



Age-Friendly Initiatives of Northern New Jersey: The Early Phase of Implementation



Community members participate in a pedestrian safety workshop organized by Lifelong Elizabeth. The workshop took place in partnership among the Elizabeth Office on Aging, the Police Department, the City Library, and the Rotary Club.

Beginning in 2016, nine communities across northern New Jersey embarked on comprehensive initiatives to make their localities better places to grow up and grow old. This report provides an overview of these age-friendly initiatives (AFIs) during the early phase of implementation. Information is based on in-depth interviews with AFI leaders conducted at the beginning and end of 2017. The report first describes the AFIs' activities and outputs across six domains: (a) information and communication, (b) transportation, (c) housing, (d) walkability, (e) civic participation and inclusion, and (f) health, wellness, and social services. Then the report addresses the initiatives' leadership teams and community partners, as well as the concept of *gaining traction* to conceptualize their progress. The report concludes by integrating the themes from the interviews into a program model for AFIs in the early phase of implementation.

Introduction

A worldwide age-friendly movement is under way to make communities better places for people to grow up and grow old. *Age-friendly* refers to how communities support the health and well-being of residents as they experience long lives. Age-friendliness includes, for example, whether a community has a diverse housing stock that allows people to move into smaller homes if they so desire; whether there are accessible transportation options beyond driving; whether there are strategies for sharing information with residents of all ages; and whether there are inclusive opportunities for volunteering and employment for residents in various life stages.¹

Age-friendly initiatives (AFIs) are organized efforts to improve localities for midlife and older adults, and in many cases, such improvements can benefit residents of all ages. Typically, AFIs target specific cities or communities, but they also can encompass regions, states, or even countries. General features of AFIs include:

- Goal-oriented actions that address multiple domains of community living (e.g., housing, transportation, civic participation).
- Multiphasic work spanning multiple years (e.g., planning and assessment; implementation; evaluation and continuous improvement).
- Leadership through a core group of people and organizations in partnership with key stakeholders (e.g., local government, private nonprofits, universities, businesses, voluntary groups).
- A value on older adults as contributors to their communities.²

AFIs have grown rapidly over the past decade. Beginning with just 33 cities in 22 countries in 2006, the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities now has over 540 members in 37 countries.³ In the U.S., the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities has grown from just six members in 2012 to over 235 affiliates today.⁴

Just as AFIs have grown in number, so too have efforts to describe and evaluate their impact. This report contributes to these efforts by studying nine AFIs in northern New Jersey, all of which received planning grants in early 2016.⁵ This report addresses the AFIs' subsequent development in 2017 during the early implementation phase.

The report first provides an overview of the network of AFIs in northern New Jersey and an ongoing research study to examine their development over time. Then, the report presents findings on the initiatives' progress during early implementation in two parts. The first part describes the AFIs' activities and outputs across six domains:

1. Information and communication
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Walkability
5. Civic participation and inclusion
6. Health, wellness, and social services

The second part addresses how the initiatives worked toward their accomplishments, focusing on their leadership teams and community partners. It further presents the concept of *gaining traction* to conceptualize AFIs' early implementation progress. The report concludes by presenting a program model integrating themes from the study.

AFIs in Northern New Jersey

The Grotta Fund for Senior Care and The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation are two philanthropies that conduct grantmaking in support of aging across northern New Jersey. The foundations started their work on AFIs in 2015, at which time they hosted a conference to educate local stakeholders about age-friendly community change.⁵ Following the conference, they put out a call for proposals for age-friendly planning grants of

up to \$35,000. The grantmaking program included the potential for subsequent support: up to \$75,000 for each of three years.

Eight communities received a planning grant in January of 2016, and a ninth was a recipient in March. The planning phase generally took place from January through December of 2016, with seven of the nine AFIs transitioning from planning to implementation at the start of 2017. The table below provides a brief overview of the AFIs.

Initiatives (in alphabetical order)		
Initiative	Website and Social Media	Setting
Age-Friendly Englewood	age-friendlyenglewood.org facebook.com/Age-Friendly-Englewood-1679619148944462	<p>Located in the eastern region of Bergen County, NJ, Englewood is a city with approximately 28,000 residents. The percentage of residents ages 62 years and over is approximately 19%. Forty-four percent of the residents identifies as White, 30% as African American or Black, and 12% as Asian. Approximately 23% identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The organization's fiduciary agent is the Community Chest of Englewood.</p>
Age-Friendly Ridgewood	agefriendlyridgewood.org facebook.com/agefriendlyridgewood	<p>Ridgewood is a village of approximately 25,500 residents. It is located in the west-central region of Bergen County, NJ. The percentage of residents ages 62 and over is approximately 16%. About 82% of the population identifies as White, and 15% identifies as Asian. The organization's fiduciary agent is The Community Center of Ridgewood Foundation.</p>

Demographic information is from the 2016 American Community Survey.

Initiatives (continued from the prior page)

<p>Age-Friendly Teaneck</p>	<p>agefriendlyteaneck.org facebook.com/AFTeaneck</p>	<p>Located in Bergen County, NJ, Teaneck is a township with nearly 41,000 residents. The percentage of residents ages 62 and over is approximately 20%. Approximately half of the population identifies as White, 29% as African American or Black, and 9% as Asian. Approximately 17% identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The lead organization is Geriatric Services, Inc.</p>
<p>Generations for Garfield</p>	<p>generations4garfield.org facebook.com/ Generations4Garfield</p>	<p>Garfield is a city with approximately 31,500 residents. It is located in the southwest region of Bergen County, NJ. The percentage of residents ages 62 years and over is 15%. Approximately 84% of the population identifies as White, and 36% of residents identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The initiative is administratively housed in the City of Garfield.</p>
<p>Lifelong Elizabeth</p>	<p>jfscentralnj.org/ lifelongelizabeth/about-us.php facebook.com/Lifelong- Elizabeth-1713850232232804</p>	<p>Located in the northeast corner of Union County, NJ, Elizabeth is a city with approximately 129,000 residents. The percentage of residents ages 62 years and over is 12%. About 49% of residents identifies as White and 20% as African American or Black. Approximately 63% identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The lead organization is Jewish Family Service of Central NJ.</p>
<p>Lifelong Plainfield</p>	<p>facebook.com/ lifelong.plainfield.5</p>	<p>Located in the southwest corner of Union County, NJ, Plainfield is a city with over 50,000 residents. Nearly 13% of residents are ages 62 years and over. Approximately 43% of the population identifies as African American or Black, and 20% as White. About 41% identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The United Way of Greater Union County is the lead organization.</p>

Demographic information is from the 2016 American Community Survey.

