Age-Friendly Summit County Strategic Plan

March 2022

Summit County
Age Friendly Community

Acknowledgments

The Strategic Plan for Age-Friendly Summit County was a team effort. Development of the following strategies and actions would not have been possible without the following contributors.

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A MESSAGE FROM COUNTY EXECUTIVE, ILENE SHAPIRO

In 2020, Summit County joined communities across the nation in joining the AARP Age-Friendly Network. We took this important step in recognition of the changes occurring in Summit County and the entire country. By 2030, we expect older adults will account for more than 30% of Summit County's total population. This growing segment of our population will require a robust social service system to support their needs as they continue to age. Further, as older adults seek to stay active in their communities, the public and private sectors must increase collaboration at the community-level to make sure all residents are able to live fulfilling lives, at any age. Making these preparations and instilling change now will benefit all residents, from our youngest to our oldest.

Recognizing that my office cannot undertake this work on our own, we recruited trusted community members to serve on the Summit County Age-Friendly Advisory Council. Members of this council have guided the project through the assessment and planning process. They reached out to other community leaders and organizers to create a coalition in support of AARP's livability goals. Susan Sigmon, former SVP of Long-term Services and Supports at Direction Home Akron Canton and Helen Humphrys, former Copley Township Trustee lead this council as co-chairs. I am so thankful for their leadership, and grateful for the time and energy contributed by all the Advisory Council members and others who joined us through the assessment and planning stages. Special thanks to Planning NEXT for expertly leading us all through the planning process. Together, we have laid the foundation for Age-Friendly Summit County.

I am confident that we will achieve our goal of making Summit County livable for all people, and in doing so, earn the Age-Friendly designation from AARP. I am excited to enter this phase of our journey. We are ready to take action and implement the change needed to achieve the Age-Friendly designation. We cannot do this alone. The community, including local government, the public and private sector, and residents, will have opportunities to help us along the way. If you believe every person in Summit County should be able to age as they wish, in the place of their choosing and with ample avenues to remain engaged in their community, I invite you to join us as we make this vision a reality.

Sincerely,

Ilene Shapiro, Executive
County of Summit

A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Dear Friends of Aging,

It is with great happiness that we present to you our recommendations for Age-Friendly Summit County. Over the past year the Community Advisory Council has worked to evaluate the needs assessment completed in 2019, gather input from the community and subject matter experts, and use professional planners to put together this document. We as the chairs of Age-Friendly Summit County could not be prouder of this work.

We would like to thank the Community Advisory Council for their time and talents. Without their leadership and feedback, we would not have been able to move this project forward. We need to also thank all the community partners that made this work possible. And of course, we thank Executive Ilene Shapiro for her vision and empowerment that is making Summit County a better place for all ages to live.

We hope you find value in our recommendations, hope for the future in the vision we see through this plan, and a clear way forward for older adults in Summit County. By ensuring our community is livable for all ages we build a future that we want to see. We now look forward to the whole of Summit County to help us make these recommendations a reality. With you, we will achieve this future together.

With great thanks,

Helen Humphrys and Susan Sigmon, Co-Chairs
Age-Friendly Summit County

Contents

Executive Summary

The strategic planning work for Age-Friendly Summit County launched in Spring 2021. The following Strategic Plan is the result of the community's thoughtful input and participation, along with guidance and research from regional experts. This initial phase of planning resulted in six overarching themes and 44 actions that will guide the County's Age-Friendly efforts for the next 5 years, and beyond.

Why Age-Friendly?

According to AARP, the population of the United States is rapidly aging. By 2030 one of every five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older and by 2035 the number of adults older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18.

Summit County is no exception. By 2030, older adults are expected to account for more than 30 percent of Summit County's total population. While Summit County currently maintains a strong social service system, more can be done to strengthen this system to ensure it can handle increased utilization.

In 2019, County Executive Shapiro announced Summit County's intention to join communities across the nation in becoming an AARP Age-Friendly Community. AARP is a national organization that has developed a well-respected framework to guide communities through the Age-Friendly Network's process. This five-year process includes assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation phases, which are expected to recur so long as the community remains within the Network.

How did we plan?

The strategic planning process consisted of three main steps: review of the assessment , research, and public engagement. A countywide Age-Friendly Needs Assessment, prepared by The Center for Community Solutions, offered the planning team initial insight into the relative 'age-friendliness' of Summit County. Surveys and listening sessions conducted with older adults helped support the actions that appear in the final plan document. This initial planning effort resulted in a list of 44 specific recommendations organized around six major themes. Each recommendation supports a specific policy, program or project to meet the needs of Age-Friendly Summit County. A Vision Statement and eight goals helped guide the Plan's framework from start to end.

Who was involved?

Over 50 individuals were directly engaged in the planning process for the Age-Friendly Summit County initiative:

A Coordination Team met weekly to spearhead the effort and guide the planning process. A monthly Core Advisory Committee provided feedback on all the plan elements and helped draft plan content. Feedback from the public about the Age-Friendly Summit County Strategic Plan was also critically important for this planning process. This public feedback helped determine the final elements that appear in this plan.

How will this plan be implemented?

The Age-Friendly Summit County Strategic Plan presents a list of actions for realizing the community's vision for its age-friendly future. The success of the Strategic Plan will be determined by the committed, ongoing implementation of its actions. The County's area-wide agency on aging- Direction Home Akron Canton- will serve as the primary organization for spearheading the implementation of this Age-Friendly effort with an implementation manager appointed by the agency to manage the day-to-day coordination of the plan's execution.

The Plan's Action Agenda will only be achieved through collaborative efforts across the entire Summit County community. Partners from across Summit County, including local government, will be instrumental in carrying out these actions.

Where can I learn more?

To learn more about the Summit County Age-Friendly initiative and to learn how you can get involved, please visit: agefriendlysummit.com.

1. Background

This project assesses the Age-Friendliness of Summit County and sets forth an Action Agenda that will guide the County's Age-Friendly efforts for the next five years. It is also intended to be a resource to strengthen the quality of life for people of all ages across Summit County and the northeast Ohio region.

What is Age-Friendly Summit County?

Summit County officially applied and was accepted into the Age-Friendly Network in January 2020, shortly after the City of Akron joined the Network in 2019. This Plan and its efforts, known as Age-Friendly Summit County, fulfills the County's voluntary membership in the AARP Age-Friendly Network.

Skyline, Shane Wynn

Who Was Involved

Summit County has a well-known reputation for coordination and collaboration. This Plan's organizational and planning team structure reflects this strength to bring various agencies and partners together to plan for the future.

Over 50 individuals were also directly engaged in the planning process for the Age-Friendly Summit County initiative. These individuals represented all aspects of the Summit County community and were asked to provide input and guidance on the direction of this Plan to accurately reflect the needs of the community.

A Coordination Team met weekly with the Strategic Plan consultants to help drive the public planning process and to serve as a general guide. A Core Advisory Committee was also selected on behalf of Summit County and included representatives from area-wide businesses, local governments and community service organizations. The Core Advisory Committee met monthly with the Coordination Team and assisted the process by providing local expertise and feedback on the development of the Strategic Plan content.

"The superpower of Summit County is collaboration."

— Core Advisory Committee Member

Project Timeline

The Age-Friendly Summit County process consists of four stages of strategic and inclusive planning. The process is intended establish a continual five-year cycle.

Phase 1: Assess

This introductory phase used research, field work and outreach to evaluate the current conditions for Age-Friendliness in Summit County. The summary and results of Phase 1 were published in May 2021 as a Needs Assessment.
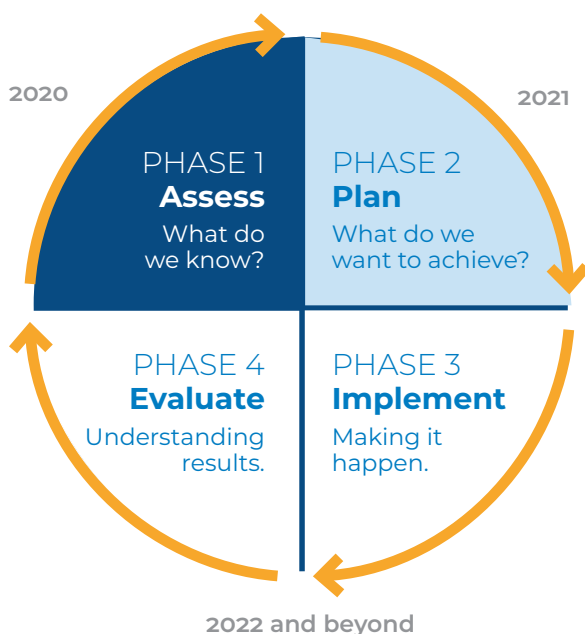
Phase 2: Plan

The strategic planning process was carried out between May and December of 2021. The process resulted in 6 themes organizing 44 actions to be implemented, over the next three years.

Phase 3: Implement

The Age-Friendly Summit County Strategic Plan will be implemented from 2022 through 2024 in collaboration with the partners listed in the Executive Summary.

Phase 4: Evaluate

Interim reports will be made at the end of Years One and Two of the implementation phase to document progress toward established indicators. The indicators for the following year will be set after evaluation of the previous year's efforts. At the end of the three-year implementation phase (2024), Plan accomplishments will be evaluated and reported in a Final Report, and a new strategic planning process will commence.

2020

2021

PHASE 1
Assess
What do
we know?

PHASE 2
Plan
What do we
want to achieve?

PHASE 4
Evaluate
Understanding
results.

PHASE 3
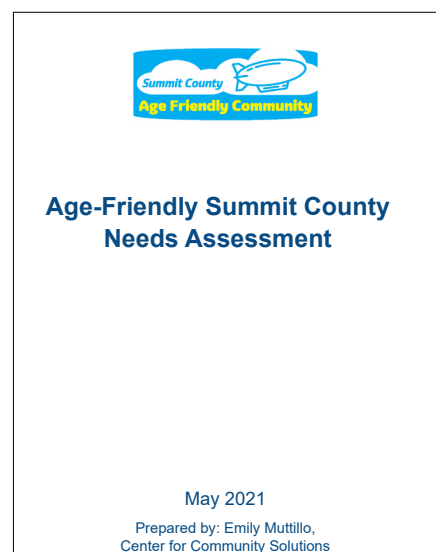**Implement**
Making it
happen.

2022 and beyond

Needs Assessment Key Findings

A quality strategic plan starts with two components: technical analysis and public input. The recommendations in this plan are based upon what was learned during Phase 1 of the Age-Friendly process and from public engagement. The Needs Assessment provided clarity on the conditions, available services, shortcomings and aspirations related to age-friendliness in Summit County.

In 2018, the Center for Community Solutions conducted a survey of older adults in the County during the initial Needs Assessment phase. The Center for Community Solutions is a nonpartisan think tank focused on solutions to health, social and economic issues. In addition to the Needs Assessment survey, five virtual listening sessions were offered in March 2021, to obtain additional input on each of AARP's Eight Domains of Livability.

The Needs Assessment revealed that:

◆ **Older adults surveyed overwhelmingly want to remain in their homes** as they age, while some want additional housing options and availability.

◆ **The top three ways older adults receive information** about available services include word of mouth, telephone and via the Internet.

◆ **Over half of respondents** did not have access to assistance for housing-related services.

Age-Friendly Summit County Needs Assessment

May 2021

Prepared by: Emily Muttillo,
Center for Community Solutions

The full Needs Assessment can be accessed at AgeFriendlySummit.com

Domain Introduction

The World Health Organization and AARP Livable Communities have established Eight Domains of Livability, or topical focus areas, to organize the work of making a community more age-friendly. The eight Domains, as defined by AARP[1], are as follows:

1. **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings:** People need both indoor and outdoor public places to gather.. Green spaces, seating and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, staircases with railings) should be used and enjoyed by people of all ages.

2. **Transportation:** Driving shouldn't be the only way to get around. Pedestrians need sidewalks and safe, crossable streets. Dedicated bicycle lanes benefit nondrivers and drivers alike. Public transit options can range from the large-scale (trains, buses, light rail) to smaller options (taxis, shuttles or ride share services).

3. **Communication and Information:** We now communicate in ways few could have imagined a decade ago. Age-Friendly communities recognize that information must come from a variety of methods since not everyone is tech-savvy, has a cell phone or has home-based internet access.

4. **Work and Civic Engagement:** Why does work need to be an all or nothing experience? An age-friendly community encourages older people to be actively engaged in community life and has opportunities for residents to work for pay or volunteer their skills.

[1] AARP Livable Communities. (n.d.). The 8 Domains of Livability: An Introduction.
https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html

5. **Respect and Social Inclusion:** Everyone wants to feel valued. Intergenerational gatherings and activities are a great way for young and older people to learn from one another and honor what each has to offer while feeling good about themselves.

6. **Community and Health Services:** At some point, every person of every age gets hurt, becomes ill or simply needs some help. While it's important that assistance and care be available nearby, it's essential that residents can access and afford the services required.

7. **Social Participation:** Regardless of a person's age, loneliness is often as debilitating a health condition as having a chronic illness or disease. Sadness and isolation can be combated by having opportunities to socialize and making available fun social activities that are accessible and affordable.

8. **Housing:** AARP surveys consistently find that the vast majority of older adults want to reside in their current home or community for as long as possible. Doing so is possible if a home is designed or modified for aging in place or if neighborhoods have housing options that are suitable for differing incomes, ages and life stages.

Age-Friendly Summit County began its plan development following the eight Domain structure. Developing the Plan's recommendations using this Domain structure was important because it ensured that all aspects of an age-friendly community were being considered and planned for at the outset. A guiding goal statement was established for each Domain, with input from the Advisory Committee and the general public during the engagement period.

During the planning process, it became clear that many of the findings and possible strategies relate to multiple Domains. As a result, the Strategic Plan is organized by overarching themes that emerged as part of the process and icons are used to cross reference related Domains.

Strategic Plan Development

The strategic planning process consisted of several phases of research and engagement, with an emphasis on making sure that older adults and those that provide them services were engaged and able to contribute throughout the entire process. Additionally, it was important to hear from the broader Summit County public to ensure that the Plan reflects the entire community's needs. These efforts resulted in a comprehensive list of strategies. Details of this process are outlined in this section.

Outreach and Communication Highlights

◆ Over 15,300 individuals were reached with Age-Friendly Summit County Facebook advertisements during the engagement period.

◆ The majority of those reached during the Facebook advertisements were 65 and older, with over two times the representation from women than men.

◆ Advertisement of the engagement opportunities were shared with the Summit County AARP monthly email-newsletter subscribers.

◆ Emails to the Mayor's Association and the Township Association in Summit County were distributed to their appropriate audiences.

◆ Press coverage was recorded in both the Akron Beacon Journal and Spectrum News 1.

How do YOU want to Live • Age • Thrive in Summit County? TELL US!

Summit County is joining communities across the nation in becoming an Age Friendly Community. We need your input to ensure that Summit County is a place where people of all ages, income levels, and abilities can thrive!

Choose from two ways to share your vision.

Option 1 — Join us for a virtual meeting. October 28th, 12-1 pm. Sign-up to receive the Zoom meeting link at: AgeFriendlySummit.com

Option 2 — Complete a survey. Scan the code:

Also, listen for opportunities to share in small discussion groups in your area! Learn more at AgeFriendlySummit.com.

Age-Friendly Summit County publicized engagement opportunities broadly, including interactive posters that linked to the online survey, as shown above.

Core Advisory Committee Meeting 1

Members of the Core Advisory Committee were invited to the first meeting of the strategic planning phase, held virtually via Zoom on June 17, 2021. At the meeting, Committee members learned more about the AARP Age-Friendly framework and reviewed the existing Needs Assessment. Additionally, participants were asked to respond to the following open-ended prompts to jump-start the Age-Friendly planning process: (1) What is the greatest challenge you see that this Plan should address? (2) What is the greatest opportunity that this Plan can create? Committee members were encouraged to invite additional community members in their Domain-related expertise areas.

Core Advisory Committee 2

Members of the Core Advisory Committee met in-person on July 29, 2021, to review the Age-Friendly draft Vision Statement and began drafting Domain goal statements and Domain priority actions for the final plan document. The draft Vision Statement was generated based on conversations at the first Core Advisory Committee meeting and subsequent calls with the Coordination Team.

Members from the Core Advisory Committee discuss potential actions items at a meeting.

Core Advisory Committee Meeting 3

Members of the Core Advisory Committee met virtually via Zoom on September 8, 2021, to review the Age-Friendly draft actions and to prepare for the period of public engagement. All Domain actions were reviewed and finalized for engagement materials.

Core Advisory Committee Meeting 4

To close out the draft plan sessions, the Core Advisory Committee met in-person on November 10, 2021, to review all comments submitted during the engagement period and recommend edits to existing actions tested with the public. The group also considered any additional action items for incorporating into the final plan document. An updated draft of the working plan document was shared with the Core Advisory Committee.

Members from the Core Advisory Committee discuss potential actions items at a meeting.

Public Engagement

An opportunity for engaging with the Age-Friendly Summit County material remained open to the public from Monday, September 27 through Monday, November 1, 2021. Participants had three opportunities to provide input for this planning process. These opportunities are described below:

On The Table

The Planning Team assisted in the distribution of small group activities modeled after the regional On The Table initiative. The organization On The Table Greater Akron served as a guiding model for the agenda and set-up of these small group meetings.

Interested groups were directed to sign-up on the project website to download an editable PDF copy of the kit materials or pick up a hard-copy kit. The kits were designed to be completed by 6-8 people either virtually or in-person.

All kits (both electronic and hard-copy versions) included a one-page review of the Age-Friendly Summit County process and a recording form for the group leader to fill out with feedback on the input questions. Participants had the opportunity to comment on the draft Vision Statement, the draft Domain goal statements and the draft priority actions identified by the Core Advisory Committee on Wednesday, September 8. Participants also had the opportunity to generate additional action items.
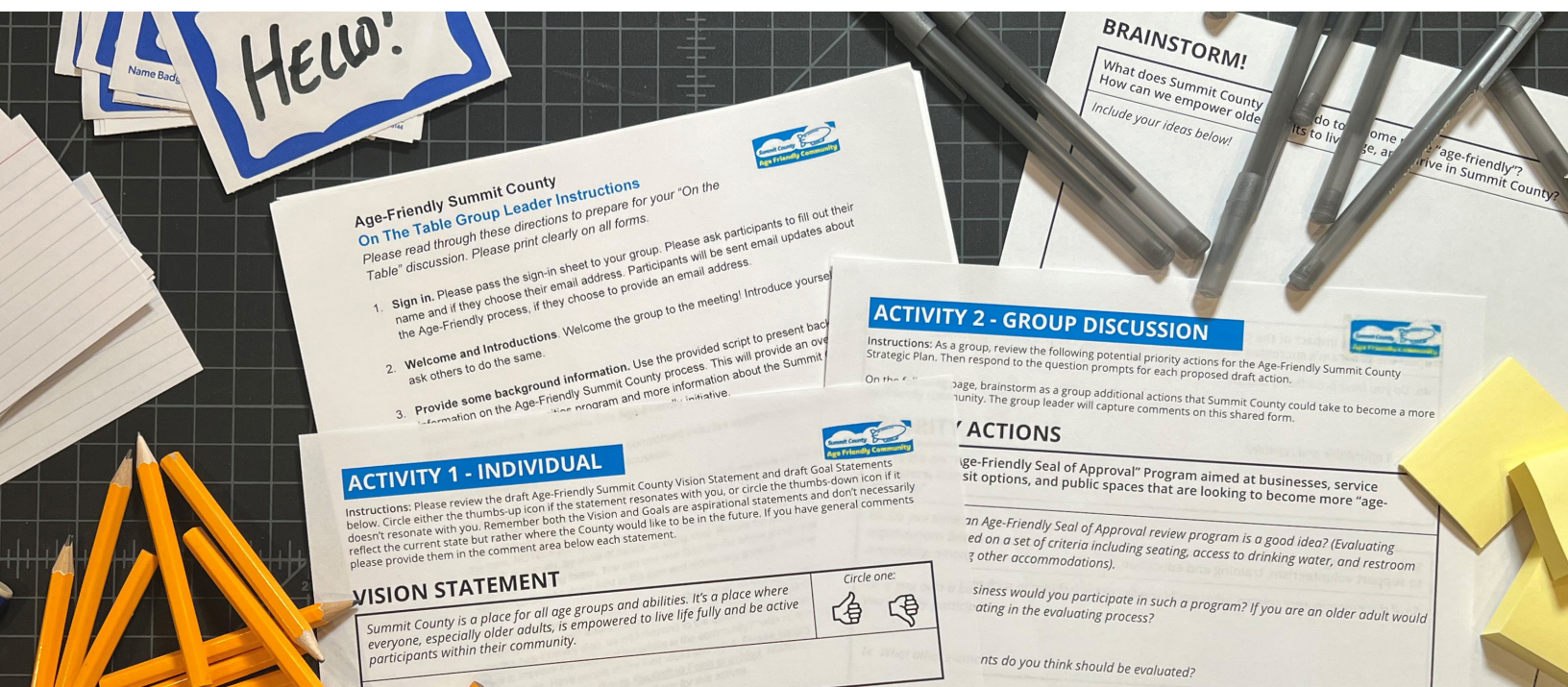
Virtual Meetings

Two virtual workshops were held using the virtual meeting software Zoom during the engagement period. Interested participants were required to RSVP and received a meeting link upon registration. The virtual meetings were open to anyone in the County who wanted to participate in the Age-Friendly planning process.

During virtual meetings, an overview of the planning process was shared and information related to Age-Friendly planning and summarized findings in the Summit County Age-Friendly Needs Assessment. Live polling was then used to facilitate engagement during the virtual meetings. Using the live-polling software, participants could provide anonymous comments on the draft Vision Statement, draft Domain goal statements and draft priority action items across multiple Domains.

Self-Paced Online Survey

A self-paced, online survey was made available on the Age-Friendly Summit County website (www. AgeFriendlySummit.com) throughout the duration of the engagement period. The survey allowed participants to provide feedback on the draft Vision Statement, draft Domain goal statements and draft priority action items across multiple Domains. The survey also allowed participants to submit additional ideas or suggestions for actions that were not captured in the survey contents.

