



**Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
December 10, 2019**



Age Friendly Berkshires Mission: To create a more livable Berkshire County for people of all ages, with a focus on the needs of an aging population.





Who is *Age Friendly Berkshires*?



*A collaboration of Berkshire County residents, businesses, governments, elected officials, non-profit organizations and community groups, who decided to take **Action** to create a county that is fully-supportive of the aging process. Age Friendly Berkshires is a movement*





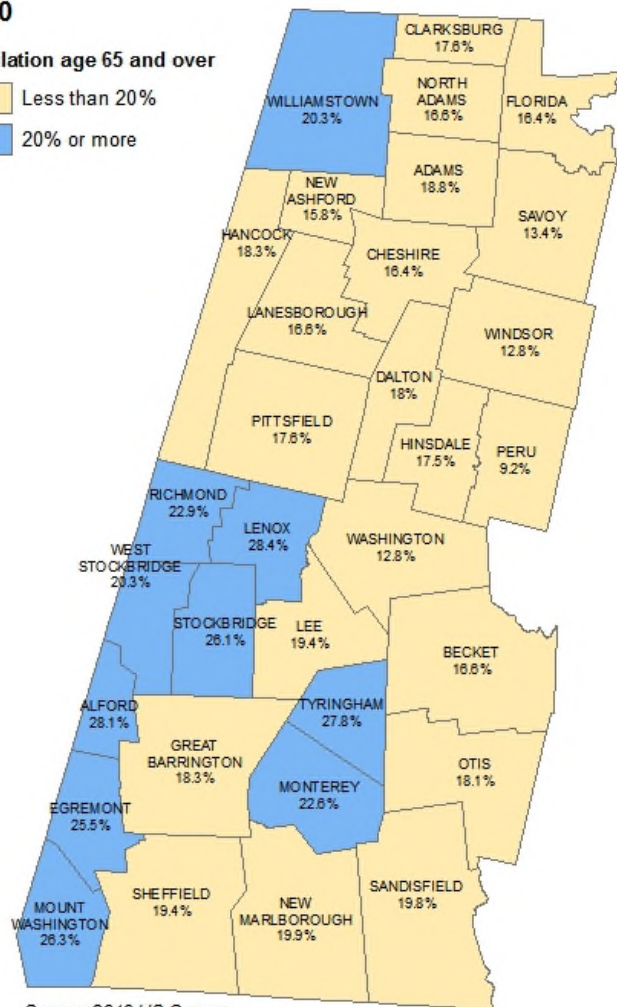
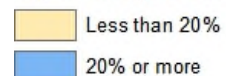
Why Age Friendly Berkshires?



Population over 65 is growing in numbers & percent

2010

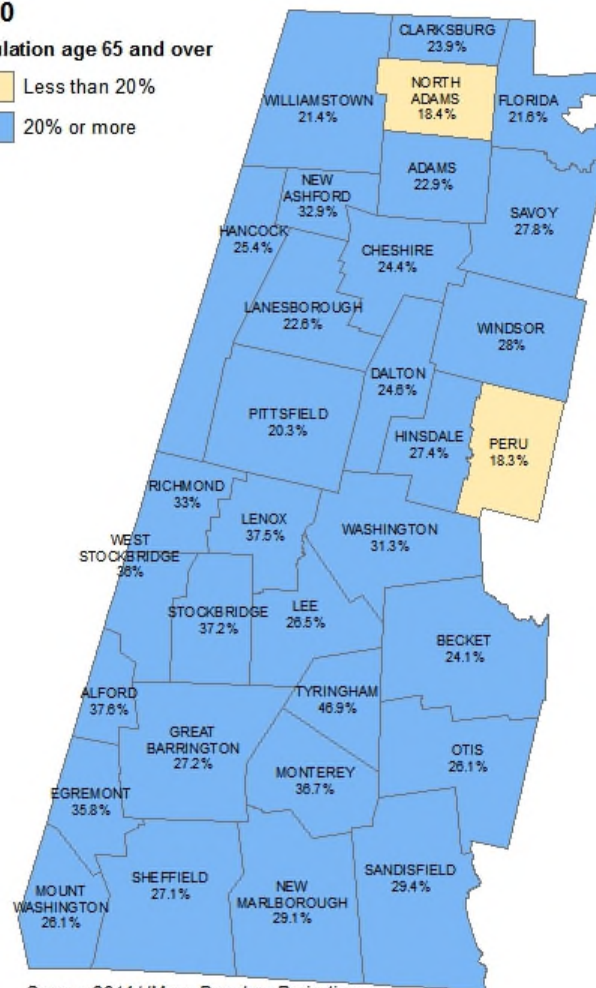
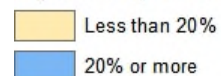
Population age 65 and over



