

Community Livability in Connecticut

*Shaping Great Places
for People to Grow Up
and Grow Older*



An Annual Report

Prepared by **Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging**,
Pursuant to Public Act 13-109,

To the Connecticut General Assembly's Committees
on Aging, Housing, Human Services and Transportation

July 1, 2015



Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is a
nonpartisan public policy and research office of the Connecticut General Assembly,
located at the State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106 | www.cga.ct.gov/coa



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Executive Summary



Connecticut's population is aging, and that demographic transformation is both dramatic and permanent. Recognizing a growing urgency to plan for changing Connecticut communities, the Connecticut General Assembly empowered Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging to spearhead a livable communities initiative. Livable communities are places that foster independence and support residents across the lifespan.

The Commission on Aging has identified seven areas through which community leaders and their partners can influence community livability: planning and zoning, public spaces and buildings, housing, transportation, health services, social services, and community engagement. For each area, we provide ideas, inspiration and resources, including a document that we created for community leaders that provides a comprehensive list of potential strategies on shaping community livability.

Among our other achievements of the past year, we have:

- Conducted a comprehensive, statewide survey on what Connecticut residents have to say about how communities can best prepare to support residents across the lifespan;
- Based on survey results, formulated public policy strategies on transportation, discussed at a policy briefing we convened;
- Provided comment on an international framework to measure livability;
- Provided consultative support to support the City New Haven as one of 15 urban areas worldwide to pilot that framework;
- Strategically cultivated more than 50 organizational partners, through whom we connect related initiatives to maximize resources and expertise;
- Convened a Partners' Summit on livability at the State Capitol;
- At the invitation of our partners, participated in wide-ranging, multi-sector collaboratives with implications for shaping community livability;
- Worked with local leaders and provided consultative support to communities throughout Connecticut to embed a lifespan approach to decision-making;
- Grown our subject matter expertise through participation in at least 35 forums, conference calls, webinars or conferences related to livability;
- Raised awareness through regular public speaking activities, writing articles, and distributing regular electronic communications; and
- Established and maintained a website (www.livablect.org) for community leaders.

The livable communities initiative is dynamic, ever-responsive to changing issues, but simultaneously concentrating on shaping and sometimes transforming long-term systems. We invite you to learn more, in this, our second annual report to the legislature.

Shaping
great
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Background

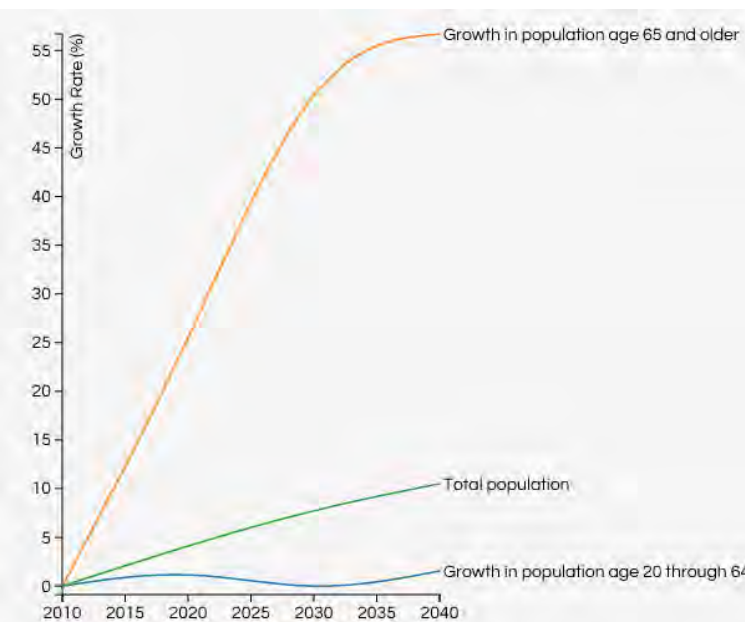


Changing Demographics

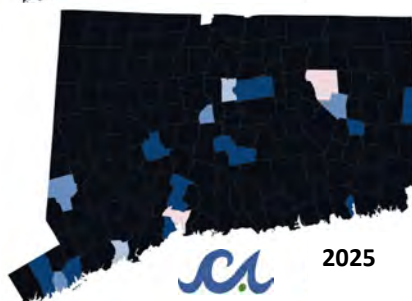
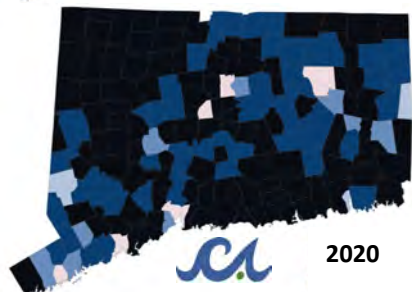
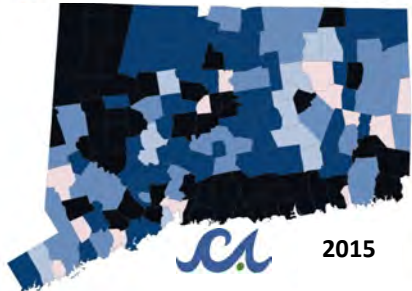
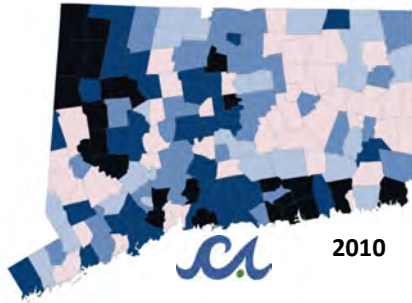
Connecticut's population is aging, and that demographic transformation is both dramatic and permanent. Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation, based on median age.¹ It also has the third longest-lived constituency, with an average life expectancy of 80.8 years for residents born in Connecticut today.² More than one-third of Connecticut's population is over the age of 50, and that proportion continues to rise. Between 2010 and 2040, Connecticut's population of people age 65 and older is projected to grow by 57%, with less than 2% growth for people age 20 to 64 during the same period.

This unprecedented longevity, coupled with sheer increases in the number of older adults, will impact nearly every facet of society. Increasing numbers older adults will play pivotal roles, both as caregivers and as recipients of care, in both families of origin and of choice. They will challenge our state's creativity, policies and budgets as they increasingly outlive their financial resources, despite working longer. And they will prompt municipal and state leaders and their partners to ensure that cities and towns have features, services and funds to support aging in place and in community.

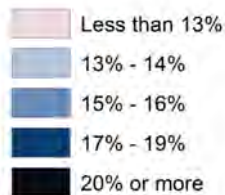
Unprecedented longevity, coupled with sheer increases in the number of older adults, will impact nearly every facet of society.



Left: Chart produced in partnership by Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging and the Connecticut Data Collaborative



Above: The percentage of people age 65 and older as a proportion of total population. These maps were produced in partnership with the Connecticut State Data Center.



Legislative Charge

Recognizing the growing urgency to plan for changing Connecticut communities, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a state law called “An Act Concerning Livable Communities,” which became effective July 1, 2013. That law empowered Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging to spearhead a statewide livability initiative that convenes, engages, inspires and supports local and regional efforts to shape communities that are more livable for Connecticut residents across the lifespan.

