Aging in Place

in the New River Valley

Next Steps towards Building Lifespan Friendly Communities

Prepared by the Aging in Place Leadership Team

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For more Information or to Get Involved:

Action 1: Conduct a NRV Aging in Place Housing Survey

and

Action 4: Attain Age Friendly Community Certification

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Action 6: Encourage Land Use Policies and Regulations for Lifespan Friendly Communities

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In recognition of growing housing and service challenges, **Successfully Aging at Home in the New River Valley** – *a grassroots, community-based initiative* – was established to meet an unmet and growing need: the ability of residents to age in their homes and communities. The initiative is guided by the New River Valley (NRV) Aging in Place Leadership Team—a collaboration of eight regional organizations, which emerged during the 2010-2013 NRV Livability Initiative:

- NRV HOME Consortium
- NRV Area Agency on Aging
- Habitat for Humanity of the NRV
- Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology
- VA Dept. for Aging & Rehabilitative Services
- Community Foundation of the NRV
- Virginia Tech School of Construction
- NRV Planning District Commission

Aging in Place Leadership Team activities have included:

2013 Aging in Place Workshop - Over 80 community members met in Christiansburg to discuss the meaning of aging in place and conceptualize housing options and neighborhood configurations that could extend independence for older adults and foster healthy and successful aging across the lifespan. The housing, neighborhood, and community designs that emerged reflect regional values, priorities, and culture, support resident independence and self-determination, facilitate social interactions, and promote stewardship and conservation of the natural environment. The guidebook can be downloaded at: https://nrvhome.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/home-matters.pdf

2014 Aging in Place Workshop **-** Because participant response to the first workshop exceeded expectations and attendees were eager to delve deeper, a follow-up workshop was offered to explore the financial, policy, and decision-making obstacles that traditionally interfere with making our homes and communities truly lifespan friendly—great places to grow up *and* grow old**.** The event was attended by 125 participants, including community professionals representing aging services and advocacy, housing and community development, local and State government, as well as community members. More than 20% of attendees traveled from other regions of the state (e.g., Richmond, Charlottesville, Roanoke, & Danville) to learn more about how the NRV was addressing aging in place.

Workshop discussions were robust and led to the identification of next steps for the Aging in Place Leadership Team to effectively promote aging in place in the NRV. **The Aging in Place Leadership Team plans to initiate the 6 priority action items within this guidebook.** It is our hope that this plan will inspire focus and momentum and serve as an invitation for other community members to participate in making this action plan a reality for the NRV.

#1: Conduct a NRV Aging in Place Housing Survey

A comprehensive housing survey of adults aged 50+ living in the NRV is needed to identify individual and community priorities related to housing and the ability to age in place in the region.

This survey of older adults will focus on characteristics of their current home, including accessibility, visit-ability, location to services and amenities, and their housing needs and wants. The survey results will help our region develop effective strategies to implement the priorities identified and promote aging in place in the NRV.

Why is this survey important?

According to AARP, 90% of older adults nationwide want to remain in their homes for as long as possible before dying. Yet, findings from 2010 US Census block data suggest that homes in the NRV may not be designed to accommodate the needs of aging homeowners. Most homes were built 40+ years ago and include multi-story living, stepped entries, narrow doorways and hallways, second story bedrooms and single bathrooms adjacent to the bedrooms. Most of these older homes are likely to need repairs, modifications, and energy updates to meet the needs of older residents and remain habitable.

A housing survey needs to be conducted with NRV residents to identify their current and future housing needs and preferences. The information collected will be shared with residents, builders, local government officials, health and human service professionals, and persons who speak for the needs of vulnerable older residents.

Findings will help:

- local government make informed decisions about infrastructure and service priorities
- builders plan for identified demand and preferences in new construction and existing home renovations
- service organizations manage resources effectively by focusing on identified gaps and projected future demand

Potential Challenges and Solutions

The primary challenge to implementing a regional phone survey is lack of funding. To address this challenge the Center for Gerontology will collect pilot data to be used as baseline data when seeking funding from foundations, local businesses, stakeholders, and local government resources. If funding for a regional phone survey or the opportunity to link to another survey opportunity conducted by the Virginia Tech Center for Survey Research does not materialize, self-administered surveys could be distributed by members of the Aging in Place Leadership Team at local events and through door-to-door canvasing. An electronic survey can also be developed to recruit respondents using social media.

