The KC Communities for All Ages initiative and the First Suburbs Coalition have worked over the last three years to develop information, standards and practices to help communities become Communities for All Ages. Communities for All Ages are those that recognize the changing demographics of a growing older adult population and are committed to making their communities welcoming and functional for all age groups — young people, young adults, families and older adults alike.

Throughout this period, the Communities for All Ages program has identified a number of best practices that can act as models for discussion and implementation, and help turn information and plans into action. A community interested in becoming a Community for All ages can follow the steps outlined below. These steps were developed as part of the Communities for All Ages recognition program, which recognizes communities that are putting Communities for All Ages principles into action. These steps are:

- **Build community awareness** of changing demographics, how these changes will impact their community, and how their community can put in place facilities, programs and policies that will assure that all age groups are well served and become active participants in their community.
- **Assess the community’s programs and infrastructure** to identify how they can better serve all age groups. This step is facilitated by the Communities for All Ages Toolkit and Checklist (available at www.kccfaa.org).
- **Develop a Communities for All Ages plan** to address the needs identified in the assessment. This can be a stand-alone plan or incorporated in individual existing plans such as a comprehensive plan, a parks plan or an infrastructure plan.
- **Implement the plan.** Put in place the funds, policies and practices to implement the elements of the Communities for All Ages plan.

The following best practices are examples of how some communities are working to become Communities for All Ages.
Public Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Public spaces and buildings are an important element in creating an age friendly community. Not only should they meet the needs and capabilities of different age groups, but can also facilitate the interaction of different age groups in ways that build community. Following are some best practices:

**Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center: Houston, Texas**

Community centers can be more than just buildings with an adjacent park; the whole facility, inside and outside, can be a community place. This was the vision that emerged from a grassroots planning process that engaged a largely Latino neighborhood for the new Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center. The Project for Public Spaces held community design workshops that identified the potential uses for public spaces in the complex, as well as providing input on the physical design and programming for the center. In one workshop, groups were given maps for the site upon which they could organize the different indoor and outdoor uses. Based on that input, the outdoor public spaces were divided into three main zones: the park zone (with a playground and walking path), plaza zone for special events and programs, and a zone that includes a market for local entrepreneurs. To learn more about this project, visit [www.pps.org/projects/baker-ripley-neighborhood-center-2/](http://www.pps.org/projects/baker-ripley-neighborhood-center-2/).

**Intergenerational Park: Central Point, Oregon**

The city of Central Point Parks and Recreation Department, and Twin Creeks Development, LLC, are creating an Intergenerational Park, the first in Oregon, to serve a demographically diverse community offering a range of recreational facilities for young and old alike. This is a private/public partnership between the city and developer to serve an intergenerational community. For more information visit their website at: [http://agefriendlyinnovators.org/intergenerational-park/](http://agefriendlyinnovators.org/intergenerational-park/).
Age-friendly Parks Checklist: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Age-friendly Parks working group, composed of Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, The Fairmount Park Conservancy, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the Klein Jewish Community Center has created a simple, yet effective, checklist for creating better parks in their city. The city of Philadelphia found that 71.8 percent of the population that is over 60 said that they have never used any public recreation facilities in their areas. This is in part due to the actual distance of the citizens live from the parks, as well as the fact that not all parks are accessible for older adults. The Age-friendly Parks Checklist works to create standards for parks so that their use is accessible to all residents, not just a select few. Age-friendly Parks promotes a healthier lifestyle for its city’s residents and the inclusion of all generations. The Age-friendly Parks Checklist can be viewed at: www.pcaares.org/files/age-friendly_checklist_June_2011.pdf.

Intergenerational Parks: Cavan, Ireland

Ireland has been making strong efforts in the age-friendly movement at the local level. In Cavan, Ireland, the County Council has designed and developed a park that works to satisfy the needs of all generations. The park’s design came from feedback from various age groups in the region and includes a children’s playground, accessible paths, as well as workout equipment that varies in ability levels. It has been the site for various programs that promote healthy lifestyles for all generations, and has acted as a great recreation space for the entire community. A packet with some of the programs Ireland is implementing to make their country more age friendly is available online at: www.ifa-fiv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/12-AF-Counties-Ireland.pdf.

