Age-Friendly Municipalities
Creating great places to age in New Jersey

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America is growing older. Every day for the rest of the decade, 8,000 members of the Baby Boom generation will turn 65.

We know a great deal today about the correlation between where people live and how they age. We know that seniors are at risk of social isolation and that social isolation presents serious threats to mental and physical health. And we know that seniors face limited access to vital community resources in isolation. COVID-19 has only exacerbated these risks for New Jersey’s aging residents. We need to take steps now so that communities are prepared to deal with conditions, such as disease outbreaks or natural disasters, that compromise public health or safety. This includes making New Jersey’s communities healthier and safer for aging adults. But how?

The built environment
To start, we can take a closer look at the built environment of our communities. Land use is a critical factor in a town’s livability for people of all ages, but especially for older residents. Communities offering affordable and diverse housing options, downtown walkability and other forms of access to daily tasks for those who don’t drive, physical and social activities, safe streets, and amenities like parks, are places where older residents can thrive. However, many communities in New Jersey, which has the 11th largest number of residents aged 60 and older, fail to offer these attributes.
Many people want to stay in their communities as they get older. Our communities contain our friends, doctors, places of worship, gyms, familiar restaurants and shops. Some aging residents would like to continue living in the homes they’ve known for many years. Others want to move, but still stay in the town they love. Some want to downsize from a larger single-family home to a smaller house, townhouse, or apartment closer to the destinations they need to reach. This is especially true as mobility declines with age and many people eventually reduce their driving or stop driving altogether, making walkability to destinations critically important.

**Municipal scores**

New Jersey Future has scored every municipality on three criteria that serve as a general indicator of how well a town is positioned to meet the changing needs of its aging residents—whether it

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**The New Jersey Municipal Management Association (NJMMA)** is a statewide professional association made up of municipal managers and administrators. Founded in 1954, the NJMMA has been a valued resource for local government for more than 60 years. The members of this proud association know all about municipal government, and here is what you need to know about them:

- NJMMA’s membership currently represents over 250 full-time professional managers statewide.
- Members are responsible for many of the essential services that are delivered daily to more than four million New Jersey residents.
- The Association’s primary objective is to ensure members are well prepared to deliver local government services, efficiently and effectively, working in conjunction with the elected officials who serve in local government.
- NJMMA’s leadership are the primary advocates and spokespersons for professional local government management across the state.
- The Association is recognized by elected officials throughout the state for its members’ expertise, contributions to the enactment of sound public policy, and the delivery of public services.
- NJMMA has been affiliated with Rutgers University for the past nine years, providing members with the assistance, technical training, and support that comes with a partnership with a nationally recognized state university.
- The Association maintains ongoing relationships with other New Jersey professional associations, which collectively represent nearly all licensed officials working in local and state government.

For more information on the NJMMA, or to become a member, please contact Executive Director Alan Zalkind at zalkind@docs.rutgers.edu.
Senior Dollars

As Americans live longer, they also work, pay taxes, and support local businesses longer.

The AARP’s Longevity Economy outlook found that in 2018, the 50-plus age demographic contributed $645 billion in state and local taxes, a sum expected to increase four times by 2050. In terms of direct spending, 56 cents of every dollar spent in 2018 was attributable to this age group, and is expected to increase to 61 cents by 2050.

Additionally, the 50-plus age group is expected to be an important driver of job sustainability through 2050.

In 2018, this age group supported 88.6 million U.S. jobs through jobs they hold or create. This number is projected to grow to 102.8 million jobs by 2050.
Improving communities

How can New Jersey’s car-dependent communities become more aging-friendly? Through support from the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation and the Community Foundation of South Jersey’s Aging Innovation Fund, New Jersey Future has been helping towns proactively improve their built environments to accommodate the needs of an aging population.

This work includes providing information about aging-friendly features and the real social and economic benefits they offer, an overview of the demographics of a town’s older residents, and an aging-friendly land use assessment followed by assistance with local planning based on the results.

As part of the assessment process, New Jersey Future analyzes a town’s downtown center, housing options, access to transportation, and supply of public spaces and amenities and then provides recommendations for each in an aging-friendly land-use assessment report.

The advantages of aging-friendly communities extend beyond the health benefits for older residents. There are substantial economic benefits to municipalities whose residents are able to comfortably age-in-community.

The towns New Jersey Future has been working with are well on their way to becoming better places to age and live in general, as we have learned that aging-friendly towns are more livable, equitable, and inclusive towns for people of all ages.

To help your community get started, Download New Jersey Futures’ Creating Great Places to Age in New Jersey: A Community Guide to Implementing Aging-Friendly Land Use Decisions from https://tinyurl.com/yyrdjxyr. This guide provides towns with a step-by-step process to make it easier to design for the needs of older residents. We hope you’ll take a look and join us in our work to create great places to age across New Jersey and stronger, healthier, more equitable communities for everyone.

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Broad experience, custom tailored to your legal needs

Legal representation isn’t one size fits all. Your individual situation deserves personalized attention from the attorney best suited to your case.

Call us today for your custom fitting.

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