Livability Domains and Community Responses to COVID-19

AARP Real Possibilities

AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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The **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** informs and inspires local leaders to implement the types of policies and improvements that make communities more livable for people of *all* ages — especially older adults. Many of the towns, cities, counties and states enrolled in the network use the **8 Domains of Livability** framework to organize and prioritize their work. In response to the global coronavirus pandemic, communities in the network are applying their existing plans, programs and partnerships to all of the domains (along with commitments to emergency preparedness) in order to protect and assist older residents and other high-risk individuals. The following examples, shared with us by the communities themselves, show how the use of best practices, creativity and the power of volunteers can spark innovative ideas and achievable solutions that effectively meet community needs.

Respect and Social Inclusion

- Create online programming for schools and senior care facilities on topics of shared interest to students and older adults
- Ask children to make and deliver greeting cards to Meals on Wheels recipients and people in senior care facilities

Transportation

- Modify transit schedules, stations and seating to enable social distancing
- Provide specialized services for essential workers
- Suspend transit fares
- Increase paratransit services
- Enlist volunteers to deliver needed items to people who can't leave their homes or use their usual modes of transportation

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Close streets to motor vehicle traffic so people can safely walk and bicycle while social distancing
- Automate crossing signals so pedestrians won't need to touch the crosswalk buttons

Housing

- Provide 24/7 services and shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Work with local leaders and legislators to enact and enforce a moratorium on evictions
- Capitalize on relationships with funding sources to provide financial assistance to older adults and others struggling with housing costs
- Create a housing grant program for people with low-incomes and/or a job loss due to COVID-19

Social Participation

- Start a daily, community-wide "appreciation clap" for health care workers and first responders
- Create a drive-in theater by projecting a movie onto a wall near a parking lot
- Host a "dragging Main" event so residents can get out and see other people by driving slowly along their community's main roadway
- Ask local entertainers to perform online or outside of their homes

Communication and Information

- Work with businesses and internet service providers to expand access to affordable high-speed internet
- Create a "friendly voice" call program for checking on people who live alone
- Establish information hotlines and distribute "necessity bags" that contain needed supplies

Health Services and Community Supports

- Work with municipal offices, houses of worship and first responders to coordinate deliveries and visits to people who can't go out
- Provide vouchers for groceries and household goods to residents in need
- Expand where SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program) benefits can be used
- Conduct wellness checks and implement quarantine measures in senior care facilities
- Prioritize assistance to people with underlying medical conditions
- Stock book-swap boxes (such as Little Free Libraries) with needed items
- Improve access to fresh foods from farm stands, farmers' markets or community supported agriculture (CSA) harvests by enabling pre-orders and providing free or low-cost grab-and-go and home delivery options

Civic Participation and Employment

- Connect people with educational and social opportunities through online "virtual" academies
- Promote online volunteerism for advocacy or service campaigns
- Foster local economic assets, such as maker spaces or by adapting commercial properties for needed but temporary uses

Emergency Preparedness

- Add safety resources and tips to utility bills and local government mailings
- Create tool kits that can help older adults manage in the event of a power outage, food shortages or other disruptions
- Use or adapt existing emergency plans and resources

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