

Housing Cont.

❖ ***Increase communication on available housing and resources for home services:***

- **Establish a central hub for information on housing & service options at all income levels.**
 - A resource list of reliable sources is needed. The list shall include rental units available that are fully ADA compliant.
 - Potential coordination with MORPC as they are looking into the feasibility of maintaining a regional resource of this type.
 - Potential coordination with COAAA.
- **Launch programs that provide more services and resources to allow older residents to safely age in place (in-home modifications).**
- **Outreach with neighborhoods to create a group effort of services to offer each other - The Village model. These are usually grassroots, community-led or community serving groups.**

❖ ***Encourage intergenerational living:***

- **Explore potential partnership with Otterbein University students.**
- **Explore the potential to partner with intergenerational home shares such as *Nesterly*.**

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 4: Social Participation

Participating in cultural, social and leisure activities in the community often becomes more difficult as people age. Yet, it is critical for an individual's health and well-being. Social participation is important to remaining connected to one's community. Loneliness can be as devastating as any health condition, but can be prevented. Age-Friendly communities strive to reduce loneliness by providing accessible and affordable social activities.

Where Are We Now: Westerville currently offers a wide range of Social and Community events. With life expectancy still growing, leisure service providers need to rethink services for older residents. The City currently has an active Senior Center Advisory Board.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Grow the City's reputation of events and services. Given the differences in how older residents participate in recreation programs, the trend is moving toward having at least two different segments of older adults. Programs should be organized for older residents into 55-75 and 75+ age programming categories. Programs should include aging population needs such as aquatic therapy pools, pickle-ball courts and low-impact fitness classes. More programs should be offered mid-day.

Existing City Goals:

- Provide year-round choices of quality outdoor and indoor recreational and cultural activities.
- Provide additional resources for an increasingly active older population by folding in the Senior Center services and space into the expanded Community Center with other activities not available at the former Senior Center location.
- Expand programs that provide social interactions.

Social Participation

Social Participation Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Increase intergenerational activities:*

- **Pair students with older residents at schools and parks programs for more intergenerational activities.**
 - A collaborative opportunity for the City’s Senior Center, the Westerville Area Chamber of Commerce, Westerville City Schools, and the Lifelong Learning Community at Otterbein University.
 - The Lifelong Learning Community (LLC) of Otterbein University currently has a program called LLC Scholars Award program. Rising seniors at Otterbein can apply for financial assistance collected through member donations. Students who receive an LLC Scholar Award are asked to commit to participating in at least two LLC programs over the course of their senior year. That could mean they give a presentation for LLC members, volunteer during a class or event, or something similar. However, the LLC is hopeful that once the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, that they can revisit an idea of pairing more Otterbein students with LLC members.

❖ *Increase social participation through the Senior Center:*

- **Continue to change the perception of the Senior Center. They do provide active activities.**
 - Add evening activities through the Senior Center for active (working) older adults.
 - Consider changing the name to something like the “Intergenerational Center”. This would convey something different and provide inclusive activities. If younger people are present it might create a more desirable outcome. Moving the Senior Center to the Community Center can provide re-branding.
 - Explore potential partnership with the Lifelong Learning Community at Otterbein University.
- **Promote activities that most people wouldn’t associate with a Senior Center.**
 - “GoSeniors” have been doing activities such as axe throwing, yoga, etc.
- **Update the marketing strategy for the Senior Center to appeal to a wider audience.**
 - Example: Delaware, “Thrive after 55”.
 - Metro Parks has changed its older adult programming to simply “adults only” which creates a more inclusive aspect; not just seniors.
 - The age to participate in the Senior Center had increased to 65+ a few years ago. Explore whether it should be lowered back to 55. Most people think they are “not old enough” to utilize the Senior Center.
 - Promote importance of older adults connecting with other older adults.

Social Participation *Cont.*

❖ ***Increase senior friendly volunteer opportunities:***

- Explore potential coordination with Neighborhood Bridges, Westerville Education Foundation's Academic Allies, and the Center for Disability Empowerment.
- Create a Volunteer Hub page; this could be an opportunity for both school-aged children and for adults to find volunteer opportunities and/or find a volunteer.
 - Examples: Connection Center, the volunteer center in Delaware, OH and VolunteerMatch.org.
 - Potential partnership with Leadership Westerville to create the hub.

❖ ***Increase virtual programming:***

- **Promote digital literacy.**
 - Increase skills and teach seniors how to use Zoom, Google Meet, etc. This helps keep them connected, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Record meetings and classes. Post them to an events page.
 - Explore potential partnerships with software providers to better provide senior friendly engagement platforms.
- **Education on virtual safety and security.**

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 5: Respect and Social Inclusion

Being a part of a respectful and inclusive community can play a significant role in an older resident's physical and emotional well-being. People of all ages want to feel appreciated. Age-friendly communities integrate activities where both young and older residents can learn from one another. They also integrate activities where diversity and inclusion can be celebrated. This is key to helping residents feel valued.

