**An Age-Friendly Burlington Action Plan**

**HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, AND COMMUNITY DESIGN**

**As an Age-Friendly Community, in Burlington:**

Affordable, accessible, appropriate, safe, and service-enriched housing, transportation, and community support options allow older adults to age in community within a variety of settings along the continuum of care, fostering rich engagement in community life. These same building blocks, affordable housing, accessible transportation, and community friendly design are the same components that encourage people to grow up and raise their families in Burlington and for new residents to move to the city and stay.

The city provides leadership to ensure that a wide range of housing options and a network of homebased care and other service options are available to meet changing needs of older residents allowing older adults to remain in their homes as they age, and when appropriate move within the community to more supportive housing maintaining their engagement in the civic, economic, and social life of the community.

The city demonstrates its commitment to an age-friendly transportation network, including improved community walkability and expansion of bus and transit stops, seamless transit across transit district lines, and investing in complete streets infrastructure through both its annual planning and budgeting process, and its long-term vision.

**Moving toward an Age-Friendly Community, in Burlington:**

* Older adults have access to a comprehensive set of programs that connect housing, health care, and social enhancement.
* Housing options that are accessible, affordable, and safe are in ample supply to address the needs of older adults at various levels of independence.
* Opportunities are created to provide affordable dementia-focused housing that meets universal design standards and incorporates the person-centered [Best Friends™](https://bestfriendsapproach.com/about/about-the-best-friends-approach/) approach to memory loss to reduce the long waitlist for those with lower income looking for residential memory care.
* Housing for older adults and transportation services are tightly linked ensuring options for travel to work, volunteer, routine health appointment, spend time with family and friends, and enjoy entertainment, recreational and religious activities.
* There is a comprehensive strategy to prioritize the needs of older adults (e.g., community design, sidewalks, winter maintenance, transit stops, sitting benches). Incorporate this explicitly into [PlanBTV](https://planbtv-burlingtonvt.opendata.arcgis.com/), work with planning efforts across Vermont in seeking [Network of Age Friendly States accreditation](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/), and contribute to the incorporation of older adult sensibilities in the [CCRPC ECOS Plan](https://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/ecos-regional-plan/).
* Mobility options allow those without, or with limited use of personal automobiles to meet their mobility needs affordably and efficiently.
* Public spaces are accessible and inclusive (indoor and outdoor) for all ages, in all seasons.
* Public intergenerational programming is the norm.

**Actions: City Council & The Mayor’s Office**

1. Expand City staffing functions in key city departments (e.g., CEDO, Planning, DPW, Parks, Recreation & Waterfront) to explicitly address the needs of older adults in the city. Build Age-Friendly criteria into job descriptions and performance reviews and provide staff with adequate training and upskilling to succeed in this effort.
2. Support the expansion of existing Burlington programs that work to connect housing, health care, and social supports for aging residents, with an emphasis on broadening the provision of diverse types of housing options/situations depending on level of independence.
3. Expand the supply of affordable age-specific housing options. Work with housing organizations to increase affordable and accessible assisted living opportunities. Collaborate with developers and partners to create opportunities to provide affordable dementia-focused housing.
4. Increase opportunities for Home Share programming in Burlington. Assess the current pilot program approved by City Council in 2022. Build on the incentives that are working. Review strategies such as municipal tax breaks for Home Share homeowners and include provisions for how this applies to multi-generational living situations among diverse cultural groups.
5. Require all new construction to adhere to [Universal Design Standards](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2021/visitability-and-universal-design-in-sarasota-county-florida.html).
6. Work with GMT to increase usage of public transportation, with special attention to the needs of older adults, and support GMT staffing and resource needs to accomplish this. Work with GMT to ensure that the fare structure is transparent and understandable to riders, and that it considers the needs of older riders in terms of access, comfort, and AFFORDABILITY.
7. Work with GMT, DPW, and other relevant agencies on processes and funding needed to support a standardized bus stop amenity plan that addresses winter maintenance. Apply a similar process to handicapped parking spaces.
8. Provide incentives to fill the gaps with volunteer and assisted ride programs.
9. Require [PlanBTV](https://planbtv-burlingtonvt.opendata.arcgis.com/) to incorporate a comprehensive strategy to prioritize the needs of older adults in elements of community design, including sidewalks, winter maintenance, etc.
10. Adapt the capacity, staffing, and funding of pre-existing policy efforts to expand age friendly infrastructure and design efforts in Burlington.
11. Promote the newly adopted BTV Neighborhood Code to increase opportunities for middle housing. Collaborate with residents and small-scale developers to include community input in the implementation and development of zoning policy that supports middle housing with an emphasis on accessibility and affordability for older adults.

**Summary of Key Investments:**

* Expand City staffing functions in key city departments (e.g., CEDO, Planning, DPW, Parks, Recreation & Waterfront) to explicitly address the needs of older adults in the city, build it into job descriptions and performance review, and provide staff with adequate training and upskilling to succeed at this effort.
* Assess the Home Share pilot program and determine what incentives work and fund them. Review the opportunity to provide a municipal tax break for Home Share homeowners.
* Assess GMT funding needs that the city must supplement to ensure adequate public transit service for older adults. Provide incentives to fill the gaps with volunteer and assisted ride programs, such as GMT’s Community Driver Program.
* Expand or hire staff as needed to support Age-Friendly Burlington initiatives.
* Provide training opportunities for city staff on meeting Age-Friendly goals.

