



Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Age-Friendly City?

The Global Age-Friendly Cities project is an international effort started by the World Health Organization (WHO) to respond to two significant demographic trends: population aging and urbanization. As of 2007, over half of the world's population lived in cities and by 2030 that population will rise to about three out of every five people in the world. At the same time, improvements in public health have led to more people living longer lives. The proportion of people aged 60 and over will likely double from 11 percent of the world's population in 2006 to 22 percent by 2050.

An age-friendly city encourages active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, social participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

What is DC doing to become an Age-Friendly City?

In October 2012, Mayor Vincent C. Gray announced that the District of Columbia would commit to become designated by the World Health Organization as an Age-Friendly City by 2017. An Age-Friendly DC Coordinator was hired and Mayor Gray appointed an Age-Friendly DC Task Force made up of local government, business and community leaders charged with producing an *Age-Friendly DC by 2017* Strategic Plan. Since the announcement, the District, in partnership with AARP-DC, has surveyed, interviewed and consulted with thousands of residents to inform the development of the Strategic Plan.

How is Age-Friendliness measured?

WHO has established eight broad domains that help measure the health and quality of life of older people living all around the world. The domains provide a framework by which cities can focus their efforts to remove barriers and make modifications that will enable adults to remain active participants in community life as they age. The District of Columbia has added two additional domains for a total of ten:

1. **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings** – accessibility to and availability of safe recreational facilities.
2. **Transportation** – safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation.
3. **Housing** – wide range of housing options for older residents, aging in place, and other home modification programs.
4. **Social Participation** – access to leisure and cultural activities and opportunities for older residents to participate in social and civic engagement with their peers and younger people.

5. **Respect and Social Inclusion** – programs to support and promote ethnic and cultural diversity, along with programs to encourage multigenerational interaction and dialogue.
6. **Civic Participation and Employment** – promotion of paid work and volunteer activities for older residents and opportunities to engage in formulation of policies relevant to their lives.
7. **Communication and Information** – promotion of and access to the use of technology to keep older residents connected to their community and friends and family, both near and far.
8. **Community Support and Health Services** – access to homecare services, clinics, and programs to promote wellness and active aging.
9. **Emergency Preparedness and Resilience, a DC focus** – information, education and training to ensure the safety, wellness, and readiness of seniors in emergency situations.
10. **Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Fraud, a DC focus** – prevention and prosecution of financial exploitation, neglect, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of seniors.

I am not an older adult so why should I be concerned?

The concept of an Age-Friendly City is one that is universally beneficial to all residents of a city. For example, persons of any age carrying baggage or a baby would find kneeling buses and covered benches at bus stops helpful amenities. Repairing potholes or uneven sidewalks is important to reduce the risk of falls. What's good for older adults can be good for those with different mobility needs – wheelchair, tricycle, walker or stroller. As we re-imagine our community we can make it a more welcoming place for all residents, workers and visitors.

What is the Age-Friendly DC Block-by-Block Walk?

The Block-by-Block Walk is a means for enlisting residents and stakeholders to assess the age-friendliness of DC, neighborhood by neighborhood. Volunteer teams comprised of observers and scribes will be assigned to every Single Member District (SMD) in the City. The teams will record their observations on areas including safety, the presence of retail amenities and the availability of community services. They will look for things like beauty salons and barber shops, cracked sidewalks and broken street lights, places of worship, community-based organizations and grocery stores. The observations, when compiled, can be used to identify and begin a dialogue on areas in need of improvement.

March 20 – April 15, 2014 will be the dates of the first annual Age-Friendly DC Block-by-Block Walk. Hundreds of volunteers will take to the streets of DC to identify neighborhood assets and issues needing attention all through the lens of DC residents 60 and older. When the data from all the Walk areas is combined, it will serve as a baseline to measure how the District becomes more Age-Friendly over time and will inform policy and practice to make daily life better for everyone.

Questions? Want to Volunteer?

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