Source: 2010 US Census

2020

Population age 65 and over

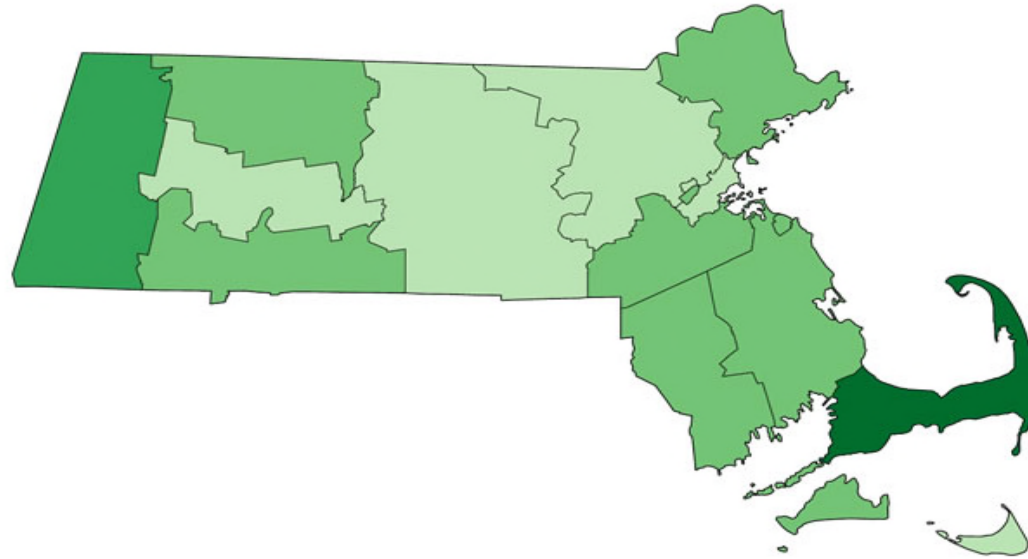
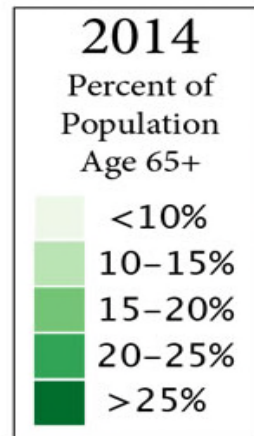


Source: 2014 UMass Donahue Projections

2010: Total Population:
131,219
Population over 65:
24,386

2020: Total Population:
130,002
Population over 65:
31,003

More over 65 than the rest of Massachusetts



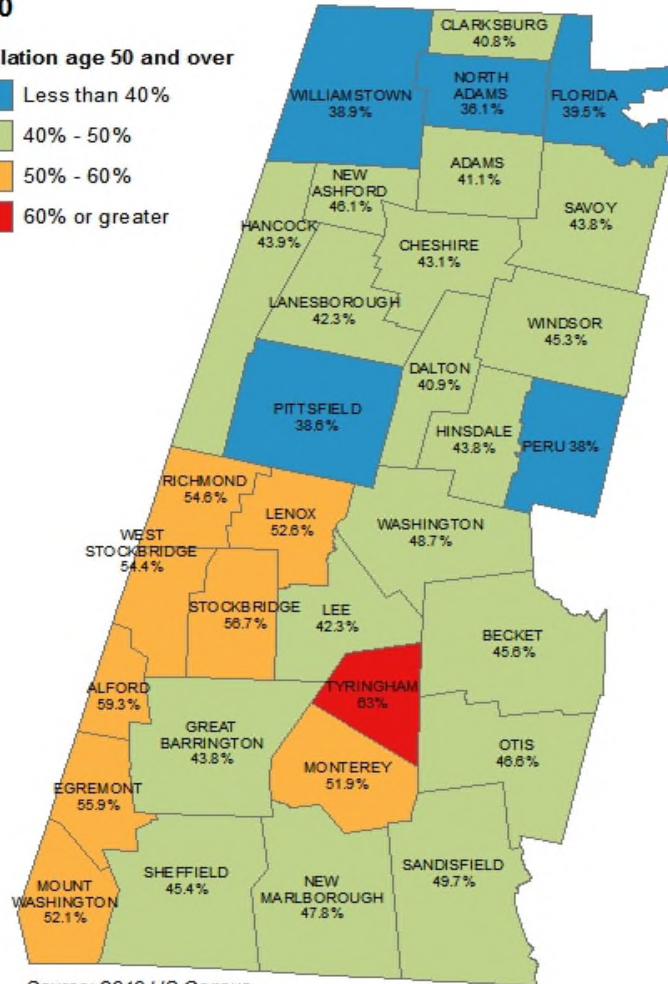
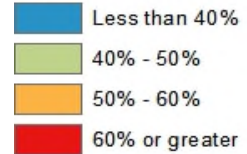
Source: United States Census Bureau



As is the over 50 population

2010

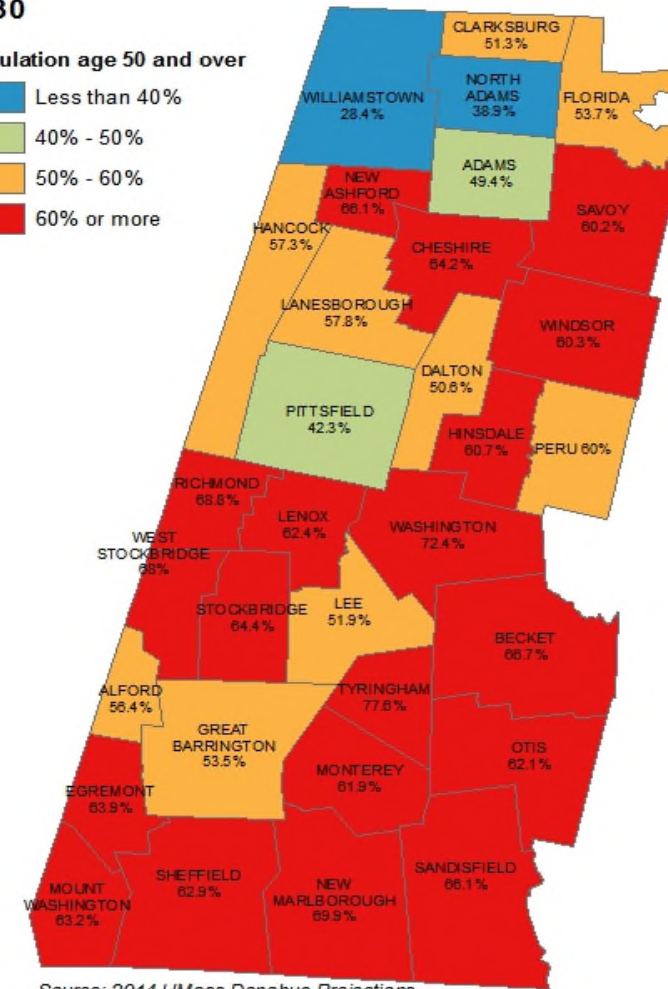
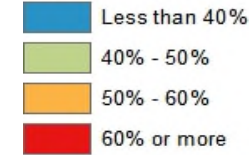
Population age 50 and over



Source: 2010 US Census

2030

Population age 50 and over



Source: 2014 UMass Donahue Projections

Berkshire County

- Covers 950 square miles; can take close to 2 hours to drive end to end.
- Far west of the state, bordered by NY, CT, VT; isolated geographically and culturally from the rest of the state.
- Less than 128,000 people in 32 municipalities, the majority of which have fewer than 2,500 people. Population is declining.
- 1/3 of the population lives in the City of Pittsfield, a Gateway City.
- Median household income almost \$20,000 below MA and below the US median. Also a significant population of more affluent and educated retirees, esp. in south county.
- Public transportation is extremely limited.
- Housing is largely limited to 1-family homes, most of which are older homes.