Key Implementation Partners

- **Nancy Brossoie, PhD, a home and community-based services evaluator at Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology** has a research interest in Aging in Place. She will be responsible for overseeing project management including survey development, data collection, and analysis. She will also spearhead efforts to secure funding for regional implementation.
- **Members of the Aging in Place Leadership Team and knowledgeable community members** (builders, developers, service providers, local government officials, and residents) will be asked to provide feedback on survey questions during initial stages of survey development. Their input will ensure that a comprehensive and meaningful survey is administered.
- The Aging in Place Team will work closely with **localities and other community partners** to distribute survey results.

Scope

The proposed survey will be offered to householders (rent or own) aged 50+ living within the New River Valley. Each respondent will be asked to report the needs of all older members (age 50+) in the household, resulting in one survey participant per household. A representative sample size will be predetermined for each jurisdiction in the NRV. Samples will further be defined by sex, age, and housing characteristics (age, type, ownership, location) so that the needs of older residents can be effectively identified.

Action Plan

- ☐ **Identify the types of information desired and develop initial survey questions.** Anticipated survey items include characteristics of the current home, accessibility, visit-ability, distance to services and amenities, and resident housing needs and wants.
- ☐ **Identify what type of data is currently available on housing in the NRV and what data can be linked to homeowners.** Use of currently available data will eliminate having to ask about information that is already accessible. Sources to be explored include Federal block census data and town personal property records.
- ☐ **The Aging in Place Leadership Team will provide feedback on survey questions to support further refinement.** Input on survey development is critical in ensuring that the multiple factors that influence housing are explored and represented.
- ☐ **Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology will pilot the survey to ensure item reliability and validity.** Pilot results will be used to solicit funds for implementing the region-wide survey.
- ☐ **Administer survey and analyze results over a 12 month period.** Ideally, the survey will be conducted by telephone within a 3 month period using the services of Virginia Tech Center for Survey Research. The timeframe allotted for hand distributed surveys is anticipated to extend to 6-9 months. It will take another 3 months to analyze and synthesize findings for the final report.
- ☐ **Share and disseminate findings across the NRV to help inform community discussions on housing.**

2: Develop a Lifespan Friendly Homes Program

The Lifespan Friendly Homes Program will provide low-income homeowners with assistance to obtain low or no cost modifications to address issues that inhibit accessibility to essential parts of their home.

Home modifications for elderly or disabled residents, which allow them to remain in their home safely, is the major priority for this program. This program will also augment the work of locally hired contractors and help align individual efforts to collectively utilize limited resources to improve home accessibility and extend independence for older residents.

Home modification activities include:

- Installation of lifts, wheelchair ramps, grab bars, railing, lever
- Bathroom modifications (accessible showers, bathtubs, sinks, toilet)
- Door & hallway widening for wheelchair & walker accessibility
- Modification of exterior doors to provide a step-free entrance
- Energy efficiency improvements that improve affordability and safety

Why are home modifications important?

There is clear need to initiate a home modifications program for low-income older residents in the NRV. As is the trend nationally, the population is aging . **The housing stock is also aging: nearly 60% of homes are more than 30 years old and nearly 32% are more than 50 years old.** These houses were not designed to meet the needs of older residents with limited or declining mobility. Residing in these homes raises risk for falls, serious injuries and health risks – significant factors that can hasten hospitalization and premature placement in nursing homes. Basic home modifications can extend independence and prevent these risks. For older adults to safely and successfully age in place, modifications are needed to provide an accessible home environment.

Helping seniors stay at home and delaying institutional care has significant financial ramifications. ***In the non-metro areas of Virginia, accommodating one adult in a nursing home costs an average of $70,000 to $80,000 annually.*** These expenses can quickly deplete savings and resources; not only impoverishing elders but placing increased financial burden onto taxpayers.