Initiatives (continued from the prior page)

<p>SOMA: Two Towns for All Ages</p>	<p>somatwotownsforallages.org</p> <p>facebook.com/SOMA2Towns</p>	<p>SOMA encompasses South Orange Village and Maplewood Township, which are adjacent to each other in the southern region of Essex County, NJ. Combined, there are nearly 41,000 residents. Across the two municipalities, approximately 15% of the population is ages 62 or older. About 64% of the residents identifies as White, and 31% as African American or Black. The initiative is administratively housed through shared services between the two municipal governments.</p>
<p>TriTown 55+ Coalition</p>	<p>tritown55plus.org</p> <p>facebook.com/Tri-Town-55-Coalition-1416456925101521</p>	<p>The TriTown region includes Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, and Madison Borough, which are adjacent to each other in the southeast corner of Morris County, NJ. In total, there are approximately 35,680 residents. The percentage of residents ages 62 and over is about 17%. Approximately 87% of the residents across the three municipalities identifies as White and over 7% as Asian. The initiative became its own 501(3)c organization in 2016.</p>
<p>Westwood for All Ages</p>	<p>westwoodforallages.org</p> <p>facebook.com/westwoodforallages</p>	<p>The Borough of Westwood has approximately 11,170 residents. It is located in the north-central region of Bergen County, NJ. The percentage of residents ages 62 years and over is 21.1%. Approximately 78% of the population identifies as White, 7% as Asian, and 7% as African American. Approximately 17% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The lead organization is Meals on Wheels of Greater Pascack Valley.</p>

Demographic information is from the 2016 American Community Survey.

Research Study Overview

This research was conducted as part of a multi-year developmental evaluation of AFIs in northern New Jersey. Developmental evaluation is useful for understanding programs as they evolve over time. The role of the evaluator is to generate understanding of an emerging program model, while also using research methods to enhance program development.⁶ Accordingly, the researcher (report author) actively participated on the AFI development team such as by organizing grantee network meetings, strategizing with the funders on ways to support the grantees' work, and responding to individual grantee's requests for information.

Findings in this report are from in-depth interviews conducted with the persons who identified as the primary leaders of their AFI. One to five people participated in each interview, depending on the AFI's staffing and partnerships, as well as the preference of the participants. Across all interviews, the person designated as the initiative coordinator participated. The report author conducted all of the interviews—once in February/March of 2017 and

Summary of the Research Project	
<i>Research Design</i>	Longitudinal, in-depth, semi-structured interviews
<i>Participants</i>	Leaders of each of the nine AFIs in northern New Jersey
<i>When Data Was Collected</i>	February/March and November/December of 2017
<i>Data Analysis</i>	Iterative coding process

again in October/November of 2017. The study protocol received approval from the Rutgers University Human Subjects Board.

Following from prior findings on the AFIs in the planning phase,⁶ all interviews included questions about the initiative's structure (e.g., staffing, organizational auspice, partners groups); the role of specific stakeholder groups (e.g., local government, hospitals, faith-based leaders, social service organizations); and future aspirations (e.g., plans for sustainability). Customized questions for each AFI also were developed. These questions were derived, in part, from each of their action plans. The action plans were provided as spreadsheets, with each sheet summarizing a domain of action, associated objectives, timeline, and resources. Additional interview questions were developed from research memos that summarized past interviews for each initiative, as well as information that the participants had submitted to the funders as part of the grants administration process.

Each interview was approximately two hours in length. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and entered into software for qualitative data analysis. Analysis took place through a multiphasic coding process, whereby common themes were identified across the transcriptions. At the later stages of analysis, tables were created to compare and contrast each initiative along particular themes. These tables helped to advance understanding of the dimensionality of major themes, as well as their prevalence across the nine initiatives. At the final stage of analysis, the themes were integrated into a visual model to depict the overall development of the AFIs during the early phase of implementation.

Activities and Outputs

This section provides an overview of the initiatives' activities and outputs during the early phase of implementation according to six domains of age-friendliness. These domains emerged across the network of AFIs in northern New Jersey as a whole, with no one AFI addressing all six. Most communities selected their focal domains toward the end of the planning phase, prioritizing those issues

that emerged most prominently from their community assessments. Although many AFI leaders described updating the specific objectives, action steps, or timelines at some point during early implementation, most reported maintaining the same set of priority issues throughout the year. The table below presents a list of themes that emerged with respect to activities and outputs under each domain. These themes are described further in the following subsections.

Summary of Activities and Outputs in the Early Phase of Implementation	
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Creating new communications platforms ◆ Leveraging other organizations' communications platforms ◆ Enhancing people-based information networks
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Facilitating the growth of on-demand transportation services ◆ Sharing information about existing transportation services ◆ Advocating for changes to existing transportation services
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sharing information about housing services ◆ Exploring the creation of additional housing services ◆ Advocating to create new housing
Walkability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Advocating for changes to the built environment ◆ Introducing pedestrian safety programs
Civic Participation and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conducting outreach to local businesses ◆ Supporting municipally-based senior advisory committees ◆ Enhancing access to outdoor community events ◆ Connecting older adults with volunteer opportunities
Health, Wellness, and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Facilitating health and wellness programming ◆ Connecting older residents with healthy food and household goods ◆ Conducting targeted outreach to older adults who are homebound

Spotlight on Information and Communication

Age-Friendly Englewood

By: Janet Sharma, Coordinator

Our community assessment in the planning phase showed that the community wanted more information about services and events going on in town. We developed a comprehensive marketing plan that included press, a website, social media, and print communications about a wide range of topics relevant to older adults aging in place.

We gathered voluminous data from various sources and combined it into an attractive 36-page directory with extensive indexing. This booklet was printed gratis by a local corporation. We hosted a launch party to introduce the directory to the community and are distributing 2,000 copies throughout Englewood using coalition member organizations, local businesses, and city offices.

We also found there was a lack of knowledge about various options regarding housing and transportation. So we formed committees of coalition members to put together two half-day conferences. One conference on housing options (see photograph to the right) provided information regarding available resources and services that help residents remain safely in their homes and conserve funds while doing so. Our transportation conference, which took place four months later, educated attendees about various options for transportation. More than 100 residents attended both conferences.