AFB joined the
global movement
in 2015, on behalf
of 32
municipalities



Regional Effort

- **Resources spread across the county – small towns cannot have everything**
- **County identity**
- **Can be challenging, however: large area to cover; 32 separate municipalities, Councils on Aging, etc., as well as self-division into south, north & central county areas.**
- **Biggest challenge is funding for central coordinator**

Early steps

- Assessment, Outreach & Organization:
 - Age Friendly Berkshires Survey
 - Public Listening Sessions
 - Task Force Partners
 - Active Agers Advisory Council
- Planning Grant from Tufts Foundation (2015)

AGE FRIENDLY BERKSHIRES ACTION PLAN

November 1, 2017

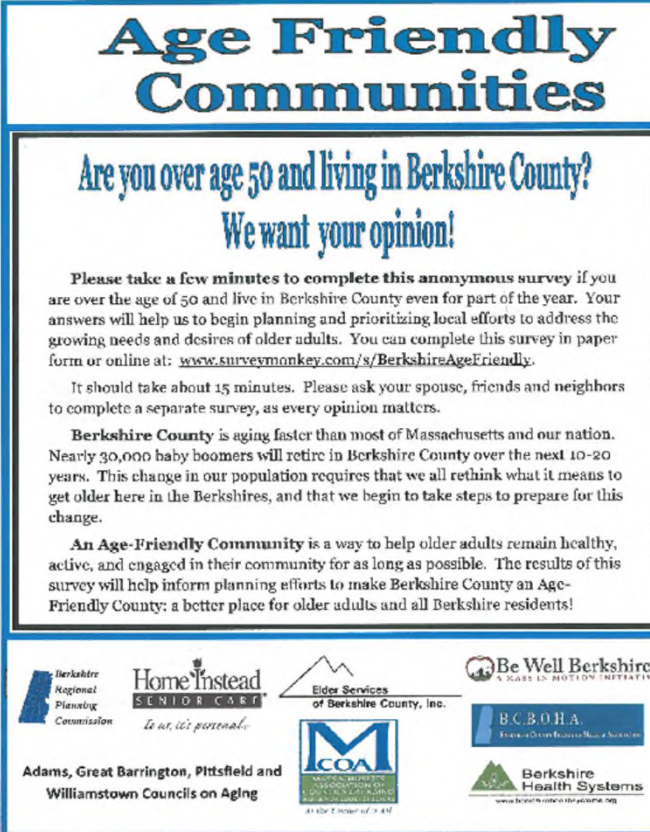


Making the Berkshires a great place to grow up ...and a great place to grow old!



Assessment: Berkshire Age Friendly Survey

- February/March 2015: Age Friendly Survey for Berkshire County adults aged 50 & over
- Distributed paper copies and online through multiple channels; entered into survey monkey
- Almost 2,500 responses! Largely representative by geography, age, income, education.
- Final report available at www.berkshireplanning.org or www.agefriendlyberkshires.com



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.

