

Creating a Community for a Lifetime

An Action Plan for an Age-friendly/Livable
Rochester and Monroe County



LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
Rochester and Monroe County



2022 Progress Report



Introduction

Monroe County and the City of Rochester joined the national age-friendly movement in 2021. This is a first-year progress report on our three-year implementation of the Creating a Community for a Lifetime Action Plan. The plan is being overseen by the Monroe County Aging Alliance, a group of nonprofit organizations and funders focused on the needs and wishes of older adults.

Age-Friendly Communities Have Three Characteristics.



1

Age is not a significant barrier to the maintenance of lifelong interests and activities.



2

Supports and accommodations exist to enable individuals with age-related disabilities to meet basic health and social needs.



3

Opportunities exist for older adults to develop new sources of fulfillment and engagement.

Why Becoming a More Age-Friendly/Livable Community is Imperative

Why Strive to Become an Age-Friendly Community?

1

More of Us are Living Longer

The confluence of increasing longevity and the aging of the baby boom generation is creating an unprecedented demographic shift. The leading edge of the boomer generation, once the largest in history, is turning 76 in 2022 at a time when advances in health care are resulting in longer lifespans. The combination of factors is a key trend which will continue to increase the number of people 65 and older in our community well into this century.

2

Economics

Older adults fuel the economy. The 2016 report, *The Longevity Economy* by Oxford Economics found:

- The “longevity economy” is one of the most vital in the U.S., with 106 million people over the age of 50 collectively responsible for \$7.6 trillion in annual economic activity, spending \$4.6 trillion on consumer goods and services, and the health care industry.
- 83% of U.S. household wealth is held by people 50 and older.

3

Assets

Older adults are a community asset with a lifetime of experience and knowledge. As most hospitals and many nonprofits can attest, older adults give back thousands of hours of volunteer service each year in fulfilling roles which also boost their health and wellness. They also are valuable employees in multi-generation workplaces.



178,000
PEOPLE

In Monroe County, almost **one in four residents (24%) is 60 or older.**

In more than half of Monroe County's suburban towns, the percent of **people 60 and older is above 25%**. In these towns, one in four residents is 60 or older. They include Rush, Penfield, Irondequoit, Webster, Gates, Greece, Brighton, Riga, Mendon and Parma.

+38,000



Since 2010, the number of county residents 60 and older increased by 38,000.

+6,100



Since 2010, the number of city residents 60 and older increased by 6,100.

(Source: U.S. Census 2020 5-YR American Community Survey)

New York State Executive Order to Create a Master Plan on Aging

In 2022, Executive Order 23 ordered the establishment of a New York State Master Plan for Aging. The plan calls for coordination of existing and new state policy and programs creating a blueprint of strategies to be implemented to ensure older New Yorkers can live fulfilling lives, in good health, with freedom, dignity and independence to age in place for as long as possible. The Alliance hopes this provides additional support and prioritization for age-friendly community planning and funded initiatives.

“As the first age-friendly state in the nation, we continue to take important steps to empower and support older New Yorkers,” Governor Hochul said. “This Master Plan for Aging will provide us with tools to ensure our aging New Yorkers have access to quality long term care in healthy, livable communities where they can thrive.”

Our Action Plan Progress Highlights

We used the World Health Organization’s Eight Domains of Livability to guide our Action Plan. The availability and quality of these community features impact the well-being of older adults and help make communities more livable for people of all ages. *We added one domain we believe is vital – especially for older adults living within the City of Rochester – economic security.*

Domains of Livability

1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social Participation
5. Respect & Inclusion
6. Volunteerism & Employment
7. Communication & Information
8. Health Services & Community Supports
9. Economic Security
(added by this Action Plan)



Year-One Highlights

RESPECT & INCLUSION

Recommendation #1: Combat Ageism

Two local institutes on aging were created:

The University of Rochester Aging Institute (URAI) is an initiative to integrate existing aging-related expertise and programs. The URAI provides a framework for collaboration related to three pillars of strength across the entire University entitled: Vital Discovery focusing on research, Vital Care focusing on delivering age-friendly care and educating all health care professionals; and Vital Living focusing on community outreach and collaboration. The goal is to transform University of Rochester Medical Center into an Age-Friendly Health System and serve as a catalyst for an Age-Friendly University and Community.