In addition to its existing charge, with respect to livable communities, the Legislative Commission has been charged with³:

- Establishing a “livable communities” initiative to serve as a forum for best practices and a clearinghouse for resources for municipal and state leaders;
- Establishing and facilitating partnerships with municipal leaders, representatives of municipal senior and social services offices, community stakeholders, planning and zoning boards and commissions, representatives of philanthropic organizations, and representatives of social services and health organizations;
- Planning informational forums on livable communities;
- Investigating innovative approaches to livable communities nationwide;
- Identifying various public and private funding sources;
- Creating a livable communities [website](#); and
- Recognizing communities that have implemented livable community initiatives.

Finally, the Legislative Commission on Aging is charged with submitting this annual report not later than July 1, 2015 to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to aging, housing, human services and transportation. This report describes how we have fulfilled our various statutory obligations with respect to the livable communities initiative over this past year.

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is a nonpartisan public policy and research office of the Connecticut General Assembly. For twenty-two years, the Legislative Commission has worked to prepare Connecticut for its growing aging population while promoting policies that enhance the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. Through its unique role in state government, the Legislative Commission:

- Shapes innovative public policies that reflect best practices, national trends and cost-optimizing strategies on multi-faceted and complex aging-related issues, including long-term services and supports rebalancing, workforce development and economic security;
- Promotes government accountability through review of, comment on and leadership in implementing legislation and other state policies, programs and plans that affect older adults and persons with disabilities;
- Establishes relationships with diverse stakeholders, including the legislative and executive branches of state government, municipalities, the business community, and philanthropic and nonprofit organizations, to align synergy, build consensus, and promote fiscal efficiency; and
- Analyzes demographic trends to prepare the state and communities for the broad-scale societal transformation that will result from a longer-lived, rapidly growing population of older adults.



Above: Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging Staff, from left to right: Christianne Kovel (Communications Specialist), Alyssa Norwood (Project Manager), Julia Evans Starr (Executive Director), and Deb Migneault (Senior Policy Analyst)

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging innovates, develops data and analyzes policy for the Connecticut General Assembly. The Commission's staff works together with twenty-one volunteer board members and many other partners from across the state.

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Livable Communities



Definition

Livable communities are places that foster independence and support residents across the lifespan. They offer affordable, accessible, and diverse housing and transportation options and public buildings and spaces; supportive community features and services; and vibrancy and opportunities for community engagement. They foster independence, engage residents in civic and social life, and allow people to remain in their homes and communities. Done well, they enhance the quality of life for all residents, create tremendous economic value in towns and cities, promote healthy living and support environmental sustainability.

Benefits

- **Livable communities are attractive to all ages.** Livable communities features are also likely to attract residents from across the lifespan, including professionals needed to support aging in place and in community. These features include broad housing and transportation options in or near higher-density, vibrant areas with public amenities, and lively commercial districts.
- **Livable communities create economic value.** Livable communities have been associated with increases in home values, higher property and sales tax revenues, savings on service delivery and infrastructure costs, growth in business revenues and development opportunities, and decreased individual transportation costs.
- **Livable communities promote health.** Community conditions can impact physical activity levels, food access, air quality, and social cohesion. Livable communities increase opportunities for every resident to make healthy choices.
- **Livable communities drive environmentally responsible development.** Increasing density and broadening the array of viable transportation options reduces natural resource consumption and pollution, and creating smaller energy-efficient housing is an important part of climate change strategy.

Livable communities are places that foster well-being, independence and support residents across the lifespan.

Vision, Mission and Values

The livable initiative's current vision, mission and values are articulated below. The initiative is dynamic and evolving, and so too is the continuous refinement of the guiding frame established for it by Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging.

Vision: Shaping great places for people to grow up and grow older

Mission: To convene, engage, inspire and support local, regional and state efforts to shape more livable communities in Connecticut for residents across the lifespan

Values:

- **Accessible.** Every aspect of community design and life ought to be accessible to and promote the engagement of its residents.
- **Choice.** Communities should promote personal

dignity and functional independence across the lifespan by creating a broad array of choices to meet the evolving needs of residents.

- **Cooperative.** Shaping livable communities requires partnership across a wide variety of sectors, within-town collaboration across departments, and regional cooperation.
- **Equity.** Everyone deserves the ability to live in one's home and community safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, income or ability level.
- **Intergenerational.** Intergenerational communities can leverage strengths across the lifespan by linking the needs and skills of different age groups.

Shaping Livable Communities & Promoting Aging in Place
April 2015 Edition

Connecticut is Aging: Is Your Town Ready?

Connecticut is undergoing a permanent and historic transformation in its demographics: it is aging. Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation with the 3rd longest-lived constituency. And its residents overwhelmingly want to stay in their homes and communities as they grow older, retaining choice and independence.

What that means for municipal leaders and their partners is that there's a **growing urgency to plan for changing communities**—ones that will need affordable, accessible and diverse housing and transportation options and public spaces and buildings; supportive community features and services; and vibrancy and opportunities for community engagement.

Recognizing that urgency, Connecticut passed a state law that empowered **Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging** to spearhead a statewide livability initiative. Through its initiative, the Commission is convening, engaging, inspiring and supporting local and regional efforts to shape more livable communities for residents across the lifespan. We're working with diverse partners, connecting related initiatives, and promoting ideas.

Deeply embedded in this work is a notion of shared fate, across age and other demographic characteristics.

The goal of this guide is to provide **strategies to municipal leaders** and their partners to enhance community livability for Connecticut residents. Livable communities not only foster independence and allow individuals to age in place, they also promote health and well-being, create economic value and drive environmental sustainability.

To learn more go to Commission's website: www.livablect.org

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging: A Nonpartisan Public Policy and Research Office of the Connecticut General Assembly Located at the State Capitol

Strategies to Shape Livable Communities
Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

These strategies present a menu of opportunities for communities to consider. But there is no singular formula for shaping livability. Communities should build on their strengths and consider their unique needs.

