



# Becoming Age Friendly Berkshires: A Municipal Checklist

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A SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR MUNICIPALITIES

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## What is Age Friendly?

Age Friendly communities are *livable* - providing appropriate housing, good transportation, work and volunteer opportunities, plus a range of leisure activities for all residents - across their lifespans.

Age Friendly communities enable people to actively participate in civic and social life and treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age or ability. They are places that makes it easy for older people to stay safe, and connected to the people that are important to them. Age Friendly communities help people stay healthy and active -- even at the oldest ages and provide appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

**An Age Friendly Berkshire County is a great place to grow up and a great place to grow old!**

*This Checklist is intended to be used to "start the conversation" in your city or town, around becoming age-friendly. Chances are, you're doing alot already! No need to start from scratch – just put on your age-friendly lenses, review your current housing stock, home-support programs, or other housing-related practices to keep your residents safe at home. Then identify ways to expand or adapt your Actions from the suggestions on the Checklist - or create some yourselves. Don't forget to share best practices or what you've discovered, with other Berkshire County communities, via [www.agefriendlyberkshires.com](http://www.agefriendlyberkshires.com). For additional assistance with using the Checklists call Age Friendly Berkshires at 413-442-1521 x16.*

# BECOMING AGE FRIENDLY BERKSHIRES: A MUNICIPAL CHECKLIST



## SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community helps older adults to stay healthy, engaged and informed.

Grownups have a broad range of interests. An age friendly community makes available a variety of social activities to cater to those diverse interests, including activities that are accessible for people with different abilities.

Scheduling activities at various times and at convenient and accessible locations served by public transportation options encourages greater participation. Activities must be affordable for older people to allow greater participation. Special attention should be paid to communicating and marketing age friendly events using a variety of media.

Participation in social activities helps to prevent social isolation. Most older adults want to socialize and integrate with other age groups and cultures in their communities. Intergenerational activities are mutually enriching and fulfilling for all ages.

Regardless of a person's age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combatted by ensuring that older adults stay engaged with family and friends through the availability of accessible, affordable and fun social activities.

## REGIONAL SOCIAL PARTICIPATION GOALS

- Develop self-sustaining networks of residents based on common interests or within a geographic area.
- Encourage those in need to become engaged in community by helping others.
- Create opportunities for socialization and strive to eliminate barriers to participation (transportation, cost, etc.).
- Organize regional and long-distance activities for group engagement, as well as bringing programs to Councils on Aging, community centers, faith-based organizations, civic organizations and others, where older adults might already congregate.
- Promote local arts, music and cultural or academic programs to build bridges to engagement of seniors as both volunteers and consumers.
- Reach out personally to engage residents of all needs and abilities.
- Build intergenerational networks, whenever possible.

## Social Participation Checklist

- Develop self-sustaining networks of Berkshire residents to promote social interactions and opportunities for those with varying interests and abilities
- Develop neighborhood networks using available communication channels
- Enlist those who are isolated to become engaged by helping others
- Organize regional/long-distance activities for group engagement
- Bring engagement programs to local council on aging and other gathering centers
- Reach out to personally engage residents and assess their range of needs, wishes and abilities
- Build Intergenerational networks for mutual benefit like connecting schools with elder communities
- Develop public meeting places for conversation (like coffee houses, libraries)
- Encourage the development of Villages and NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) to provide assistance to elders who wish to remain engaged in community
- Develop cross-sector opportunities to promote active lifestyles with group engagement
- Venues for events and activities are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit, and easily reached by public transport
- Events are held at times convenient to older adults
- Activities and events can be attended alone or with a companion
- Activities and attractions are affordable and have no hidden additional costs
- Information about events/activities is provided, like details about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for older people
- A wide variety of activities is provided to appeal to a diverse population
- There is consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation