



The Importance of an Age - Friendly Community: Grand Rapids, MI

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What We Will Cover

- What is Age-Friendly Communities?
- Why is it Important?
- History of Age-Friendly Grand Rapids
- Grand Rapids Age-Friendly Action Plan Focus
- Age-Friendly Action Plan Implementation





What is Age-Friendly Communities?

Age-Friendly Communities is a global movement launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and spearheaded in the U.S. by AARP to help communities prepare for the aging of the population.

Why is it Important?

- It is estimated that by 2040, 22% of the total U.S. population will be over 65 years old.
- Michigan's adults over 65 is 19.2%, ranking the state as the 14th oldest.
- Kent County's adults over 65 is 15.4%.
- Grand Rapids' adults over 65 is 12.9%.



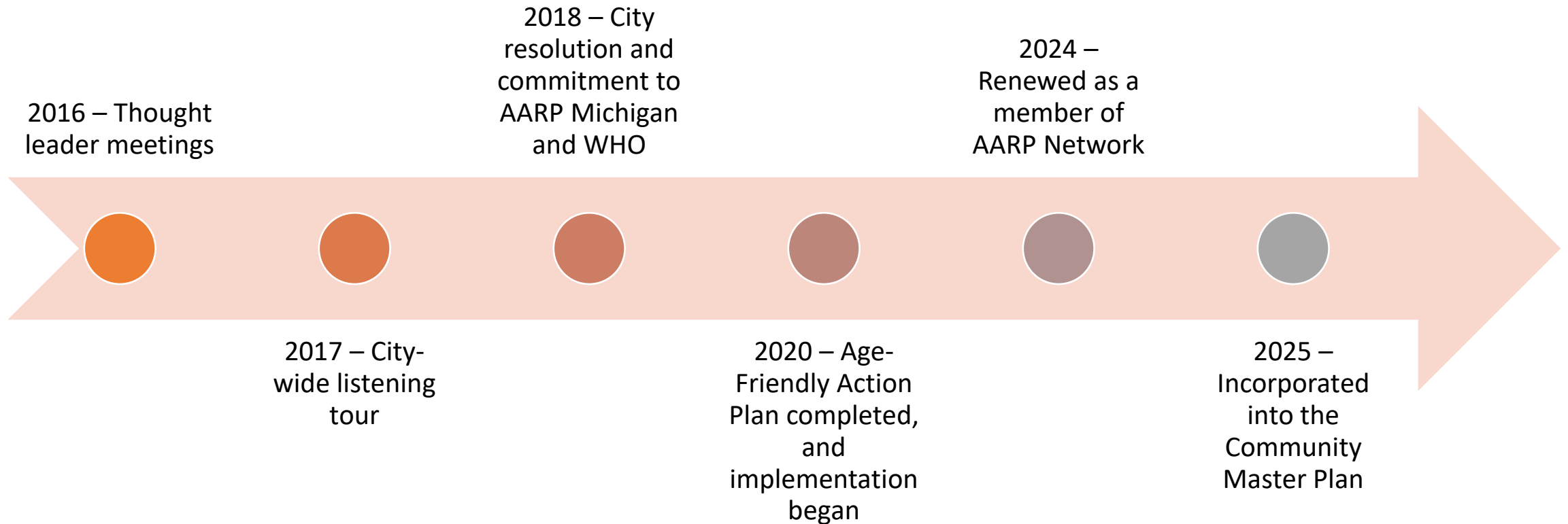
AARP Age-Friendly work

- The AARP Network of Age-Friendly supports the work of local, regional and state governments as they prepare for the nation's changing demographics.
- Established in 2012, the network includes towns, cities, counties and states that have made a commitment to being more livable for people of all ages, and especially older adults





History of Age-Friendly Grand Rapids



Give us your ideas!

INTERACTIVE!

FUN!



A game for individuals or groups of all ages



Four Domains of Livability



Communication



Housing



Outdoor Spaces



Transportation



Communication

Goals for Improving Communication

- Create a physical or virtual one-stop resource with a focus on health, housing, transportation, utilities, food, in-home services, and social activities.
- Develop a multi-faceted communication plan.



Housing

Goals for Improving Housing

- Increase fair rental practices for seniors.
- Encourage community discussion and increase marketing of Our City Academy to older adults.
- Provide relevant information to state level policy makers about the need for housing options and services.



Outdoor Spaces

Goals for Improving Outdoor Spaces

- Include older adults in walking audits to increase pedestrian safety and access.
- Improve sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.
- Focus on winter sidewalk issues (ice/snow).
- Add benches and plantings to expand pedestrian comfort and enjoyment.
- Create safety/education/outreach programs and messaging.



Transportation

Goals for Improving Transportation

- **Develop and promote awareness of current and future transportation options and resources.**
- **Create and expand programs to address improved customer service and safety issues.**
- **Explore partnerships for the development of dedicated routes for older adults.**





Age-Friendly Plan Implementation

Communication

- Updated the city website to include maps of senior housing and key services available
- Partnered with the Senior Preferences Guide for West Michigan with an expansion of listings and distribution
- Ongoing focus on sharing information and resources with diverse populations



Senior PREFERENCES

2025-26



Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm,
Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa Counties

SeniorPreferences.com

-
- Grand Rapids Public Libraries
 - Senior Centers
 - Senior Serving Organizations



Age Friendly Grand Rapids Website

Age Friendly Grand Rapids

In 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched Age-Friendly Communities to help cities prepare for the parallel trends of a rapidly aging world population and increasing urbanization. In 2016 the City of Grand Rapids partnered with AARP, an institutional affiliate of WHO, to pursue and obtain accreditation as an Age-Friendly Community. The global initiative aspires to:

- Improve communities
- Sustain economic growth
- Make for happier healthier residents of all ages

The Work of AARP and the City included extensive community engagement and resulted in the draft Grand Rapids Age-Friendly Action Plan. The Action Plan aligns with the City of Grand Rapids values and focuses on Four Domains of Livability with each domain having its own set of Goals and Action Steps.

In January 2024, the Age-Friendly Action Plan was formally approved by AARP. Grand Rapids was renewed as a member of The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The designation is valid until January, 2027, when further reporting is due.

[Download Age Friendly Action Plan](#)

Four Domains of Livability



Communication Goals for Improving Communication

- Create a physical or virtual one-stop resource with a focus on health, housing, transportation, utilities, food, in-home services, and social activities.
- Develop a multi-faceted communication plan.



Housing Goals for Improving Housing

- Increase fair rental practices for seniors.
- Encourage community discussion and increase marketing of Our City Academy to older adults.
- Provide relevant information to state level policy makers about the need for housing options and services.



Contact Us

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Events

GVSU 21st Annual Art & Science of Aging Conference

Friday, March 13, 2026
9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
GVSU Richard M. DeVos Center, 401 W Fulton
Click [here](#) for more information

Creston Walks

Date Every Wednesday at 12 p.m.
Location: Meet in the parking lot at 205 Carrier St NE




Age Friendly Grand Rapids Website

Resources Age-Friendly Spotlight News **Related Information**

- [Transportation Services](#)
- [Accessibility in Our Parks](#)
- [AARP Livability Index Score for Grand Rapids](#)
- [AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Certificate](#)

Resources **Age-Friendly Spotlight** News Related Information

 Antoine Court Apartments

Grand Rapids is rich with resources for seniors, and Age-Friendly Grand Rapids is striving to make them easier to find. Drawing from a variety of sources, we have mapped locations of housing options and organizations that provide services to seniors. Take a minute to explore the maps to learn what is available in your neighborhood and the broader community, too.

- [Senior Housing](#)
- [Senior Services Providers](#)
- [Senior Centers](#)
- [Senior Home Repair and Rental Advocacy](#)
- [Age Friendly Parks](#)

Past Spotlights

January 2022: Creston Walking Program

An Age-Friendly Grand Rapids partner organization, the North End Wellness Coalition (NEWC), created a walking program to improve access to outdoor spaces and activity for all ages. Read more [here](#).

March 2022: Age-Friendly Parks

Parks and Recreation has created a list of the twenty-eight parks that are the most Age-Friendly and their corresponding amenities and features. Read more [here](#).

Resources Age-Friendly Spotlight **News** Related Information

We're spreading the word, check out our articles below.

2025

- [AARP Michigan Awards \\$10,000 to Support Age-Friendly Communities](#), by AARP, October 10, 2025

2024

- [Grand Rapids Renews AARP Age-Friendly Community Status](#) by Rapid Growth, February 7, 2024
- [Grand Rapids Recognized as Age-Friendly City by AARP](#) by FOX 17 News, January 24, 2024

2023

- [AARP Awards Grants to Six Michigan Organizations as Part of its Nationwide Program to Make Communities More Livable](#) by AARP, June 28, 2023
- [Michigan Age-Friendly Action Plan aims to make it easier for adults to age in place](#) by Flint Side, March 30, 2023

2022

- <https://www.wktvjournal.org/more-michigan-communities-strive-to-become-age-friendly/> by WKTV Journal, September 23, 2022

2021

Resources Age-Friendly Spotlight **News** Related Information

United Way 211 Service

United Way 2-1-1 is an easy way to connect with help of all kinds, right in your community. Whoever you are, whatever your needs, 2-1-1 makes it easy to find food, shelter, utility assistance, disaster recovery, childcare, transportation, and more. Just call, text, or search online and they'll get you connected.