AVERAGE COST OF ELDER CARE PER MONTH IN VIRGINIA

	COST
NURSING HOME / PRIVATE ROOM	$6,360
ASSISTED LIVING	$3,743
ADULT DAY SERVICES	$2,880
HOME HEALTH AIDE	$1,860

*2010 Metlife Market Survey of Long-Term Care Costs

Most seniors in the NRV live on low or modest incomes. They are challenged to afford basic costs of living, much less the expense to pay for modifications that would improve accessibility in and out of the home. Taking a proactive, preventative approach to address these needs and initiating a home modification program, rather than reactive intervention to a crisis, can help adults age in place and is far more cost-effective for residents, families, and the NRV as a whole.

Potential Challenges and Solutions

1. **Funding for home modifications have traditionally been limited to low income homeowners living in the Town of Blacksburg corporate limits.** This has two significant flaws: Most homes in Blacksburg are rental properties not occupied by homeowners and the greatest level of need is outside of the Town of Blacksburg. The Aging in Place Leadership Team was recently awarded a Partners for Places grant that will extend the scope of this program to include low income older adults residing in the New River Valley. This is a two year funding source that will allow Habitat for Humanity and its partners to expand the program and develop a sustainable financing mechanism for a long-term New River Valley wide program. Long term funds are anticipated to come from a mixture of homeowner reimbursements, grants, and community fundraising.
2. **Local codes present an obstacle for modification projects if they require updating entire systems throughout the home (e.g. electrical, plumbing).** AiP partners will meet with local building officials to review codes, and work to overcome obstacles to modifications that improve accessibility to essential parts of the home.
3. **Projects beyond the scope of this program**. Identify and refer to regional resources that address additional problems to create a collaborative effort in providing lifespan friendly modifications.

Key Implementation Partners

- **Habitat for Humanity NRV** will be responsible for developing the Lifespan Friendly Homes Program.
- An **Advisory Board**, comprised of multiple public and non-profit agencies, will help to guide the program.
- **Habitat for Humanity NRV** along with **Habitat at Virginia Tech** volunteers will provide free labor and assistance with modifications, allowing the program to be more efficient in maximizing the funding available.
- The **NRV HOME Consortium** and **The Community Foundation of the NRV** will continue to serve as an intermediary for funds that can be used for home modifications.

Scope

The Lifespan Friendly Homes Program will be available to income eligible, homeowner-occupied applicants located in the NRV. Assistance will be provided to applicants who meet current low to moderate-income standards as mandated by HUD at the time of application and are 55 years of age or older. Applicants must own and live in their home as their primary residence. In the case of manufactured or mobile homes, ownership of the lot will not be a prerequisite. The amount of assistance per household is anticipated to average $5,000.

Action Plan

- ☐ **Establish an advisory board to help guide the program activities.**
- ☐ **Develop a home evaluation checklist, eligibility requirements, and client intake forms.**
- ☐ **Provide training for volunteers and Habitat staff on conducting home evaluations, home modifications, and energy upgrades.**
- ☐ **Pilot the home evaluation and modification process.**
- ☐ **Market the program, begin participant recruitment and screening, and complete home audits.**
- ☐ **Complete home modifications and any applicable energy upgrades.**
- ☐ **Link participants with other available resources and services that can help extend independent living and reduce energy expenditures.**
- ☐ **Evaluate the program as it is implemented, to determine impact and effectiveness and adjust strategies as needed.**
- ☐ **Continue to seek sustaining funds for the program.**

3: Establish a TimeBank in the NRV

An established TimeBank will provide a community based network to address the need for affordable supportive services and the need for meaningful engagement and connection in the community.

A TimeBank helps connect neighbors through the exchange of services. TimeBanks work by creating a large network of reciprocal service; in which members both give and receive assistance. The core tenet is that everyone has something to give, and everyone has something to gain. Building on that premise, a TimeBank allows people to share skills that build on individual strengths, skills and knowledge to benefit their neighbors and the community. The contributions of all people – regardless of age, education or status – are recognized and rewarded.

Why a TimeBank in the NRV?

Connection to family, friends, and community drives the desire to age in place. The 'need to feel needed' is inherent in successful aging. Older adults, and in fact, all residents, can and should be perceived as a vital component to the overall health and well-being of the community. We are challenged with the responsibility and opportunity to develop sustainable services that support aging in place immediately and for the impending future of our communities.

