



A Community for all Ages-Herkimer County

Action Plan

June 2025

A Community for All Ages- Herkimer County an summary provided by the Herkimer County Age Friendly Coalition

The Herkimer County Age-Friendly Coalition is proud of the progress made to ensure our community is welcoming, accessible, and supportive for residents of all ages. In 2020, Herkimer County applied for and was accepted into the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, affirming our commitment to age-friendly planning and policies that address changing demographics and promote independent living.

Recognizing the opportunities presented by our growing older adult population, Herkimer County has embraced a vision of continuous improvement to support active, healthy aging and foster long-term economic and social vitality. This Action Plan is the result of extensive community input gathered from residents across the county and is built upon the eight domains of livability defined by AARP and the World Health Organization: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Transportation; Housing; Social Participation; Respect and Social Inclusion; Work and Civic Engagement; Communication and Information; and Community and Health Services.

In 2020, the County received an Age-Friendly Planning Grant from the New York State Herkimer County Office for the Aging. We are now excited to move from planning to implementation—transforming ideas into action to make Herkimer County a truly age-friendly community for all.

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I. Herkimer County Profile

Herkimer County is located in central New York State, situated northwest of Albany and east of Syracuse. The northern part of the county is in the Adirondack State Park, and the Mohawk River flows across the southern part of the county. Herkimer County is bordered by St. Lawrence County to the north, Otsego County to the south, Hamilton, Fulton, and Montgomery Counties to the east, and Lewis and Oneida Counties to the west. Herkimer County is the longest county in New York State and has the sixth largest land area (1,412 square miles). Forty-seven square miles of the county are covered in water (3.32%). The 2017 Census of Agriculture, Herkimer County Profile estimates that 13% of the land (117,780 acres) is used in farming.

Herkimer County had a population of 60,139 (2020; DEC Redistricting). There are nineteen towns, ten villages, and one city in Herkimer County. The majority of the county's population resides in the towns, villages, and cities that surround the Mohawk River, referred to as the Mohawk Valley Corridor. The county seat is the Village of Herkimer, which is the home to the county's community college.

The county's population, according to the most recent estimate (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates), is 59,932.

Herkimer County's population has seen a steady decline in the last decade, which is evident when comparing the 2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, which estimate the population to be 64,428 (DP05). As of 2023, the median age in Herkimer County stood at 44.6 years. Approximately 4.9% of the population is under five years old, 20.6% are younger than eighteen, 76.1% are twenty-one or older, and 21.6% are sixty-five or older. (S0101, 2023 ACS 5-Year)

Based on the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, approximately 95.4% of the county's residents identify with one specific racial group. Out of the total population, 92.7% identify solely as white, 1.0% as exclusively Black or African American, which aligns with the 2013 ACS data, and 0.9% as belonging to another singular racial category. Additionally, 2.7% of the population identify as Hispanic, while 0.7% are Asian. (DP05 2023, ACS 5-Year)

Out of the 32,449 housing units in Herkimer County, most are situated in rural and agricultural settings. Approximately 25,426 of these units are occupied; more specifically, 75.9% (19,296 units) are owner-occupied, while the remaining 24.1% (6,130 units) are rented. The same data profile shows the median self-reported housing value at \$135,100 and the median self-reported rent at \$811. The housing stock in the region is relatively old, with 38.2% (12,406 units) constructed in or before 1939. (DP04 2023, ACS 5-Year)

According to the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, out of 29,228 individuals aged 16 or older in the civilian labor force, 27,920 were employed. These workers are spread across multiple industries, including education, healthcare, and social assistance (8,290); retail trade (3,372); manufacturing (2,816); construction (2,222); arts, entertainment, accommodation, food services (1,784); finance and insurance (1,621); transportation and warehousing (1,304); and wholesale trade (586). (DP03 2023, ACS 5-Year)

Higher education facilities in the county include Herkimer County Community College, which offers associate degrees across a wide range of study areas. The college enrolls an average of 1,800 students annually, including both part-time and full-time students from across the state.

Healthcare facilities in the county feature two Bassett locations: one in the Village of Herkimer and a hospital in the City of Little Falls. The county also provides various independent and assisted living options, such as Claxton Manor and Valley Residential. Additionally, several rehabilitation and nursing centers serve the community, including Valley Health Services, Foltsbrook Center Nursing and Rehabilitation, Alpine Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, The Grand Rehabilitation and Nursing Mohawk Valley, and the Masonic Health Care Center.

Herkimer County is widely regarded as a desirable area for aging in place, with communities throughout the county known for their close-knit, quiet, and hometown values. Compared to urban areas in New York, the cost of living in Herkimer County is more affordable. For outdoor enthusiasts, the region offers an abundance of parks, trails, and waterways, ideal for hiking, fishing, and skiing.

The Herkimer County Industrial Development Agency has long been committed to creating job opportunities in the county, supporting economic development projects in line with its mission to "promote, develop, encourage, and assist with qualifying economic development projects." The agency has overseen the establishment of five major business parks in Schuyler, Frankfort, and Manheim, resulting in thousands of new jobs for the region.

Thanks to the county's strong sense of community and the collaborative efforts of its residents and organizations, Herkimer County is well-suited to hosting age-friendly or livable community initiatives.

Primary Source: US Census Bureau

II. Introduction to A Community for All Ages- Herkimer County Action Plan

The Age Friendly Herkimer County Action Plan is a culmination of over 5 years of work and planning to gather demographics and as much input from the Herkimer County residents of all ages as possible. The goal has been to create or, in some cases, enhance the age-friendly characteristics of Herkimer County.

We ensured inclusion in the planning and final project by inviting leaders from diverse communities, government bodies, and organizations serving residents across the county spectrum to join the Coalition and sub-committees. Typical of Herkimer County, participants came together willingly and enthusiastically to develop collaborations across all areas in the county.

An extensive survey process was developed for dissemination throughout Herkimer County and focus groups organized representing urban and rural areas of Herkimer County. The specifics of the process are described below. Copies of the Age Friendly Herkimer County Survey and focus group initiative can be found in the Appendix.

The Age Friendly Communities of Herkimer County Coalition and collaborative partners are pleased to provide this Action Plan along with a detailed description of the development of our process for completion.

The Age Friendly Communities of Herkimer County Coalition participating organizations thank all of the Herkimer County residents and organizations who have made this report and the next steps possible.

III. How the Age Friendly Herkimer County Action Plan was Developed

In 2019, the Herkimer County Office for the Aging, Herkimer County Administrator, and Herkimer County HealthNet came together to discuss the AARP Age-Friendly Community initiative and the possibility that Herkimer County could become an Age-Friendly Community.

On August 8, 2021 the Herkimer County Office for the Aging, Herkimer County HealthNet, and the Legislature submitted an application to AARP for membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities - Livable Communities. On August 23, 2021, Herkimer County received the AARP's approval to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Herkimer County formed the Herkimer County Age Friendly Coalition. The members were committed to guiding this project and included representatives from the County Departments of Health, Planning, Mental Health, and Office for the Aging, Herkimer County HealthNet, Catholic Charities, Herkimer College, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Herkimer County Industrial Development Agency, Herkimer-Oneida County Planning Department, and Herkimer Next.

As part of the Coalition formation process, members made specific commitments to ensure the initiative's forward momentum.

Herkimer County committed to this initiative by providing resources of staff, printing, data entry and support.

In 2019, Herkimer County Office for the Aging applied for a planning grant from the New York State Office for the Aging to get the project started. The Herkimer County Office for the Aging was awarded a \$25,000 grant to start the Age Friendly work. The Herkimer County Office for the Aging worked in collaboration with Herkimer County HealthNet to launch the project.

Herkimer County HealthNet and the Herkimer County Office for the Aging committed dedicated staff time and resources to the initiative. As a member of the Age Friendly Coalition, Herkimer County HealthNet shares this supervisory role with the Herkimer County Office for the Aging and the coalition.

With commitments in place, Herkimer County was now ready to enter the “Getting Started” Phase as part of the AARP Age-Friendly Communities five Phases:

1. Getting Started
2. Needs Assessment
3. Action and Evaluation Plan
4. Implementation
5. Connecting

1. The Process and Program Cycle of AARP Age Friendly of Herkimer County

a) Getting Started Phase

The Getting Started Phase began with the formation of the Coalition and the group discussed developing a name for the project, setting up the website and social media page, as well as creating a logo. The logo was created by a local Herkimer College student. Herkimer County Office for the Aging and Herkimer County HealthNet informed the coalition of the objectives of the Age Friendly work and outlined the phases of the work. The Age Friendly Coalition established four work groups to address the eight domains of liveability as listed in the AARP guidelines and as outlined by World Health Organization (WHO). These include: Civic Participation and Employment, Housing and Outdoor Spaces, Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion and Communication & Information, and Transportation and Health & Community Services.

The Coalition was asked to outline positives and weaknesses of the County in their assigned domain, review the score given to Herkimer County by AARP concerning each area of liveability and prepare for the next phase: Needs Assessment and Planning.

b) Needs Assessment Phase

The Needs Assessment was completed in a two-part process: A Community Survey and Focus Groups. The Coalition assumed the role of developing a community survey based on the AARP Needs Assessment Survey. The survey was disseminated throughout the entire County – both rural and urban areas. Surveys were collected both on-line and via paper copies. Over 350 surveys were completed.

The Herkimer County Public Health Department provided staffing resources to analyse the data from the surveys. The Herkimer County Office for the Aging and Herkimer County HealthNet reported to the Coalition to show the progression of data collection. The Coalition was instrumental in targeting additional areas to focus on to increase the participation in the survey.

The second part of the assessment process was to host community listening sessions and focus groups throughout the County to gather additional information from residents to ensure that the assessment was complete. Three initial Community Listening Sessions were held in-person across the county. Data was presented from the Needs

Assessment and input was gathered on priorities as well as engaging community members to assist in developing the action plan.

Following the listening sessions, 4 different focus groups were held at Herkimer College to begin narrowing focus on the most needed and effective project and program ideas for the workgroups to develop plans.

The community assessment was completed in 2024. Data gathered through the survey and focus group processes were summarized with the full reports in the Appendix.

c) Action and Evaluation Plan Phase

The work groups were established with members of the coalition and community members that participated in the focus groups. Four work groups were established to address the eight domains of liveability as listed in the AARP guidelines and as outlined by World Health Organization (WHO). These include: Outdoor Spaces-Housing, Transportation-Health Services, Social Participation, Respect and Inclusion- Communication and Information, and Civic Engagement/Employment.

Participants from non-profit organizations, businesses and community members were invited to serve on the work groups. Each work group was given the AARP guidelines for their specific domain to begin the discussions.

The work groups began by review the data from the Needs Assessment and the focus groups. The work groups received guidance on creating an action plan. The groups identified priorities and gaps for each focus area. Three goals were set and the groups developed the team values, a mission statement, and vision statement. The groups then began to develop the action plan. Each group assessed the possible impacts of action items that were developed. Action plans were developed that each contain, goals, specific action items, community partners, date for completion, and performance indicators for evaluation purposes.

The coalition was convened in June 2025 to review the Action Plan that was developed by the work groups. The Herkimer County Office for the Aging presented the Action Plan to the Legislature for their approval and submission to AARP.

d) Implementation Phase

The Coalition will support the Work Groups during the phase of Implementation over the next two years and will continue developing the County's Action Plan as a road map for age-friendly initiatives. Through the implementation phase, progress will be measured and any needed additions or changes will be made to the plan. This process will lead to a cycle of continuous improvement; as priority items are accomplished in each domain, new action items are identified and form the basis for additional planning and implementation.

IV. Action Plans for a Livable Herkimer County

1. Employment and Civic Participation Action Plan

Vision Statement

Build a vibrant community that encourages and provides opportunities for residents to fully engage civically and economically—strengthening community connectedness and supporting long-term economic prosperity.

Mission Statements

- **Civic Participation:** Enhance opportunities and expand the presence of civic engagement to ensure broader access to the benefits of a connected and active community.
- **Employment:** Address workforce gaps by fostering an inclusive labor market that embraces a diverse population, with a particular focus on improving employment outcomes for older adults.

Background

Herkimer County offers a wide range of volunteer opportunities, including the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). However, greater public awareness is needed to better connect residents with volunteer roles that align with community needs. Employment and educational opportunities for older adults also remain underpublicized, despite the growing value and availability of this demographic. Increasing engagement in these areas supports not only personal well-being but also the economic and civic strength of the community.

Civic Participation: Action Plan #1

Goal: Create a countywide inventory of volunteer opportunities.

Specific Action Items:

1. Collect data on existing volunteer opportunities, including locations and roles. (September 2025)
2. Compile an organized inventory list. (November 2025)
3. Distribute the completed inventory throughout the community. (January 2026)

Participating Partners:

Catholic Charities of Herkimer County, Age-Friendly Coalition, Herkimer Working Solutions, and additional nonprofit partners

Facilitator:

Herkimer County HealthNet & Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Performance Indicators:

- Volunteer inventory created
- Number of new agencies offering volunteer opportunities
- Number of new volunteers engaged
- Number of outreach events conducted

Civic Participation: Action Plan #2

Goal: Increase social media visibility and individual outreach efforts to promote volunteerism across Herkimer County.

Specific Action Items:

1. Create and publish social media posts highlighting volunteer opportunities. (September 2025)
2. Develop and distribute written materials (e.g., flyers, brochures) promoting volunteer programs. (November 2025)
3. Host outreach events to connect potential volunteers with available opportunities. (March 2026)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Catholic Charities, Age-Friendly Coalitions, and local nonprofit organizations

Facilitator:

Herkimer County HealthNet & Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Performance Indicators:

- Social media post reach and engagement
- Number of flyers distributed
- Number of recruitment events held
- Number of participants engaged through events

Civic Participation: Action Plan #3

Goal: Recruit community organizations that are in need of volunteers.

Specific Action Items:

1. Host an event for nonprofits, civic institutions (schools, municipalities, and churches). (November 2025)
2. Collect information from organizations that utilize volunteers. (October 2025)
3. Develop a centralized platform to promote volunteer opportunities countywide. (February 2026)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Herkimer County Office for the Aging, Catholic Charities, and local nonprofit organizations

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of new agencies seeking volunteers
- Number of new volunteer opportunities identified and listed

Employment: Action Plan #1

Goal: Educate employers on job sharing and workplace flexibility to increase older adult employment.

Specific Action Items:

1. Create and distribute a flyer promoting job sharing to local employers. (July 2025)
2. Host a “Lunch & Learn” with the Chamber of Commerce to educate employers on job sharing, workplace flexibility, and employee retention strategies. (December 2025)

Participating Partners:

Age-Friendly Coalition, Working Solutions, and the Chamber of Commerce

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Coalition, Herkimer County Office for the Aging, and Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of employers contacted
- Number of flyers distributed

Employment: Action Plan #2

Goal: Educate older job seekers on how to effectively market their skills.

Specific Action Items:

1. Survey job seekers to identify what resources they need to obtain employment. (August 2025)
2. Develop “quick tip” flyers for distribution to job seekers. (July 2025)
3. Develop and host in-person workshops focused on job readiness and skill-building. (March 2026)

Participating Partners:

Age-Friendly Coalition, Working Solutions, Chamber of Commerce, and Herkimer County

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Coalition & Working Solutions

Performance Indicators:

- Number of surveys completed (to assess job seeker needs)
- Number of flyers distributed
- Number of new services created at Working Solutions
- Number of post-evaluation surveys collected

Employment: Action Plan #3

Goal: Develop user-friendly tools to support older adults in the job search process.

Specific Action Items:

1. Create a comprehensive guide for job seekers. (September- October 2025)
2. Develop informative social media content related to employment. (September-October 2025)
3. Produce short instructional videos on job search strategies. (March 2026)

Participating Partners:

Age-Friendly Coalition, Herkimer County HealthNet, Working Solutions, and the Chamber of Commerce

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Coalition & Working Solutions

Performance Indicators:

- Number of job search guides distributed
- Social media engagement (likes, shares, and comments) on job-related posts
- Number of views for instructional videos

2. Housing & Outdoor Spaces

Vision Statement

Foster a sense of community that brings residents of all ages and abilities together that promotes acceptance.

Mission Statements

- **Housing:** Create affordable and accessible housing options that serve residents of all ages and abilities.
- **Outdoor Spaces:** Develop outdoor environments that are safe, welcoming, and accessible to everyone in the community.