<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/university-of-rochester-aging-institute.aspx>

The Clare and Jerry Rotenberg Aging Institute at Jewish Senior Life strives to be the hub of knowledge and innovation to promote all aspects of positive aging — physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. The Institute serves Jewish Senior Life residents, families, caregivers, and staff as well as older adults and their families in the greater Rochester community and surrounding areas.

<https://jewishseniorlife.org/rotenberg-institute-on-aging>



The Clare & Jerry Rotenberg
Institute on Aging
at Jewish Senior Life



Clare Rotenberg of the Clare and Jerry Rotenberg Aging Institute at Jewish Senior Life

“Everything you know about aging is wrong. It’s not your fault. Everything you have been taught about aging is wrong.”

Dr. Tracey Gendron



Dr. Tracey Gendron at “Ageism Unmasked.”

Lifespan, a regional nonprofit working to make Rochester a great place to age well, hosted “Ageism Unmasked,” a public symposium with author Dr. Tracey Gendron.

An Age-Friendly unit was added to the Lifespan/University of Rochester Gerontology Certificate program.

Lifespan hosted its 25th Celebration of Aging community luncheon, an event designed to break the myths about longer life and highlight five older adults for the ways they take on the challenges and opportunities of longer life.



Honorees at Lifespan’s 25th Celebration of Aging.

Recommendation #2: Engage & Support Older Adults from Underserved and Underrepresented Populations

The Alzheimer’s Association provided free, online training for first responders in how best to interact with people with dementia.

The City of Rochester collaborated with local restaurants and Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, 211/Lifeline to provide free, home-delivered meals to residents 55 and older who had barriers to accessing nutritious and culturally appropriate foods.

The Hearing Loss Association of Rochester (HLAA) hosted “Hearing Loss in Older Adults” workshops for first responders and others. Their website added a “Virtual Assistive Device Demonstration Center,” and an in-person demonstration center is hosted monthly at Lifespan.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIFESPAN

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Recommendation #5: Reimagine Older Adult Centers and Programming



The Monroe County Office for the Aging is funding a new meal site at Prayer House on Cumberland Street for people 60 and older.

Using United Way funding, the YMCA contracted with Lifespan to expand educational and social opportunities at the Thurston Road YMCA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIFESPAN

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION



Recommendation #11: Centralize and Simplify Information for Older Adults

Together Now, an initiative designed to improve the complex system of care and services in Monroe County, is working to connect health, education, and community resources to make services and programming easier to understand and access. The flagship project, MyWayfinder, is a secure online platform giving residents easier access to providers and more control over program and service selection. Using an age-friendly lens, Aging Alliance members and older adult volunteers helped create a more barrier free model.

The Greater Rochester Partnership for the Elderly secured grants to produce the ElderPages, a printed resource guide with a lens on supporting city residents living in poverty.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIFESPAN

Recommendation #13: Increase Access to and Proficient Use of Internet and Technology to Reduce the Digital Divide

The Monroe County Office for the Aging funded computer proficiency classes at local older adult centers and for homebound persons served by the Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP) program with a focus on how to use telehealth.

TRANSPORTATION



Recommendation #21: Implement More Robust Mobility Management Services

Lifespan’s Mobility Management service received federal and state funding to expand access to transportation options. Funding will establish a “one-click” online platform for all available transportation options based upon the user’s preferences and mobility needs. Lifespan’s mobility managers also assist individuals by phone.

