

Creating a Community for a Lifetime

An Action Plan for an Age-friendly/Livable
Rochester and Monroe County



LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
Rochester and Monroe County



2023 Progress Report

Introduction

Monroe County and the City of Rochester joined the national age-friendly movement in 2021. This is our second-year progress report on our three-year implementation of the Creating a Community for a Lifetime Action Plan. The plan is being overseen by the Monroe County Aging Alliance, a group of organizations that work together to promote the value and well-being of our community's older adults



Age-Friendly Communities Have Three Characteristics.



1

Age is not a significant barrier to the maintenance of lifelong interests and activities.



2

Supports and accommodations exist to enable individuals with age-related disabilities to meet basic health and social needs.



3

Opportunities exist for older adults to develop new sources of fulfillment and engagement.

Why Becoming a More Age-Friendly/Livable Community is Imperative

Why Strive to Become an Age-Friendly Community?

1

More of Us are Living Longer

The confluence of increasing longevity and the aging of the baby boom generation is creating an unprecedented demographic shift. The leading edge of the boomer generation, once the largest in history, is turning 76 in 2022 at a time when advances in health care are resulting in longer lifespans. The combination of factors is a key trend which will continue to increase the number of people 65 and older in our community well into this century.

2

Economics

Older adults fuel the economy. The 2016 report, *The Longevity Economy* by Oxford Economics found:

- The “longevity economy” is one of the most vital in the U.S., with 106 million people over the age of 50 collectively responsible for \$7.6 trillion in annual economic activity, spending \$4.6 trillion on consumer goods and services, and the health care industry.
- 83% of U.S. household wealth is held by people 50 and older.

3

Assets

Older adults are a community asset with a lifetime of experience and knowledge. As most hospitals and many nonprofits can attest, older adults give back thousands of hours of volunteer service each year in fulfilling roles which also boost their health and wellness. They also are valuable employees in multi-generation workplaces.



192,000
PEOPLE

In Monroe County **one in four** residents is 60 or older for the first time in history.

60+ 192,000 (25% of the population) | 65+ 142,000 (19%)

25%+



The county's population of older adults is aging-in-place in suburban towns. In 11 of Monroe County's suburban towns, the percentage of people 60 and older is above 25%.



In New York State, the fastest increase in the 65+ population over the past decade occurred in the City of Rochester (+64%) while the under 65 population decreased by 6%.

(Source: U.S. Census 2020 5-YR American Community Survey)

New York State's Master Plan on Aging Underway

Since the executive order calling for a Master Plan on Aging (MPA) was signed by the Governor in 2022, the New York State Department of Health (DOH) in partnership with the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) have assembled subject matter experts and partners from across the State to advance the important work of the MPA, which is to put forward a comprehensive set of recommended policies and programs to help build and improve systems of services and supports for aging and long-term care. The plan is vital because by 2030, one in four residents in 51 of the state's 62 counties will be 60 or older.

Local representatives participating in the Master Plan on Aging include Ann Marie Cook, president/CEO of Lifespan, Doris Green, director of the New York State Caregiving & Respite Coalition, Linda James, coordinator of Lifespan's Relatives Raising Children program, and Ann Cunningham, Director of Rochester Oasis.

More than 200 meetings and listening sessions to gather input for the plan have been held across the state. The final Master Plan for Aging is due in January 2025

Our Action Plan Progress Highlights

We used the World Health Organization’s Eight Domains of Livability to guide our Action Plan. The availability and quality of these community features impact the well-being of older adults and help make communities more livable for people of all ages. *We added one domain we believe is vital – especially for older adults living within the City of Rochester – economic security.*

Domains of Livability

1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social Participation
5. Respect & Inclusion
6. Volunteerism & Employment
7. Communication & Information
8. Health Services & Community Supports
9. Economic Security
(added by this Action Plan)



Year-Two Highlights

RESPECT & INCLUSION



Recommendation #1: Combat ageism

Recommendation #2: Engage and support older adults from underserved and underrepresented populations

- ★ Nineteen professionals working in the aging and long-term care fields are participating in training designed to reframe aging and what it means to grow older. The training, provided by the National Center to Reframe Aging (NCRA), seeks to counter ageism and ensure older people can fully participate in our communities. Monroe County Office for the Aging provided funding for the training.
- ★ Lifespan held the 26th annual Celebration of Aging, an event designed to dispel the stereotypes about aging and older people. The event highlights five older adults for the ways they take on both the challenges and opportunities of longer life.
- ★ Older representatives were added to multiple local boards and community groups, including both City and County Active Transportation Planning Committees, a Systems Integration pilot, Action for a Better Community's Community Assessment team and the Racial and Structural Equity Commission.
- ★ Monroe County's Office for the Aging is partnering with Rainbow Seniors ROC to support a social club at the Old Fellows building on Whalen Street in the South Wedge. Rainbow Seniors ROC is an advocacy, service and social activity group for greater Rochester area LGBTQ+ older people.