Background

The Herkimer County community has some affordable housing options for the residents but needs additional housing options. There is also a need to improve accessibility and increase community use of outdoor spaces and public buildings.

Housing: Action Plan #1

Goal: Increase the number of affordable housing options to include non-traditional housing options

Specific Action Items:

1. Review the housing study completed by the IDA. (June-October 2025)
2. Discuss with the IDA & Municipalities on current or planned housing projects. (November 2025 -March 2026)
3. Look at alternative housing models & what could work in Herkimer County. (December 2025)

Participating Partners: Age Friendly Working group- Housing & Outdoor Spaces

Facilitator: Herkimer County HealthNet, Herkimer County Office for the Aging, & Herkimer County IDA

Performance Indicators:

- Send document to partners & meet to discuss housing study
- Number of meetings held with IDA and Municipalities
- Number of housing options reviewed

Housing: Action Plan #2

Goal: Update existing housing information and develop a comprehensive guide for distribution.

Specific Action Items:

- Inventory existing housing guides and collect up-to-date housing information. (September-October 2025)
- Classify housing options to organize the content of the guide. (September-October 2025)
- Create the housing guide using the collected data. (September-October 2025)
- Distribute the finalized guide across Herkimer County. (September-October 2025)

Participating Partners:

Housing Authorities, Catholic Charities, ICAN, Municipalities, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA)

Facilitator:

Herkimer County HealthNet & Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Housing: Action Plan #3

Goal: Educate residents about the benefits of affordable housing in Herkimer County through a countywide campaign.

Specific Action Items:

1. Research similar communities that have successfully added affordable housing options. (September 2025)
2. Develop strategies to foster community support and buy-in. (December 2025)
3. Create and launch a media campaign highlighting the benefits of affordable housing. (January 2026)

Participating Partners:

Housing Authorities, Catholic Charities, Municipalities, Herkimer County, MVCAA

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Housing/Outdoor Spaces Work Group, Herkimer County HealthNet, and Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Performance Indicators:

- Number of communities researched
- Number of strategies developed
- Number of ad placements or campaign runs
- Social media reach (e.g., Facebook post engagement)

Outdoor Spaces: Action Plan #1

Goal: Conduct an inventory of outdoor spaces in Herkimer County and assess their accessibility and event potential.

Specific Action Items:

1. Meet with mayors and town supervisors to gather information on accessible outdoor spaces in their communities. (September 2025)
2. Review identified outdoor spaces to assess accessibility features. (December 2025)
3. Explore grant opportunities to enhance accessibility at existing locations. (January 2026)

Participating Partners:

Housing Authorities, Catholic Charities, Municipalities, Herkimer County, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Housing/Outdoor Spaces Work Group, Herkimer County HealthNet, and Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Performance Indicators:

- Number of mayors and supervisors interviewed
- Number of outdoor locations reviewed

- Number of grant opportunities researched or pursued

Outdoor Spaces: Action Plan #2

Goal: Create and distribute information on accessible outdoor spaces available for recreation and exercise.

Specific Action Items:

1. Develop a comprehensive map (print, digital, and potentially app-based) of outdoor recreation sites. (October 2025)
2. Distribute remaining trail guides and issue a supporting press release. (July-August 2025)
3. Promote the Mohawk Valley Mile initiative and distribute informational materials. (July-August 2025)

Participating Partners:

Housing & Outdoor Spaces Work Group

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Housing/Outdoor Spaces Work Group, Herkimer County HealthNet, Herkimer County Office for the Aging, and Cornell Cooperative Extension

Performance Indicators:

- Number of maps distributed / website visits (web hits)
- Number of trail guides distributed
- Number of Mohawk Valley Mile cards distributed

Outdoor Spaces: Action Plan #3

Goal: Develop inclusive outdoor spaces that incorporate fitness areas, community gathering spaces, and community gardens.

Specific Action Items:

1. Review current outdoor spaces to determine locations that would benefit from accessibility upgrades. (September 2025)
2. Identify and define types of new outdoor spaces needed. (November 2025)
3. Create a guide for establishing community gardens. (November 2025)

Participating Partners:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Herkimer County HealthNet

Facilitator:

Age-Friendly Housing/Outdoor Spaces Work Group, Herkimer County HealthNet, and Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Performance Indicators:

- Number of locations identified for accessibility upgrades
- Number of upgrades completed or planned
- Number of community garden guides distributed

3. Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion, and Communication & Information

Vision Statement

Build a community that is inclusive of all residents, reduces social isolation, and actively encourages people of all ages and abilities to participate and enjoy a high quality of life.

Mission Statements

- **Social Participation and Respect & Inclusion:** Develop and maintain a robust calendar of community activities, gatherings, and events that engage people across generations and ability levels. These opportunities will enhance the well-being of older adults through meaningful intergenerational interaction.
- **Communication & Information:** Implement a multi-pronged communication strategy to ensure all residents are aware of available resources and local opportunities—reducing isolation and strengthening community connectedness.

Background

Older adults in Herkimer County are significantly represented in the leadership of various community organizations. However, feedback from the Needs Assessment and focus groups indicated that many do not feel included in decision-making processes or that their needs are being adequately addressed. The community expressed a desire for increased intergenerational activities and more accessible opportunities for engagement.

While Herkimer County offers a broad array of communication channels—including newspapers, newsletters, TV and radio segments, websites, and social media—many older residents still report a lack of public awareness around community resources. Libraries and services like Working Solutions offer valuable access to computers and digital training, but outreach remains inconsistent and could benefit from more intentional, coordinated strategies.

Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion: Action Plan #1

Goal: Offer one monthly event that older adults can participate in, with a focus on areas of the county that currently lack social engagement opportunities.

Specific Action Items:

1. Promote and maintain a countywide community calendar. (June 2025)
2. Highlight upcoming events through social media and community websites. (Continuous)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Work Groups, Libraries, and other community organizations

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of web visits to the county’s community calendar
- Number of new events listed on the calendar
- Number of email communications sent to individuals and organizations promoting the calendar

Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion: Action Plan #2

Goal: Create events and distribute helpful information to caregivers throughout the community.

Specific Action Items:

1. Conduct a survey of caregivers to determine the types of events they would like to attend and what information would be most useful. (May-August 2025)
2. Distribute educational and support materials to caregivers. (September 2025)
3. Plan and host a caregiver-focused event based on survey results. (July-October 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Work Groups, Alzheimer’s Association, and the Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of completed caregiver surveys
- Number of informational packets distributed
- Number of caregivers attending planned events

Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion: Action Plan #3

Goal: Increase the number of low or no-cost art and cultural events available to older adults.

Specific Action Items:

1. Identify existing art and cultural events within the community. (August 2025)
2. Promote these events to older adults through various communication channels. (August 2025)
3. Identify gaps in art and cultural programming that limit access for older residents. (August 2025 & ongoing)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Work Groups, Arts Centers, Libraries, Schools, and the Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of existing events identified
- Number of promotional communications sent
- Number of gaps identified in art and cultural offerings

Communication & Information: Action Plan #1

Goal: Increase community awareness of the Herkimer County community calendar.

Specific Action Items:

1. Prepare and distribute a media announcement, including social media content. (April-August 2025)

2. Create a streaming advertisement to promote the calendar. (April-August 2025)
3. Share all developed content across platforms and partners to maximize visibility. (April-August 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Working Group, County Libraries, Schools, and other community agencies

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Communications, Herkimer County Office for the Aging, and Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of media outlets the announcement was sent to
- Number of streaming ads created
- Number of ads posted and total post engagement (likes, shares, clicks)

Communication & Information: Action Plan #2

Goal: Increase the number of county residents receiving communications from the Herkimer County Office for the Aging.

Specific Action Items:

1. Produce an informational video about the OFA communication platform. (June-August 2025)
2. Conduct outreach to libraries to promote the platform. (June-August 2025)
3. Distribute flyers to senior housing locations and senior clubs. (June-August 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Working Group, County Libraries, and other community agencies

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of times the video was viewed
- Number of flyers sent to libraries
- Number of flyers distributed to senior housing and clubs

Communication & Information: Action Plan #3

Goal: Partner with local libraries to better educate the public about available programs and resources.