Information and Communication

Information and communication refers to the ability to stay connected with people and organizations to receive timely information to meet their needs.⁷

Information and communication emerged as a major focus of all nine initiatives' work during the early phase of implementation. As one participant remarked, "(This area) has been the most important and the most productive. We couldn't even add anything new without finding a way to tell people about it." Three categories of activities emerged under this domain, as described below.

1. **Creating New Communications Platforms:** All initiatives described their efforts to create new communications products. For eight of the nine communities, this included standalone websites. The websites typically presented information about the initiatives, as well as resource directories (i.e., listing information for assistance under various categories, such as transportation, health, and housing), links to partnering organizations' websites, and a calendar or list of community events. Several initiatives also created Facebook pages, noting that engagement grew throughout the year, as evidenced by *likes* and comments on posts.



The Mayor speaks during the Age-Friendly Englewood Housing Options Conference.

Because the leaders recognized that not all older adults access information online, many reported supplementing online materials with printed handouts, such as hard copies of resource guides and flyers. As one person commented, “We’re in the in-between age where so many people have access to the Internet, but then there’s still a large group that does not...So we have to hit as many ways as we can for now.”

Leaders also described newsletters as an additional platform that they created during the early phase of implementation. Although variable in length, form (i.e., digital versus print), and frequency of distribution (e.g., monthly versus quarterly), the newsletters typically included information about services, programs, and current events, as well as health and wellness education.



A community member and elected council member celebrate the opening of a dedicated section of the Westwood library with information about community resources for older residents.

Spotlight on Information and Communication

Westwood for All Ages

By: Lisa Bontemps, Program Director

Westwood for All Ages created an ambassadors program to help older Westwood residents access information about many services, including transportation, housing, health, and social welfare. The ambassadors are a group of about 8 to 10 older resident volunteers who are active in the community and well connected to other voluntary groups. The ambassadors receive monthly trainings to keep them apprised of many types of services available through public and private organizations, such as ITN North Jersey, NJ Tips, EZRide, and Rebuilding Together.

In addition, our initiative partnered with the Westwood Public Library to create an Age-Friendly Community Resource Center at the front of the building (photograph to the left). There, volunteers assist older patrons by informing them of upcoming events, providing them with brochures describing various services, and directing them to public agencies based on their needs.

Additionally, the ambassadors have set up informational tables at community events and provide information at a table at the Westwood Borough’s farmers market, which runs weekly from May through October. The ambassadors have also helped to spread the word about Westwood for All Ages by giving presentations to other senior groups, such as the Westwood Senior Fellowship and a 50+ group at the local Catholic church.

2. **Leveraging Other Organizations'**

Communications Platforms: Participants also described using other organizations' communications platforms. This included writing press releases for newspapers, participating in local television segments, and embedding age-friendly content on other organizations' websites. Some participants described innovative ways that they connected with other organizations' communications platforms. One initiative, for example, attached age-friendly flyers to prescription medicine bags in partnership with a local pharmacy. This initiative also printed brief messages about aging and the AFI on the empty cells of the municipal calendar for recycling and trash pick-up. Another AFI worked to update local information with relevance for older adults and caregivers as part of the NJ 211 registry, a statewide number for information about community services.

3. **Enhancing People-Based Information**

Networks: Participants further described their efforts to enhance person-to-person information networks. One strategy for doing so was to maintain a regular presence at community events and meetings throughout the year, such as health fairs, farmers markets, and health education workshops. Leaders positioned themselves at these events to converse with older residents and other stakeholders, sharing information about resources and their initiatives in the process. Leaders also organized community events and educational workshops that facilitated face-to-face information sharing on locally available resources, such as volunteer fairs and resource fairs.

Another strategy for enhancing people-based information networks was facilitating word-of-mouth connections among older adults. Some initiatives developed relationships with particular older residents, who were known to be involved in a variety of organizations and could help share information through their networks. In other cases, the initiatives worked with leaders of local senior clubs.

Finally, several of the AFI coordinators described how they themselves had become a central source of information for older residents in the community. They reported receiving phone calls from community members with questions on topics such as transportation, food security, and housing. In response, the coordinators served as a source of information and referral. As one leader reflected, "Now you know there's an age-friendly program. That's who you would go to first."



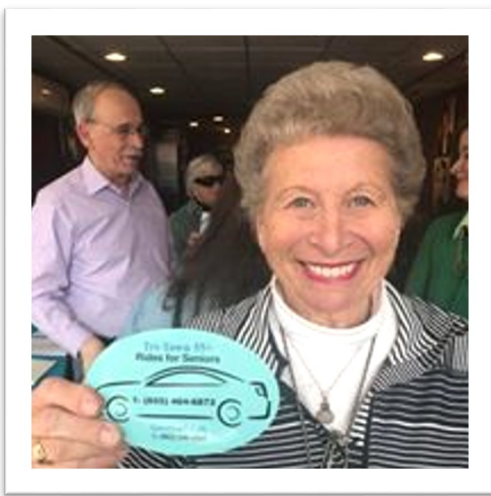
Leaders of Age-Friendly Englewood participate in an event to launch a new resource directory.

Transportation

Transportation refers to the ability to get from one place to another.⁷ All nine initiatives identified transportation as a priority for age-friendly action. They discussed their work in this domain according to the three following categories.

1. *Facilitating the Growth of On-Demand*

Transportation Options: Many of the AFIs expressed interest in expanding on-demand transportation services in their communities. On-demand transportation services include services that connect people with rides through private companies such as Uber, Lyft, and taxi companies, as well as volunteer-based programs, such as ITN Transportation. Some participants expressed reservations about pursuing these options because of the costs of the services or the programs' dependence on volunteers. Other initiatives, however, began to pilot programs and evaluate their utilization. The pilot programs involved not only deliberately marketing the services to individual older adults,



A TriTown resident becomes the first person to use Rides for Seniors, which connects participants with a toll-free number to access on-demand rides through private companies.

Spotlight on Transportation

TriTown 55+ Coalition

By: Laura Sostak, Coordinator

Lack of access to fast, affordable, and convenient transportation is one of the leading causes of isolation among seniors. The transportation services available in communities are often limited in their destinations, operate within designated hours, and require advanced planning. Our survey of residents in Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, and Madison during the planning period for the TriTown 55+ coalition confirmed that older residents were concerned about access to transportation services.

