

AGE FRIENDLY BERKSHIRES: AGING IN PLACE FORUM RESULTS

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Age Friendly Survey

- Survey conducted by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission & Age Friendly Berkshires Task Force
- Based on AARP Livability Survey
- Berkshire County adults age 50+
- Ran March 1 – April 15, 2015
- Distributed through Councils on Aging, municipal buildings, Elder Services meal sites/ meals on wheels, social services agencies, email lists (BRPC, BOH, OLLI, town lists), etc.
- Responses collected directly on line by Survey and on paper copies

Age Friendly Communities

Are you over age 50 and living in Berkshire County?
We want your opinion!

Please take a few minutes to complete this anonymous survey if you are over the age of 50 and live in Berkshire County even for part of the year. Your answers will help us to begin planning and prioritizing local efforts to address the growing needs and desires of older adults. You can complete this survey in paper form or online at: www.surveymonkey.com/s/BerkshireAgeFriendly.

It should take about 15 minutes. Please ask your spouse, friends and neighbors to complete a separate survey, as every opinion matters.

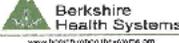
Berkshire County is aging faster than most of Massachusetts and our nation. Nearly 30,000 baby boomers will retire in Berkshire County over the next 10-20 years. This change in our population requires that we all rethink what it means to get older here in the Berkshires, and that we begin to take steps to prepare for this change.

An Age-Friendly Community is a way to help older adults remain healthy, active, and engaged in their community for as long as possible. The results of this survey will help inform planning efforts to make Berkshire County an Age-Friendly County: a better place for older adults and all Berkshire residents!

   
to us, it's personal.