Recommendation # 19: Improve Cycling Infrastructure



Monroe County and the City of Rochester are concurrently developing active transportation plans with strategies to make self-propelled human-powered travel such as bicycling, rolling (wheelchair, scooter, stroller), and walking safer and more comfortable for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

Monroe’s Countywide Active Transportation Plan (CATP) is a document to provide the county with an equity-focused, data-driven framework for achieving desired changes to the non-motorized network. The CATP aims to advance active transportation infrastructure and promote active transportation to be an integral, convenient, and safe part of daily life. Since its kick-off in March 2022, the CATP has completed the existing conditions needs assessment, as well as recommendations for policies, facility toolkits, and a preliminary county bike network.

The City of Rochester’s Active Transportation Plan (Roc ATP) is an initiative to make the city safer and more accessible for active transportation, including people walking and using wheelchairs, riding bikes and scooters, rollerblading or skateboarding, and more. At its completion, this plan will be a blueprint for making smart investments that will make walking, biking, and public transit a preferred option for people in Rochester. In December 2022, Roc ATP issued an “Existing Conditions Report” which highlights past work that the Roc ATP will build from, establishes baseline conditions throughout the City, and clarifies a focus for the plan rooted in equity and community voices.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

The following recommendations stemmed from the *Poverty in Later Life* report issued by Lifespan and the Aging Alliance in 2021.



Recommendation #28:
Recognize the Issue of Poverty Among Older Adults Especially Those of Color Living within the City of Rochester

Recommendation: #29:
Increase Participation in Public Benefits Programs & Services

Community partners from organizations and aging sectors gathered to discuss how to better connect older adults to financial services and supports.

The Aging Alliance is exploring funding sources and community collaboration opportunities for a countywide outreach campaign for education and access to financial supports.

TogetherNow's Systems Integration Team is working on the development of a public benefits calculator, BenefitsNow, is an eligibility and benefit estimator tool designed for use by both individuals and professionals to improve access to helpful financial support for low income residents.

Rochester Financial Empowerment Center provided free, one-on-one financial counseling focused on savings, banking, debt and credit at older adult centers.

OUTDOOR SPACES

Recommendation #14: Provide Safe, Comfortable Access to Indoor and Outdoor Public Spaces

A 305-foot ADA-compliant wheelchair pad was built at Charlotte Beach. It allows people with mobility issues to access the beachfront.

Four pickleball courts were built at Black Creek and Mendon Ponds parks.



“Beach goes with mobility challenges, such as a walker or wheelchair — and families with strollers or wagons shouldn’t have to struggle across sand to have access to our beautiful waterfront.”

County Executive Bello

“Pickleball has become increasingly popular in our area and it’s important for us to modernize our parks with the latest amenities for people of all ages to enjoy.”

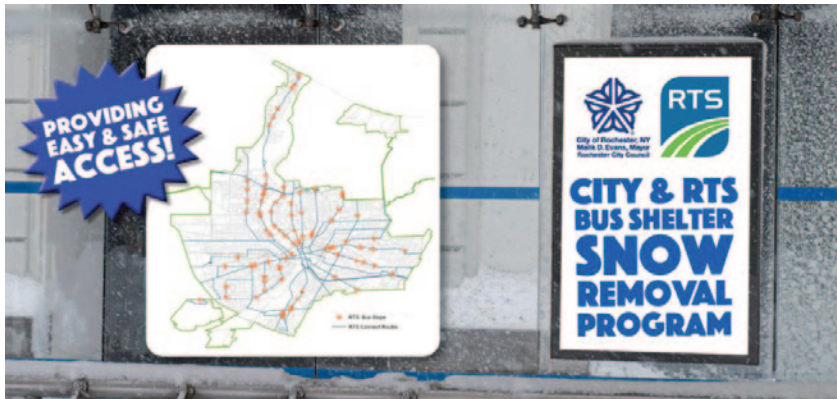
County Executive Bello



Recommendation #17: Improve Pedestrian Safety

In May 2022 ReConnect Rochester collaborated with the Josanna neighborhood to accomplish a “Complete Streets” makeover at the intersection of Orange & Orchard streets — making it a more vibrant, safer place for people of all ages.