Specific Action Items:

1. Add the Mid York Library System link to the county website. (June-August 2025)
2. Send community calendar information to libraries to help them share local events. (June-August 2025)
3. Feature a weekly Herkimer County Office for the Aging Facebook post highlighting a library activity or resource. (June-August 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Working Group, County Libraries, and other community agencies

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Library link added to the county website
- Number of libraries receiving calendar information
- Number of people reached via Facebook posts

4. Transportation and Health & Community Services Action Plan***Vision Statement***

Make Herkimer County a safer and more accessible place for aging in place. This includes focusing on reducing risk and enabling older adults to remain in their homes, while improving health outcomes through better communication, stronger service coordination, and expanded access to care.

Mission Statements

- **Transportation:** Improve non-vehicular access throughout Herkimer County and increase education around transportation resources, while elevating transportation safety as a priority in countywide planning efforts.
- **Health & Community Services:** Ensure that health services are accessible to all residents and offer support for navigating existing systems and programs.

Background

Herkimer County's public health and aging services continue to participate in a cycle of planning and evaluation through various local agencies and initiatives, including the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and the Four-Year Plan from the Herkimer County Office for the Aging. These efforts identify priority needs for the county's aging population.

Transportation challenges persist, particularly in rural areas and on weekends. While Bernie Bus offers some public transit, service is limited in scope and frequency. Additional services are provided by the Herkimer County Herkimer County Office for the Aging and Catholic Charities, but coordination among providers is lacking. Service gaps remain a barrier to independence and well-being for many residents.

Transportation: Action Plan #1

Goal: Improve walkability and bike safety across the county by identifying needs and incorporating age-friendly infrastructure into local planning.

Specific Action Items:

1. Conduct a survey of existing walking and biking paths in the county. (August-November 2025)
2. Collaborate with municipalities to enhance walkability and pedestrian access. (August-November 2025)
3. Encourage municipalities to integrate age-friendly principles into local and county planning. (August-November 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, County and Municipal Governments, Herkimer-Oneida County Planning

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of walking and biking paths identified
- Number of county and municipal leaders engaged
- Number of municipalities that adopt age-friendly planning principles

Transportation: Action Plan #2

Goal: Launch an educational campaign promoting the safe use of crosswalks for both drivers and pedestrians.

Specific Action Items:

1. Create or adapt educational materials about crosswalk safety. (June-October 2025)
2. Produce public service announcements for social media, radio, and TV. (June-October 2025)
3. Distribute crosswalk safety materials through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). (June-October 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, County and Municipal Governments, Herkimer-Oneida County Planning

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of educational materials distributed
- Number of public service announcements produced
- Number of locations (e.g., DMV offices) sharing crosswalk safety information
- Number of safe crosswalk information materials distributed
- Social media post reach
- Number of radio advertisements aired

Transportation: Action Plan #3

Goal: Update transportation resources and increase community awareness through education and outreach.

Specific Action Items:

1. Create or update a comprehensive transportation resource guide for Herkimer County. (October 2025-January 2026)
2. Conduct in-person community presentations on available transportation services. (October 2025-January 2026)
3. Make crosswalk safety materials available at the Department of Motor Vehicles. (October 2025-January 2026)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Work Groups, 50 Forward, Catholic Charities

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of transportation guides distributed
- Social media post reach
- Number of community presentations held
- Number of advertisements placed

Transportation: Action Plan #4

Goal: Expand transportation access in Herkimer County’s outlying and rural areas.

Specific Action Items:

1. Develop a partnership with GoGo Grandparent to offer alternative transportation options. (May-November 2025)
2. Recruit new volunteers for the ride program. (May-November 2025)
3. Increase volunteer recruitment specifically for rural communities. (May-November 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Work Groups, 50 Forward, Catholic Charities

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of rides provided by GoGo Grandparent
- Number of new volunteers recruited

Health & Community Services: Action Plan #1

Goal: Create a ramp program to help residents with limited mobility access their homes safely.

Specific Action Items:

1. Identify service providers, companies, and volunteer organizations that offer ramp installation. (February 2026)
2. Develop and distribute a guide listing local ramp resources. (February 2026)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Herkimer County Office for the Aging, Age-Friendly Coalition, Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL)

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of ramp installation providers identified
- Number of ramp guides distributed
- Number of potential funders identified for ramp programs

Health & Community Services: Action Plan #2

Goal: Improve digital literacy among older adults by teaching them how to access telehealth services and electronic medical records.

Specific Action Items:

1. Research and compile training materials focused on digital literacy for older adults. (April-December 2025)
2. Apply for ConnectALL or similar digital equity grants to support program delivery. (April-December 2025)
3. Deliver training to older adults on telehealth and electronic medical record access. (April-December 2025)

Participating Partners:

Older adults, Age-Friendly Work Groups, Mohawk Valley Economic Development District (MVEDD)

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging & Herkimer County HealthNet

Performance Indicators:

- Number of training sessions offered
- Number of older adults trained
- Grant application submitted
- Number of potential digital literacy training programs identified

Health & Community Services: Action Plan #3

Goal: Increase the number of homecare workers serving Herkimer County, particularly in northern areas, and improve public awareness of available in-home services.

Specific Action Items:

1. Update the list of agencies currently offering homecare services in Herkimer County. (July-August 2025)
2. Distribute the updated list to rehabilitation facilities, service providers, and directly to the community. (October 2025)
3. Use Blooming Health to send educational messages highlighting available in-home services. (September 2025)

Participating Partners:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging (Herkimer County Office for the Aging), Herkimer County HealthNet, Age-Friendly Transportation/Health Services Work Group

Facilitator:

Herkimer County Office for the Aging

Performance Indicators:

- Number of homecare agencies added to the directory
- Number of flyers distributed
- Number of residents reached through Blooming Health messaging

V. Appendices

Appendix 1:

Summary of Herkimer County “A Community for All Ages” Survey Results

Summary of the Age-friendly/Liveable Communities Survey Process

The Needs Assessment Surveys were distributed between June 2021 and July 2022. The survey attempted to obtain baseline data to gauge the level of “livability” in Herkimer County. “Livability” is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and AARP as “age-friendly” community amenities that help people of all ages live as they age. The amenities are sorted into eight different categories called “*The Eight Domains of Livability*” or “*Domains*.” These Domains include: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information, and Community and Health Services.

Community Needs Assessment Survey: The intention of the Consumer Survey was to get the perceptions of livability from Herkimer County residents 18 and older. The residents rated age-friendly amenities in their community. These amenities can be provided by either public or private entities. There were approximately 60,000 Herkimer County residents that qualified to take the survey at the time it was distributed.

Herkimer County Age-Friendly Survey 2021

Part I: Survey Methodology

Collection Method

- **Online Survey:**
Included a mix of quantitative and qualitative responses.
- **Sample Size:**
 - Total responses collected: **304**
 - Valid sample (Herkimer County residents): **298**
 - Margin of error: **±5.6% at a 95% confidence level**
- **Data Analysis:**
 - Survey questions were grouped based on the primary **Domains of Livability for Aging Adults**, including:
 - Housing
 - Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
 - Transportation
 - Community & Health Care
 - Communication & Information
 - Civic Participation & Employment
 - Social Participation, Respect, & Inclusion
 - Evaluation focused on identifying:
 - **Top Features:** Highest percentage of *Excellent/Very Good* responses
 - **Bottom Features:** Highest percentage of *Fair/Poor* responses