Physical Environment		Social Environment	
Planning and Zoning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that municipal plans of conservation and development include planning for older adults and individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 9-239a(c)(3). Revise zoning codes to maximize opportunities for Smart Growth. Allow flexible housing options, like accessory dwelling units. Reduce minimum lot size strategically to allow for higher-density development. Conduct health, environmental, and economic impact assessments. 	Housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate residents on home remodeling or modifications to age in place. Compile a list of vetted home repair and home modification contractors and programs to help older adults and persons with disabilities adapt their homes. Incentivize incorporation of universal design features in new construction. Ensure that adequate small-, energy-efficient, affordable housing in neighborhoods of opportunity exists in every community. Collaborate with affordable and low-income housing developers to generate additional housing options. 	Community Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate an atmosphere that promotes diversity and inclusiveness. Mobilize older adults to address community issues through meaningful paid and unpaid work opportunities. Promote opportunities for intergenerational contributions, connectivity and learning. Facilitate opportunities for religious, spiritual and social connectivity. Facilitate opportunities for local economic development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalize partnerships with town planners to maximize opportunities for Smart Growth and other strategies to promote active lifestyles. Ensure capacity and capability to plan for public health emergencies, including for those with access and functional needs. Prioritize access to healthy and affordable foods and opportunities for physical activity. Conduct health impact assessments to determine the potential health implications of projects, policies and community design.
Public Spaces and Buildings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that public buildings and spaces are ADA accessible for all users and located to enhance community safety and intergenerational interactions. Increase access to parks, school playgrounds and other recreational facilities. Establish community gardens. Rehabilitate blighted, vacant and otherwise underutilized properties. Encourage diverse use of public spaces and buildings to maximize investment and community building. 	Transportation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote public awareness of existing transportation services. Develop or enhance mobility management programs. Engage in transit-oriented development. Identify funding streams to coordinate and grow both fixed route and demand-responsive transportation options. Conduct a walkability audit. Adopt and implement a complete streets policy and plan. 	Health Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a robust public health system to promote in-home programs, community wellness programs and preventive health services. Support local health departments, first responders, senior centers and other partners in their efforts to prevent falls through various strategies. Formalize partnerships between health care, public health and social services leaders and professionals to ensure an integrated system that comprehensively meets the needs of older adults, which can include addressing social isolation, loss and mental health issues. 	Social Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a robust local social services system to address community needs through collaborations among other municipal departments and divisions and community leaders. Promote public awareness about existing social and support services available. Promote information, training and support for family caregivers across the lifespan. Promote and support collaboration among police, fire, aging services and adult protective services for safety education and prevention of physical and financial elder abuse.

Why Make Communities Livable? For improved community economic growth and individual economic security, employment opportunity, community safety, emergency preparedness, and more...

Left and above: Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging created a document entitled "[Shaping Livable Communities & Promoting Aging in Place](#)." These strategies present a menu of opportunities for communities to consider and tailor to their unique local and regional contexts.

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Domains of Livability



Framework

Dramatic increases in the number of older adults internationally have inspired efforts around the world to shape environments that support people across the lifespan. Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging provided comments to an expert review panel, led by the World Health Organization, working to develop a framework for examining community livability. With that framework as a starting point, the Commission conducted literature reviews, conducted meetings, and solicited peer review to adapt that international framework and revise and refine it to make it appropriate for use in Connecticut.

Through that process, the Commission on Aging identified seven domains, or areas of intervention for community leaders and their partners, that influence a community’s livability, which fall into two broad categories: physical environment and social environment (see figure below). The areas under physical environment are planning and zoning, public spaces and buildings, housing and transportation. The areas under social environment are community engagement (which includes support and connectivity, civic engagement, and opportunities for both employment and recreation), health services and social services.

Shaping community livability requires collaboration across all sectors.



In this section, we provide a brief overview of each domain and associated strategies. We discuss each domain separately, though each of these areas are deeply interconnected and require collaboration across sectors.

Planning and Zoning

Planning and zoning have far-reaching implications for community life, dictating, for example, how well residential areas are connected to transit, businesses, medical services, and community and civic centers. Increasingly, communities are embracing planning principles that promote more compact, walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income, environmentally sensitive communities with a range of transportation and housing choices. Demand is coming not only from older adults, but from individuals across the lifespan. Good community design is a fundamental necessity to successfully age in place and in community, while benefitting everyone across the lifespan.

Community Strategies

- Ensure that municipal plans of conservation and development include planning for older adults and individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 8-23(e)(1)(I).
- Revise zoning codes to promote safe, intergenerational communities by maximizing opportunities for Smart Growth. Smart Growth includes:
 - ◇ Mixing land uses;
 - ◇ Leveraging compact building design;
 - ◇ Creating a range of housing opportunities;
 - ◇ Creating walkable neighborhoods;
 - ◇ Fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
 - ◇ Preserving critical environmental areas;
 - ◇ Strengthening and directing development towards existing communities;
 - ◇ Providing transportation choices;
 - ◇ Making development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective; and
 - ◇ Encouraging stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
- Create diverse, accessible and affordable housing and transportation choices by
 - ◇ Promoting housing arrangements to support residents across the lifespan, including accessory dwelling units, shared housing and generally broadening the definition of family to go beyond family of origin;
 - ◇ Reducing minimum lot sizes strategically to allow for higher-density development;
 - ◇ Encouraging universal design features in new construction;
 - ◇ Adopting policies that support complete streets, transit-oriented development, and robust fixed-route and demand responsive transportation systems; and
 - ◇ Considering health, environmental, and economic impacts of planning projects and policies.



Above: Storrs Center in Mansfield is a mixed-use town center, just steps away from the University of Connecticut. Its success has inspired residents to think differently about development.

Public Spaces and Buildings

Livable communities have safe and accessible public spaces and buildings—ranging from green spaces to places of civic engagement to places for commerce—that help foster a sense of community and mutual caring. They are designed and built to provide a foundation for true neighborhoods and opportunities for intergenerational connectivity. And they accommodate users of all ages and abilities.



Above: In 1996, Stratton Brook State Park in Simsbury was the first state park in Connecticut to have a total retrofit of all park facilities (parking, trails, restrooms, picnic areas, and beach) accessible to older adults and persons with disabilities.

Community Strategies

- Ensure that public buildings and spaces are accessible for all users and designed and located to enhance community safety and promote opportunities for intergenerational interactions.
- In defining accessibility, use the American with Disabilities Act and other relevant legal authorities as a floor, not a ceiling. Public buildings and spaces should go beyond mere compliance to be welcoming, easy to navigate, and aesthetic.
- Design public spaces and buildings in a manner that promotes choice. For example, opportunities in parks should exist for quiet enjoyment of nature or social interaction, or for sun or for weather protection.
- Promote social interaction through a range of programs and through physical design features, such as conversation-starting public art and outdoor reading rooms.
- Provide orientation and way finding with large, visible fonts, at a height where they could be viewed by a person in a wheelchair.
- Ensure that ground surfaces are wide, smooth, appropriately graded and lighted, and have benches with backs and arms, placed at regular intervals.
- Ensure that areas where there is light transition are designed to minimize the risk of falls.
- Promote physical activity through strategic placement of outdoor exercise equipment and mile markers for motivation.
- Encourage diverse use of public spaces and buildings, implementing joint use agreements as needed, to maximize investment and community building.
- Establish community gardens, incorporate strategic landscaping in public spaces, and consider creating wandering gardens, especially for residents with dementia or other cognitive impairments.
- Rehabilitate blighted, vacant and otherwise underutilized properties.

Housing

Older adults generally want to age in place, in familiar home and neighborhood environments. Accordingly, a broad range of accessible, affordable and creative housing options is a critical component of a livable community. Age-diverse communities and development, rather than age-segregated solutions, are necessary to enhance quality of life, including ensuring easy connectivity between older adults and the professionals needed to support them. Broadening housing choice also creates more economically vibrant, diverse communities that enhance opportunities for intergenerational connectivity.

Community Strategies

- Facilitate in-home inspections of safety hazards (e.g., poor lighting and inappropriately placed carpets and other floor items).
- Educate residents on what kinds of home remodeling or modifications (e.g., zero-step entry, wider doorways, and bathroom aids) may be necessary to accommodate emerging impairments.
- Through regional cooperation, compile a listing of vetted home repair and home modification contractors and programs to help older adults and persons with disabilities adapt their homes to meet their evolving needs.
- Adopt policies that encourage incorporation of accessible housing features into new construction, so that new housing can support its residents throughout the lifespan.