Where Are We Now: Close to 6% of Westerville residents were not born in the United States. Of the foreign-born population, 56% are naturalized United States citizens, and 92% entered the country before the year 2010. This follows a strong regional trend toward greater diversity of ethnic, racial and immigrant populations. Since 2010, 24% of the region's growth was from international migration (Source: US Census, American Communities Survey).

An article written by Oasis Senior Advisors (LGBTQ+ Seniors Aspire to Thrive, Not Hide While Aging) states about 1.1 million U.S. seniors age 65 and over identify as LGBTQ+ and this demographic is growing with an additional 1.6 million adults aged 50 - 64. Strategies and solutions must be developed and executed to address the needs of this growing population. Transportation, legal services, support groups and social events are also identified as much-needed services in the LGBTQ+ community. Strategies and solutions must be developed and executed to address the needs of this growing population.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Previously accepted City plans such as the Comprehensive Community Plan and the PROS Master Plan call for staff to encourage a society of caring people. As Westerville participates in the global economy, social awareness of diverse cultures promotes cross-education, dignity, and respect.

In November 2019, Westerville City Council adopted legislation to provide equality protections for all people living in, visiting or conducting business in Westerville. Council approved two ordinances: one to prevent unlawful discrimination within the City; the other to prevent ethnic intimidation.

Existing City Goals:

- Develop educational programs and opportunities.

Respect & Social Inclusion

Respect and Social Inclusion Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Increase intergenerational activities:*

- Provide and promote activities that enable interactions where older residents are given the opportunity to share their experiences with younger generations.
 - Collaborate with The Center for Disability Empowerment.
- Provide and promote activities that have high school students visit the new Senior Center, to help teach older residents how to use various electronics and technologies.

❖ *Increase elder abuse awareness and education:*

- Team up with the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA) to conduct a workshop on elder abuse.
 - The Westerville Rotary Club, VFW, WARM, and Concord Counseling could join and bring their members to socialize and learn about elder abuse.
- Westerville to hold own elder abuse awareness day. Advertise the program at the new Senior Center and within the assisted living facilities.
- This education is to include information and initiatives that identify and prevent elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Hold a caregiver awareness day and provide resources.

Respect & Social Inclusion *Cont.*

❖ *Increase activities that promote diversity and inclusion:*

- **Establish a centralized hub of connection**
 - To be used as a central place for advertising volunteer opportunities in the community. This is to be advertised in mailers, websites, and the quarterly Westerville newsletter.
 - Regularly update the Neighbor2Neighbor resource directory.
- **Increase community conversation opportunities.**
- **Collaborate with Westerville Partnership, WeRise, and other private and non-profit organizations to strengthen diversity initiatives in the City.**
- **Collaborate with private and non-profit organizations to strengthen inclusion initiatives in the City.**
 - Partner with Local LGBTQ+ organizations on programs and outreach events such as local Pride celebrations.
 - Partner with The Center for Disability Empowerment on programs and outreach events.
 - Partner with various organizations to strengthen initiatives that help support all communities listed as being protected under Westerville's Nondiscrimination Ordinance.
- **Increase awareness of the annual Westerville Community Culture Celebration.**
- **Develop an awareness campaign for Westerville's Nondiscrimination Ordinance.**

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 6: Work and Civic Engagement

Volunteer opportunities, employment, and training programs for older residents are necessary in age-friendly communities and can be major factors in the quality of life. When given opportunities to volunteer their skills or continue to work for pay, older residents are given another opportunity to feel valued and engaged.

Where Are We Now: Westerville's local economy is supported by a strong set of large, mid-sized and small public and private employers. The largest of these is JP Morgan Chase. Others include Worthington Industries. The presence of Otterbein University, Westerville School District, and Columbus State Community College provide unique assets in terms of employment and education opportunities.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Expand opportunities to meet the desires of skilled baby boomers looking for professional and management volunteer positions; in addition to educational opportunities.

Existing City Goals:

- Increased collaboration between the City of Westerville, Westerville City School District, Otterbein University and other education providers for an educated workforce and engaged citizens that promotes lifelong learning to keep minds sharp.
- Develop a partnership between the Senior Center and the AARP Senior Employment program through their Westerville office.

Work & Civic Engagement

Work and Civic Engagement Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ Increase potential employment and lifelong learning opportunities for people as they age:

- **Coordinate with community partners to provide educational opportunities.**
 - Collaborative opportunity with the Lifelong Learning Community at Otterbein University. Otterbein can be a good community partner to help sharpen skills of our older residents such as resume building.