2. Strategic Plan Elements

Strategic Plan Hierarchy and Organization

VISION

The highest level—and therefore most general—expression of a community's future. It reflects the community's values and sets the tone for more specific recommendations.

GOALS

An outcome expressed in simple terms. Goals reflect, at a high level, what the community cares about.

THEMES

Themes organize the strategies and provide a way to connect the strategies back to the vision and goals.

STRATEGIES

Specific recommendations (programs, policies and projects)

Vision

The Vision Statement captures the broadest aspirations of the Age-Friendly Summit County planning effort and serves as a guide for the remainder of the Action Agenda. The Vision was generated with input from the Advisory Committee, tested with the public, and refined by the Coordination Team.

Summit County is a place **for all age groups and abilities**. It's a place where **everyone is empowered**, especially older adults, to live life fully and be active participants **within their community**.

Goals

Eight goals that describe the future of an Age-Friendly Summit County were developed as part of this planning process. The Vision and goals were initially drafted to correspond with each of the eight Domains of Livability. These statements were later refined by the Core Advisory Committee and then tested with the public before being revised into these final versions:

Summit County is...

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

A place where everyone can access and navigate varied outdoor and indoor spaces with clear signage, multi-abled access, and ample safety features.

Transportation

A connected county, providing affordable and accessible transportation options for a variety of occasions that are dependable, responsive, and safe for everyone, and residents are informed about these options. A robust mobility network is the key to unlocking access to all services and opportunities.

Communication and Information

A place which communicates information effectively and thoroughly in a centralized and inclusive manner through a variety of meaningful and culturally relevant channels.

Work and Civic Engagement

A place where residents are actively engaged in civic life, where the older adult voice is heard and where there are plentiful opportunities for people of all ages to work, volunteer, and to develop new skills through training and mentorship.

Respect and Social Inclusion

A community where everyone feels respected and included – a place where everyone feels like they belong. Intergenerational opportunities connect the County together and emphasizes achieving equitable outcomes for all residents.

Community and Health Services

A place with access to quality physical, mental, and other community services that are affordable, accessible, and effectively coordinated – a place where everyone can live a healthy life.

Social Participation

Welcoming, offering a wide variety of social events and activities for people of all ages and abilities. People feel welcomed and inspired to create, participate and celebrate in their community.

Housing

A place where everyone has the choice to remain living in their home or has access to appropriate housing options within their community that are supported by an environment that is safe, accessible, affordable and healthy.

Overarching Themes

The following six themes serve to organize the actions that appear in this Plan. The themes recognize the inherent synergies and overlaps across each of the eight Domains of Livability to achieve the Age-Friendly Vision for Summit County. They are as follows:

A. Educate & Empower

B. Communicate Broadly

C. Remove Barriers

D. Increase Connections

E. Enhance Livability

F. Improve Community Services

Action Agenda

Throughout the planning process the Planning Team developed 44 actions, each written as a program, policy, or project. All of the actions were derived from the Needs Assessment and public engagement.

* *Actions that have collaboration with the City of Akron are indicated with an asterisk.*

A. Educate and Empower

Getting older isn't a positive thing in most people's minds, but there is no way to avoid it. Americans, on the whole, do not look at aging positively but have the opportunity to embrace it as an opportunity. Imagine a community where older adults are linked with young people, where the pair teaches each other how to use social media to link with grandkids and how to make chicken noodle soup from a family recipe. Or a community that offers programs that provide a "can do" spirit that propels people of all ages into opportunities regardless of apprehension or access. This is how we educate and empower.

Educate and Empower

Actions	Domain

* **1.** **Develop a "positive aging campaign"** featuring older adults in the County that shines a positive light on aging and involves all residents.

2. **Create an "intergenerational connections program"** to encourage people of all ages to meet, share experiences, and mentor one another.

3. **Establish an agency that will drive aging and disability strategies for the County** by formalizing the Senior Independent Living Coalition (SILC) initiative and changing it to the Summit County Senior and Independent Living Coalition (SCSILC).

4. **Make education opportunities available for older adults.** Work with local agencies and education facilities to develop and communicate opportunities for older adults to obtain new learning and skills-based opportunities for growth.

5. **Increase awareness and promotion of aging resources** including United Way 211, Job and Family Services, and Direction Home as three primary entry points to obtain services for older adults.

6. **Create a program for older adults through DOVIA** (directors of volunteers in agencies) to support volunteerism, training and education.

7. **Create an early action end-of-life planning program** so that aging adults can receive the care that aligns with their preferences and specific health situation. This includes being proactive on establishing a will and/or trust, as well as appointing Power of Attorney.