[Learn More](#)

Call

211 or 1-800-887-1107

Text

Text your zip code to [898211](#)

Chat Online or Search for Services Near You

www.hwmw.org/211

- [AARP HomeFit Guide](#)
- [AARP Livable Communities](#)
- [Area Agency on Aging West Michigan](#)
- [Grand Rapids/West Michigan Senior Resources Guide](#)
- [Network 180 - Mental Health Services](#)
- [Senior Neighbors](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

Housing

- Accessory Dwelling Units and intergenerational housing
- Assured older adult population participation in the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County 2021 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing focus group
- Support the Fair Housing Center to reduce ageism in the rental market

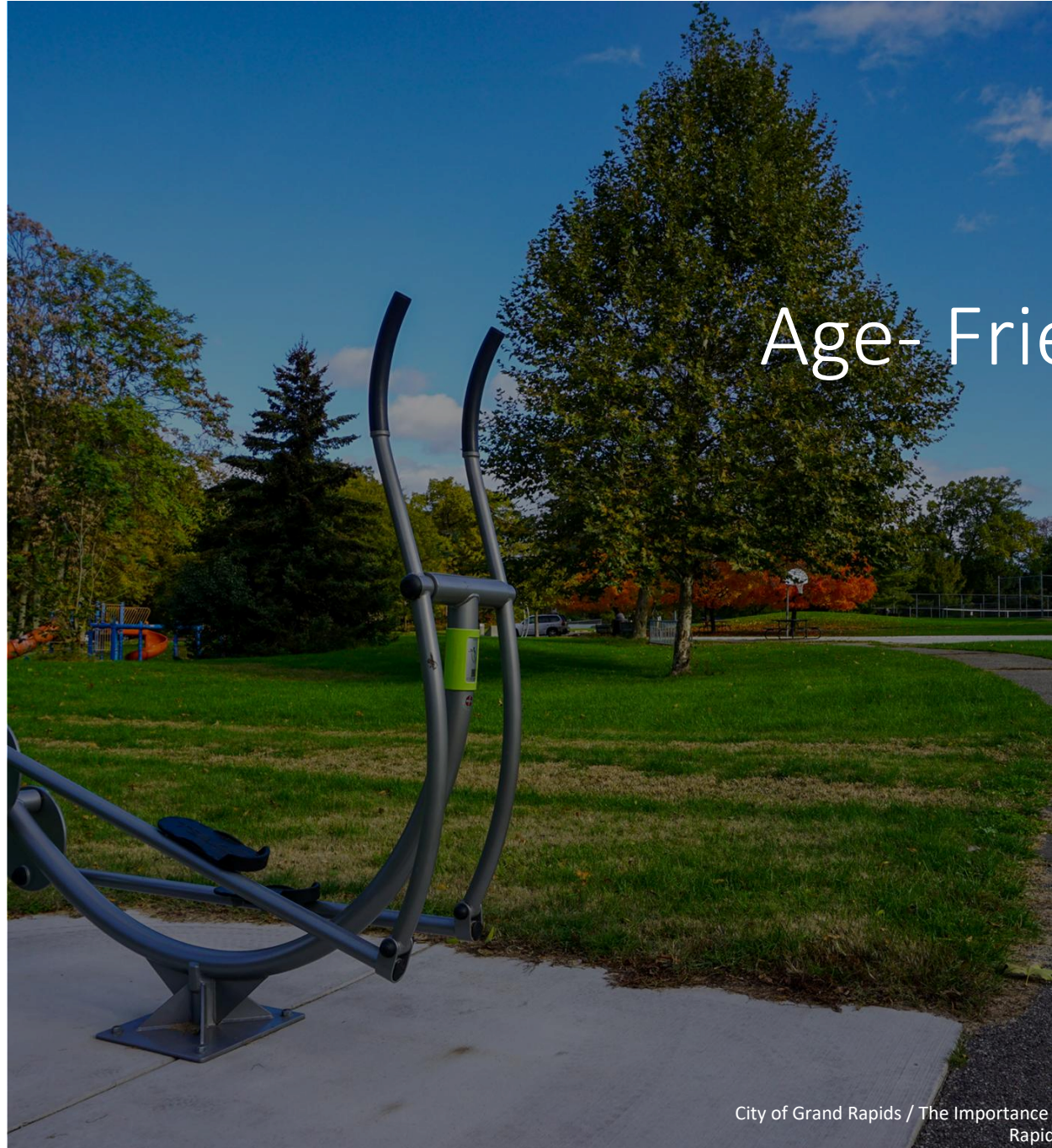


Outdoor Spaces

- Worked with Parks and Recreation to update the city website to include a map of senior-friendly amenities in city parks
- Used the AARP Challenge Grant to add benches in the street right of way
- Piloted a neighborhood intergenerational walking program with funding from the Special Events Sponsorship
- Advocated for increased sidewalk snow removal and maintenance in neighborhoods with a higher senior population