Above: Rocky Corner in Bethany, Connecticut, will be Connecticut's first cohousing community. Cohousing is a neighborhood design that promotes social connectivity among neighbors and emphasizes sustainable construction and land use.

- Ensure that adequate smaller, energy-efficient, affordable housing—in walkable, transit-served, mixed use neighborhoods—exists in every community.
- Finance the redevelopment of small, under-utilized downtown buildings into housing above commercial space.
- Collaborate with affordable and low-income housing developers to generate these additional housing options so that residents may remain in their communities across the lifespan, if they choose.
- Modify zoning codes and plans of conservation and development to support cohousing arrangements, including shared housing, accessory dwelling units and generally broadening the definition of family to go beyond family of origin.

Transportation

Transportation is the vital link that connects residents with their communities and the elements of a vibrant and engaged life. Connecticut’s changing demographics increasingly demand a transportation system that provides affordable, accessible and diverse transportation options to all residents. Those options need to be thoughtfully interconnected to, among other goals, retrofit car-dominated infrastructure for the safety of all users; create environments that promote equity, environmental sustainability and support healthier lifestyles for everyone; rebuild the street as a public space for social experience; sustain, coordinate and grow both fixed route and demand-responsive transportation options; and support economic activity.

Community Strategies

- Adopt and implement complete streets to accommodate all users, regardless of age or ability.
- Conduct a walkability audit to assess sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian linkages to essential services.
- Use data on road traffic injuries, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, to target infrastructure improvements to improve safety in the most dangerous locations.
- Establish lower speed limits on local streets.
- Develop or enhance mobility management programs to help older adults and other community members learn how to access and navigate transportation options.
- Engage in transit-oriented development to ensure that compact, walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income communities are located within a half-mile of quality, dependable public transportation, if there is adequate density to support it.
- Sustain, grow and enhance both fixed route and demand-responsive transportation options.
- Work collaboratively across town lines to coordinate transportation options and share resources.
- Collaborate across sectors to increase the use of mobile services to bring necessities and opportunities for engagement to transit-challenged homes and neighborhoods.



Above: The Hartford Mobile Market, conceived of by the Hispanic Health Council and run by the Hartford Food System, brings produce year-round to areas in Hartford with limited access to healthy foods. It also provides a model for bringing necessities and opportunities to residents in rural and other potentially transit-challenged communities. **Right:** The City of New Haven adopted a [Complete Streets Design Manual](#) and has begun implementing its principles. Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users.



Community Engagement

All Connecticut communities strive to be vibrant, intergenerational places with opportunities for community engagement across the lifespan. Community engagement includes **support and connectivity, civic engagement**, and opportunities for both **employment** and **recreation**. Older adults enhance community capacity by contributing their experience and leadership to support community establishments, engaging in continuing education, addressing critical community issues as paid and unpaid workers, and acting as local economic participants. Communities in which individuals of all ages are valued and work together to enhance the quality of life for all.

Community Strategies

- Cultivate an atmosphere that promotes diversity and inclusiveness.
- Mobilize older adults to address community issues through meaningful paid and unpaid opportunities, especially to address workforce shortages, to support community establishments and to serve on municipal boards and commissions.
- Promote opportunities for intergenerational contribution. For example, young parents need child care, while older adults may need transportation for errands.
- Promote flexible work options, which not only support caregivers, but also enhance productivity, reduce absenteeism and cost, and enhance recruitment and retention.
- Support settings for intergenerational learning through adult and continuing education, including job retraining programs for older adults.
- Facilitate opportunities for religious, spiritual and social connectivity.
- Promote local economic development and job creation.
- Develop systems to consistently outreach to people at risk of social isolation.
- Provide opportunities for social and cultural engagement.



Far left: Through its First Fridays program, Putnam connects artists with a regional audience, as well as wide-ranging opportunities for community engagement.

Immediate left: With support from the City of Norwalk and numerous other partners, Under One Roof, a nonprofit, sponsors, develops and operates The Marvin, affordable housing for older adults in need of supportive services. The Marvin also houses a Children's Center, at which residents have an opportunity to volunteer.

Health Services

Livable communities are ones that promote the health and well-being of all Connecticut residents, including older adults. As people live longer—and often with multiple chronic conditions—leaders at all levels of government increasingly need to embrace an approach that thinks beyond just health care delivery systems and considers health in all policies. At least half of all health outcomes may be driven by community conditions, like walkability, housing quality, and the placement of public buildings and spaces. These and other conditions can impact physical activity levels, food access, air quality, social cohesion and economic opportunities—with profound implications for health.

Community Strategies

- Support a robust public health system to:
 - ◊ Improve health through in-home programs;
 - ◊ Provide wellness programs and preventive health services, such as screenings and immunizations;
 - ◊ Provide health education on various health topics;
 - ◊ Ensure food and environmental safety; and
 - ◊ Conduct disease surveillance, report analysis, and case investigation to reduce disease transmission.
- Support local health departments, first responders, senior centers and other partners in their efforts to prevent falls through various strategies, including medication safety reviews, blood pressure monitoring, training for service providers, fall prevention seminars, exercise classes, home safety assessments and other evidence-based practices.
- Formalize partnerships between health care, public health and social services leaders and professionals to ensure an integrated system that comprehensively meets the needs of older adults, such as addressing social isolation, loss and mental health issues, including hoarding.
- Formalize partnerships with town planners to maximize opportunities for Smart Growth and other strategies to promote more active lifestyles.
- Collaborate with local, state and regional transit leadership to create a balanced transportation system that connects residents with quality health care services.
- Ensure capacity and capability to plan for, respond to and recover from public health emergencies for all community residents, including those with access and functional needs.
- Systematically consider health impacts of projects, policies and community design on residents.
- Prioritize access to healthy and affordable foods and safe opportunities for physical activity for everyone.
- Promote more widespread adoption of telehealth and other assistive technologies to improve access to care, coordination, quality and outcomes for residents, all while reducing health care costs.
- Where appropriate, use and incentivize use of community health workers for service delivery.



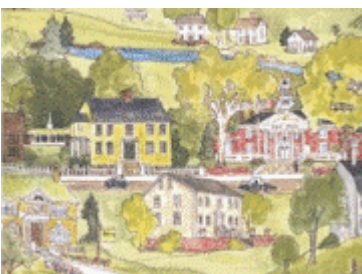
Above: The Pomperaug Health District, serving the towns of Southbury, Woodbury and Oxford, hosted a best practices workshop on community preventive services, including diabetes and fall prevention, chronic disease self-management, and community vaccinations.

Social Services

Livable communities have adaptable social and support services for all residents. Such services are broad and can help people carry out the tasks necessary for independent community living (such as shopping, financial management, and household maintenance), as well as the tasks necessary to maintain an active and engaged life. Robust social services and supports can prevent initial and repeated encounters with the health care system, improve quality of life, and keep people in their homes and communities.