In April 2017, the coalition launched the Rides for Seniors (RFS) program in partnership with GoGoGrandparent, a national on-demand car service company based in California. GoGoGrandparent serves as an interface between the caller and local Uber and Lyft drivers with a toll-free number. As of April 2018, RFS had 285 registrants and had provided over 2,400 rides. Our evaluation of the program indicates that 26% of riders are ages 85 or older, and rides are typically used for medical appointments (28%), retail visits (27%), and social activities (22%). Although GoGoGrandparent is available throughout the United States, RFS is the only program to subsidize the rides. The subsidy is made possible by a portion of the age-friendly implementation grant from the Grotta Fund for Senior Care and sponsorships, including a 2018 commitment of \$5,000 from AARP-NJ.

Spotlight on Transportation

Lifelong Elizabeth

By: Jill Dispenza, Coordinator

Survey and focus group responses during the planning phase made it apparent that older adults in Elizabeth felt there was a lack of viable transportation services available to them. We researched further and found that, although many types of transportation services were available, information explaining the options was not readily available. We partnered with the New Jersey Travel Independence Program (NJTIP), which is part of Rutgers University and offers programs and services to help people with disabilities, older adults, and others to use public transit safely and independently. Building from NJTIP's work in the past, together, we produced *The Lifelong Elizabeth Guide to Public Transportation*. The guide is the first bilingual guide produced by NJTIP to better serve the community in Elizabeth, which is 58% Spanish-speaking.

We received funding from Trinitas Regional Medical Center and The City of Elizabeth for the initial printing of 2,000 guides, which were distributed through our partners network, including municipal departments and other nonprofit organizations. The support continued as the Mayor of Elizabeth invited us on his weekly television show to promote the guide. The initial batch of guides was quickly distributed, and with further funding from the City, we produced 3,000 additional guides that are continually being distributed to a broad range of Elizabeth residents.

but also, in some cases, using the age-friendly grant money to subsidize service fees and to work closely with first-time users. (See *Spotlight* on p. 11.)

2. **Sharing Information about Transportation**

Services: The most common activity related to transportation across initiatives was devising ways to better share information about existing transportation services. One community, for example, worked extensively with a consultant to create a comprehensive transportation guide—in English and Spanish—that included an integrated map with stops for various modes of transportation. (See *Spotlight* on this page.) Others created flyers with brief descriptions of transportation services. Participants also organized community-wide educational events on transportation, such as a transportation summit that featured a line-up of speakers presenting different transportation options. (See *Spotlight* on p. 8). Several of the AFIs also brought in a statewide organization to conduct group travel training with older residents, which included a trainer accompanying participants on a trip using mass transit.



Residents receive copies of “The Lifelong Elizabeth Guide to Public Transportation.”

3. **Advocating for Changes to Existing**

Transportation Services: Several participants described their efforts to advocate for changes to existing transportation services. In most cases, this work addressed municipal transportation services. Two AFIs worked to encourage their municipalities to modify senior shuttle schedules to better accommodate existing riders and to attract more riders. Another community convened meetings among municipal leaders, older residents, and a local taxi service to improve a municipally-sponsored coupon program for older riders. Several participants also described activities to better understand the strengths and limitations of local transportation services as part of longer-term advocacy efforts, such as commissioning studies through consultants or convening stakeholders around transportation asset mapping. As one participant reflected, “I go to the mayor’s office, and I say, ‘There’s a transportation issue.’ Well, what’s the issue? So for me right now, it’s more about getting all the right information, and then year two (of implementation), driving that conversation.”



Ridgewood residents utilize a municipal shuttle.

Housing

Safe, affordable, and supportive housing is key to being able to age well within one’s community.⁷ Seven of the nine initiatives reported work in this domain during the early phase of implementation, as described below across three categories of activities.

1. **Sharing Information about Housing Services:**

Five of the nine initiatives reflected on their efforts to disseminate information to older adults and other stakeholders about programs and services related to housing. One initiative, for example, created a brochure with information about affordable home repair services provided by local nonprofits and the municipality. Other initiatives sponsored events where people could learn about housing-related services, such as workshops about a statewide property tax relief program and a housing summit that featured several presentations on different resources. (See *Spotlight* on p. 8.) One initiative also advocated for changes in how the county releases information about openings within low-income housing, encouraging leaders to create an integrated list of openings across properties rather than requiring people to search each property separately.

2. **Exploring the Creation of Additional Housing Services:**

Five of the nine initiatives expressed interest in promoting the creation of new services to assist older adults who are aging in place in their own homes. In most cases, this focused on introducing a homesharing program to the region (e.g., to be embedded within a local nonprofit or as an independent organization),

which would help match older adults in need of a housemate with individuals seeking affordable housing. One AFI also described its efforts to pilot a neighbor-helping-neighbor program in partnership with the parent-teacher organizations of their local elementary schools.

3. **Advocating to Create New Housing:** Many leaders commented on the critical need for additional housing for older adults in their communities. As one participant stated, “We know there is need for more senior housing: affordable and low-income. We know that it will take a long time because it involves the city, finance, and economic development. But we are working on that. We have the ear of the head of the housing authority and the mayor.”

In several cases, participants reported that their communities were in the early phases of developing new housing. They described their efforts to connect with stakeholders to make them aware of the need for additional housing options for older adults. This was done in one-on-one meetings with local officials and developers, as well as at public meetings.

Several participants described wanting to learn more about housing issues in their communities, with the intention of using this information for longer-term advocacy. For example, one participant explained that the initiative recently entered into a partnership with a consultant, who will study the municipality’s land use and demographics, expressing hopes that findings might encourage the municipality to develop additional senior housing.

Walkability

Walkability refers to whether outdoor spaces are amenable to travel by foot. For many people, walking is a key aspect of mobility, quality of life, independence, and ability to age in place.⁷ Eight of the nine initiatives reported conducting work within this domain, which is described with regards to two categories below.

1. **Advocating for Changes to the Built**

Environment: Many participants described advocacy as a key aspect of their work on walkability. This advocacy involved meeting with key stakeholders—such as elected officials and city engineers—to encourage improvements to their communities’ built environments.

Participants also described their work to partner with other local initiatives to enhance walkability, such as Complete Streets policies (which encourage safe mobility for everybody, including pedestrians and bicyclists), Safe Routes to Schools initiatives, and previously planned improvements to municipal walkways (e.g., curb cut-outs). They aimed to support these efforts and to advocate for improvements especially relevant for older adults, such as prioritizing areas where many older adults shop.

Several of the groups partnered with consulting firms to conduct a walkability study. The consultants helped to facilitate a workshop for stakeholder and residents in each of these communities to (a) learn about design practices, (b) participate in a brief walkability audit, and (c) identify priority areas for walkability improvements. The consultants’ work culminated in a report with community-specific

recommendations. (See *Spotlight* on this page.) Many AFI leaders had just received—or were about to receive—the report and were actively strategizing on ways to leverage it for action. As one participant reflected, “I want to roll (the report) out in such a way that it’s not just going to go (on) the back burner on somebody’s desk.”