Part II: Characterizes of Respondents

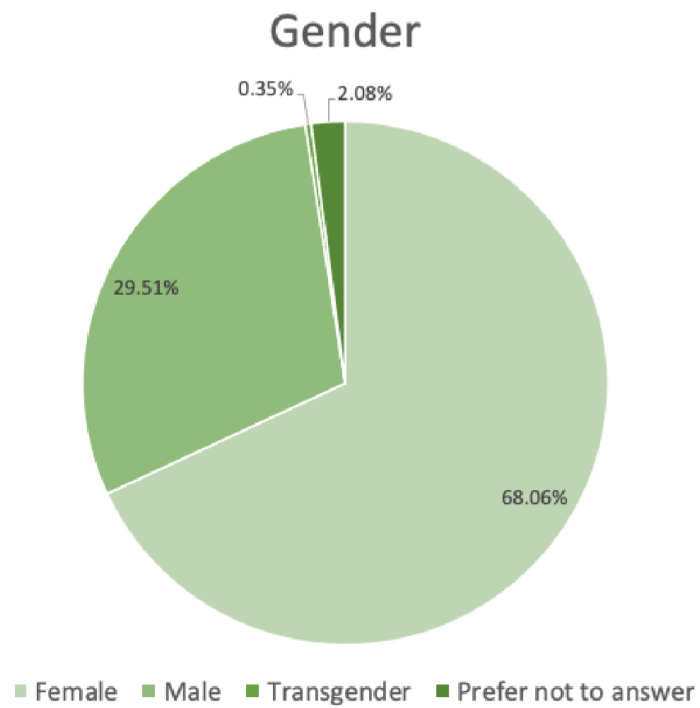
Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent	Total	(n)	(%)
Gender					
Female	196	68.06%	288	(SS=298)	
Male	85	29.51%			
Transgender	1	0.35%			
Prefer not to answer	6	2.08%			
Age					
18-25	2	0.95%	235		
26-39	13	5.53%			
40-54	25	10.60%			
55-64	52	22.10%			
65+	143	60.90%			
Marital Status					
Married	132	46.32%	285		
Not married, living w/ partner	13	4.56%			
Separated	13	4.56%			
Divorced	50	17.54%			
Widowed	52	18.25%			
Never married	25	8.77%			
Education					
k-12the grade (no diploma)	19	6.79%	280		
High school graduate or GED	57	20.36%			
Post-high edu/training (no degree)	42	15.00%			
2-year college degree	43	15.36%			
4-year college degree	48	17.14%			
Post-graduate study (no degree)	20	7.14%			
Graduate or professional degree(s)	51	18.21%			
Household Income					
<\$20,000	82	32.16%	255		
\$20,000-29,999	28	10.98%			
\$30,000-49,999	38	14.90%			
\$50,000-74,999	51	20.00%			
\$75,000-99,999	29	11.37%			
\$100,000+	27	10.59%			
Race					
White or Caucasian	265	99.25%	267		
Asian or Asian American	3	1.12%			
Native American or Alaska Native	4	1.50%			
Ethnicity					
English	51	86.44%	59		
Spanish	2	3.39%			
No preference					

6

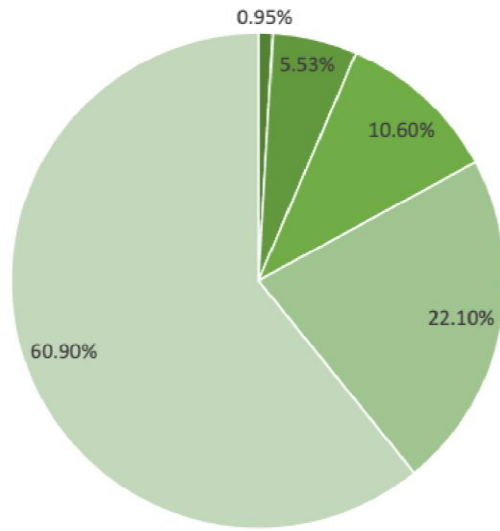
10.17%

Note. Participants were allowed to skip questions.

Visualization of Demographics:

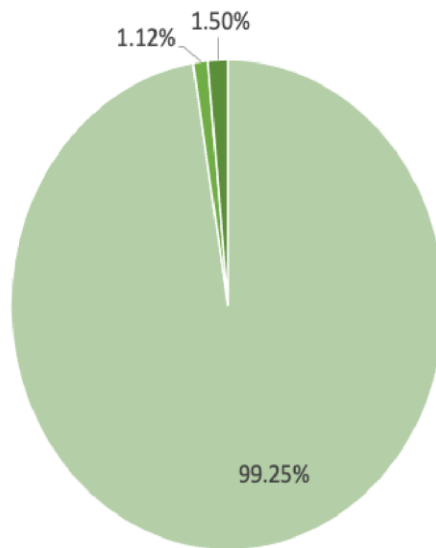


Age



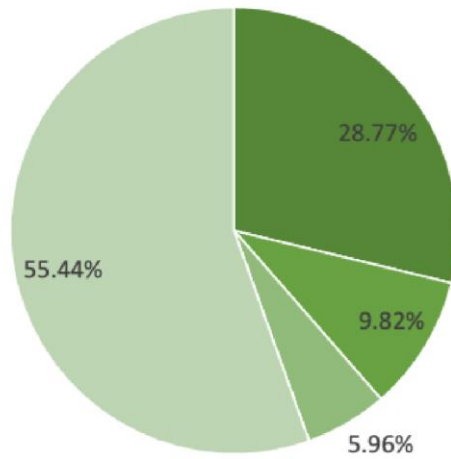
■ 18-25 Years ■ 26-39 Years ■ 40-54 Years ■ 55-64 Years ■ 65+ Years

Race



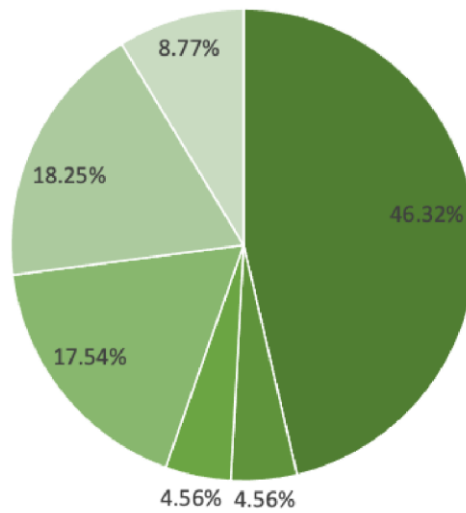
■ White or Caucasian ■ Asian or Asian American ■ Native American or Alaska Native

Disability Status



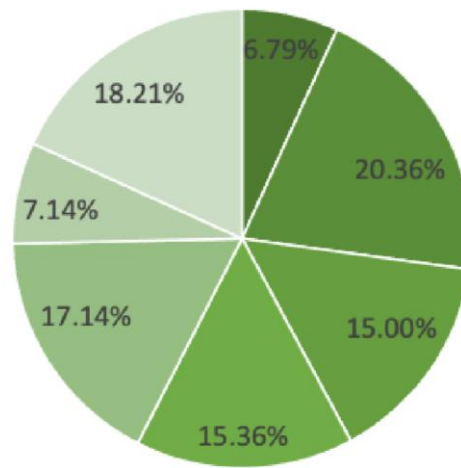
- Yes, myself
- Yes, my spouse or partner
- Yes, both me and my spouse or partner
- No

Marital Status



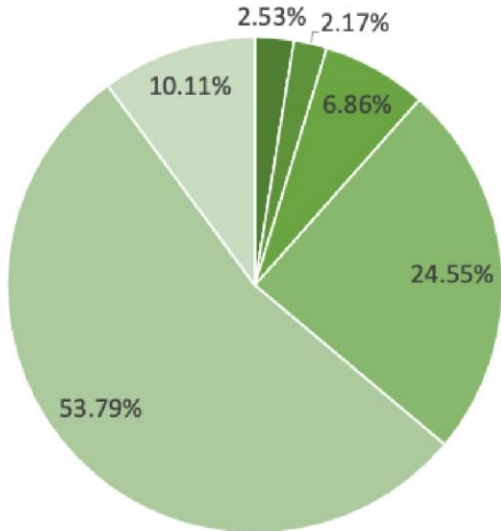
- Married
- Not married, living w/ partner
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Never married

Education



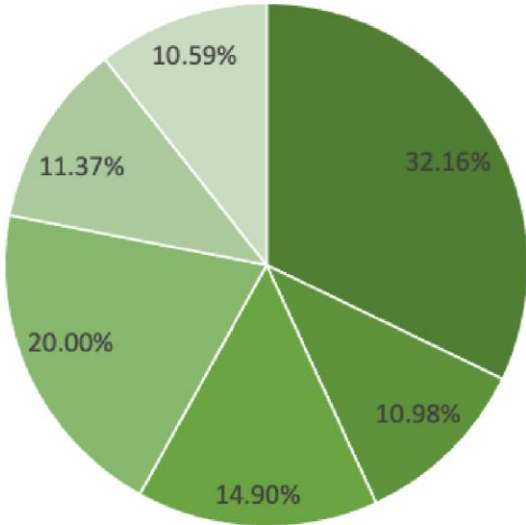
- k-12th grade (no diploma)
- High school graduate or GED
- Post-high edu/training (no degree)
- 2-year college degree
- 4-year college degree
- Post-graduate study (no degree)
- Graduate or professional degree(s)