Community Strategies

- Support a robust local social services system to address community needs through strategic collaborations among and between other municipal departments and divisions—like parks and recreation, public health and transportation services—and community leaders. Explore opportunities for regional collaboration.
- Promote information, training and support for caregivers across the lifespan, including grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Support effective, community-level primary mental health care for older adults.
- Create an open and affirming social services environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Connecticut.
- Facilitate collaboration among police, fire, aging services and adult protective services for safety education and prevention of physical and financial elder abuse.
- Identify geographic clusters of older adults, sometimes called naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), to deliver targeted social and supportive services delivery in neighborhoods of greatest need.
- Empower religious, spiritual and other community leaders to support community members at greatest risk of social isolation.



Left: A partnership of senior centers in Avon (top left), Canton (top right), Simsbury (bottom left), Newington (bottom middle), and Bloomfield (bottom right) are reaching out together to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) adult community and allies through a series of “Moveable Senior Center” events. The hope is to foster dialogue with people in the LGBT community, a group which faces special challenges as they age. Statewide, LGBT Aging Advocacy is working to create an open and affirming aging services environment for Connecticut’s LGBT population.

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Accomplishments

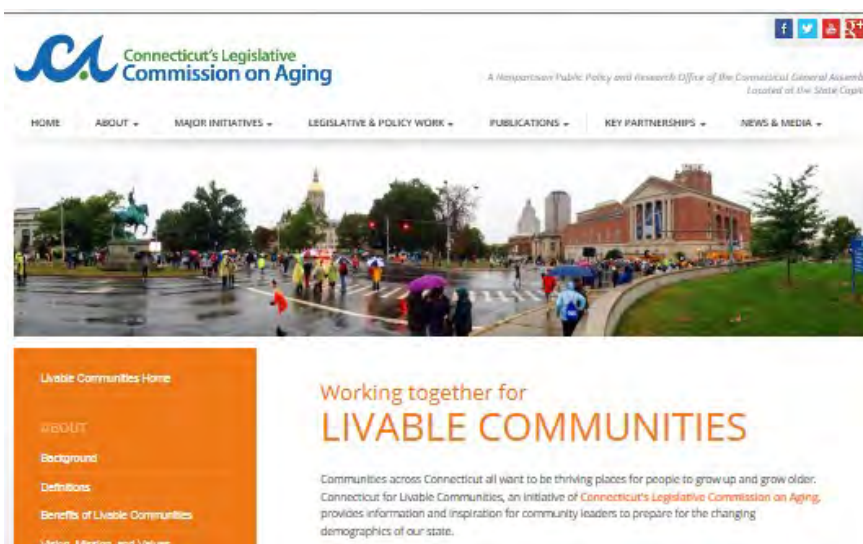


Providing Resources, Ideas and Inspiration

Among other aspects of this initiative, the Legislative Commission on Aging’s statutory charge is to “serve as a forum for best practices and a clearinghouse for resources to help municipal and state leaders to design livable communities to allow residents of this state to age in place.”⁴

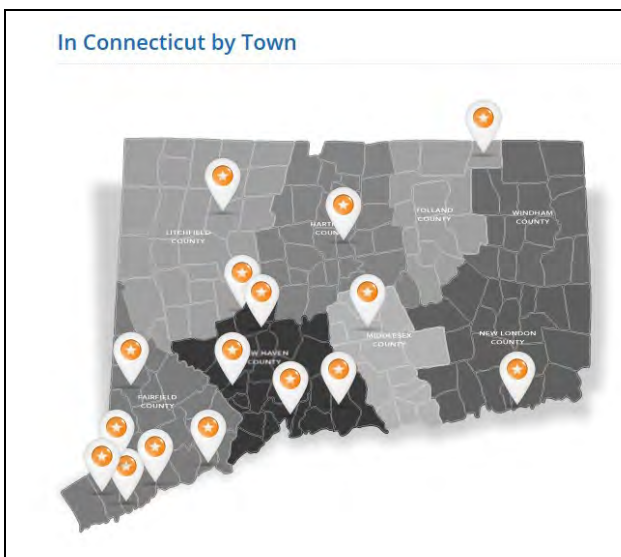
Accordingly, we established and maintain a website (www.livablect.org) for community leaders and their partners. Through consultation with subject matter experts and sustained research, the Commission improves, refines expands and updates website content on a continuous basis. We recognize ideas, innovations, and outstanding examples of livability on the website as well.⁵ The website provides resources, recommendations and information on best policies and practices. Finally, we also created a document titled “[Shaping Livable Communities & Promoting Aging in Place.](#)” It is a document, targeted to community leaders, that provides a comprehensive list of potential strategies on shaping community livability.

Shaping livability requires innovative partnerships and strategic planning.



LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Innovations and Ideas



Our map of ideas and innovations is intended to galvanize continued improvements in Connecticut’s livability.

Above: The map of livable communities ideas and innovations on the Commission’s website is intended to galvanize continued improvements in Connecticut, promote best practices, and stimulate continued ideas and innovation. **Right** (from top to bottom). (1) Mary Wade at Home provides non-medical home and community-based services and supports. Their effort advances one of the State’s rebalancing goals, which is to support nursing facilities seeking to diversify their business model. (2) Danbury Senior Resources is a virtual community place for Danbury older adults, families, and caregivers to find information and services, provided by the City of Danbury Department of Elderly Services and Danbury’s Aging in Place Council. (3) The Open Communities Alliance embraces diversity to strengthen Connecticut. Specifically, it is a new Connecticut-based civil rights organization that works to build an urban-suburban interracial coalition to support policies that lead to housing choice.

Conducting Research and Formulating Public Policy Strategies

Shaping community livability demands a fundamental rethinking of how communities are design, built and financed. Large-scale policy change should be informed by data. Accordingly, Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging, together with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Capitol Region Council of Governments, commissioned a statewide survey, conducted online by Harris Poll in the first quarter of 2015 among 1,011 Connecticut adults, leveraging an existing national tool, created by the American Planning Association. The purpose of the survey was to learn what Connecticut

residents have to say about how communities can best prepare to support residents across the lifespan.