Health organizations endorse TimeBanks because they help people feel better and cut the cost of health care. TimeBanks promote a broader vision of health; one less focused on medicine and doctors' expertise, and more attuned to people's social and human needs.

- ***When the Visiting Nurse Service TimeBank of New York surveyed its older members, 79% felt the TimeBank would give them resources they would need to be able to stay in their homes as they aged.***
- In Richmond, Va., Sentara Healthcare found that using a TimeBank to provide peer support for people with asthma cut emergency admissions to hospitals by 74 % and saved $217,000 in health costs over two years.
- At Rushey Green Group Practice in London, Dr. Richard Byng recognized that many of his patients suffering from isolation and depression were unresponsive to medication. He believed they could benefit from contributing to others in a way that made them feel useful and valued. He enrolled patients in a TimeBank within the group practice. Participants made new friends and social connections, and reported reduced depression and increased self-esteem. Formal and family caregivers also reported less burden.

Potential Challenges and Solutions

1. **Available funding for both a program coordinator and marketing materials** (website, brochures, and advertising). At least a part-time program coordinator is needed to develop a database to document service exchanges and hold community outreach events to enhance broader support and engagement for the TimeBank. The NRV HOME Consortium is providing part time staff support to help launch and coordinate the TimeBank until additional funding can be secured. Potential funding sources include government and foundation grants, business sponsorships, donations, membership fees and participating organizations all of which will be pursued.
2. **Developing an effective outreach plan to expand the network of organizations and individuals willing to participate in a new and innovative model of reciprocal services.** Increasing awareness and enthusiasm for the program will be crucial for attracting potential members to join and to become and to remain actively engaged in service exchanges. While everyone has something to offer, some members may need time and assurance before they feel comfortable and ready to give and receive services. Even though there is a goal of making the TimeBank available to all residents and organizations throughout the New River Valley, initial services will likely need to be focused on neighborhoods or larger communities to ensure a vibrant exchange before it is launched throughout the region.

Key Implementation Partners

- An **Advisory Council** will be established to provide feedback and guidance to support the development of a start- up plan and to help ensure systematic growth of the program.
- The **NRV HOME Consortium** will provide part time staff support to help launch and coordinate the TimeBank. The position will coordinate outreach efforts to engage the community in supporting the program.
- As the TimeBank grows, **additional staff** time will be required. Some of this need will potentially be met by members of the TimeBank, who will be able to provide support for the organization and obtain time credits for service.
- Staff will seek collaboration with **partner organizations** that promote interdependence and improved quality of life for NRV residents.

Scope

The TimeBank will be a valuable and well-integrated tool that will eventually be available to all interested individuals and organizations across the NRV. Initial development will be in the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg in Montgomery County with the hope that it will expand across the NRV.

Action Plan

- ☐ **Establish an advisory board for the TimeBank.** The advisory board will work to create mission and vision statements, develop a membership guide which will include policies, procedures, fee-structure, contact information, and seek potential partners, sponsors, and members. An AmeriCorps VISTA member will provide assistance to the advisory board.
- ☐ **Identify and select appropriate software to manage the program.**
- ☐ **Develop and implement marketing strategies aimed at engaging individual and organizational members.**
- ☐ **Conduct outreach efforts to inform and attract potential members and service organizations.**
- ☐ **Identify funding for a long-term program coordinator** to manage the program and orient new members to the TimeBank and enter their membership information into the database.

4: Attain Age Friendly Community Certification

Seeking Age Friendly Community (AFC) Certification will encourage community growth and development, which will be beneficial to residents and the economy.

An age friendly community is one that commits to adapting its structures and services towards improving the lives of residents regardless of age, disability, or need.

The AFC designation is recognized globally by the World Health Organization (WHO) and nationally by AARP.

Selected features of an AFC include safe walkable streets, housing and transportation options, accessible home and community-based services, and opportunities for community engagement.

We propose to:

- build upon existing networks of regional, county, and local supports and resources.
- develop concrete steps within each jurisdiction to help make communities more age friendly.