Employment Status



- Self-Employed, part-time
- Self-Employed, full-time
- Employed, part-time
- Employed, full-time
- Retired, not working at all
- Not in labor force for other reasons

Household Income



- <\$20,000
- \$20,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000+

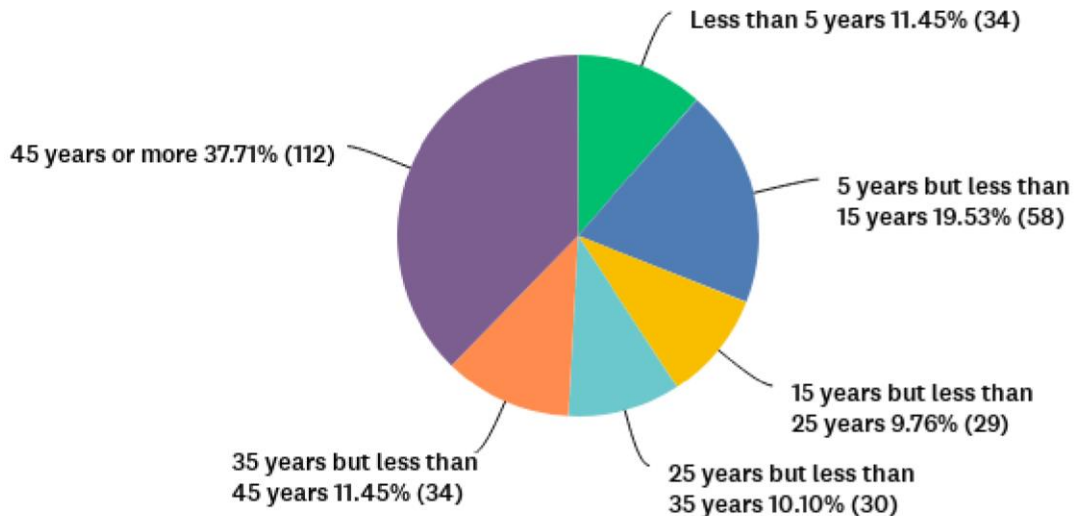
Part III: Community Insights and Information

Participant-Related Community Context

- **Residence**
 - o A majority of respondents own their own home (71%) A majority reside in a single-family home (69%)
- **Time in Community**
 - o 20 years is the average amount of time respondents have lived in their homes
 - o Nearly half of the respondents (49.16%) have lived in the community for 35 years or more

Note: Many of the respondents are long-standing residents of the region. Their insight is valuable as they have aged in the community over time.

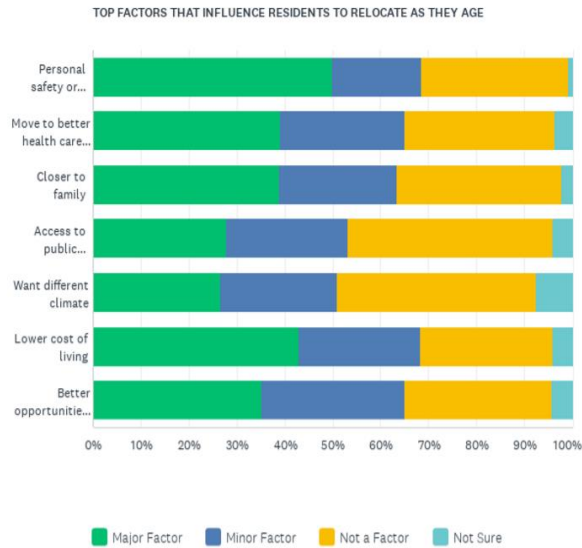
Q3 How long have you lived in your community?



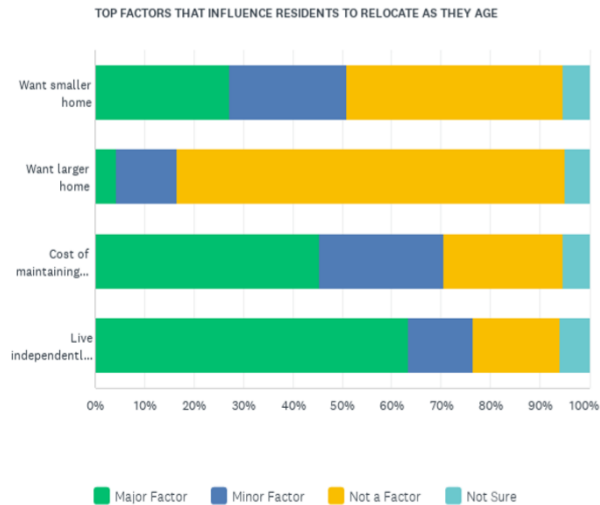
Participant Perception of Herkimer County as an Age-Friendly Community

- **Livability** o More than half of respondents (62.42%) rate the community as an excellent, very good, or a good place for people to live as they age
- **Desire to remain in the Community** -More than half of respondents (65.08%) say remaining in the community is extremely or very important to them.
 - o More than half of respondents (58.42%) plan to stay in their current residence and never move in the future years
- **Top Factors that Influence Residents to Relocate as they Age** o Nearly half of respondents (49.82%) say their personal safety and security is a major factor that would influence them to move out of the community
 - o More than half of respondents (63.43%) say wanting a home that will help them live independently as they age is a major factor that would influence them to move out of their residence.

Q8 Some people find that they need or want to move out of their community, as they get older. If you were to consider moving out of your current community, would the following be a major factor, a minor factor, or not a factor at all in your decision to move?



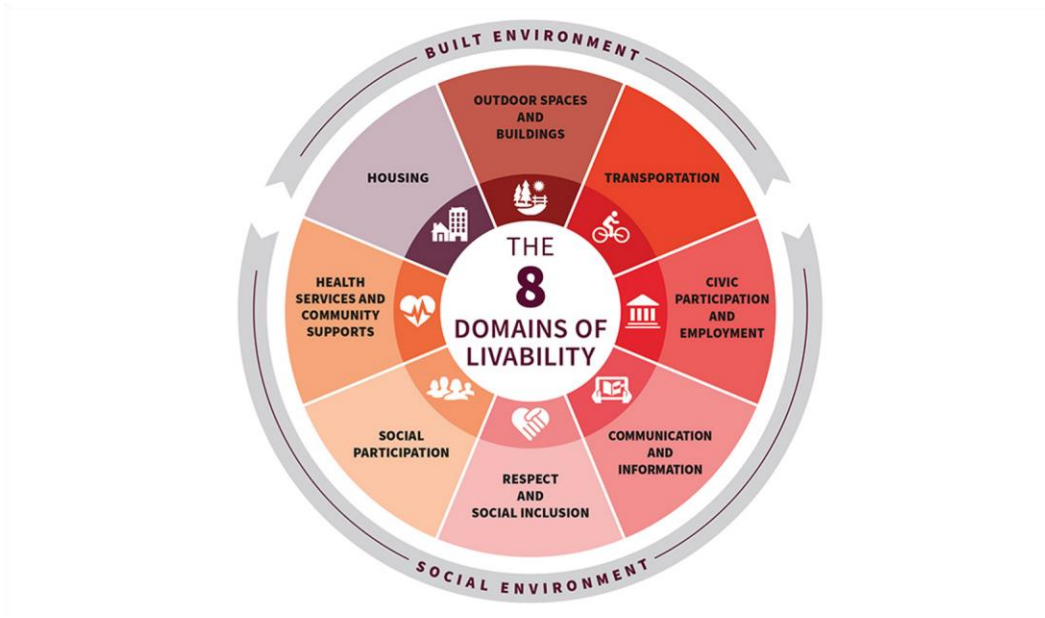
Q7 Some people find that they need or want to move out of their residence as they get older. If you were to consider moving out of your current residence, would the following be a major factor, minor factor, or not a factor at all in your decision to move?