2. **Introducing Pedestrian Safety Programs:**

Two of the initiatives described their efforts to introduce pedestrian safety programs. One initiative was in the process of purchasing hundreds of brightly colored pedestrian safety vests, which police would then distribute to residents at pedestrian safety workshops. The other initiative was supporting the project of a local girls scout troop to introduce a pedestrian flag-crossing program. This program aimed to put flags on each side of crosswalks to help pedestrians better signal their crossing.



Participants engage in a walking tour as part of a workshop organized by Age-Friendly Ridgewood.

Spotlight on Walkability Age-Friendly Ridgewood *By: Beth Abbott, Co-Chair*

Age-Friendly Ridgewood organized a Senior Walkability Workshop. Approximately 30 people participated, including elected officials, municipal department staff, and older adults. Participants learned about best practices, discussed problem areas, and went on a walking tour, including the use of a wheelchair (see photograph, this page). The workshop resulted in a 29-page report highlighting strengths, limitations, and recommendations.

It came up in the workshop that Village crossing guards would previously use their summer time to survey sidewalks and forward input to the government. This function was no longer happening because the crossing guards were no longer employed in the summer. Therefore, following the workshop, eight residents organized themselves to conduct an audit of the sidewalks and curbs in the Central Business District, resulting in an additional report.

Both reports have been sent to Village personnel and posted on the Age-Friendly Ridgewood website. The Citizens Safety Committee, a joint citizen/government group that advises the Village Council, has been very enthusiastic in expressing their desire for the concerns to be addressed. Next steps involve the Village serving notice to building owners of problems that are their responsibility to address, as well as for the Village to budget for priority improvements that are under its control.

Spotlight on Civic Participation and Inclusion

SOMA: Two Towns for All Ages

By: Cathy Rowe, Coordinator

Our initiative has expanded a vibrant senior discount program, which includes 82 local businesses and nearly 1,000 cardholders over the age of 65. The discount program was first started by a group called *South Orange Seniors*. Our initiative helped to expand the program in South Orange, while also being responsive to the calls of older adults in Maplewood who wanted the same program in their municipality. Some of the strengths of both Maplewood and South Orange are their very active business improvement districts and dedicated focus on local, independent businesses. So expanding the discount program was a good fit for our community. When businesses were presented with information on the purchasing potential of 6,000 area residents over the age of 65, most businesses (e.g., restaurants, florists, shops) signed up, with an average discount of 10%.

In a recent survey, participating merchants did not report a noticeable increase in business from the senior discount program; however, residents who signed up for the discount card expressed an overwhelming positive response, feeling they are appreciated customers and that the towns have done something for them. The recognition of the economic power of older residents and the appreciation for their business has made this program a public relations success.

Civic Participation and Inclusion

The domain of civic participation and inclusion refers to how localities facilitate and encourage older adults' engagement in the social life of their communities.⁷ Participants described four categories of activities in this domain.

1. **Conducting Outreach to Local Businesses:**

Six of the nine initiatives discussed their efforts to encourage businesses to be more inclusive and welcoming toward older residents. As one participant commented, "I think there are simple things some of the businesses can do to make it work. It can be a place that acknowledges me when I walk in the door, maybe even knows my name, so that I'll come back there the next time."

Much of this relationship building was done through face-to-face meetings with local business leaders, such as AFI leaders speaking at Chamber of Commerce meetings. Several initiatives also described developing a decal program, giving businesses stickers to display on their storefronts to demonstrate their support for the initiative and their efforts to be age-friendly. One initiative also worked to expand an existing senior discount card program by recruiting additional businesses to participate, as well as promoting the program to a broader base of older residents. (See *Spotlight*, this page.)

2. **Supporting Municipally-Based Senior Advisory Committees:**

Three of the initiatives helped to create or significantly strengthen a senior advisory committees as part of their municipal governments. Two additional AFIs were pursuing the creation of such groups in

partnership with elected officials. These groups consisted mostly of older residents and representatives of local government. The committees' purpose was to provide input on how to better meet the needs of older residents, as well as to help connect older adults as volunteers for municipal programs and departments.

3. **Enhancing Access to Outdoor Community**

Events: In addition to providing information about community events, several communities took additional steps to promote older adults' inclusion in outdoor community activities. One AFI promoted an age-friendly checklist with items such as having enough handicap parking, which the municipality distributed to any group seeking an event permit. This initiative also purchased a tent that it would set up with chairs for older residents at outdoor events. Another initiative worked with the municipality to expand shuttle service to its summer concert series, as well as to

pay for memberships to the municipal pool for older residents with limited incomes.

4. **Connecting Older Adults with Volunteer**

Opportunities: Three of the nine initiatives described promoting older adults' volunteerism as a central goal, utilizing a variety of strategies. In one community, a major focus was hosting a large volunteer fair in partnership with the local library. This AFI also sought to promote older residents' volunteerism by partnering with the local school district, helping to create an intergenerational MakerSpace program at the high school. Another initiative similarly aimed to promote volunteering among older adults through the public schools, such as by connecting older residents with parent-teacher organizations in need of additional volunteers in the schools. The third initiative focused on supporting the efforts of local leaders to create a municipal historical society. (See *Spotlight* below.)

Spotlight on Social Inclusion and Civic Participation

Age-Friendly Teaneck

By: Jacqueline Kates (Project Coordinator) and Team

One of the priorities of Age-Friendly Teaneck's Health and Social Engagement Task Force was to explore opportunities for Teaneck's older adults to connect with other older adults and with residents of all ages. The Teaneck Historical Society was established in 2017 to bring together residents of any age who are interested in studying, celebrating, and preserving the unique history of their community. Meeting monthly, and now an incorporated non-profit organization, the society has attracted a cross-section of residents as well as its first corporate member, Farleigh Dickinson University. Its board of trustees includes a used bookstore owner, a celebrated civil rights activist, retired Chief of the Teaneck Fire Department, the Chamber of Commerce president, and the project coordinator of Age-Friendly Teaneck.

Health, Wellness, and Social Services

This domain refers to older adults' access to, and utilization of, health and social services to optimize their well-being and independence.⁷ The three categories below describe the work in this domain.