Housing and Commercial Development

Affordable, accessible housing and accessible commercial services are key components for an age-friendly community. This means locating housing and commercial developments in close proximity, and encouraging the development of housing that accommodates all ages and health conditions. Following are some best practices:
Aging Improvement Districts: New York

Even in one of the largest cities in the world, efforts towards age-friendly communities are visible. In certain districts, New York businesses have been making a lot of progress toward making their establishments more age friendly, and these efforts have cost businesses little to implement. One component in the aging improvement districts has been senior-focused hours, where businesses set aside a small portion of their normal business hours to focus on the needs of their older consumers. For example, a bank set aside an hour to ensure that older customers understand the benefits of online banking. Other businesses in the Aging Improvement Districts have installed benches outside their establishments. Learn more about age-friendly programs in New York at www.nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/initiatives/current/aging-improvement-districts.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/

Age Friendly Business Checklist: Manitoba, Canada

Manitoba encourages all of their businesses to become age friendly, and have created a checklist to track their progress. The checklist used categories such as sidewalks/entrances, parking, getting to one's business, technology and customer service to break down the work into manageable components. Each of the components contains standards such as ramps, availability of transportation, and spoken/written communication. This program encourages all businesses to focus their efforts on serving all members of the community and not excluding anyone. A copy of the Age Friendly Business Checklist and other materials from Manitoba can be found at www.agefriendlymanitoba.ca/resources.cfm?cat_id=23

Universal Design Local Government Policy: AARP

AARP has provided a useful summary of how local and state governments are encouraging the use of universal design or visitability standards in the construction of housing. A visitable home has a main level that is easy to enter and exit. Three key features of a visitable home are at least one zero-step entrance, wide interior doors and at least a half bathroom on the main level. It is a less comprehensive, but more affordable, approach to universal design. The AARP resource summarizes local requirements for universal design or incentive programs to encourage the use of such standards. This resource can be found online at: www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/act/housing/expanding-implementation-of-universal-design-and-visitability-features-in-the-housing-stock-aarp.pdf.
Transportation and Mobility

Mobility, the ability to conveniently access jobs, services and recreation is a key element in any community. Providing a set of choices is key to providing good community mobility. Following are some best practices:

*Taxi Coupon Program: Olathe, Kansas*

The city of Olathe operates a subsidized taxi program that provides medical, work, business and personal trips to registered users. To be eligible for the service, an individual must be a resident of Olathe and fall into one or more of the following categories: persons with disabilities, older adults and/or persons of low-income. The subsidized portion of the trip are good for any place within Olathe or adjacent medical parks. If a rider would like to go beyond the city limits, they can do so at their own expense. The service is operated by 10/10 Taxi 24 hours a day. The service provided 42,264 trips in 2014. For more information visit their website at [www.olatheks.org/HT/TransportationPrograms/TaxiCouponProgram](http://www.olatheks.org/HT/TransportationPrograms/TaxiCouponProgram).

*CityRide Program: Shawnee, Kansas*

The city of Shawnee operates a subsidized taxi program that provides rides to Shawnee residents who have a disability or are an older adult. The taxi coupon can be used for any trip purpose within Shawnee, adjacent medical parks and adjacent agency services (including Johnson County transit centers). If a rider would like to go beyond the city limits to any other destination they can do so at their own expense. The service is operated by 10/10 Taxi 24 hours a day. The service provided 5,000 trips in 2014. For more information visit their website at [www.cityofshawnee.org/WEB/ShawneeCMS.nsf/vwContent/CityRide?OpenDocument](http://www.cityofshawnee.org/WEB/ShawneeCMS.nsf/vwContent/CityRide?OpenDocument).