Adams, Great Barrington, Pittsfield and Williamstown Councils on Aging

 
At the Center of It All



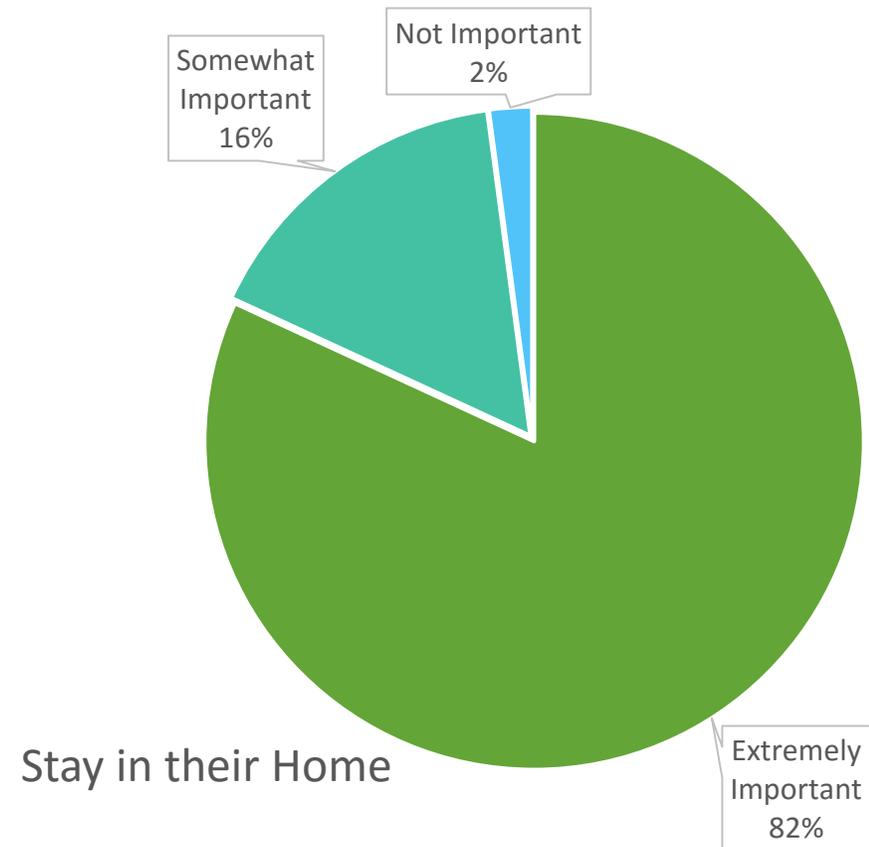


Survey Results

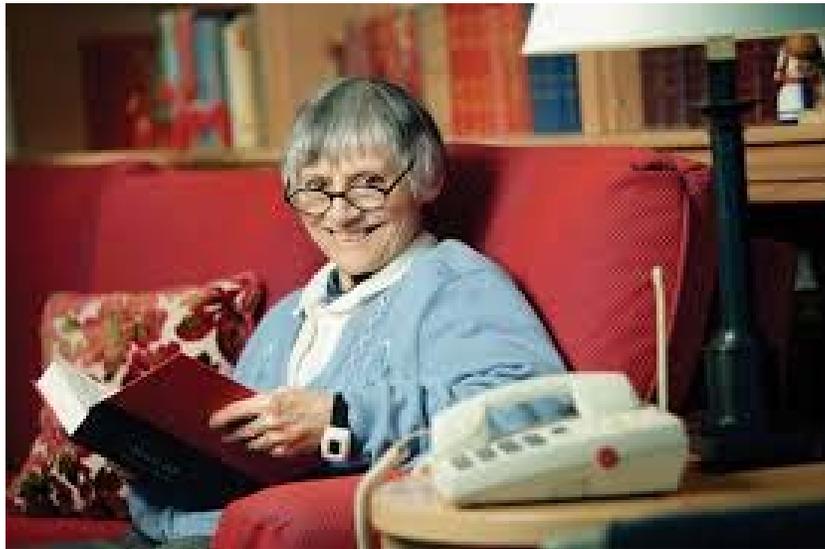
- Almost 2,500 responses!
- Good representation by age, income, education, municipality, area of the county
 - Overrepresentation by women, higher income & higher education
- Report of the full results can be found at www.berkshireplanning.org

Aging in Place

- One result in particular stood out:
 - 82% of respondents said it was “extremely important” to age independently in their own home
 - 16% said it was “somewhat important”
 - 98% of overall respondents
 - True across all groups, though slightly higher among younger & higher income
 - Higher #'s than those who said it was important to stay in their community



People clearly wanted to age in their own homes, but many indicated that they weren't sure they would be able to



Aging in Place Forums

- Designed to elicit, through public participation:
 - Barriers to aging in place
 - Which of these barriers were most important
 - Potential solutions to these barriers

A recent survey in Berkshire County found that 98% of older adults thought it was important to age independently in their own homes.

Aging in Place Open Forum



Discuss barriers to aging in your home and community and potential solutions!
Offer suggestions and tips to help create a regional action plan for aging!
Learn about other efforts to support older adults in the Berkshires!
We are here to listen – tell us what you think!

Who Should Attend? Anyone interested in aging in place

When and Where?

Pittsfield: Thursday, March 31st, 9:30-11:30am
Froio Senior Center, 330 North St

Adams: Thursday, March 31st, 1:30-3:30pm
Visitor's Center, 3 Hoosac St

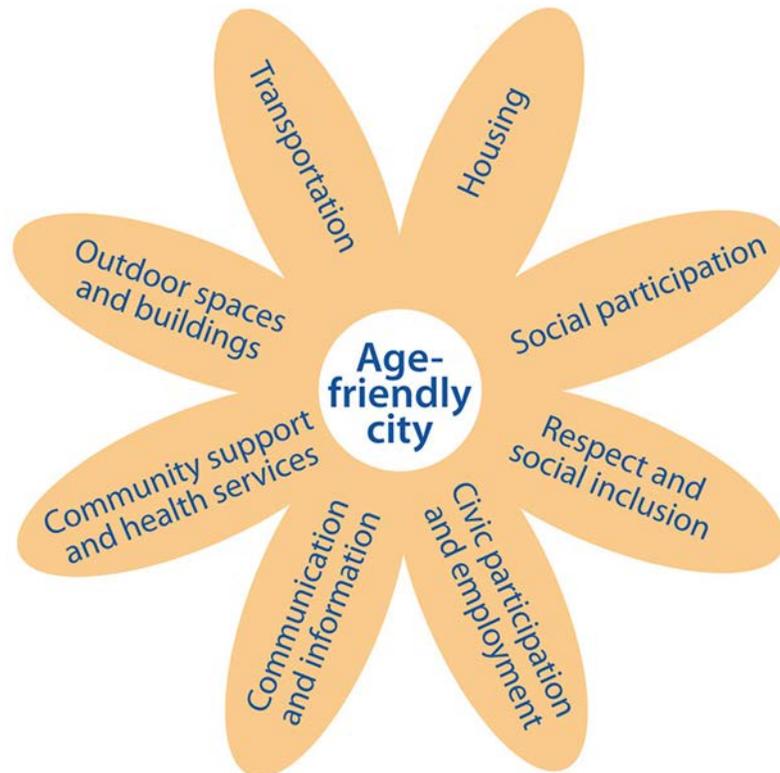
Great Barrington: Friday, April 1st, 10:00-12:00pm
Berkshire South, 15 Crissey Rd