The Legislative Commission is releasing the comprehensive findings as a series of topical policy briefs, analyzing survey responses and providing policy recommendations in light of Connecticut’s changing demographics. We released our first policy brief on transportation⁶, with plans to release subsequent data this fall on housing and economic security, to complement information in the [ALICE report](#), a study of financial hardship in Connecticut, released last year.⁷

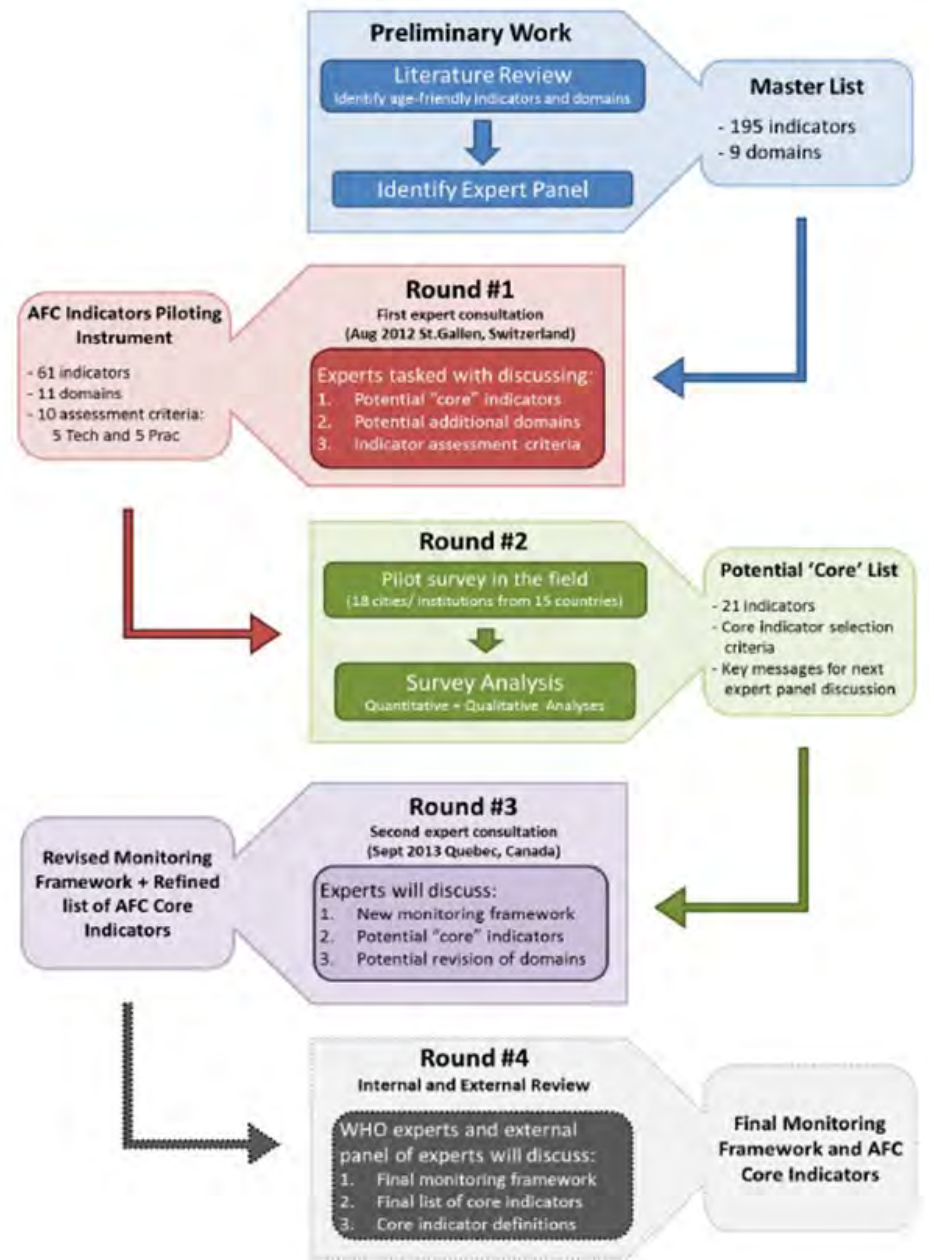


Right: Our [transportation policy brief](#), prepared by the Legislative Commission on Aging in partnership with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) analyzes the results of a statewide survey we conducted and provides policy recommendations. **Above:** Lyle Wray, executive director of the CRCOG, speaks at the Legislative Office Building, where we shared the key survey findings and discussed various transportation-related initiatives with legislators and organizational leaders.

Measuring Livability

Livability is a complex and multi-faceted concept, encompassing all of the domains in Section 4 of this report (“Domains of Livability”). The extraordinary breadth of these issues makes it important to define and measure progress. Determining how to measure livability sets a common understanding among stakeholders and provides the foundation for policy innovation and transformation. Measuring livability also establishes a baseline from which to monitor change over time and evaluate the efficacy of interventions, as well as to inspire continued social and political attention to shaping community livability. Finally, the Commission’s focus on measurement is a reflection of our long-time commitment to results-based accountability.⁸

At the international level, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been working to create what they are calling an “age-friendly city indicator guide,” to measure age-friendliness. We provided comment on the first draft of WHO’s “Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators.”



Above: The World Health Organization’s process for selecting and refining indicators for its age-friendly city indicator guide. Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging entered the process at the box marked “round 4,” providing comment on the first draft of the guide.

WHO Indicator Guide for Age-Friendly Cities: Pilot Sites



Above: The City of New Haven was one of 15 urban areas worldwide to pilot the second iteration of the World Health Organization’s age-friendly city indicator guide. Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging provided comment on the first draft of the guide and provided consultative support to DataHaven, the lead in piloting the guide in New Haven. The map was created by the World Health Organization

From that round of internal and external review, WHO developed the second iteration of their age-friendly city indicator guide. DataHaven is a New Haven-based non-profit organization whose mission is to “improve quality of life by collecting, sharing and interpreting public data for effective decision-making.” On behalf of the City of New Haven, DataHaven was invited as one of 15 urban areas worldwide to pilot the second iteration of the WHO age-friendly city indicator guide.

With consultative support from the Legislative Commission on Aging, DataHaven used the WHO indicators to evaluate the status of livability in New

Haven and Connecticut. Because the analysis focused not only on the City of New Haven but also on the Greater New Haven region, the report is fairly representative of other suburban and urban Connecticut communities.

The findings, along with those of similar studies by the other 14 international sites in the pilot, will inform WHO’s global standard for assessing age-inclusivity. The findings were also used to shape the 2015 Community Wellbeing Survey, a large-scale statewide survey being conducted by DataHaven that will provide local-level information on community livability and well-being for cities,



The Age-inclusivity of New Haven and Connecticut

A pilot of *Measuring the Age-friendliness of Cities: A Guide to Using Core Indicators* by the World Health Organization Centre for Health Development

March 31, 2015

written by Mary Buchanan and Mark Abraham of DataHaven with support from Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

About the author

DataHaven is a non-profit organization with a 25-year history of public service to Greater New Haven and Connecticut. Our mission is to improve quality of life by compiling, sharing, and interpreting public data for effective decision making. DataHaven is a formal partner of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership of the Urban Institute in Washington, DC.

Acknowledgement

In addition to in-kind staff time and support provided by DataHaven and Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging, this study was made possible through grants received from Connecticut Council for Philanthropy and Connecticut Community Foundation, and from a private donor. We thank these organizations for their generous support and guidance.



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towns and neighborhoods across the state. When completed, the Legislative Commission intends to use data from the 2015 Community Wellbeing Survey to create a statewide benchmark report on Connecticut's livability.

One of DataHaven's charges was to engage with key stakeholders in piloting the age-friendly city indicator guide. The Legislative Commission coordinated the convening of a select group of representatives from among our partners and other stakeholders to participate in a facilitated dialogue in New Haven. We also assisted in collecting electronic feedback from those who could not attend in person.

The final report, authored with support from the Legislative Commission, is called *The Age-inclusivity of New Haven and Connecticut*, which adapts the WHO's indicators for use in Connecticut. Upon invitation from the WHO, DataHaven presented our findings in June at an international convening on age-inclusive livability in Geneva, Switzerland.