❖ Increase the variety of senior-friendly volunteer opportunities:

- **Coordinate partnership with Neighbor2Neighbor and the Center for Disability Empowerment.**
- **Provide senior opportunities that are not labor-intensive, such as reading to kids.**
- **Hold a volunteer fair to promote available opportunities in the community.**
 - Organizations include, but not limited to, the Westerville Area Chamber of Commerce, Otterbein University, and the Community Center.
 - Smaller organizations are also to be present as they often have difficulty getting volunteers.

❖ Provide communication for employment, volunteerism, and lifelong learning:

- **Establish a community resource list.**
 - Partner with local entities to create a resource list. These entities include, but are not limited to, Leadership Westerville, Neighbor2Neighbor, Westerville Public Library, and others.
 - Explore potential for having volunteer profiles of older residents available for entities to choose someone with a specific skill.

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 7: Communication and Information

In order for older residents to age in place and stay connected to their community, they need access to information about services and events. It is important for age-friendly communities to ensure older residents have access to information in a variety of avenues. It is important to recognize not every resident owns a smartphone, a computer, or has access to the internet. Communication methods need to be varied in form.

Where Are We Now: Westerville Serving Our Seniors (WSOS) Day offers a full day of education covering a range of topics including scams, identity theft protection, personal safety, health services, and estate planning. Local experts attend to answer questions and provide information on resources and services for seniors and caregivers.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Access to fast reliable broadband internet enables us all to participate in today's society. Real broadband internet is the gateway for a number of essential needs such as employment, education, healthcare, shopping for goods and services, affordable housing, and aging in place. Equitable access and the ability to use broadband internet, no matter a person's age, social, or financial circumstance, is essential in ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate in today's society. The City's Fiber Exploratory and Access Team (FEAT) has begun researching the social benefits and community impact to extending fiber to the home (FTTH*). These many benefits translate to supporting the City's effort in achieving an Age-Friendly Westerville and can serve as a functional component to achieving successful outcomes for each of the Eight Age-Friendly Domains.

*The research and feasibility for FTTH are a long way from finished, and future public work sessions and budget discussions with Westerville City Council will have to take place before next steps.

Existing City Goals:

- Collaborate with AARP on offering technology programs (Smartphone, iPad programs) and driver safety at the Senior Center.

Communication & Information

Communication and Information Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Increase alternative ways to reach people with information (radio, mail, phone, and community postings):*

- Physical mail was the top method of information gathering by older adults, per survey results. Mail can be expensive to send out. The City will explore ways to fund this channel of information.
- Expand social media outreach. For example, seniors who have special groups on Facebook are able to share information easily.
- Explore potential for informational phone lines to press a number and get events for that day.
- Explore potential partnerships with software providers to better provide senior friendly engagement platforms.
- Increase communication on businesses and facilities that are fully ADA compliant.
- Explore establishing a community online calendar to serve as a central hub for information.
 - The City's Rec guide will be going out bi-monthly in 2021 and include senior dedicated programming in every issue. The next step would be to create a landing page for all community partners to update and edit on their own. All of the information from different entities would be housed in one place (Westerville City Schools, Otterbein University, Westerville Parks & Recreation, the Westerville Area Chamber of Commerce, WARM). This includes exploring options for being in print too.

Communication & Information *Cont.*

❖ ***Create more opportunities and locations where the community can access technology and Wi-Fi:***

- **With the new Senior Center, there are computers and Wi-Fi available. Computer classes will be offered. Ensure this continues, expands and thrives.**
 - A survey may be conducted to help get more in-depth information from older adults who have access, do not have access, and how important this access would be to them.
- **A Wi-Fi hotspot rental program, called Borrow-the-Internet, is offered through the Library, the loan period is about 2 weeks and approximately 40 are available. There is usually a waitlist. Explore ways to get the waitlist down and get the word out that this program is available.**
 - Explore potential for providing screen readers for low vision individuals.
- **Partner with Westerville City Schools and other agencies to host technology classes, information sessions, and webinars.**
- **Westerville City Schools and Neighborhood Bridges collaborated to provide hot spots to students in order to complete virtual learning. We will look to this example when exploring ways to do the same for our older residents.**
- **Work with the City's Fiber Exploratory and Access Team (FEAT) to further explore how Fiber to the Home (Residence) can support achieving successful outcomes for each of the Eight Age-Friendly Domains.**

Age-Friendly Livability

Domain 8: Community Support and Health Services

A person's state of health determines their ability to remain independent and active in their community. Age-friendly communities provide support and health services that are conveniently located, affordable and accessible to residents with various physical abilities.

Where Are We Now: Westerville's health care district includes three hospital systems. Citizens have access to regional medical centers, private physicians and specialists that make up the health care district. In this district, inpatient and outpatient services are available for a wide-ranging set of procedures. The proximity of services makes the community one of the better served suburban populations in the region. Westerville's average response times for police, fire and emergency medical services are less than four minutes, half the national average.