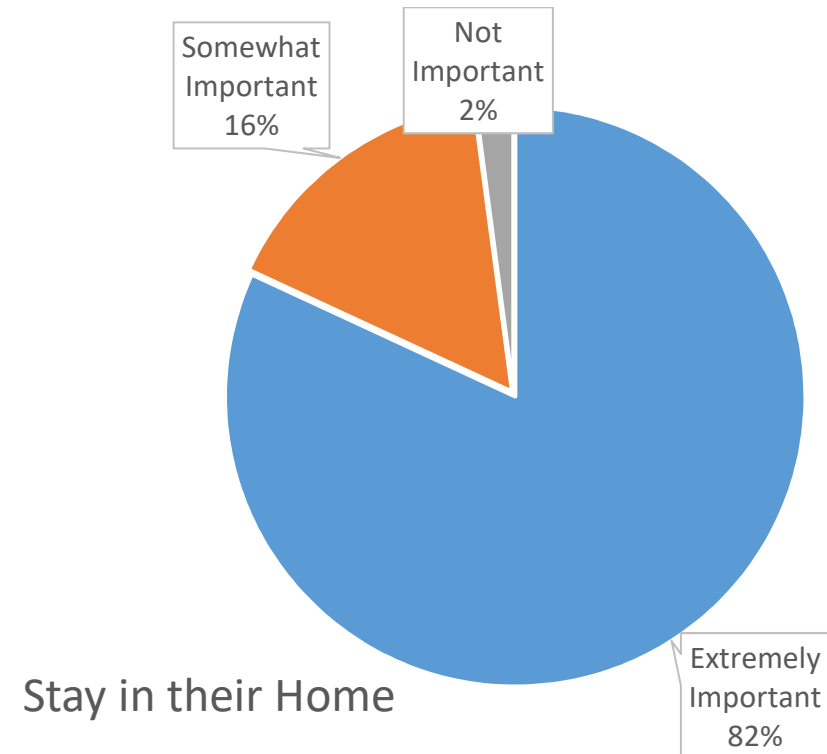
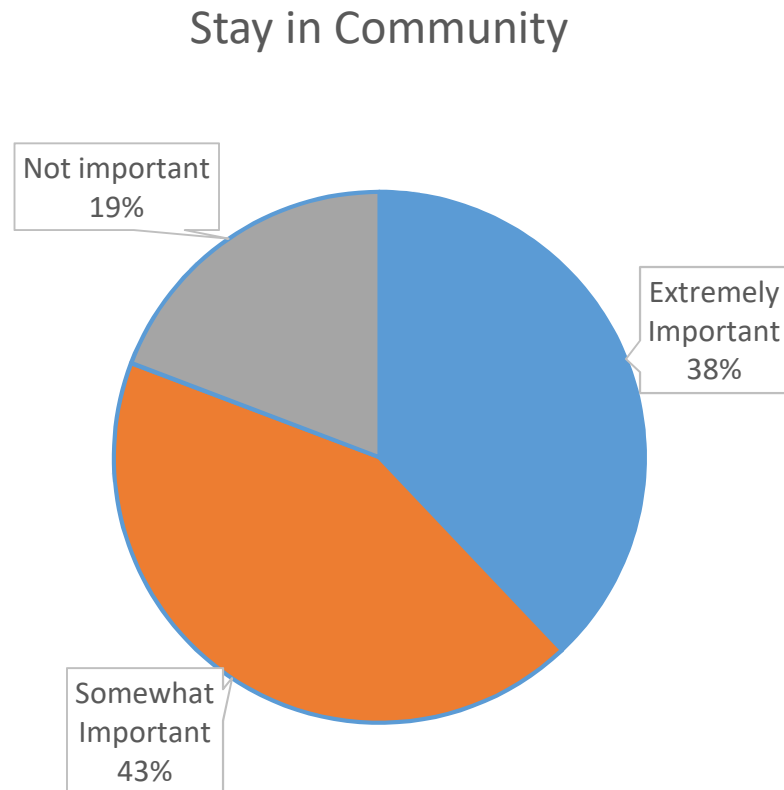
Berkshire County is aging faster than most of Massachusetts and our nation. Nearly 30,000 baby boomers will retire in Berkshire County over the next 10-20 years. This change in our population requires that we all rethink what it means to get older here in the Berkshires, and that we begin to take steps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

Logos:
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Home Instead Senior Care, Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc., Be Well Berkshires, B.C.B.O.H.A., Berkshire Health Systems, Adams, Great Barrington, Pittsfield and Williamstown Councils on Aging, MCOA.

Aging in Place / Aging in Community

- Respondents want to stay in their community as they age, but even more important is to be able to live independently in their own homes.
- Those with lower incomes and lower education rated staying in their community higher
- Those with higher incomes rated staying independently in their own homes as more important.