1. **Facilitating Health and Wellness**

Programming: Four of the nine AFIS reported hosting health and wellness programs, either as one-time events or as part of a series. Examples included falls prevention lectures, exercise programs, and Medicare enrollment workshops. One of the initiatives received grant money as part of an AARP Challenge Grant to create a pop-up wellness center. The purpose of the pop-up center was to simulate how an integrated community center could benefit residents of all ages, and especially older adults. As the initiative leader commented, "It incorporates all of this multidisciplinary approach where we're all working together." (See *Spotlight* on p. 19.)

2. **Connecting Older Residents with Healthy**

Food and Household Goods: Four of the nine AFIs described their efforts to connect older residents in need with healthy food. Much of this work was done in partnership with local food pantries—specifically by connecting food pantries with organizations working with lower-income older adults (e.g., housing providers, faith-based organizations) and adding locations for food distribution sites. As one AFI leader reflected, "I hear the food bank say how they're throwing away food because they have nowhere to take it. And then I'm over here trying to figure out how we're going to expand the farmers market that would cost the community money.

And so we made the connection, and people ran with it." Another initiative supported the efforts of an individual volunteer to set up donation boxes for household items and to distribute the items to residents in local low-income senior housing.

3. **Conducting Targeted Outreach to Older**

Adults Who Are Homebound: Six of the nine initiatives referenced efforts to conduct targeted outreach to older adults who are homebound—that is, residents who are unlikely to attend community events and who are likely in need of additional supports. Much of this work was contingent on the availability of social service professionals with whom to connect such residents. Two communities had a municipal social worker already in place to meet such needs, whereas the other communities were actively strategizing on how to create such a resource, either within their own municipality or regionally. Another AFI was beginning to work with volunteers as part of an existing faith-based *Shut-in Council*, helping them to enhance their capacity to refer older adults in need to additional community services.



A local service provider presents information at a resource fair through Age-Friendly Teaneck.

Spotlight on Health, Wellness, and Social Services

Generations for Garfield

By: Darleen Reveille (Coordinator) and Shannon Doherty-Lyons (Co-Coordinator)

Generations for Garfield applied for a 2017 AARP Community Challenge Grant. Almost 1,200 applications were submitted for this program nationally, resulting in a highly competitive selection process. Garfield was one of two cities funded in New Jersey. With this award, Generations for Garfield hosted four weekly pop-up wellness centers at the local VFW, Post 2867, in October through November of 2017. For four consecutive Wednesdays, the Wellness Center was open from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. Attendees could participate in cooking classes, cultural arts activities, a technology workshop (B.Y.O.D. or *Bring Your Own Device*), chair yoga, or low-impact Zumba. A hot lunch was served midday, followed by aromatherapy and an afternoon fitness class. Additional resources were available from Generations for Garfield partners, including Greater Bergen Community Action, the Garfield Police Department of Community Affairs, Hackensack Meridian Health, Bergen Volunteers, the Garfield YMCA, and New York University School of Medicine. More than 50 older adults participated each week, with pre-registration required and transportation provided for Garfield residents.

Surveys at the end of each event provided positive feedback. The favorite activity was exercise followed by cooking classes, and over 90% of participants were willing to participate in future wellness center events. The photographs below picture residents' involvement in Center activities, including a cooking demonstration (left), farmers market (right), and exercise program (middle).



Leadership Teams, Community Partners, and Gaining Traction

The prior section provided an overview of the initiatives' activities and outputs across six domains. This next section addresses *how* the initiatives engaged in those activities and worked toward their accomplishments. This section begins by providing an overview of how the initiatives organized people and relationships to advance their work during the early phase of implementation, including the structure of the leadership teams and community partners. It then presents the concept of *gaining traction* as a way to conceptualize the initiatives' progress during the early phase of implementation.

Leadership Teams

Each of the initiatives had a designated group of people who were responsible for advancing the initiative as a whole. As one participant stated, the team served as “a guiding force for the initiative.” Some initiatives formalized this group, such as by referring to them as the *executive committee*, whereas others considered the group simply as core staff (in some cases with main partners as well).

All groups had at least one paid staff member as part of their leadership teams, who served as the coordinator or co-coordinator for the initiatives. These individuals were most actively involved with the initiatives on a day-to-day basis. They organized meetings and events, developed internal and external communications, engaged in networking activities within and outside of the community, recruited partners, led grants administration, conducted research on behalf of the initiative, and oversaw planning and visioning.

In many cases, the coordinators worked alongside a senior-level director of their auspice organization, or in some cases, a paid consultant. The role of this person was more strategic—working with other members of the leadership team to discuss ideas, identify directions, allocate resources, and assist with grants administration. Several initiatives even considered key partners from other organizations as leadership team members, who also were described as serving in the role of providing strategic direction.

Finally, many initiatives hired, or were looking to hire, a “boots on the ground” person during the early phase of implementation. This person's role was to implement specific action steps, such as creating and distributing flyers, updating websites, writing newsletters, attending other organizations' meetings on behalf of the initiative, and compiling information.

Six of the nine initiatives experienced changes in their core leadership team, with either a new coordinator or the addition of a co-coordinator. Three initiatives underwent such changes as their initiative transitioned from the planning phase to early implementation, whereas three other initiatives experienced this change in the course early phase of implementation. In some cases, staff members took other positions or moved out of the area. In other cases, the change occurred as the initiatives evolved, with leaders recognizing the need for individuals with different skill sets over time. One participant, for example, explained that earlier in the initiative, they were “focused on a few specific activities, just getting them off the ground.” Now, deeper into implementation, they needed a person

on the leadership team to work more independently and to play a more strategic role on the team: “I think at this point, we’re going in so many directions that it’s more helpful to have someone who can assume the responsibility.”

Community Partners

Participants described the involvement of many individuals and organizations in their AFIs throughout the year, including faith-based leaders, business owners, health and social service providers, county officials, local universities, schools, youth organizations, senior centers, other AFIs in the region, funders, and individual volunteers and residents. Participants also broadly discussed the involvement of local government, including elected officials, political appointees, municipal managers, and municipal department staff.

Many participants identified partners groups—as committees, task forces, coalitions, and advisory groups that formed specifically to advance the goals of the AFIs—as the primary structure for organizing the work of their partners. In most cases, members of the partners groups included professionals as well as individual volunteers, many of whom were older adults. Some partners groups would meet regularly, whereas others would meet on a more *ad hoc* basis. Participants described the purpose of these groups as providing input, generating new ideas, providing insight on issues that affect older residents of the community, sharing information with the community at large, and championing the initiative with other community stakeholders.