Age-Friendly Parks



AARP Bench Ribbon Cutting at the Creston Neighborhood Association

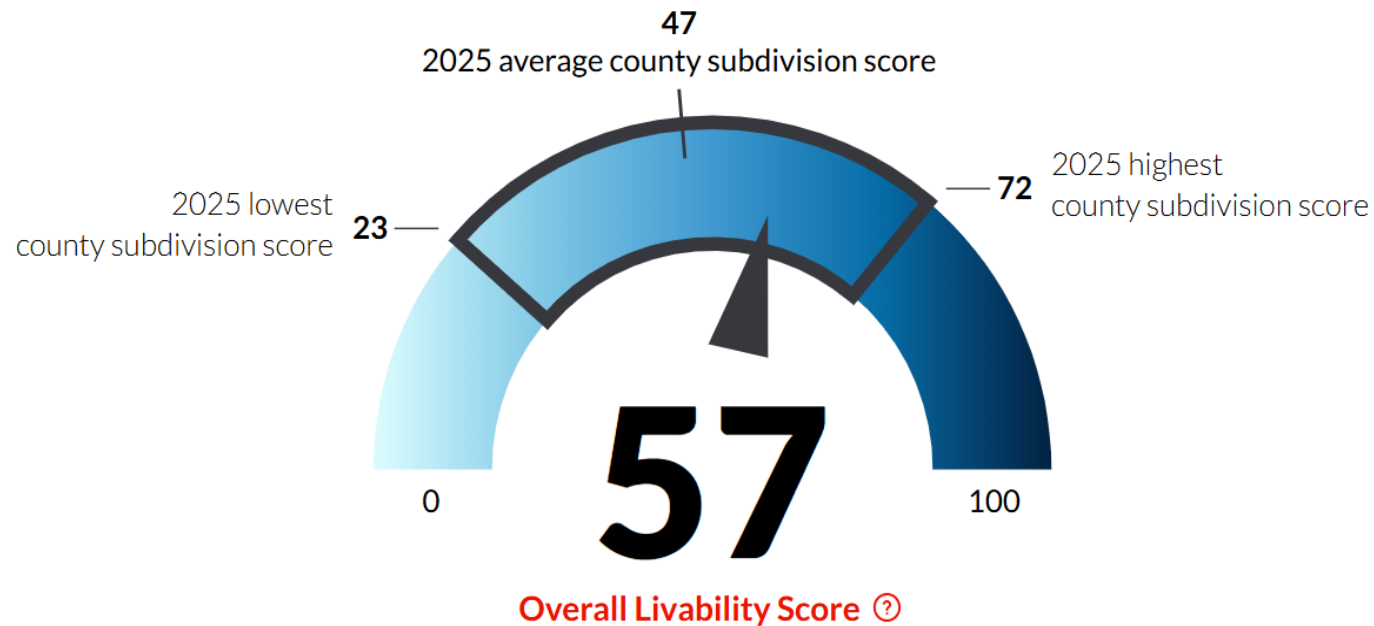


Transportation



- Planning staff has:
 - Served on the Technical Advisory Committee for the Rapids' new Transit Master Plan
 - Embedded Disability Advocates into the Vital Streets design and the new Community Master Plan processes

City of Grand Rapids Age Friendly Livability Score




The overall Livability Index™ score for **Grand Rapids, Michigan** is **57**.

This is in the **top half** of **communities** in the U.S.

Category Scores


Category Scores

These are the category scores for Grand Rapids, Michigan. Explore the metrics and policies behind the numbers.

 **Housing** ⓘ
Affordability and Access




[View Indicators](#) ▼

 **Neighborhood** ⓘ
Proximity and Security




[View Indicators](#) ▼

 **Transportation** ⓘ
Safety and Convenience



[View Indicators](#) ▼

 **Environment** ⓘ
Clean Air and Water



[View Indicators](#) ▼

 **Health** ⓘ
Prevention, Access and Quality



[View Indicators](#) ▼

 **Engagement** ⓘ
Civic and Social Involvement



[View Indicators](#) ▼

 **Opportunity** ⓘ
Inclusion and Possibilities

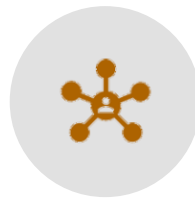


[View Indicators](#) ▼

What's Next for Age-Friendly Grand Rapids?



Continuing to implement the Age-Friendly Action Plan.



Connecting with other Age-Friendly Communities in the State of Michigan.



Partnering with Senior Serving Organizations to support them in the work



Questions?





Thank you



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Citations

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- World Health Organization. World report on ageing and health. World Health Organization; 2015. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/186463>
- <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/age-friendly-network-introduction.html>