*Liberty Access Bus: Liberty, Missouri*

The Liberty Access Bus offers free transportation within the city of Liberty for older adults and/or persons with disabilities. Essential trips, such as doctor appointments, grocery store or pharmacy trips, are free but require the rider to make a reservation at least 48 hours in advance. For non-essential trips, riders can purchase a 10-ride coupon book for $10. Non-essential trips are provided as space is available. The
Omni Bus: Excelsior Springs, Missouri

The Omni Bus is a deviated fixed-route service operated by the city of Excelsior Springs. Within two miles of the bus route, the Omni Bus will pick up and drop off a rider at their door. For service outside two miles of the bus route, the rider must call in advance to schedule a pick-up. The service is for any trip service and costs $2 per ride. The Omni Bus operates Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.–12 p.m. and 1 p.m.–4 p.m., and Tuesday and Wednesday nights from 5:30 p.m.–7:00 p.m. In 2014, the service provided 10,000 trips. For more information visit their website at www.cityofesmo.com/transportation.html.

Go Triangle: Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina

Go Triangle is a partnership of seven public transportation agencies to create a common brand for an online regional trip planner. All regional systems agreed to translate their stops and schedule data into a suitable form for the trip planner, allowing riders to effectively plan cross-jurisdictional travel. Through the use of Google Transit Feed, AVL technology and real-time arrival information tools, Go Triangle was able to build a website, mobile app and text messaging information system that allows users to see precisely when their rides will arrive. Go Triangle also features an electronic fare payment system for users to efficiently access and pay for their trips. For more information visit their website at www.gotriangle.org/.

Ped-Flag Program: Kirkland Washington

The Seattle suburb of Kirkland has placed yellow flags at more than 75 crosswalks around the city. Pedestrians carry the flag from one side of the street to the other in order to be more visible to drivers. The effort is assisted by the "Adopt a PedFlag Crossing" program in which volunteers maintain and replace flags at their designated crosswalk. For more information visit

www.kirklandwa.gov/depart/Public_Works/Transportation_and_Traffic/Pedestrian_Flags_-_FAQs.htm.
Transportation Information Hubs: Edmonton, Canada

Senior's Transportation Information Hubs, an initiative of Age Friendly Edmonton, are a one-stop shop for brochures on transportation for seniors who drive, those who want to — or already — use Edmonton Transit, and for those who are looking for alternative driving options.

Brochures include: Mature Driver Education Programs with AMA, Winter Driving Tips from the federal government, information in the Driving Angel program, Edmonton Transit System schedules, Edmonton Transit System customer training programs and senior-friendly services, assisted transportation services such as Care for a Ride, and more.

The Hubs are intended to bridge information gaps for seniors about transportation choices, to ensure that seniors have current information that is relevant and useful, and to improve connections between seniors, service providers and transportation programs.


Safe Routes to School: Kansas City metro area

Safe Routes to School is a program being implemented by many communities nationwide, and has proved to be a great asset in the Kansas City area. Safe Routes to School promotes families walking and biking to school safely. These routes are set up by the community to ensure pedestrian safety and accessibility. This program benefits not only young students, but the entire community, since having safe routes for walking is good for all members of the community. Programs like Safe Routes to School have led to other walking programs, such as National Walk to School Day and Walking School Buses. To find out more about this program and others that can improve the walkability in your community, visit: www.marc.org/Transportation/Modes/Active-Transportation/Safe-Routes-to-Schools
Social Inclusion, Communication and Participation

An important aspect of creating a Communities for All Ages program is encouraging social inclusion, communication and participation in a community. This is not just the function of the city, but must include partnerships between the city, local nonprofits and other social services organizations. Following are some best practices:

**Men’s Sheds: Australia**

Men’s Sheds are found throughout Australia. They are a takeoff on the idea of a backyard shed where a man could undertake projects, fix the lawnmower or build a play house. In Australia, they have morphed into a community-based facility, usually run by a nonprofit, that provides an opportunity for men to build relationships, work on productive projects for themselves or the community, and even interact with others teaching skills — all in a spirit of “mateship.”

Men’s Sheds are so common in Australia, there is a national association and state associations. The national association is the Australian Men’s Shed Association and they define a men’s shed as “any community-based, non-profit, non-commercial organization that is accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe and friendly environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men. A major objective is to advance the well-being and health of their male members.”