Although partners groups began in the planning phase for nearly all of the initiatives, participants

described solidifying these groups as a primary focus of the early phase of implementation. For example, during the first interview, several initiatives discussed their plans to consolidate issue-specific committees (e.g., a housing committee and a communications committee) into a single steering committee. Other AFIs had a large advisory group that they were planning to break into issue-specific committees. Other initiatives had both a large group advisory and issue-specific committees, and were actively strategizing to better structure these groups relative to each other.

By the follow-up interview, five of the nine initiatives had one consolidated partners group (such as a coalition or steering committee) with ad-hoc committees that would meet as needed around particular issues or tasks. In most cases, members of the ad-hoc committees were also part of the larger partners group. Several participants commented on how this structure made the number of meetings more manageable, allowed partners to become involved with various aspects of the work, and also reduced duplication across efforts. Two initiatives maintained issue-specific committees as their predominant partners groups. Another initiative had a more expanded group of partners on its



Clergy members meet with leaders of Westwood for All Ages over breakfast at a local restaurant.

leadership team and also facilitated a separate senior advisory council of older adult residents. Another initiative was working largely through the partners group of a local health-focused coalition.

Participants described their efforts to strengthen their partners groups by ensuring the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, such as key municipal departments and private organizations. As one participant said, “We really are making our very best efforts to spread our tentacles as deeply as possible.” Collectively, participants identified important qualities for partners, as described below.

Valued Qualities of Partners
<p><u><i>Reliable</i></u></p> <p>The partner regularly attends group meetings, communicates with the AFI leaders, and follows through with tasks.</p>
<p><u><i>Connected with Older Residents</i></u></p> <p>The person has regular contact with older adults in their communities and is knowledgeable about the challenges and opportunities that they face.</p>
<p><u><i>Influence</i></u></p> <p>The partner is able to get things done within their own organizations and the community.</p>
<p><u><i>Vocal</i></u></p> <p>The partner is willing to give “voice” and to speak up on behalf of the initiative and its vision.</p>

Participants identified two ways in which partners made in-kind contributions to their initiatives: direct and indirect. Direct contributions involved the partners dedicating their own organizational resources. For the most part, this was staff time, such as by allowing for regular participation in partner group meetings. In some cases, partners also contributed other types of resources, such as physical space and equipment for events. Partners also shared their communications platforms, such as by allowing the leadership teams to write a column in the partnering organizations’ newsletter.

Indirect contributions involved the partners helping to connect the AFI leaders with other organizations’ resources. In most cases, the resources were people, although sometimes, the partners helped to connect the initiative with financial resources. For example, in some cases, the AFI leadership team and community partners worked together to obtain additional grant funding.

In most cases, however, participants described this assistance as partners helping to engage in-kind contributions from a new person or organization toward some aspect of the AFI’s work. For example, in one community, the municipal engineer helped the AFI leaders to connect with a consulting firm to conduct a walkability study at no cost. As another example, one participant reflected on the role of the mayor in getting the attention of elected council members. She recalled attending a council meeting: “Some members of the council said, ‘Some of these things are going to take three years? What can we get going on right now?’ The mayor said, ‘Everything must take its course and go through proper channels. So rather than saying that, why don’t you get involved with a task force?’”

Gaining Traction

This final subsection takes a dynamic perspective on the initiatives' development, focusing on themes from the interviews that suggest how the AFIs were progressing over time. This subsection focuses specifically on the concept of *gaining traction*, which compares the movement of an AFI to a vehicle on the road. Are the tires moving while gripping onto the road and propelling the vehicle forward? Or are the tires moving, but mostly spinning in place? Themes from the interviews suggest several aspects of "gaining traction," as described below.

1. ***Growing regard for the AFI among key stakeholders and the community:*** One aspect of "gaining traction" was the AFI having a positive reputation among local stakeholders and within the community at large. Some participants discussed how people were becoming not only more aware of the AFI and its purpose, but also perceiving its value for the community. One participant, for example, noted a comment from the mayor as a turning point in the AFI's development. "He said, 'You know, I remember going to your first meeting two years ago, and usually things don't sustain. You're really making things happen.'"

Many participants described how the AFIs' early accomplishments enhanced the reputation of the AFI among public and professional stakeholders alike. For example, one leader recalled conversations about the initiative with community members at an outdoor event: "So people would (stop by our tent and) ask about who we were. We were talking, and they'd look like they still



A volunteer through SOMA: Two Towns for All Ages participates in a project with local children.

don't quite get it, and we'd say, 'Well, transportation is an issue, and this is what we implemented.' And then it all kind of clicks. And they go, 'Oh, okay.'"

Participants reflected on how their early accomplishments also helped them to get the attention of key partners by demonstrating the value of their AFI and encouraging them to become more involved. As one participant stated: "I don't want people saying 'I went to all those committee meetings and what's being done?' We want people to see results, and then they become more engaged and they bring in others and it starts to build momentum."

2. ***Securing the participation of the "right" person within a partnering organization.***

Participants described how, in some cases, it was not until the end of the early implementation phase that they had connected with the optimal individual within an organization who was willing and able to partner in meaningful ways. Much of this was a matter of timing, with individuals who were once unavailable to partner becoming

available (e.g., the end of medical leave). Also, staff turnover in other organizations provided opportunities, in several cases, to develop relationships with professionals who were more receptive to the AFIs than their predecessors had been. There were also changes in elected leaders within some communities, with new officials presenting opportunities to widen and deepen relationships with local governments.

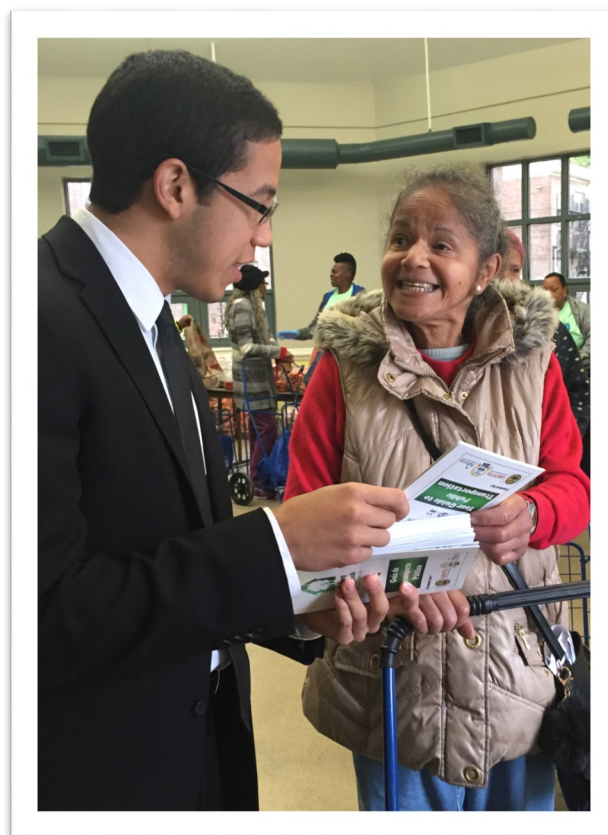
Participants reflected on the time and work it took to develop trusting relationships, especially with organizations not accustomed to collaboration. As one participant reflected, “It (takes) time and lots of coffee and lots of patient conversations. It’s not something that happens quickly.”