Complete Streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.



Recommendation #16: Improve Snow Removal

A snow-removal partnership between the city of Rochester, Regional Transit Service and the Center for Employment Opportunities will clear snow from 85 prioritized bus stop and shelter locations around Rochester. Eighty-five bus stops were picked by RTS based on average daily ridership and the number of potential riders who face other mobility challenges.

HEALTH SERVICES & COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Recommendation #27: Promote Full Participation in the Age-Friendly Health System Initiative by Local Hospitals and Medical Providers

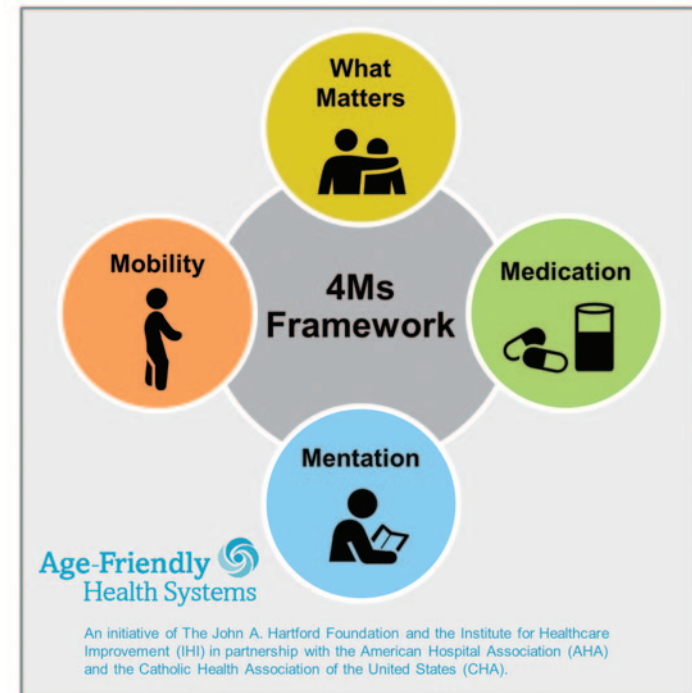


Strong Memorial and Highland hospitals achieved the highest level of age-friendly health system certification, the “Level 2: Committed to Care Excellence” designation by the John A. Hartford Foundation, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States.

“The certification is a key milestone in a “transformative journey to ensure age-friendly care to older adults across all UR Medicine care settings.”

Annette Medina-Walpole, M.D., chief of Geriatrics and Aging, and director of the University of Rochester Aging Institute

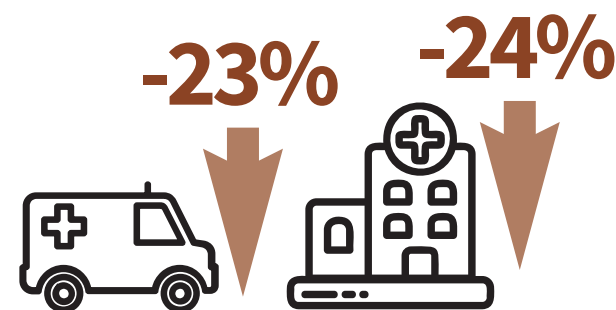
Rochester Regional Health implemented the Geriatric Surgical Program to provide safe, high-quality surgical care for adults 75 and older. Patient-centered care addresses the unique physiological, social, and treatment goals of aging surgical patients while improving surgical outcomes. This first-in-the-nation program offers individualized surgical plans carefully crafted to meet patients’ specific needs and help them maintain their independence.