GELFAND-PIPER

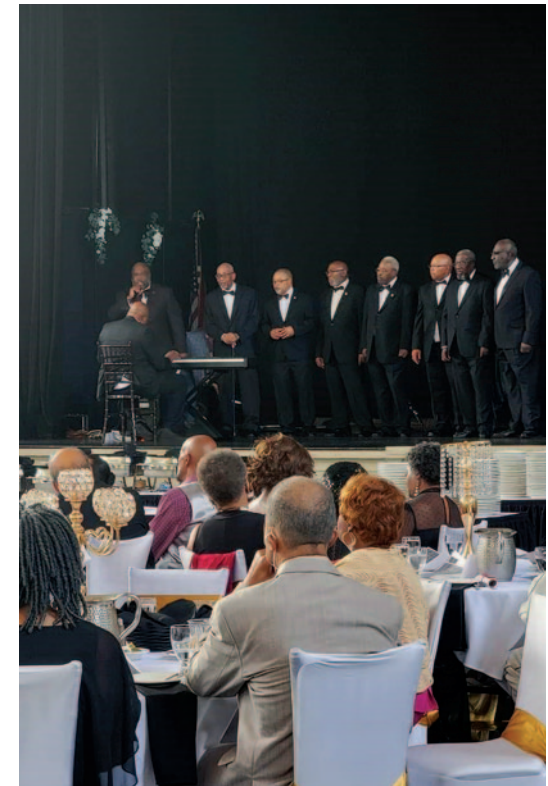
Second Half Hero Award winners at Lifespan's 2023 Celebration of Aging.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Recommendation #5: Expand social opportunities on weekends and evenings



- ★ Senior Expressions, under the leadership of Martha Hope, hosted a Friday evening Senior Ball for older adults with activities, a buffet dinner, live music and dancing. Senior Expressions also hosted other social opportunities including a cruise on the Erie Canal, a trip to the Festival of Lights in Syracuse, and event titled Happy Hour and Blue Jeans, fishing and games in Black Creek Park, Thanksgiving dinner at Hamilton Apartments and thrift store shopping and dinner. Senior Expressions events are intended to engage older adults in socialization opportunities, emotional wellness and healthcare education.



PHOTOS: SENIOR EXPRESSIONS

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Recommendation #12: Promote age-friendly language in written and spoken communication

Recommendation #13: Promote technology education for older adults



★ The Monroe County Aging Alliance and Lifespan published *Age-friendly Communication Style Guide* which is being distributed to media, advertising agencies, governmental officials and the public. The guide provides preferred ways to communicate with and about older adults.



NAZARETH UNIVERSITY

★ Students in Nazareth University's Aging & Community Service course partnered with the Health Equity Program Support Office (HEPSO) at the University of Rochester Medical Center to devise ways to minimize inequalities in digital health access. Four groups, each comprised of Nazareth students and elders from St. John's, administered surveys to better understand the usage of digital health tools like MyChart and gain a better understanding of access and usage roadblocks. Partners included David W. Steitz, Ph.D., Director of the Gerontology Program at Nazareth University, and Wendy Parisi, Director of the Health Equity Program Support Office at the URMC and the entire HEPSO team.



LIFESPAN

★ Lifespan held a first-ever technology and assistive device fair for older adults and caregivers to view devices that can help maintain independence at home.

VOLUNTEERISM & EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation #10a: Raise wages for low-paying long-term care and home care workers to increase the caregiving workforce.



In 2023, the minimum wage for New York State's direct care workforce increased by

\$3 an hour.

In 2019,

23%

of direct care workers in the U.S. were 55 or older.

(It's Time to Care: A Detailed Profile of America's Direct Care Workforce.)



CENTRE FOR AGING BETTER

- ★ Volunteer United, a community portal made possible by the United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, now includes virtual volunteer roles people can do without leaving their homes.

OUTDOOR SPACES

Recommendation #14: Provide safe, comfortable, access in outdoor public spaces



- ★ Monroe County's parks department is incorporating age-friendly attributes as it redesigns outdoor spaces. Examples include:
- ★ A new inclusive playground at Ontario Beach Park.
- ★ Greater accessibility features in restrooms throughout the parks system.
- ★ Paved golf cart paths at Durand Eastman, Churchville, and Genesee Valley courses.
- ★ Sidewalk widening at lodges and shelters provides better wheelchair accessibility which provides greater access for wheelchairs and other mobility support devices.