Hosted by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission & Age Friendly Berkshires
For more information contact Allison Hope
ahope@berkshireplanning.org
413-442-1521 x37



8 Areas of Age Friendly Livability

WHO Age-Friendly Themes



- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Communication & Information
- Community Support & Health Services
- Civic Participation & Employment
- Respect & Social Inclusion
- Outdoor Space & Buildings

Transportation Barriers to Aging in Place

- Access to public transportation
- Lack of knowledge about transportation options
- Driving at night
- Loss of license
- Transport to medical appointments, including those in outside the county
- Transportation for shopping
- Transportation to attend cultural & social events, especially at night & on the weekends



Transportation Solutions

Goal: Ensure older adults are fully aware of existing transportation options

Strategies:

- Promote existing transportation options, such as para-transit, COA vans & existing volunteer programs
- Promote BRTA travel training program
- Promote Mass Ride Match & other ride sharing options



Transportation Solutions

Goal: Expand Transportation Options for Older Residents to Address Gaps in the Existing System

Strategies:

- Develop more on-demand transportation options, such as volunteer driver programs, or Uber or Lyft
- Promote AARP & AAA older driver programs
- Encourage more municipalities to offer COA vans
- Advocate for increased funding for regional public transportation



Transportation Solutions

Goal: Reduce the Need for Unnecessary Travel



Strategies:

- Work with local groceries and pharmacies to explore home delivery options
- Develop a comprehensive home delivery/errand service
- Technology training for older adults, including shopping on-line

Housing Barriers to Aging in Place

- Lack of accessible, in-town housing
- Need for one-level living
- Home & yard maintenance
- Household chores / minor maintenance
- Regulatory/zoning banning accessory apartments
- Lack of information about home modifications such as grab bars, ramps, stair lifts
- Finding honest, trustworthy contractors



Housing Solutions



Goal: Ensure Older Residents are Aware of Home Renovation & Financing Options

Strategies:

- Educate older residents about home renovation options to support aging in place
- Educate about funding mechanisms available for renovations or for staying in a home
- Develop & promote options to reduce property taxes, such as senior work off programs
- Promote existing contractor certifications, such as NAHB's CAPS program
- Develop local contractor referral service

Housing Solutions

Goal: Develop Networks of Volunteers to Provide Low Cost or Free Home Maintenance Services

Strategies:

- Develop volunteer networks for minor home maintenance such as community day of service or National Honor Society
- Work to build robust volunteer networks for older adults to assist each other



Housing Solutions

Goal: Encourage a Variety of Housing Options to Meet the Needs of All Older Adults

Strategies:

- Explore co-housing options with younger residents and with family members
- Identify and promote change to zoning bylaws to support development of in-law apartments/accessory dwellings
- Encourage development of condos, townhomes and apartments, with reduced yard maintenance, especially in areas close to town centers
- Develop a standard shared application for all County subsidized housing



Housing Solutions



Goal: Take Advantage of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) for Services

Strategies:

- Identify NORCs in Berkshire County and encourage community cohesion
- Develop lower cost options for home services through group pricing/purchasing

Social Participation Barriers to Aging in Place

- Rural living, tied to transportation
- Weakened social lives, difficulty attending cultural and social events
- Feeling unengaged with community
- Lack of interaction with younger people
- Having neighbors, family and friends that can be depended on
- Access to broadband internet
- Learning to effectively use the internet to access services & connect with family & friends
- Social isolation, leading to depression or other mental health issues



Social Participation Solutions

Goal: Develop Self-Sustaining Networks of Berkshire Residents

Strategies:

- Develop facilitated on-going conversations or support groups to promote information exchange and development of solutions
- Facilitate development of local “villages” to join the national “village to village” network
- Identify NORCs in the Berkshires
- Encourage communities to develop & utilize email list serves and online forums, e.g., Front Porch Forum, Alford Assist
- Encourage regular accessible community events and gathering including encouraging those in rural communities to open their homes (Mt. Washington)



Social Participation Solutions

Goal: Older Residents are Welcome and Able to Fully Participate in the Region's Rich Cultural and Social Offerings and Engage with the Larger Community

Strategies:

- Work with local transportation providers to ensure transport to cultural and social events
- Develop mentorship / visiting programs between older adults and local schools and colleges
- Encourage technology training on Internet or Smartphone usage
- Provide information about social and cultural events in multiple ways to ensure awareness



Communication & Information Barriers to Aging in Place



- Need for a central repository of information to obtain information about services, social events, news, advice on Medicare and accessibility options, housing options, etc., etc.
- Education programs needed about issues such as long term health insurance, end of life options, other legal issues, as well as in using the Internet and other forms of technology
- Need for local newspapers, including town newsletters and local TV

Communication & Information Solutions

Goal: A Coordinated Resource Providing a Central Hub for Information and Services in the Region

Strategies:

- Develop a “one stop shop” resource for information to support aging in place in the region building on and adapting existing models such as the NBCC Resource Guide or Mass 211. Ensure resource is available on line and printed.
- Identify a local organization able to serve as a county-wide telephone point of contact, referral service and resource on aging



Communication & Information Solutions

Goal: Local Communities and the Region at Large
Disseminate Information to Older Adults More
Effectively

Strategies:

- Encourage the development of local community newsletters / newspapers
- Develop regular PSAs on community television focused on needs of older residents
- Develop community bulletin boards through Facebook or Google where older adults can request and provide information



Community Support & Health Services Barriers to Aging in Place

- Mental & physical conditions making it difficult to care for oneself, including dementia, vision loss and hearing loss.
- Medication management / education about interactions
- Need for transportation to medical appointments, including those in Springfield or Boston
- Accessibility to primary care doctors & specialists
- Access for EMS to their homes / training for EMS in dealing with older adults
- Availability and cost of good home care providers
- Costs associated with medical devices, such as hearing aids
- Negotiating Medicare and Medicaid
- End of life issues
- Care of pets



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Community Support and Health Services Solutions



Goal: Eliminate Unnecessary Medical Travel in the Region

Strategies:

- Promote existing medical transportation options
- Promote and develop telehealth options
- Promote and develop options for home medical care and doctor's visits

Community Support and Health Services Solutions



Goal: Services to Allow Older Adults to Stay in Their Home are Known and Accessible

Strategies:

- Work with veterinary services, animal shelters and the humane society to develop and promote options that allow older adults to keep their pets
- Providing training and support services for caregivers
- Promote wellness and fitness activities, such as Matter of Balance to reduce falls
- Ensure awareness of all services/programs and financial assistance available
- End of life decision making assistance

Civic Participation & Employment Barriers to Aging in Place

- Ageism in applying for and staying in current jobs
- State legislators and agencies do not understand the unique concerns of the Berkshires, and geographic distance makes it difficult for them to visit their legislators



Civic Participation & Employment Solutions

Goal: Officials, Businesses & Local Organizations are Aware of and Engaged in the Challenges of Aging in the Region

Strategies:

- Encourage volunteerism among older residents, including serving on municipal and non-profit boards
- Encourage legislators to hold accessible events outside major population centers
- Educate older adults on other ways to contact legislators / state agencies
- Educate local businesses and organizations about the issue of aging in the region, and the benefits to older workers.



Respect and Social Inclusion Barriers to Aging in Place

- Opinions of children and other family – children feeling they know best for the aging parent, “too old” to live on their own
- Stigma in accepting services
- Lack of engagement in larger community, especially with younger people
- Emergency medical personnel and other health care providers lack training in needs of older adults



Respect and Social Inclusion Solutions

Goal: Residents and Organizations are Aware of and Sensitive to the Needs of Older Adults

Strategies:

- Develop or promote options for aging awareness or “senior sensitivity” training
- Develop training specifically for emergency medical personnel



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Barriers to Aging in Place

- Physical barriers to events and public buildings, such as a lack of ramps, adequate railings, and high steps
- Need for accessible paths in recreation areas for walking
- Desire to be able to walk to town, to go shopping or to a medical appointment



Outdoor Spaces & Recreation Solutions

Goal: Public Spaces, Buildings and Select Recreation Areas are Universally Accessible



Strategies:

- Work with local land trusts and municipalities to identify, create, and promote age friendly & universally accessible parks and hiking/walking trails
- Encourage municipalities to adopt “complete streets” policies and address pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on local roadways
- Encourage municipalities to address the accessibility of public buildings and facilities

Next Steps

- Draft report will be available at www.berkshireplanning.org
- Findings will be incorporated into the Age Friendly Berkshires Strategic Plan
- Implementation / Action Steps will be developed

Questions?