World Health Organization

AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Why should the NRV attain Age Friendly Community (AFC) Certification?

AFC certification for the NRV will provide an opportunity for communities to collectively:

- Respond to the changing demographics in the region including the increased numbers of older residents
- Respect inclusion and diversity among residents
- Plan for and develop lifespan friendly communities within each jurisdiction
- Reach out to home builders and developers to encourage adoption of lifespan friendly design principles
- Promote how supporting AFC objectives can help support community businesses
- Build upon findings identified by the NRV Livability Initiative

Building on the groundswell of support for aging in place initiatives in the region, efforts to attain AFC Certification are expected to be well-received. Residents are receptive to changes that can improve quality of life. Engaging in the AFC certification process will help coordinate and catalyze local efforts selected as priority areas recognized in the WHO/AARP AFC certification:

- ◊ Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- ◊ Transportation
- ◊ Social Participation
- ◊ Housing
- ◊ Civic Participation & Employment
- ◊ Respect & Social Inclusion
- ◊ Communication & Information

Potential Challenges and Solutions

AFC Certification requirements include:

1. **Official commitments by community leaders to engage in the process.** We propose to garner support in the jurisdictions by building on support already offered by leaders in some of the larger towns.
2. **Identifying a lead organization to manage the Advisory Board, staff, and project initiatives.** Leadership is expected to be best led by a non-profit organization that serves older adults and/or the regional planning agency versus a governmental or university group that lacks the community ties needed to develop a groundswell of community support.
3. **Funding for supplies and staff time to coordinate the regional certification process.** Potential funding sources include foundation grants, public funds, and agency in-kind services. By joining the efforts of diverse sectors (i.e. sustainability & home repairs), funds may be realized.

Key Implementation Partners

- The **Aging in Place Leadership Team** and the **New River Valley Regional Commission** will initiate the AFC certification process.
- An **Advisory Board** will serve as mechanisms for exchanging ideas and information to support AFC certification and plan implementation.
- **Workgroups** focused on specific priorities will also be convened to guide the certification process. Members will include governmental, non-governmental, and business stakeholders as well as interested community members.

Scope

The planning process will occur NRV wide, however, at the start priority activities may focus on some of the larger towns within each area.

Action Plan

- ☐ **Leadership Team establishes an Advisory Board to promote the benefits of an AFC certification** with local government officials, businesses, nonprofit sector and residents and raise awareness of the importance of aging in place and lifespan friendly communities.
- ☐ **The Advisory Board will assemble workgroups consisting of community members** representing different stakeholders in each jurisdiction: business, government, non-profits, and builders/developers.
- ☐ **The Workgroups will report to the Advisory Board to increase their understanding of constraints and opportunities within each jurisdiction to implement best practices and effective response models.**
- ☐ **The Advisory Board will build and engage the workgroups in targeting a specific constraint in their jurisdiction by inviting interested stakeholders** (e.g., government officials, business owners, builders/ developers, not for profit service agencies, and residents) **to identify and develop action plans that address their needs**.
- ☐ **The Advisory Board will identify overlapping areas of need and concerns among the jurisdictions and places where efficiencies could be created or services improved through cross jurisdiction coordination** (e.g., transportation or internet access).
- ☐ **Facilitate the singular and combined efforts of the jurisdictions in the selection of action priorities and aid in identifying ways to achieve those goals.**

5: Create an Aging in Place Services Connector

A highly visible and comprehensive information service will enable older residents, family caregivers, and service providers to more easily locate and access local services that improve older adults' ability to live safely and independently in their homes and communities.

The service would provide unbiased comprehensive information on both public and private services and resources. This information service would include 4 features:

- **An Aging in Place program navigator:** Accessible through a toll-free number, a navigator would be available for those who need more guidance and personalized information.
- **Aging in Place Website:** This central source of information will include information on the Aging in Place NRV initiative as well as utilize and expand upon existing resource data bases and the Agency on Aging model of providing person centered information and referral services. A short menu of categorized services and resources with links to websites and telephone numbers will be used by individuals who have an idea of what they need but do not know where to start. Short YouTube videos will discuss and demonstrate simple home modifications, etc.
- **Aging in Place Printed Materials:** For those who do not use computers or the internet, hardcopy information with a brief description and a toll-free number to call will be frequently listed in newspapers, newsletters, etc. and displayed in businesses, agencies, health care provider's offices, etc.
- **Aging in Place Logo:** The logo could be widely publicized and posted on local government and agency websites. Individuals could click on the symbol and be linked to the new website. Thus, individuals will get the full benefit of the "No Wrong Door" approach currently promoted by the NRV Agency on Aging.