**Actions: Burlington Aging Council and Age-Friendly Organizational Network (including City Departments) with Staffing Support**

**City Coordination**

1. Collaborate with **staff in key city departments** (e.g., CEDO, Planning, DPW, Parks, Recreation & Waterfront) to develop and coordinate strategies and programs to explicitly address the needs of older adults in the city.
2. Identify **training and upskilling** opportunities for city staff, Council members, and partners to succeed in this effort.

**State Coordination**

1. Align Burlington goals with State goals and support state efforts to measure progress and work toward Age-Friendly State accreditation.
2. Support state legislation to advance Burlington and the State’s Age Strong Plan goals.

**Housing**

1. Support the expansion of existing Burlington programs that work to **connect housing, health care, and social supports for aging residents**, with an emphasis on broadening the provision of diverse types of housing options/situations depending on level of independence.
   1. Expand age-specific housing-based programs that focus on mental health and social isolation as a determinant of physical health.
   2. Support embedding mental health clinicians with housing programs to support those clients with mental health concerns and identify emerging issues.
   3. Collaborate with local BIPOC, New American and other cultural affinity groups to ensure the inclusion of culturally informed resources on combined housing and health care opportunities.
2. Expand the supply of **affordable age-specific housing options**.
   1. Encourage housing organizations to increase the availability of affordable and accessible assisted living opportunities.
   2. Work with developers and partner organizations to create opportunities to provide affordable dementia-focused housing that meets universal design standards and incorporates the person-centered [Best Friends™](https://bestfriendsapproach.com/about/about-the-best-friends-approach/) approach to memory loss to reduce the long waitlist for those with lower income looking for residential memory care.
3. Increase awareness and usage of existing maintenance and home modification programs aimed at keeping older residents in their homes, safely, for longer. Advocate for increased funding and support for home fit programs to adapt older homes for those who are aging or experiencing disabilities with existing partners (e.g., Cathedral Square, VCIL, Age Well)
4. Increase opportunities for Home Share programming in Burlington.
   1. Assess the current pilot program approved by City Council in 2022. Determine what variables and incentives are working.
   2. Explore additional strategies, such as municipal tax breaks for Home Share homeowners.
   3. Research how this applies to multi-generational living situations among diverse cultural groups.
5. Explore what it would take to expand Accessory Dwelling Unit incentives specifically targeted toward 60+ population, including bridge loans.
6. Promote accessibility for all Burlington housing units ([Universal Design Standards](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2021/visitability-and-universal-design-in-sarasota-county-florida.html)).
7. Advocate for increased focus on housing services and programs for older adults in Burlington’s housing plans and strategies. Explicitly recognize the importance of [housing and transportation](https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/24/4916) in fostering an age-friendly city environment.
8. Increase the supply of middle housing and raise awareness about missing middle housing, with a focus on the needs of older adults for housing options.
   1. Promote the newly adopted BTV Neighborhood Code to increase opportunities for middle housing.
   2. Collaborate with residents and small-scale developers to include community input in the implementation and development of zoning policy that supports middle housing with an emphasis on accessibility and affordability for older adults.

**Transportation**

1. Work with GMT to explore strategy and programs to increase usage of public transportation by expanding the accessibility and convenience of services with special attention to the needs of older adults. Work with GMT to ensure that any future fare structure is transparent and understandable to riders, and that it considers the needs of older riders in terms of access, comfort, and AFFORDABILITY. Advocate for a fare structure that acts to increase ridership by older adults, decreasing their reliance on personal vehicles. Make available resources for older transit riders to better understand GMT services and fare structure. Promote utilization of GMT’s travel Training Program, [Ride Together](https://ridegmt.com/ride-together-by-gmt/).
2. Promote the services offered by SSTA (e.g., *social rides*) and eligibility for such services. Support staffing and resource needs of SSTA to meet increased demand.
3. Advocate for incentives to fill the gaps with volunteer and assisted ride programs, such as GMT’s [Community Driver Program](https://ridegmt.com/become-a-volunteer-driver/).
4. Work with SSTA, UVMMC shuttling services, and other transportation operations to expand current transportation services to medical appointments, e.g., provision of accessible routes to UVMMC satellites (Tilley Drive, etc.).

**Community Design**

1. Work with [PlanBTV](https://planbtv-burlingtonvt.opendata.arcgis.com/) on creating a comprehensive strategy to prioritize the needs of older Burlington residents in elements of community design, including sidewalks, winter maintenance, etc.
   1. Work with planning efforts across Vermont in seeking Network of Age Friendly States accreditation. Examine strategies employed by other VT cities in the Network of Age Friendly Cities: Milton, Newport.
   2. Adapt the capacity, staffing, and funding of pre-existing policy efforts to expand age friendly infrastructure and design efforts in Burlington.
2. Work with City Departments to adopt the AARP-VT Winter Audit Report on Burlington and act on the key recommendations:
   1. Create a Winter City Strategy or a Winter Master Plan through a robust process of equitable community engagement. The Plan or Strategy should focus on parks and public spaces while prioritizing programming, maintenance, and equity.
   2. Create winter programs and attractions that are accessible and representative of Burlingtonians of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic statuses. Support businesses and organizations who seek to provide winter activities and events through promotion, permit approvals, and winter-based improvement grants. Explore work being done in other cities focusing on winter accessibility needs that could be employed in Burlington.
   3. Imbed a winter lens in all planning and policy documents.

**We measure progress as we:**

* Increase Home Share program matches and longevity of matches in Burlington.
* Increase the number of age specific housing units available in Burlington, independent, assisted, nursing, and memory care, and decrease the waiting list time for these units.
* Decrease the numbers of older Burlington residents (60+) experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.
* Increase funding and utilization home modification programs to support Aging in Place.
* Increase use of GMT and specific transport services.