Part IV: Analysis of Domains of Livability

Survey questions were analyzed based on the 8 Domains of Livability framework developed by the AARP. Ultimately, the availability and quality of these community features can impact the well-being of older adults. As such, community

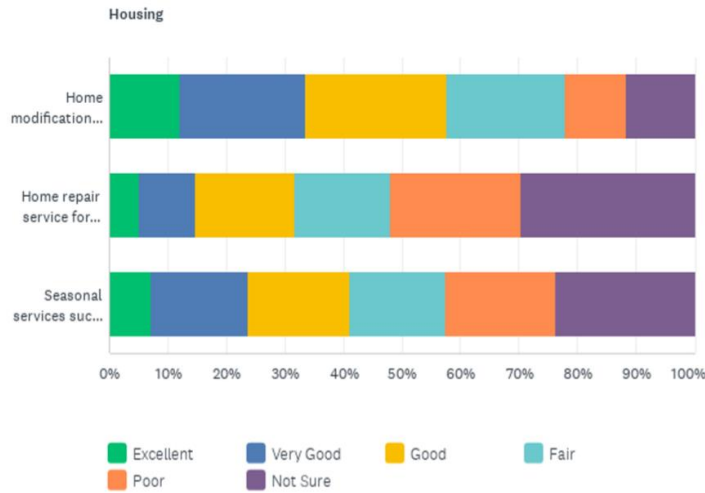
feedback related to these domains can help stakeholders to organize and prioritize work to make the community more livable for residents of all ages.



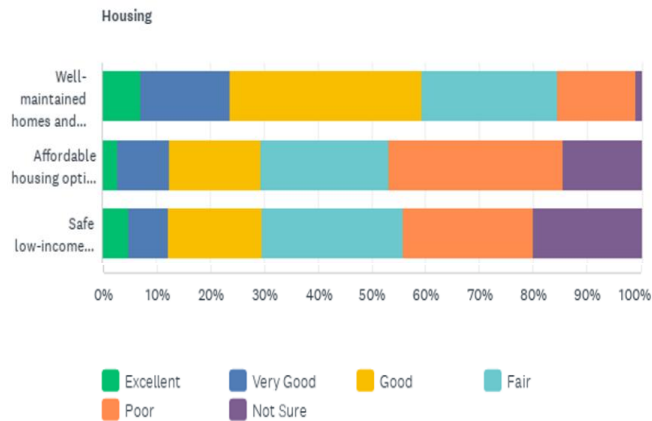
Housing

- **Community Context**
 - o Nearly half of the respondents (41.02%) say they need to make major repairs, modifications, or changes to stay in their home long term
- **Top Features**
 - o Quality, trustworthy, and affordable home modification and repair contractors (33.45% excellent/very good)
 - o Well-maintained homes and properties (23.79% excellent/very good)
- **Bottom Features**
 - o Affordable housing options for adults of low-income levels, such as older active adult communities, assisted living, etc. (56.03% fair/poor)
 - o Well-maintained, safe low-income housing (50.18% fair/poor)

Q14 Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Q16 Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



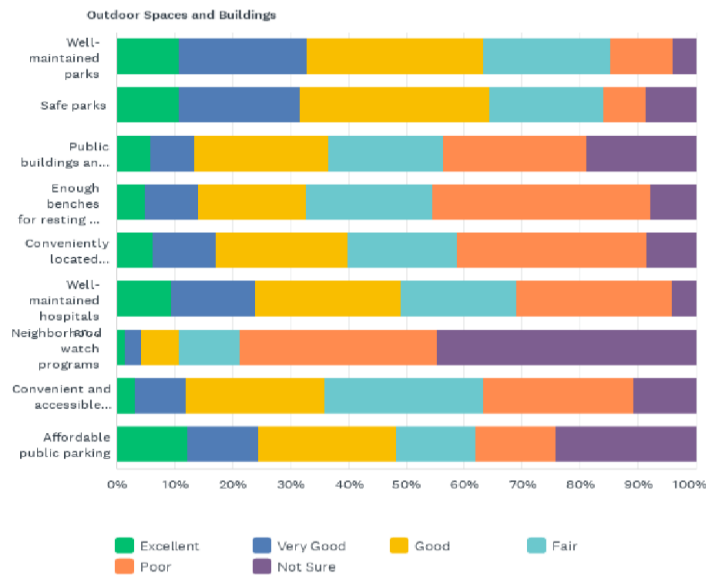
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings • Community Context

- o Nearly half of the respondents (47.47%) say they walk or bike within the community
- **Top Features** Well-maintained excellent/very good)
 - o Safe parks (31.64% excellent/very good) well maintained parks (32.97% excellent/very good)

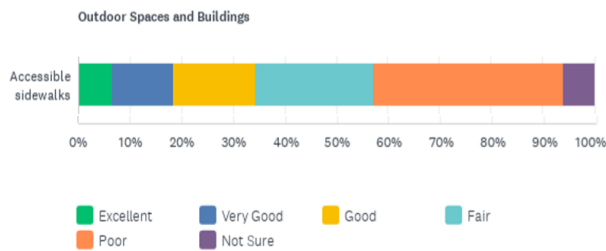
- **Bottom Features**

- Sidewalks that are in good condition, safe for pedestrians, and accessible for wheelchairs or other assistive mobility devices (59.73% fair/poor)
- Enough benches in public spaces (59.51% fair/poor)

Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Q15 Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Transportation

- **Community Context**

- A majority of respondents (83.21%) drive themselves to get around their community

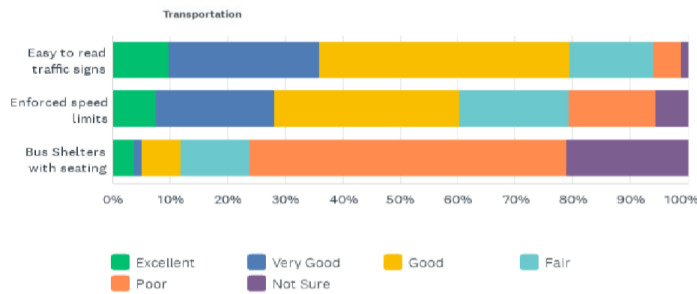
- **Top Features**

- o Easy to read traffic signs (36.04% excellent/very good)
- o Enforced speed limits (28.23% excellent/very good)
- **Bottom Features**
 - o Bus shelters with seating (67.03% fair/poor)
 - o Accessible and convenient public transportation (60.49% fair/poor)

Q18 Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Q15 Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Note. Many of the transportation question have high percentages (>50%) of grouped poor/fair ratings [orange and light blue blocking]. This may be a priority area.

Community & Health Care • Community Context

- o Less than half of the respondents (39.79%) consider their health to be excellent or very good

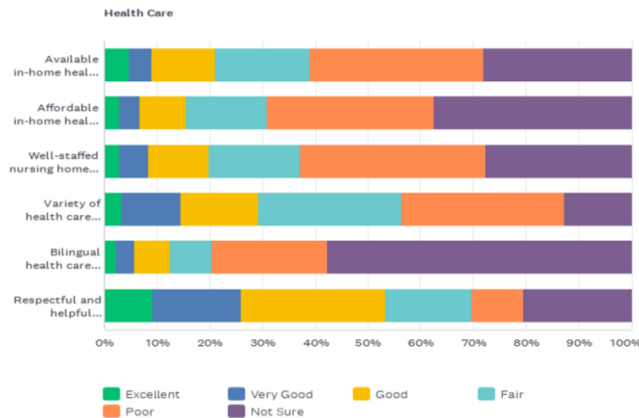
• Top Features

- o Services that provide people to help seniors easily find and access health and supportive services (16.69% excellent/very good)
- o Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff (25.96% excellent/very good)

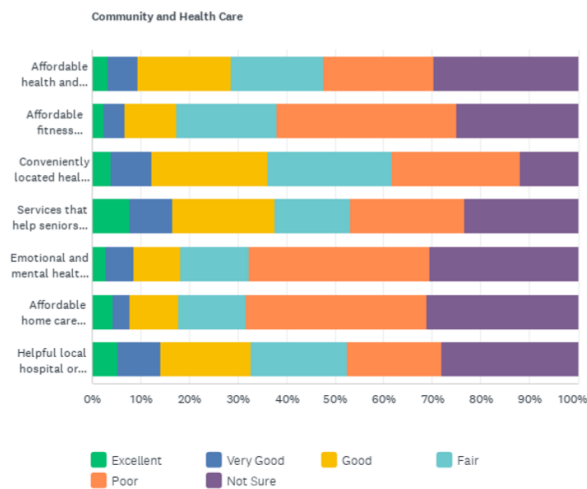
- **Bottom Features**

- A variety of health care professionals including specialists (57.95% fair/poor)
- Affordable fitness activities specifically geared towards older adults (57.64% fair/poor)

Thinking now about health care professionals in your community. Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Q20 Thinking now about health and wellness services in your community. Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Note. Many of the health care questions have high percentages (>50%) of grouped poor/fair ratings [orange and light blue blocking]. This may be a priority area.