Why does the NRV need an Aging in Place Service Connector?

At both of the "Home Matters" workshops, several participants expressed the need for unbiased information or advice that could help "navigate and find useful resources and services as they age." Following the 2nd workshop, participants completing the evaluations commented on the need for the general public, aging adults, and caregivers to be made more aware of services available to them to assist them with aging in place, including specific information on how to access these services.

There are a number of state and regional resources that currently provide information on services for older adults, however awareness of these information sources appears to be limited and the systems underutilized. Two web and telephone-based programs, the Virginia 211 and the Virginia Navigator system, offer information on public and private health and human services in Virginia. Both systems can be accessed by hearing or visually impaired persons.

Sadly, listings for public health and human services are more prevalent on these sites than listings for private providers and businesses that can respond to non-health related issues. Poor utilization of these services is likely due to the lack of computer skills among older adults, limited access to the internet, or feelings of depersonalization when calling representatives. Users report that when they do seek information they are often "bounced" from one place to another before (if ever) reaching the right source.

The NRV Agency on Aging, serving as an Aging and Disability Services Connection, utilizes information on the Virginia Navigator data base along with known local resources both public and private to provide comprehensive and individualized information and access to services and re-sources to assist aging adults, adults with disabilities and their caregivers, regardless of income. Assistance can be obtained in person, by telephone or via the internet. While efforts are made to publicize the service, the general public does not seem to be aware of its existence. By having a highly visible Aging in Place Service Connector in place, emphasizing a person centered approach, more individuals will know where to obtain comprehensive information relative to their situation and location.

Potential Challenges and Solutions

1. **Funding is needed for a web developer and graphic designer to design the logo, website and printed materials.** Some tasks might be accomplished with students from Virginia Tech or Radford University at no cost or by approaching a web developer for pro-bono services.
2. **Funding is needed for staff and other costs associated with an on-going marketing and public relations campaign** to increase public awareness of information on aging in place and for regular website maintenance. On-going staffing needs could potentially be funded through grants.
3. **Identifying how private, fee-based vendors will be vetted for inclusion on the website.**

Key Implementation Partners

- **The NRV Agency on Aging** will provide the personalized information and referral service component. With adequate resources, the public relations and marketing is expected to be spearheaded by the Agency on Aging.
- **The Aging in Place Leadership Team** will provide project guidance and help identify possible funding sources.
- **Students from Virginia Tech and Radford University** will help to research, design, and build the website or information for the website.

Scope

The proposed website and in-person referral system would be available to all residents of the NRV, regardless of income.

Action Plan

- ☐ **Develop content for the website and printed materials.**
- ☐ **Work with a graphic designer to assist in designing the Aging in Place symbol and logo.**
- ☐ **Hire a website developer to design and develop the website and provide training on its management.**
- ☐ **Engage individuals that would use the web-based information and toll-free service for input on how to make it user friendly and best meet their needs.**
- ☐ **Identify a person or entity to maintain the website, make updates, and track data obtained from the use of the website and the toll-free telephone number for use in planning for and provision of future services.**
- ☐ **Identify an organization or agency to provide the person-to-person information and referrals.**
- ☐ **Identify a "marketing"/public relations person to manage a planned and intentional public awareness campaign** (20 hours per week minimum).

6: Encourage Land Use Policies and Regulations for Lifespan Friendly Homes

Improvements to local and state policy and regulations will help to facilitate the development of lifespan friendly homes and communities, in order to ensure safe and convenient places for people as they age.

Why a focus on land use policy and regulations?