For related work, this graphic may be used in its entirety without requesting permission. Graphic files and guidance at ihs.org/AgeFriendly

Recommendation #25: Expand Health Services and Health Literacy for Older Adults

Lifespan received American Rescue Plan funding to expand Community Care Connections, a service combining social work services with LPN healthcare navigation to help older adults avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and ED visits. The program works in tandem with physician practices to improve care for vulnerable, medically complex and underserved older adults who experience health disparities, poverty, and barriers to health care access.



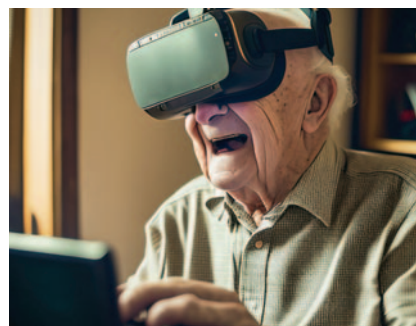
The Community Care Connections service is evaluated by the New York Academy of Medicine. It is proven to decrease unnecessary ED visits and hospitalizations by 23% and 24% respectively.

“Lifespan’s social worker has been able to think outside of the box and help my patients significantly. He has uncovered details about my patients’ health with his home visits that have been very helpful to me in treating them. He can identify and solve social stressors that are contributing to our patients’ health.”

Dr. Kellin King,
Partners in Internal Medicine

Recommendation #26: Support Formal and Informal Caregivers and Caregiver Networks

A partnership between Lifespan, St. John Fisher University, and Southwest Area Neighborhood Association (SWAN) at the Montgomery Center will reimagine and increase respite opportunities for family caregivers of older adults in the Rochester region under a grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation.



Another partnership between St. John’s Living and Lifespan is creating a drop-in respite program and will include on-site care management for caregivers of people living with dementia.

Through a collaboration with the University of Buffalo, SUNY Brockport and with funding from Community Care Corps, Lifespan volunteers providing respite for caregivers of persons with early-stage dementia will be able to add virtual reality experiences for care receivers.

HOUSING

Recommendation #22: Increase Affordable, Safe, Accessible Housing



Sage II Housing Workgroup, an initiative of Common Ground Health, is focusing on housing needs in our region, specifically affordable housing options.

Rochester Energy Efficiency and Weatherization (RENEW), an initiative of Rochester Area Community Foundation, Climate Fund, was created to support the collective impact work of community partners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the homes of low-income homeowners more energy-efficient, healthier, and safer from environmental. RNEW as additional grant funding to fill in gaps where other home repair, improvement and weatherization does not meet the need.

Monroe County awarded \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to the Veterans Outreach Center to complete renovation and expansion work on the Richards House, a housing complex for homeless male veterans.

A new housing project by Home Leasing is reimagining the historic Hickey Freeman building on North Clinton Avenue into 134 affordable apartments for low-income older adults and those in need of supportive housing. The apartments will be available to households with a range of incomes, providing affordable, quality housing in one of Rochester's lowest-income neighborhoods.

The City of Rochester released a draft Zoning Code document which propose changes to the code that would allow for more flexibility for different housing types, including accessory dwelling units and rental properties.



Hickey Freeman building

VOLUNTEERISM & EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation # 10: Raise wages for Chronically Low-Paying Jobs Particularly in Long-term Care



Providers of aging and long-term care services committed to increasing pay in accordance with the Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative's (RMAPI) Level Up program. Participating providers include Episcopal SeniorLife, Jewish Family Services, Friendly Senior Living, HCR Home Care, Rochester Regional Home Care and UR Medicine Home Care.



The Monroe County Aging Alliance will continue monitoring our age-friendly/livable communities progress in qualitative and quantitative changes and improvements. Our goal is to ensure full participation in the fabric of our community by an increasing population of older people who very much want to remain relevant.

To learn more about or to get involved with our community's age-friendly work, visit <https://monroeagingalliance.org>.





Monroe County Aging Alliance is a joint initiative of Rochester Area Community Foundation and United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes.

This program funded in part by Monroe County Office for the Aging, NYS Office for the Aging and the US Administration on Aging.