- ★ There are now 50 high ridership benches/bus shelters within the city, and nine new shelters within the county.

- ★ Eight new pickleball courts at county parks. People 55 and older were the largest segment of pickleball players in the U.S. in 2021.
- ★ The new Knollwood Lodge in Northampton Park was designed to be age-friendly and included the installation of a private area where caregivers can assist adults with personal care needs. Two accessible restrooms were added to the interior of the Ski Lodge.
- ★ Monroe County's planning department implemented new age-friendly design recommendations for the site plan review process. To date, the county has applied this comment to ten projects. The set of recommendations asks developers to consider including age-friendly design elements wherever possible.

HOUSING

Recommendation #22: Increase affordable, safe, accessible housing



- ★ Marketplace Mall is the site of many new uses including 150 income-restricted apartments for older adults. These are scheduled to open in the summer of 2024.
- ★ Episcopal Senior Life Communities' Neighborhood Program is working in partnership with affordable older adult housing developers to address health disparities and social needs of those 65+ with limited incomes. They broke ground on Ellen's Place, a community offering 74 apartments with many gathering spaces for residents and guests to enjoy.



TRANSPORTATION



Recommendation #18: Improve cycling infrastructure

Recommendation #16: Improve snow removal

Recommendation #21: Implement more robust mobility management services

- ★ The city of Rochester intends to use \$3.2 million in funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure & Jobs Law to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. The city will also develop a snow removal and maintenance plan for sidewalks, bus stops, bike facilities and trails.
- ★ Several county projects widened shoulders including on Lake and Salt roads in Webster which improves bike and pedestrian safety.



- ★ Elmwood Avenue was resurfaced to include bike lanes.
- ★ The South Avenue Road reconstruction project included the addition of bikes lanes next to sidewalks.
- ★ Representatives from the Monroe County Aging Alliance provided input on both the City of Rochester and Monroe County Active Transportation plans.
- ★ A partnership of providers including Lifespan, Monroe, Livingston and Ontario counties is testing a new online mobility platform called Here2There.help. Here2There.help is designed to help people of any age locate transportation options matched with their needs. Those options may include public transportation, taxi and specialized services like wheelchair or door-to-door. The online portal will go live in early 2024.

Here²There

Your connection to routes and rides = 

HEALTH SERVICES & COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Recommendation #27: Promote full participation in the Age-friendly Health System Initiative

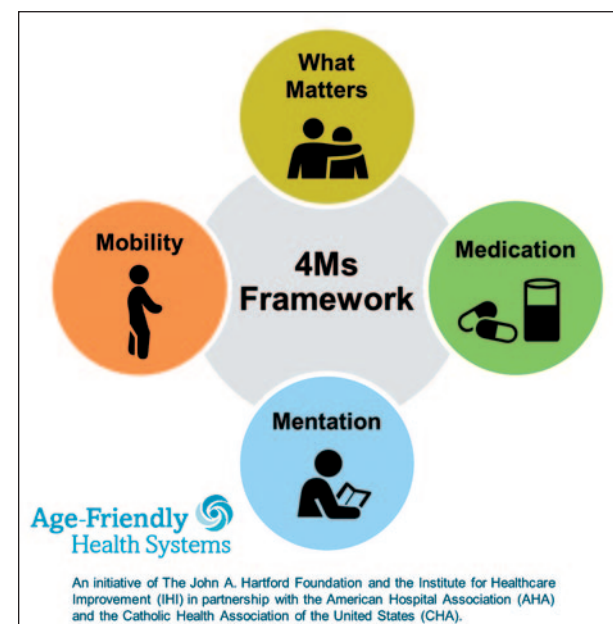


★ The health care entities listed below are participating in the Age-friendly Health Systems Initiative.

- Eastman Institute for Oral Health
- Monroe Community Hospital
- Upstate New York CareSight
- Edna Tina Wilson
- ElderOne
- Park Ridge Living Center
- Rochester General Hospital
- Rochester Regional Home Care
- Unity Living Center
- Center for Preoperative Medicine
- Specialized Oncology Care and Research for our Elders Clinic at Wilmot Cancer Center
- UR Medicine Geriatrics Group
- Strong Memorial Hospital

★ Of note, the Eastman Institute for Oral Health's Specialty Care Clinic is the first oral health care provider in the nation to be recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System participant.