Land use policy, land development, and building regulations shape the built environment. These policies and regulations have not historically been geared towards meeting the needs of older residents either at the community or individual level. Many existing homes are poorly suited to declining mobility because they were designed and built without thought for the need of single-level living. Entrances, doorways, and hallways may be difficult to navigate for someone using a wheelchair or walker. By improving the physical design of homes and communities, residents can experience better health, mobility and social interaction.

Potential Challenges and Solutions

1. **The building code is a state controlled document, local governments do not have the ability to make modifications that would require more life span friendly housing design.** Lobbying to have more universal designs and accessibility measures embedded in the building code would advance this issue significantly.

2. **Local governments often require lengthy permitting and rezoning processes, in order to offer flexibility for development, and developers often default to by-right developments due to time and money constraints.** Local government staff could create development guidelines around home siting and universal design principles that would encourage developers to propose projects that are lifespan friendly, while still appealing to the average homeowner. If the developer can meet certain aging in place development criteria, project review could be expedited. Tax incentives are another option but often one that many localities cannot afford to provide. Localities could also introduce flexibility in the zoning code to allow "by-right" setback variances for retrofitting an accessibility ramp, or other tools such as allowing for accessory dwelling units/granny flats. Sidewalks and connectivity between uses are also community elements that support aging-in-place.

3. **Aging in place home design often becomes an issue only when a crisis occurs and the home is no longer safe or suitable for its residents.** People make housing choices that make sense for their current age and household configuration at the time they are house-hunting, yet studies show that homebuyers routinely underestimate the amount of time they will live in any given house, sometimes by decades. Also, they often do not contemplate a situation where they are taking care of older relatives in their home in the future. The majority of conversations about desired home features occur between the homebuyer and the realtor and/or builder – introducing aging in place into this conversation could be a most effective tool.

4. **There is a lack of human and financial resources to address aging in place issues and increase outreach efforts in the community.** In order for homes and communities to become more lifespan friendly, it will be important to educate and engage citizens of all ages about the value of having a home and community that work across the lifespan. Getting local groups such as AARP, Ruritan, Rotary, Lions Club, and League of Women Voters involved to actively support and advocate for land use and policy changes could be a strong step forward. Advocacy on the part of homebuyers would help influence the housing market and encourage developers and realtors to build and market universal design as an asset of the home. Advocacy for community amenities and connectivity will also make neighborhoods viable for all ages, not just those aging in place.

Key Implementation Partners

- **Local governments** will work together to lobby for changes in the state building code, pool resources, and seek state and federal planning grant funds for review and amendment to local development regulations.
- **Community organizations (**AARP, Ruritan, Rotary, YMCA, Habitat for Humanity of the NRV, Community Housing Partners, NRV Agency on Aging) will increase education and outreach efforts to their stakeholders.
- **Educated citizens** will help to advocate for lifespan friendly housing and neighborhood design.

Scope

There is not one specific project that can effect the desired change in the NRV. Each community will need to find the right approach for their community and work towards a policy change, educational campaign or demonstration project that will show the importance of this issue and the realistic possibilities for change. Still, communities can learn from one another in this effort. Land use issues are a long term consideration that need to stay at the forefront for local policy makers and citizens.

Action Plan

Because land use policies and development decisions are predominantly local issues, a community that wants to foster successful aging in place should proactively integrate these priorities in their comprehensive plan and other land use regulations.

- ☐ **Actively work with local governments to use the tools at their disposal to foster good site design for aging in place through its land use policies.**
- ☐ **Encourage developers and builders to pursue universal design features for new construction above what is required by the building code.**
- ☐ **Identify potential changes in the state building code that may assist in supporting lifespan friendly design, and as a region, lobby for these changes to be made.**
- ☐ **Encourage localities to use the AARP's Livability Index tool (www.livabilityindex.aarp.org) to evaluate whether their existing regulations and policies serve to facilitate or inhibit aging in place.** The score provided can then be used as a baseline measurement to identify areas of improvement.
- ☐ **Develop and implement a community education campaign focused on aging in place and specifically target relevant citizen groups and older adults.**
- ☐ **Engage realtors, architects, and builders in an on-going conversation about the value and marketability of Aging in Place features.**
- ☐ **Share information between communities about innovative residential design and resources for retrofitting existing housing stock.**