For more information visit [www.mensshed.org/home/.aspx](http://www.mensshed.org/home/.aspx).

**Yard Art Day: Charlotte, North Carolina**

Charlotte, and now many other communities, host a once-a-year event when residents are encouraged to display their artistic talents to the public. Now an annual Labor Day event, Yard Art Day encourages Charlotte residents of all ages to create and participate in a community-wide art installation by displaying art on front lawns, balconies and even on the tops of cars. The only display rule: The art must be visible from the street. Described by organizers as "a grassroots arts exhibition, curated by the community for the community." For more information visit [www.yardartday.org](http://www.yardartday.org).
**Age Friendly Libraries: Edmonton, Canada**

Edmonton is home to the first public library in Canada to be designated a Senior Friendly organization. Seniors continue to be key users of the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) and the library has worked hard to become better at serving this growing segment of Edmonton’s population. Last year, EPL celebrated the Year of the Older Person by implementing programs, services and collections that reflect the needs and interests of people aged of 55 or older.

To receive the Senior Friendly designation, EPL conducted facility audits at all locations and developed action plans to address concerns identified by senior patrons. The library also made a commitment to have 65 percent of their staff receive Senior Friendly training through the Alberta Council on Aging. EPL exceeded that target, with about 75 percent of its public-facing staff receiving the training.

For more information visit [www.epl.ca/releases/2008-may-30](http://www.epl.ca/releases/2008-may-30).

**Diversity Programs: Olathe, Kansas**

The Olathe Human Relations Commission (OHRC), founded in the 1960s, exists today as a community resource for human rights awareness, education and advocacy. The OHRC is a volunteer board of community members appointed by the Olathe city council that organizes and sponsors community events to promote awareness and advocate for positive human relations. The group also celebrates businesses, civic organizations and individuals who have made a significant contribution to enhance human rights, equality, cultural diversity and the pursuit of disability inclusiveness. OHRC provides recommendations to the Olathe City Council and the city manager to address prejudice and discrimination, and collaborates with community groups to create comprehensive educational programs to address interracial, interreligious and intercultural understanding. Learn more at [olatheks.org/humanrelations/ohrc](http://olatheks.org/humanrelations/ohrc).

Olathe’s Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board (PDAB) was established in 1985 as a permanent committee of the Olathe Human Relations Commission. The 15-member volunteer board is appointed by the Olathe city council. The group advocates and advises community and business leaders to improve the access of citizens with physical and mental disabilities to all government and community facilities and activities. Key partnerships include Disability Mentoring Day, The Ability Experience: Journey of Home cross-country bicycle trek fundraiser, and the KC Ability Expo. Learn more at [olatheks.org/humanrelations/pdab](http://olatheks.org/humanrelations/pdab).
Since 2013, the city of Grandview has held a Citizens Academy twice a year. Each city department gets the opportunity to share what it does with these citizens, so they have a greater understanding of how each department fits into the overall mission of the operation of the city. With the city embarking on the Communities for All Ages initiative as a Phase III city, the city took the opportunity to engage citizens on a few important issues to get their feedback and listen to what they had to share.

The first discussion and “priority ranking” exercise centered on potential methods to revitalize existing neighborhoods. They framed the discussion around two areas — cost/return on investment (ROI) and levels of investment/partnership. They also handed out a list of potential neighborhood revitalization ideas and asked participants to prioritize them. Through this process, the city received some interesting thoughts from their citizens, including the use of social media to connect with neighbors and communicate regularly about neighborhood issues, the addition of more benches and trash cans in neighborhoods, the need to invest in sidewalks in older neighborhoods, and to start community volunteer groups.

The second discussion and “colored dot voting” exercise centered on potential new housing types that citizens would purchase if available, or felt that the city should pursue. Pictures were provided of the potential housing types, and citizens “voted” using colored dots and then described why they chose certain housing types.
Civic Participation and Employment

Older adults who remain active and engaged are community assets. Being employed or volunteering keeps older adults active and vital. Cities that employ older adults or that have volunteer programs for older adults enrich their resources by tapping into this asset, while also keeping older adults engaged in their community. Volunteer programs are also a great opportunity for intergenerational activities. Following are some best practices:

Volunteer Program: Shawnee, Kansas

There are many ways to enhance the quality of life in your community. Through the city of Shawnee’s Volunteer Program, a diverse group of citizens of all ages engage with others in the community. Opportunities to assist various city departments are available throughout the year, and provide awareness of local government, while sharpening a skill or developing a new one.