The City's Existing Overall Vision: Establish medical emergency criteria geared toward senior participants (i.e. emergency procedures, medical/pharmaceutical history forms, adequate medical equipment in place, etc.) to ensure safety and well-being of older residents.

Existing City Goals:

- This is the only domain that did not have any relevant goals outlined in the Westerville Community Plan or PROS Master Plan prior to the Age-Friendly Initiative kick-off. However, this domain now has the most priorities that have emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative, when compared to the number of priorities outlined in the other domains.

Community Support & Health Services

Community Support and Health Services Priorities, Goals & Strategies which emerged from the Age-Friendly Initiative:

❖ *Collaborate with community partners to keep our older residents connected:*

- Leadership Westerville to help compile a list of community partners that specialize in helping older adults.
- Connect with Social Work students at OSU and/or Sociology students at Otterbein University.
 - Explore potential partnership with these students and the City to help connect older residents with community resources.
 - This is a good opportunity for both the students and the City. The students will be able to gain real life experience while working towards their degree. The City will benefit from this partnership by having a person with this knowledge base and skill set on staff.
- Westerville Fire Division will be starting the Community Medic Program in 2021. They will market this more so it reaches the older population.
- Organizational groups that help older residents stay connected.
 - Individuals can assist older residents, but showcasing specific groups may work better. Examples include: Senior Options, Westerville City Schools, Westerville Fire Department, and National Church Residences.

❖ *Increase information that connects services to seniors:*

- Develop a resource guide for seniors - a number of services including housework, transportation, and social groups to help seniors feel safe utilizing these services if they are trustworthy and vetted through an organization.
 - AARP has a Community Resource Finder.
 - Utilizing both online resources and physical resources.
 - Keeping people and materials up-to-date on how they can be involved in the community (i.e. reading to kids, service clubs, educational programs).
- The new Senior Center/Rec Center to also serve as a communication hub.

Community Support & Health Services Cont.

❖ ***Increase options for connecting residents to resources like medical appointments:***

○ **Transportation / Circulator:**

- This has been somewhat addressed with COTA//Plus. However, this is currently only a two year pilot program.
- Question is whether seniors will use it if the Senior Center designated bus goes away.
- Encourage groups to utilize and teach them how to use it. City chose COTA as a transportation organization for this program in order to have a reputable name.

❖ ***Provide activities that promote overall wellness:***

○ **Senior Center provides tasty and affordable congregate meals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been providing drive-thru meals. The goal is to explore the opportunity to continue this service even when the congregate meals start back up.**

○ **Provide cooking classes for older adults:**

- Provide healthy cooking options, including a “potluck” cooking group that assembles meals together and then packages them for later consumption.
- There is a new demonstration kitchen in the new Community Center. The demonstration kitchen can provide opportunities to teach older adults new cooking skills like cooking for one or nutritional information.
- Use this opportunity to partner with WARM. Possibility of catering to both older adults and others who patronize WARM. This provides an opportunity for intergenerational and social activities.

❖ ***Inspire older residents to feel they have a purpose:***

○ **Instead of having them reach out to us, we will bring resources to them and will educate them about what is available.**

- Build off the Westerville Police Department’s “Friendly Phone Call” line. Older residents call in to talk with a social worker or a Senior Center employee for social interaction.
- Teach away stereotypes: being an older adult does not mean inactive, easy to abuse, or sick. Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA) can help with confidence-boosting on a more personal level.
- Make sure programs repeat themselves - so when residents hit various stages in life they can attend and learn important information.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Senior Center and Concord Counseling Services have been making calls to check-in with older residents. The goal is to explore opportunities to continue this service.

Conclusion: Implementation & Evaluation

Once this plan has been approved, the City will work towards implementing our goals. However, implementation will not be possible without help from our community partners! This is about all of us working together to understand our community and our needs so that everyone can live as engaged and selfsufficient as possible.

Implementation of this plan will require staff to look for funding and applying for grants. In addition, an annual progress report will be delivered to City Council and AARP. After three years, the City will perform an evaluation to understand the results.



Resource List

Resources used to help guide this document:

- Age-Friendly Cleveland Summary 2016
- Age-Friendly Columbus 2016 - 2018
- Age-Friendly Columbus Strategic Plan 2017
- Age-Friendly DC Strategic Plan 2014 - 2017
- Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007). World Health Organization
- Oasis Senior Advisors, "LGBTQ+ Seniors Aspire to Thrive, Not Hide While Aging", May 24, 2021
- Stanton, Melissa. "The 8 Domains of Livability." AARP Livable Communities. Web. 6 Feb. 2018
- US Census, American Communities Survey
- Westerville Community Plan
- Westerville 2014 PROS Master Plan
- www.westerville.org

