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:
- 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
- Less than 40%
- 40% - 50%
- 50% - 60%
- 60% or greater

2030

Population age 50 and over
- Less than 40%
- 40% - 50%
- 50% - 60%
- 60% or more

Source: 2010 US Census

Source: 2014 UMass Donahue Projections
• 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)
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
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.

Stay in Community
- Extremely Important: 38%
- Somewhat Important: 16%
- Not Important: 19%

Stay in their Home
- Extremely Important: 82%
- Somewhat Important: 16%
- Not Important: 2%
55-65% of respondents said they expected to move in retirement; many older respondents had already done so.

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

Age Friendly Vision 2020
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.

![Bar chart showing how often people go online](chart.png)
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
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!