One of the unique aspects of the Volunteer Program is that they are a liaison between residents requesting assistance and those willing to lend a helping hand. As the seasons change, so do the requests that are received, from snow removal in the winter to lawn mowing in the summer, there are willing volunteers to help fulfill these requests.

The city has also formed a partnership with a group of local ministers. The group’s intention is to organize the neighborhoods to help themselves — neighbor helping neighbor, younger people taking care of older people and vice versa. In the meantime, the group has been instrumental in mobilizing volunteers to help address some of the residents’ needs.

For more information visit www.cityofshawnee.org/WEB/ShawneeCMS.nsf/vwContent/VolunteerOpportunities?OpenDocument.

Klein Jewish Community Center’s “Grow for a Friend” Program: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Klein Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Philadelphia has created a program to promote volunteering, as well as healthy lifestyles. Some older adults in the city do not have access to nutritious food or are unable to shop for themselves. Grow for a Friend brings in volunteers to tend to the JCC’s community garden, which provides nutritious fruits and vegetables to those in need. It also acts as an opportunity for older adults to assist in the gardening and harvesting processes. Find out more about the JCC’s Grow for a Friend program at: http://kleinlife.org/
Community and Health Services

A healthy population benefits not only individuals, but the community as a whole. Health-related activities can also stimulate social inclusion and build healthy relationships. Encouraging health in a region requires partnerships across the community. Following are some best practices:

**Good Life Games: Pinella County, Florida**

The Good Life Games of Pinellas County encourage adults 50 and over to participate in their own “Senior Olympics” to promote athleticism and healthy lifestyles. Specifically designed to meet the physical capabilities of older adults, the Olympic-style games include archery, track and field, swimming, cycling and more. Players in the Good Life Games are also eligible for statewide and national competitions. The games are also provide a good opportunity to recruit volunteers. For more information visit [www.goodlifegames.org](http://www.goodlifegames.org).

**Minnesota Resource Guide for Caregivers: Minneapolis, Minnesota**

The Minnesota Board on Aging has created a comprehensive guide on how to be a better caregiver. The guide provides information not only on the general duties of caregiving and how to perform them better, but also on what it means to be a caregiver. The Guide discusses how the role is more than just a job, and strives to create better caregivers for our older adult population. A copy of Minnesota’s Guide for Caregivers is available at [www.minnesotahelp.info/public/documents/CaregiverResourcesGuide.pdf](http://www.minnesotahelp.info/public/documents/CaregiverResourcesGuide.pdf).

**Caregiver U: Greater Austin Area, Texas**

Caregiver U is the result of 25 nonprofit organizations in central Texas coming together to work toward a common goal: to better educate and inform caregivers with the best resources available when taking care of a loved one. Caregiver U offers informational programs available at no cost. The programs focus on the emotional aspect of caregiving, keeping loved ones safe and active, and provide in-depth training to equip caregivers with the best skills to provide the best care possible. For more information, visit [https://caregiverucentx.wordpress.com/](https://caregiverucentx.wordpress.com/).
RevUp: Lee’s Summit, Missouri

RevUp is a comprehensive wellness program designed to help citizens of Lee’s Summit and the surrounding communities achieve personal health goals. The program provides participants with the means to positively change behaviors related to physical, psychological, emotional, economic and spiritual wellness. Participants are provided with detailed fitness assessments, individualized personal training, weekly check-ins, well-coaching and effective nutrition guidance to assist health and wellness. The goal of RevUp is to provide an effective, low cost wellness program that is accessible to every citizen in the community, and provide the skills and knowledge necessary to sustain the healthy behavior changes for life.

For more information on Communities for All Ages and how your community can participate, visit the Communities for All Ages website at www.communitiesforallages.org.