55-65% of respondents said they expected to move in retirement; many older respondents had already done so

Reason	Percentage
Move to a smaller home	44%
Want to live in a different climate	38%
Want to be able to walk to parks, stores, town, etc.	38%
Move to a less expensive home or community	32%
Want to be closer to family	24%
Want better access to public transportation	21%
Move to a home that is renovated/modified for older adults or those w/ disability	19%

Where do we expect to live as we age?

- 64% expect to continue to live in a single family house (79% now). Higher for the youngest and wealthiest respondents
- 10% expect to live in a condo or coop (3% now)
- 9% in a retirement community (2% now)
- 3% in assisted living (less than 1% now)
- Do we have enough of these options?
- Other options we didn't ask about?



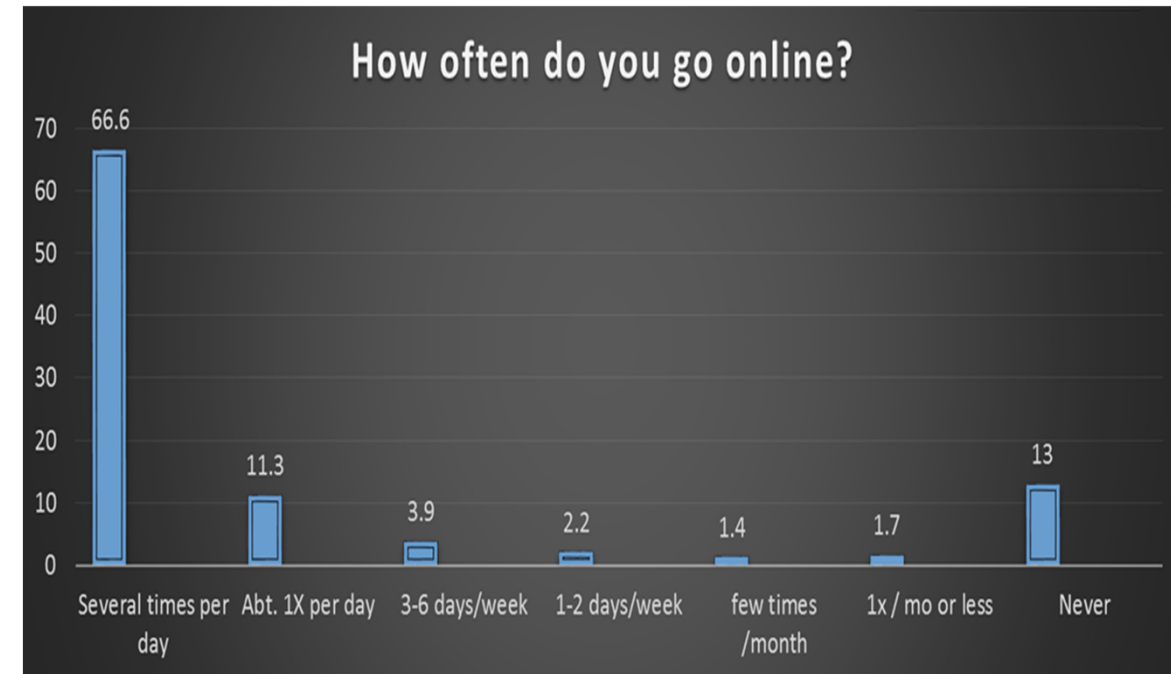


Social Isolation

- 30% of respondents live alone, ranges from 18% of 50-59 year olds to 61% of those over 80.
- Correlated to income – 70% of those w/ income <\$20,000, 10% of those w/ incomes > \$100,000
- 90% have family or friends they can count on in an emergency; 5% do not and 4% are not sure. True across all age groups and income groups.

Communication

- Internet usage was generally high among respondents, highly correlated with both age and income.
- Only 2% of those 50-59 do not use the Internet, compared to 55% of those over 80.
- 97% of higher income respondents use the Internet daily, compared to 35% of those with incomes under \$20,000.
- Overall 84% of respondents use the Internet at least once a week.