3. ***Partners begin to implement changes within their own organizations and networks.***

Participants described ways in which partners were beginning to take more ownership of, and responsibility for, initiating age-friendly community change. One aspect of this was community partners going from being a source of ideas and input to coming up and following through with their own ideas. Several participants, for example, commented during the final interview about the significance of municipal leaders coming to them with ideas and information—looking for feedback and support from the leadership team—the inverse of the more typical pattern of age-friendly leaders bringing ideas to them.

Other participants reported that partners were beginning to reach out to each other to collaborate on age-friendly actions,

independently from the leadership teams. For example, in one community, leaders of a church and food bank connected through the AFI, and through this connection, they were independently beginning to work toward making the church a mobile site for food distribution. Another municipality adopted the policy of including “age-friendly” as part of all future departmental job descriptions. After years of discussion, an additional community adopted a Complete Street policy, and another municipality began making improvements to sidewalks, which AFI leaders attributed, in part, to their advocacy. These examples indicate ways in which the community partners were beginning to make long-term age-friendly community change.



A community member receives a transportation guide from Lifelong Elizabeth through a partnership with a local housing authority.

Conclusion

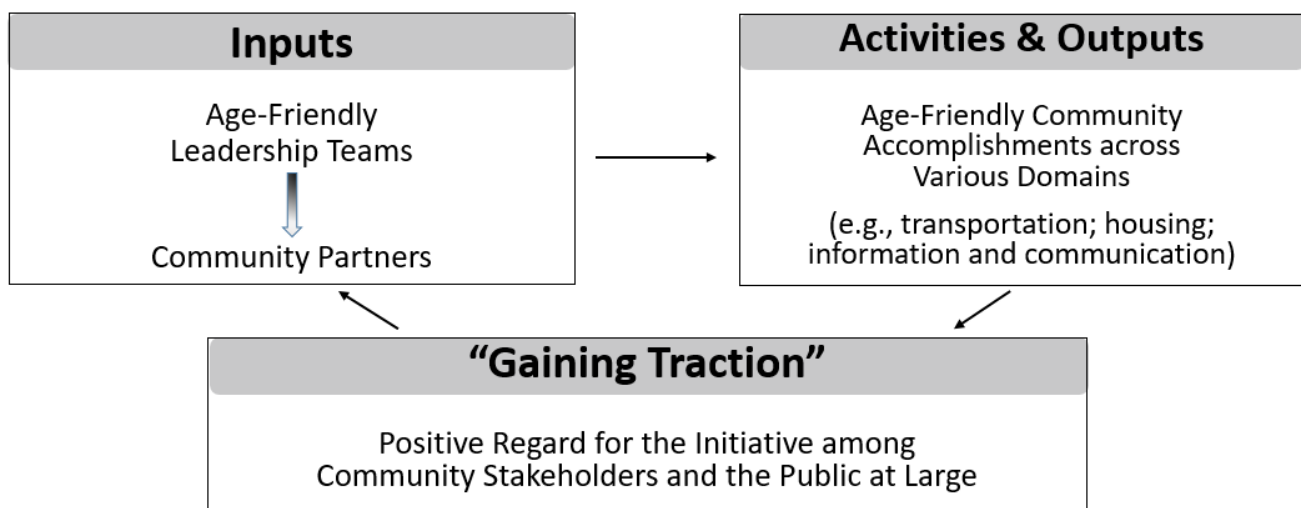
This report provides an overview of the development of AFIs in northern New Jersey during the early phase of implementation. It describes their activities and outputs, as well as how they worked toward their accomplishments. The figure below integrates the findings into a program model.

Beginning with “inputs,” the model indicates that age-friendly leadership teams facilitate the involvement and contributions of community partners. The leadership teams and partners then work to achieve age-friendly accomplishments across a variety of domains. These early accomplishments enhance positive regard for the initiative among community stakeholders and the public at large, which in turn, can deepen the engagement of partners. This deepened engagement of community partners can then further advance age-friendly community change, perhaps with ever-decreasing direct involvement of the leadership teams (as symbolized by the fading arrow in the “inputs” box). The model suggests that

the AFIs work as a feedback loop, whereby the inputs of the leadership teams and community partners produce activities and outputs, which then, in turn, strengthen the resources. In this way, AFIs’ accomplishments during the early phase of implementation are valuable, in part, as they enhance positive regard for the initiative and thereby deepen community partners’ involvement, which is likely essential for realizing longer-term and sustainable age-friendly community change.⁸

This model suggests important questions for future research and evaluation. For example, it implies the importance of (a) examining how the roles of the leadership team and community partners evolve; (b) how AFIs strategically leverage early accomplishments as part of their work toward longer-term goals; and (c) how stakeholders and the overall public perceive the AFIs and their purpose over time. Continuing to study the development of AFIs as they progress over years is essential for strengthening the efforts of age-friendly efforts at the local, regional, national, and global levels.

A Program Model for Age-Friendly Initiatives in the Early Phase of Implementation



Notes

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Acknowledgments

This research was supported by grants from The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation and The Grotta Fund for Senior Care. I thank Mandy Frantz and Rebecca Martin for transcribing interviews. I further thank Rebecca Martin for her assistance with the design and editing of this final report. Thank you also to the age-friendly leaders who continue to dedicate their time to participate in this research and for sharing the photographs included in the report. Finally, I am grateful to Renie Carniol and Julia Stoumbos—program officers of The Grotta Fund and The Taub Foundation, respectively—for their partnership throughout the process of conducting this study.

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Age-friendly leaders of Northern New Jersey convene at a network meeting to share ideas, learn best practices, and support each other's work.

An electronic version of this report is available at <https://bit.ly/2J9eRXJ>.

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