8. **Partner with institutions of higher learning in the County**, such as the University of Akron, to promote and expand existing health services.

* *Actions that have collaboration and coordination opportunity with the City of Akron Age Friendly process are indicated with an asterisk.*

B. Communicate Broadly

Today, there is more access to information than ever before. Gone are the days when you had to navigate a card catalog and research for hours to find out where the hamburger originated (Summit County's own Menches claims that!). With all this information online, it is easy to forget that people need different methods to access what is available. Improving communication means getting people the right information, at the right time and in the right method so they can make the most of their community. This is how we communicate broadly.

Communicate Broadly

Actions	Domain

* **9.** **Launch a communication campaign** that focuses on educating older adults about the use of and benefits to utilizing all transportation options in the County.

10. **Evaluate the impact of the County's digital inclusion efforts** during COVID-19 and build upon the program's communication successes while coordinating among the program's partners.

11. **Partner with libraries, senior centers, health care facilities, municipalities and County officials to create a coordinated communications policy.** These policies should be made widely available to the public to increase awareness and access to information.

12. **Create a communications group** that will collaborate, promote, and share information on actions related to this Age-Friendly Summit County initiative.

13. **Evaluate the success of printed directories vs. online databases and promote one or both.** Use the best methods that will serve the Summit County community.

* **14.** **Develop specific strategies for communicating and reaching out to different populations throughout the County.** Use and evaluate created strategies to provide the greatest level of effectiveness.

* *Actions that have collaboration and coordination opportunity with the City of Akron Age Friendly process are indicated with an asterisk.*

C. Remove Barriers

For most, aging brings changes in our abilities, options and access to our routines and lifestyle What if we could identify and remove some of the barriers that aging brings? What if you visited the Akron Zoo with a guidebook that made it easy to see everything without worrying about physical limitations? We can create a community where people easily use public transportation, where outdoor spaces and buildings are designed with everyone in mind and people can do more despite age's sometimes limiting effects. There are many ways that we can help remove barriers.

Remove Barriers

Actions	Domain

15. **Coordinate transportation services among providers** to better meet the transportation needs of everyone in the County.

* **16.** **Create an "Age-Friendly Seal of Approval" Program** aimed at businesses, service providers, transit options and public spaces to improve the County's "age-friendliness."

* **17.** **Create a mentorship program with local school districts** that connects older adults and students and facilitates intergenerational relationships.

18. **Partner with local transportation agencies** to provide accessible, reliable and timely transportation to social activities and events offered throughout the County.

19. **Increase awareness of older-adult services among caregivers and providers** so everyone can readily access and respond to this information.

* **20.** **Develop Universal Design standards for all public buildings** in the County and encourage and promote to private businesses and buildings to make places more age-friendly and accessible.

21. **Create a Public Transportation User Guide** to help the public more effectively use services.

* *Actions that have collaboration and coordination opportunity with the City of Akron Age Friendly process are indicated with an asterisk.*

D. Increase Connections

Our community is at its best when everyone is participating. We are all part of a system that keeps us safe, happy, healthy, and engaged. We can create a County where older adults easily access all there is to do. This happens by increasing participation for older adults with meaningful and targeted programs. Imagine going to the Metro Parks Fall Hiking Spree and receiving park maps with designated "age-friendly" paths. We will create options for people to do more activities safely and together. We can lessen isolation and build stronger ties when we increase connections.

Increase Connections

Actions	Domain

* **22.** **Expand the VANTAGE Aging digital inclusion initiative** (8-week training program) to other interested organizations.

23. **Support neighborhood-level community events** through small grant funding opportunities and coordinated promotion of information on County communication channels.

24. **Consider opening an 'active adult center,'** to encourage and facilitate interactions among older adults.

25. **Encourage Summit Metro Parks and municipal park systems to facilitate additional senior programming**, including tours of parks open to young people.

26. **Create a countywide older-adult social and events resource** that can be made available to the public.

27. **Establish a countywide Age-Friendly advisory board** that works to identify needs into the future and continue to work on improving livability across the County.

* **28.** **Create a program that establishes a pipeline/connection** with the Greater Akron Chamber and workers and employers focused on older adults looking for work.

* *Actions that have collaboration and coordination opportunity with the City of Akron Age Friendly process are indicated with an asterisk.*

E. Enhance Livability

Many Summit County older adults want to remain in the community, living in the same homes they have grown used to as they age. Some wish to move to a downsized living space within their existing neighborhood. Regardless of which scenario an older adult chooses, living independently will require some sort of assistance whether from formal and informal/family caregivers to paid assistance with meal delivery or transportation. Enhancing livability means people have access to home repair, housing options, in-home services to maximize independence and more. An age-friendly community provides resources that takes an older adult with a leaky roof and no way to get nutritious meals and provides solutions so that they are fed, dry, and successful. Our community strives for ways to enhance livability.