★ Age-friendly Health Systems is an initiative of the John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the United States. Each participating location is working toward reliable practice of evidence-based interventions for all older adults in their care known as the 4Ms (4Ms: What Matters, Medications, Mentation, Mobility).



ECONOMIC SECURITY

Recommendation #28: Recognize the issue of poverty among older adults, especially those of color living within the City of Rochester.

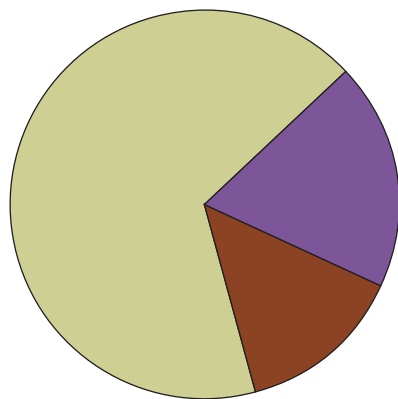
Recommendation #29: Increase participation in public benefit programs



Poverty Among Older Rochester Residents

Rochester has a poverty problem at all ages and older adults are significantly affected. The city has the second highest poverty rate in the state for older persons.

According to The Center for an Urban Future's 2023 report, the number of older persons in poverty in the city increased by an alarming 70% from 2011 to 2021.



- 19% Below 100% of poverty
- 17% 100-149% of poverty

Per the 2021, U.S. Census 1-YR Estimates: 5,451 residents 65 or older (19%) lived below the Official Poverty Measure; 8,412 residents 60 or older (21%) lived below the Official Poverty Measure.

★ Rochester has the second highest rate of older adult poverty of any county or city in the state. Almost 10,000 people 65 and older are living below 150% of poverty. The rate is highest for Hispanic/Latinx elders, and the number of poor elders is increasing along with the increasing number of people 65 and older.

★ To help meet this need, Lifespan applied for and was awarded a contract to host a Benefits Enrollment Center (BEC) in 2024 with a plan to enroll at least 500 Medicare beneficiaries in five core benefits. Lifespan is partnering with the Prayer House Church of God, Cabrini Parish/Rochester HOPE, Senior Expressions, Rainbow Seniors ROC

and the Deaf Senior Services Coalition to hold benefits fairs and reach underserved older adults.

★ The ElderPages, a comprehensive guide of resources developed by Greater Rochester Area Partnership for the Elderly, now includes a financial resource section. Distribution of the directory targeted underserved areas of the city. The ElderPages is funded by a grant from the Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation.

★ Members of the Aging Alliance are working within the Commission on Racial and Structural Equity's (RASE) Community Advancing Recommendation Team (CART) to track and implement the recommendations in the older adult domain of the RASE Report.

★ Aging Alliance members ensured that the Benefits Calculator, a pilot by ABC and TogetherNow for people applying for the city's Guaranteed Basic Income project, included the effect an extra \$500 a month would have on benefits available to people 60 and older.



The Monroe County Aging Alliance will continue monitoring our age-friendly/ livable communities progress in qualitative and quantitative changes and improvements. Our goal is to ensure full participation in the fabric of our community by an increasing population of older people who very much want to remain engaged.

To learn more about or to get involved with our community's age-friendly work, visit <https://monroeagingalliance.org>.



Sage II Commission of Common Ground Health

With its focus on the growing population of older adults, the 2023 update to Common Ground Health's 2011 Sage Commission report includes many of the similar recommendations of the Alliance's Creating a Community for a Lifetime Action Plan. Multiple members of the Aging Alliance collaborated with the Sage II Commission and provided input for the report which calls for:

- Acknowledging that as a community ageism is an existential threat to our work and the well-being of older adults.
- Expanding and creating equitable social health and prevention programs to solve disparities caused by race, ethnicity, income, and geography.
- Educating and supporting family and other “informal” caregivers.
- Increasing the integration and coordination of medical and social services.
- Avoiding duplication of programs and instead jointly and completely fund proven programs and services.
- Increasing the number of affordable and accessible housing units.
- Expanding accessible low- or no-cost transportation services for medical and non-medical trips.
- Retaining and growing the health care and social services workforce.

The Sage II report notes that Monroe County is “participating in the AARP-Age-Friendly States and Communities network of livable communities in order to address the well-being of older adults through a comprehensive Action Plan.” It also calls for including “age-friendly language and readable formats in all resources.”



CENTRE FOR AGING BETTER



PHOTO: DAVID TETT



Monroe County Aging Alliance is a joint initiative of Rochester Area Community Foundation and United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes.

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