Aging in Place Forums

- Held three structured, facilitated public forums – asked for feedback on challenges & potential solutions.
- 150 participants!
- Report available at www.berkshireplanning.org or www.agefriendlyberkshires.com

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, 10:00am-12 Noon
Berkshire South, 15 Crissey Rd

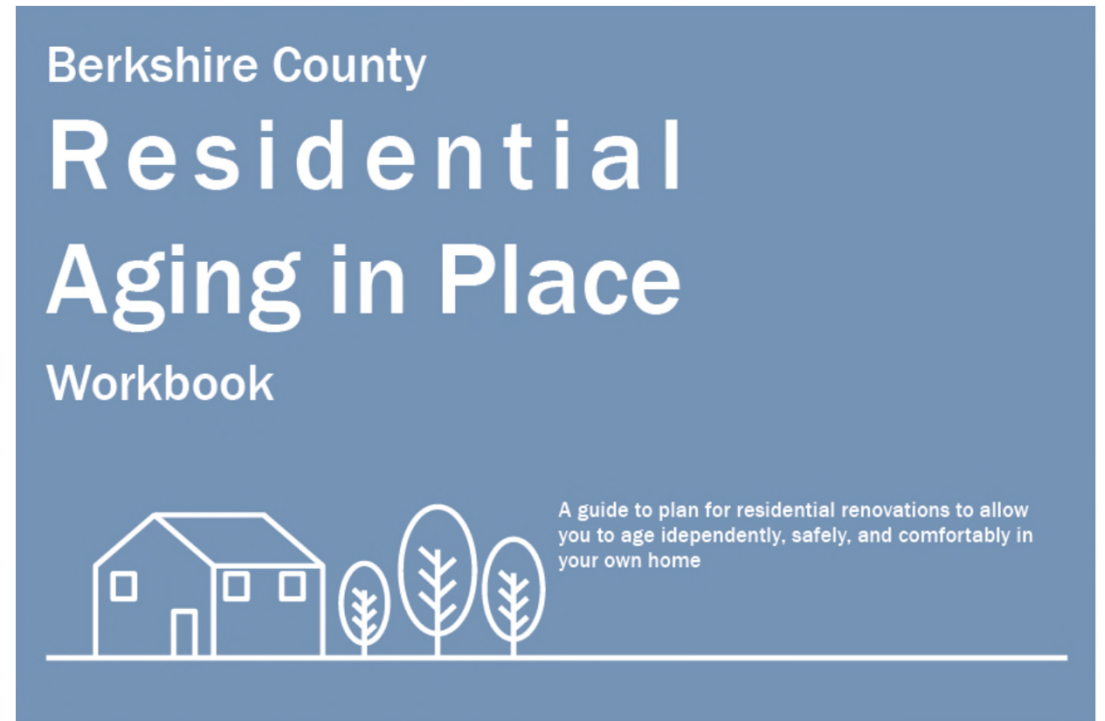
Hosted by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Age Friendly Berkshires

For more information contact Allison Hope
ahope@berkshireplanning.org
413-442-1521 x36



In response to the Aging in Place Forums

- A residential aging in place booklet, along with a training video (available free on youtube) created for use by individuals or organizations.
- Link to booklet & video at berkshireplanning.org



Action Plan

- Completed November 2017
- Has strategies and action steps for all 8 domains of livability:

CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES

HOUSING

OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

TRANSPORTATION



Achievements 2017-2019

- 2-year Implementation Grant from Tufts Health Plan Foundation (FY 2017-2019)
- Website, newsletter, Facebook page and email list-serve established
- AFB Video produced
- 9 Municipal Resolutions Signed (Only 23 to go!)
- Zoning for Age Friendly Housing (EOEEA)
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness &
- ADA Accessibility growing areas of interest
- Dalton Outdoor Exercise Park, November 2018 (AARP MA)
- Partnered with Red Cross – Free Smoke Detectors



Achievements

- Berkshire RCC on Transportation - messaging development training
- Berkshire Supergenerians Health Summit
- Volunteer Driver program in development
- 50+ Job Fair held, attended by over 120 people
- Driver Safety Programs held in multiple locations
- Village Feasibility study completed (DHCD)
- Volunteer Fair – very successful!
- Be Seen Be Safe vests and Hall Walkers programs



THANK YOU!

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Check out our website: Agefriendlyberkshires.com!
Join our newsletter mailing list!