Enhance Livability

Actions	Domain

* **29. Develop a countywide home improvement and maintenance program** that offers services regardless of homeownership status.

30. Incentivize Universal Design for construction/new development of all homes in the County so that older adults may have an accessible, functional home option as they age.

* **31. Create an in-home delivery service educational resource** so that older adults understand and feel confident using a wide range of delivery services.

32. Develop a sidewalk repair program that covers installation, repair, and replacement of sidewalks at low or no cost to residents.

33. Partner with County and municipal officials to explore the addition of a Community Reinvestment Area for senior housing development in multiple locations throughout the County.

34. Compile a "preferred resource" list that includes contractors, handypersons, and other contacts that can assist with older adult needs.

35. Address Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) zoning restrictions so that ADUs can become a viable alternative for older-adult housing throughout the County.

36. Continue to support and fund the Summit County Affordable Housing Trust Fund with an older adult focus.

37. Lobby state and federal branches of government to bolster investments in transportation-related improvements and additions, including the addition of electric vehicle charging stations.

* *Actions that have collaboration and coordination opportunity with the City of Akron Age Friendly process are indicated with an asterisk.*

F. Improve Community Services

We know how important our health and wellness is to living a full, active life. Adults in later life (60+) use more health care than any other group. An Age-Friendly County will ensure older adults have access to doctors and receive greater assistance in navigating options for Medicare. Needs of the older adult will be met, new diagnoses will enhance access to care, and integrated solutions will allow for greater success inside the healthcare system and when patients return home. Improving health and wellness means an older adult can get to the doctor when they need to, understand their care instructions and can live in the community in a way that sets them towards success. This is all possible when we improve community services.

Improve Community Services

Actions

Domain

38. **Continue healthcare partnerships and programming throughout the County** that are designed with all age groups in mind.

* **39.** **Coordinate with local transportation agencies and healthcare providers** to publicize and expand options for health-specific mobility services.

40. **Conduct outreach with faith-based organizations** to share information on health services.

41. **Create an Age-Friendly Advocacy Strategy** to assist those eligible and in-need of services.

* **42.** **Enhance the County's geriatric/gerontological services** to more comprehensively guide the older adult and their caregivers as they age.

43. **Guide Summit County towards becoming a "dementia capable" community,** an important aspect of supporting positive aging.

44. **Emphasize the importance of and opportunities for achieving preventative care services** in all community health-related resource materials.

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3. Glossary

- **Accessory Dwelling Units:** An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a smaller, independent residential dwelling unit located on the same lot as a stand-alone (i.e., detached) single-family home. ADUs go by many different names throughout the U.S., including accessory apartments, secondary suites, and granny flats. ADUs can be converted portions of existing homes (i.e., internal ADUs), additions to new or existing homes (i.e., attached ADUs), or new stand-alone accessory structures or converted portions of existing stand-alone accessory structures (i.e., detached ADUs).

- **Dementia capable community:** Dementia capable communities are able to help people with dementia and their caregivers. These communities accommodate the needs of populations experiencing memory loss and a variety of physical, cognitive and behavioral symptoms associated with dementia. Dementia capable communities are knowledgeable about resources and services available to both people with dementia and their caregivers.

- **Digital inclusion:** Digital inclusion addresses issues related to digital literacy and access to technology. Communities practicing digital inclusion ensure that everyone, regardless of income and age, has the access and ability to use communications technology.

- **Gerontology:** Gerontology is the study of aging and older adults. The science of gerontology has evolved as longevity has improved. Researchers in this field are diverse and are trained in areas such as physiology, social science, psychology, public health, and policy.

◆ **Preventative care:** Preventative care or preventative healthcare includes measures taken to prevent disease. This includes regular physician's visits, screenings and tests, and routine vaccinations.

◆ **Public transportation:** Public transportation is a system of travel operated by a public agency, typically on a set schedule and fixed route or available on demand. Public transportation options in Akron include the city bus and on demand shuttles operated by METRO.

◆ **Universal Design:** Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. The human-centered approach to design that Universal Design supports is user-friendly and convenient, but is also respectful of user dignity, rights and privacy. Universal Design should incorporate a two-level approach:

> ◆ **User-Aware Design:** pushing the boundaries of 'mainstream' products, services and environments to include as many people as possible.

> ◆ **Customizable Design:** design to minimize the difficulties of adaptation to particular users