These collective efforts complement the work of AARP, our partner in this work, whose national Public Policy Institute just launched the Livability Index. The Livability Index is an online interactive tool that measures the quality of life in American communities across multiple dimensions. It generates a score, based on 60 different data metrics. As a set of nationally available, objective data markers, they complement the efforts of the Legislative Commission and their partners to collect subjective data—what community members think (discussed above under the subsection "Conducting Research and Formulating Public Policy Strategies")—and other metrics only available through unique collection and analysis in Connecticut.

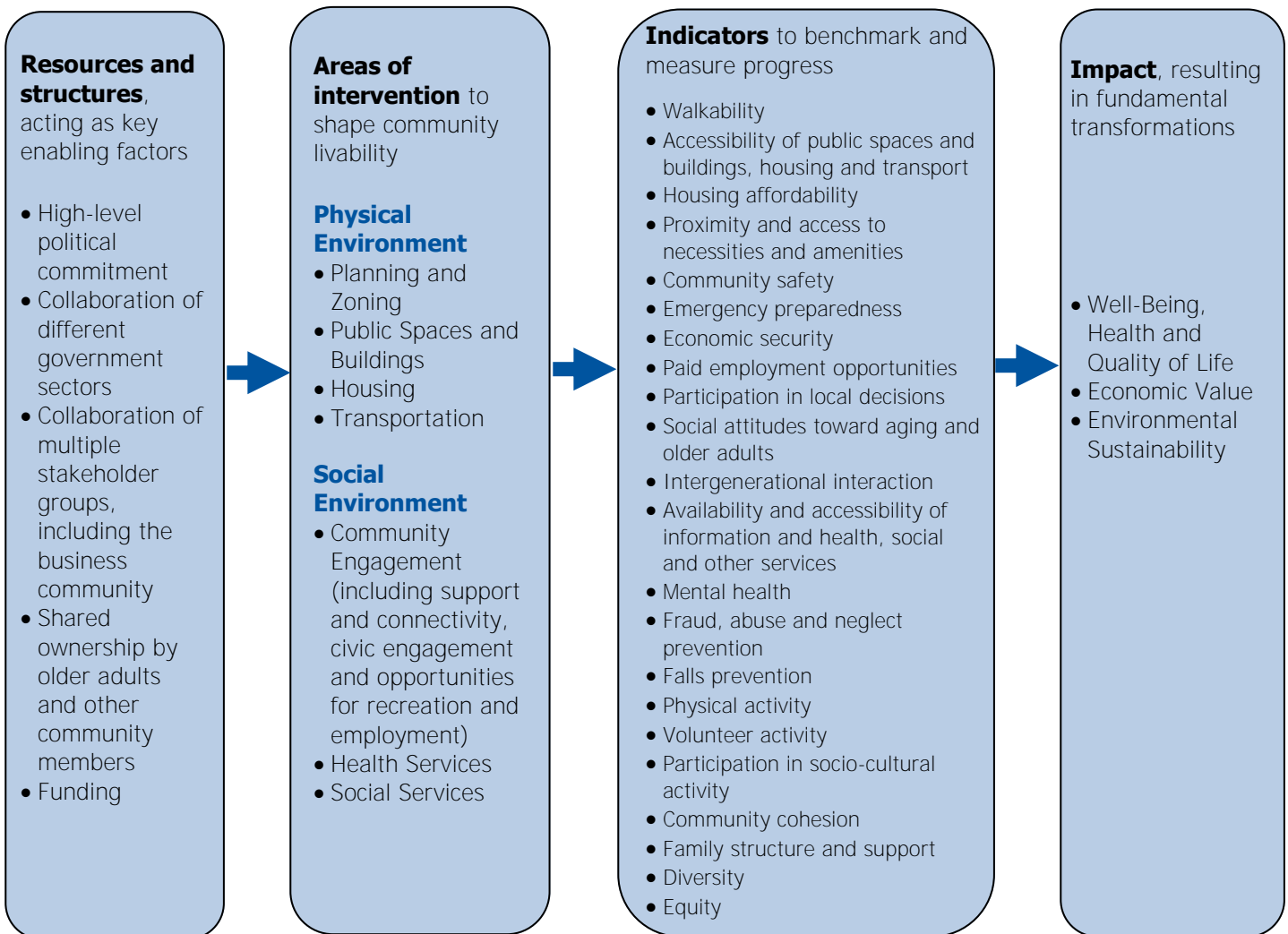


Top: Final report to the World Health Organization, following our support of DataHaven's pilot of an international age-friendly cities indicator guide. **Bottom:** Age-inclusive community indicator pilot sites in Iran, China, UK, Russia, India, Argentina, France, Australia, Washington DC, and New Haven convened at the World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva in June.

Building Cross-Sector Partnerships

With such an expansive reach across sectors, the work of shaping community livability demands establishing and facilitating partnerships across a wide range of fields. Per our statutory charge, Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging has strategically cultivated nearly 50 organizational partners⁹ (including a number of state agencies and commissions, like the State Department on Aging, among others) through at least 75 different one-on-one meetings. Through these partnerships, we connect related initiatives to maximize resources and expertise to shape community livability.

Prior to our work with DataHaven (described in the “Measuring Livability” section above), we convened our partners and other expert stakeholders at the Capitol to discuss a data-driven framework to measure and assess livability. Participants engaged in small-group conversations about the motivations for enhancing livability collaboratively, and they provided comment on the Legislative Commission’s framework for improving community livability. Feedback from that process resulted in the following revised framework:



Above: A framework for shaping livable communities, adapted by Connecticut’s Legislative from a World Health Organization model and revised with partner input.

We also asked participants for a word or phrase about why working to create livable communities is important to them. Here's what they said:



Top right: Siobhan Morgan, Director of Waiver Services at the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, and Sherry Ostrout, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Aging, at our 2014 Partners' Summit. **Bottom right:** Over 50 expert stakeholders, representing more than 30 organizations, convened at the State Capitol for the Summit.



At the invitation of our partners, we have and will continue to participate in wide-ranging, multi-sector collaboratives with implications for shaping community livability. By way of illustration, we have engaged with the following organizations and initiatives, among many others:

- **Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS)**, through leadership in long-term services and supports rebalancing between the funding and capacity of traditional institutions and services provided in home and community-based settings. The Legislative Commission chairs the Long-Term Care Advisory Council, has led the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee, leads workforce development efforts and is a member of the Community First Choice Council.
- **Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT)**, through participation in *TransformCT* and invitation to advise the Connecticut Strategic Highway Safety Plan. *TransformCT* is the highly interactive strategic planning process that engaged the public, stakeholders, and partners to shape Connecticut's long-term transportation vision. The Connecticut Strategic Highway Safety Plan, which we will inform through participation in the non-motorized road users emphasis area team, is a statewide plan that established strategies, projects and programs among multiple agencies to reduce highway fatalities and serious injuries for all road users on all public roads.
- **Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH)**, through membership in the HealthyCT 2020 State Health Improvement Plan Coalition, to assist in implementing the objective to increase the incorporation of a "health-in-all-policies" approach, especially with respect to land use decisions.

- **Knowledge Corridor Fair Housing and Equity Assessment** (convened by the Capitol Region Council of Governments), through participation in a roundtable conversation, with attention to aging in place issues, including housing accessibility and affordability, as well as supportive housing.
- **Regional Plan Association (RPA)**, developing its 4th Regional Plan, which will chart the course (for Connecticut, New York and New Jersey) of the region's growth, sustainability, governance and economic opportunity for the next 25 years. We serve as a Communities Workgroup member, providing the lifespan planning lens through meeting participation and written feedback. We have further provided RPA with requested, comprehensive, age-stratified data that we collected on the perspectives of Connecticut residents and co-sponsored two community forums (one in Hartford and one in Southport), organized by the Partnership for Strong Communities, for Connecticut-specific conversations on the 4th Regional Plan.



Above: Alyssa Norwood (Project Manager of the Legislative Commission on Aging) and other members of the Communities Workgroup convened in Manhattan to inform the Regional Plan Association's 4th Regional Plan for Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.

Local Consultative Support

Since this initiative's inception, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging has worked with local leadership and provided consultative support to communities throughout Connecticut to embed a lifespan

approach to decision-making at local, regional and state levels of government. At the local level, those communities include: Bloomfield, Columbia, Danbury, Darien, Enfield, Guilford, Hebron, Manchester, Marlborough, New Haven, Rocky Hill, Seymour, Stamford, Suffield, West Hartford, Wethersfield and Woodstock. And our list continues to grow.

Left: Courtney Hendricson (Assistant Town Manager of Enfield), Pat Linehan (Member of the Enfield Commission on Aging), Julia Evans Starr (Executive Director of the Legislative Commission on Aging), and David Goyette (Chairperson of the Enfield Commission on Aging).



Growing Expertise and Raising Awareness

Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging has invested strategically not only in leveraging partnerships but also growing our own subject matter expertise. During the past year, we attended or participated in at least 35 forums, conference calls, webinars or conferences related to livability initiatives occurring in Connecticut and across the country, including attendance at the national American Planning Association, which featured its first-ever cross-generational symposium. Our colleagues outside Connecticut recognize our growing subject matter expertise, with one inquiry for technical guidance coming from consultants shaping Hong Kong's age-friendly initiative.

We also raise awareness on the complex and multi-faceted issues associated with shaping communities that support residents across the lifespan. We do so through regular public speaking activities, writing articles and distributing regular electronic communications to our partners. A representative but not comprehensive list of awareness-raising activities is included below.

- WTIC AM "At Home in Connecticut": Alyssa Norwood, Project Manager, was a guest on the Legislative Commission on Aging's monthly show, hosted by Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director
- Various blog contributions and articles (see reference list)¹⁰
- Aging Affinity Group (a group of philanthropic organizations with an interest in funding initiatives to advance the well-being of Connecticut's older adults, convened by the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy): Ongoing presentations and expert consultation
- Area Agencies on Aging: Core planning committee member and a keynote speaker at their annual conference, which focused on livable communities and mental health
- Speaker at statewide meetings for the Connecticut Public Health Association, Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, the Connecticut Data Collaborative, the CT Council of Government (COGs), the Long-Term Care Advisory Council, and the Municipal Geriatric Social Workers



Left: Alyssa Norwood (Project Manager of the Legislative Commission on Aging) presents at a statewide meeting of the Connecticut Data Collaborative on Connecticut's changing demographics. **Right:** Alyssa Norwood (right) is interviewed on WTIC AM Radio by Julia Evans Starr (Executive Director of the Legislative Commission on Aging) about livable communities on the Commission's monthly show.

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Next Steps



The livable communities initiative of Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging concentrates on shaping and sometimes transforming long-term systems, but simultaneously is dynamic, ever-responding to many changing issues. Connecticut’s evolving demographics demands this sustained commitment to systems change. Next steps in the Commission’s livable communities initiative are outlined below.

- **Continue Research Analysis and Formulation of Public Policy Strategies.** The Legislative Commission will continue to analyze the findings of the comprehensive survey we conducted earlier this year to learn what Connecticut residents have to say about how communities can best prepare to support residents across the lifespan. Following the release of our first policy brief on transportation, we plan to release subsequent data and policy recommendations this fall on housing and economic security.
- **Embed a Lifespan Lens in Statewide, Regional and Local Planning.** In 2013, the Legislative Commission shepherded legislation¹¹, suggesting that municipal plans of conservation and development include planning for older adults and individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities. The Legislative Commission will continue to influence efforts by the state, regional and local planning community to embed a lifespan lens in community design, building and financing.
- **Promote Policies that Consider Non-Motorized Transportation and Sustain, Coordinate and Grow Fixed-Route and Demand-Responsive Transportation Options.** The Legislative Commission will continue to collaborate with transportation stakeholders to build on Connecticut’s successes and promote funding for and implementation of complete streets policies to accommodate all transportation users. The Legislative Commission will also inform changes to transportation financing policy to support the continued coordination, growth and need for enhancing the convenience and quality of fixed-route and demand-responsive transportation options.
- **Integrate Older Adults into Economic Development Strategies.** Local economic development strategies tend to be biased toward

The livable communities concentrates on shaping and sometimes transforming long-term systems.

attracting and retaining young residents. As a complement to this work, the Legislative Commission will work to ensure that older adults are also integrated into economic development strategies, both to signal their critical economic value in the workforce, as caregivers and as consumers, among other roles, as well as to help both the public and private sectors respond with more services to this growing market segment.

- **Develop Wide-Ranging Strategies to Support Rural and Suburban Environments, As Well As Urban Centers.** The majority of Connecticut’s older adults are aging in suburban and rural environments. Shaping livability warrants consideration for every Connecticut resident, regardless of the type of community in which

that resident lives.

- **Foster Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.** We will continue to support the commitment of every Connecticut community to foster diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Continue Executing our Legislative Charge.** The Legislative Commission on Aging will continue recognizing innovations, ideas and best practices for shaping livability across the state; strategically expanding and sustaining diverse partnerships across multiple sectors; convening statewide and regional forums on livability; identifying funding opportunities for communities; providing technical assistance to Connecticut communities; and identifying and advancing policy solutions that incentivize and inspire the creation of livable communities.

This is everyone’s journey, as every generation in Connecticut will eventually be tomorrow’s generation of older adults. And collectively, we can all take ownership of the decades-long work of enhancing livability. Bold, visionary leadership at all levels—municipal, regional and statewide—and across all sectors will be necessary to shape community livability, which may involve rethinking well-established norms. By building on the strengths of each of Connecticut’s 169 cities and towns and the many communities within them, with tenacity, Connecticut will succeed in shaping great places for people to grow up and grow older.



7

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 - Partnership for Strong Communities
 - ◇ Meeting the Housing Needs of All State Residents, <http://www.pschoosing.org/news/meeting-housing-needs-all-state-residents>
 - ◇ Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is Creating Great Places to Grow Up and Grow Older, <http://www.pschoosing.org/news/connecticut%E2%80%99s-legislative-commission-aging-creating-great-places-grow-and-grow-older>
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