- **Communication and Information**

- **Community Context**

- A majority of respondents (77.89%) use the internet every day

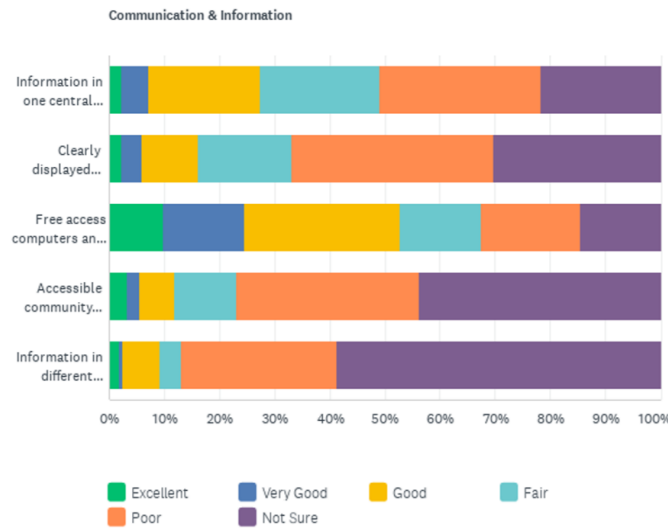
- **Top Features**

- A majority of respondents use the Herkimer County Office for the Aging for Information about services for older adults (87.72% of respondents)
- Free access to computers and internet in public places (24.55% excellent/very good)

• **Bottom Features**

- Access to community information in one central source (50.90% fair/poor)
- Clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering (53.65% fair/poor)

Q36 Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Civic Participation & Employment

• **Community Context**

- Approximately a quarter of respondents (26.72%) of respondents say they are employed fulltime

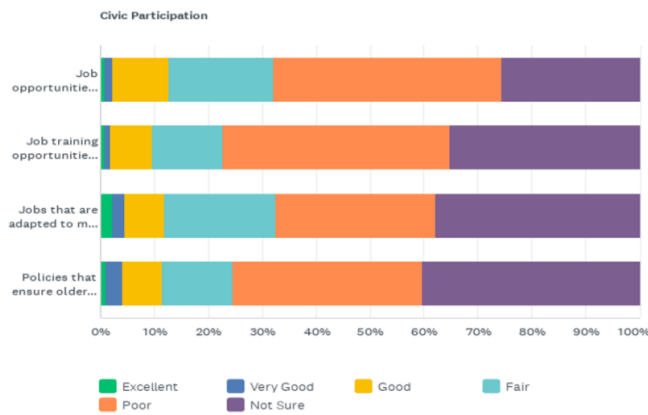
• **Top Features**

- A range of volunteer activities to choose from (13.29% excellent/very good)
- Opportunities for older adults to participate in decision-making bodies (9.61% excellent/very good)

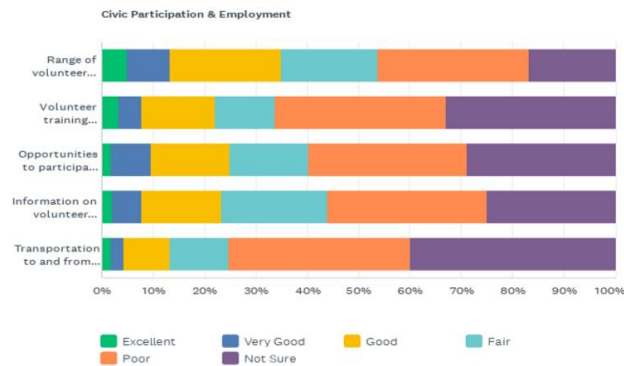
• **Bottom Features**

- A range of job opportunities for older adults (61.73% fair/poor)
- Job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new job skills within their job or get training in a different field of work (55.31% fair/poor)

. Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Volunteering and Civic Engagement Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



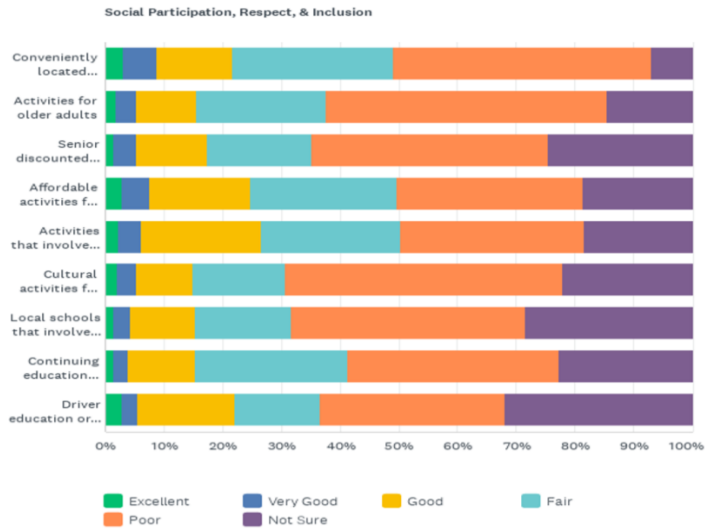
Note. Many of the civic participation and employment questions have high percentages (>50%) of grouped poor/fair ratings [orange and light blue blocking]. This may be a priority area.

Social Participation, Respect, & Inclusion

Community Context: 40.7% of respondents say they are in contact with family, friends, or neighbors daily

- **Top Features**
 - o Activities that are affordable to all residents (7.5% excellent/very good)
 - o Activities that involve both younger and older people (6.12% excellent/very good)
- **Bottom Features**
 - o Conveniently located entertainment venues (71.23% fair/poor)
 - o Activities geared specifically toward older adults (70.07% fair/poor)

Would you rate your community as excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor on having the following?



Note. Many of the social participation question have high percentages (>50%) of grouped poor/fair ratings [orange and light blue blocking]. This may be a priority area.

Conclusion

The data collected from the Resident Surveys was intended to have a few uses. First this information can assist Work Groups with developing questions and action items as the plan develops. Second, it can be used to gauge the progress of each community after certain “age-friendly” projects/actions have been implemented. Based on the responses, these surveys were successful in providing the necessary data to take the next steps in the Age-Friendly Herkimer County Initiative.

Copy of Herkimer Age-friendly Communities Survey attached.

Appendix 2

Community Listening Sessions

Summary of the Community Listening Sessions

The qualitative data collecting part of the age friendly process began with three listening sessions held in 2024 throughout the County including one in the Northernmost part of the county. These listening sessions focused on reviewing the data collected from the survey and understanding what community residents loved about their community and what features would they think could improve the area. Attendees participated in small and large group discussion related to how they would live in their community as they age. The Community Listening Sessions introduced the Herkimer County Community to the Age Friendly Process, including the AARP 8 Domains of Livability, collected initial thoughts and ideas for Age Friendly projects, and recruited community members to join the workgroups that would work to create the Action Plan.

Summary of All 3 Sessions

What do people like/appreciate about their community?

- Residents feel safe in their community.
- They appreciate the natural beauty and outdoor spaces.
- The people in the community are friendly and supportive.
- The area is convenient for daily living.
- The community is peaceful and quiet.

Newer features people appreciate in their community:

- Residents enjoy newer gathering events such as food trucks and festivals.
- There are more communal spaces, including active libraries, the Canal Trail, and community gardens.
- The View Art Center is a valued addition.
- People appreciate developments like the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI).

Priority areas for the future:

- Improved access to public transit.
- Respectful and open communication from community leaders.
- Expanded healthcare options including more home health aides and primary care providers.
- Increased availability of affordable housing options.
- Accessible and affordable broadband for all residents.
- More recreational spaces that are accessible for people of all ages.

llion

What residents love about their community

- They feel safe and enjoy the quiet atmosphere.
- There is access to natural and open space.
- The area is accessible and convenient.
- There is a strong sense of community and deep roots.
- They value Herkimer's walkability and the presence of OFA and local history.

Features residents enjoy that did not exist 5–10 years ago

- The Canal Trail and community gardens.
- Local festivals and food trucks.

- Revitalized older housing.

Needs for now and the future

- Improved and safer walkways.
- Shuttle services and expanded transportation options.
- More healthcare specialists and caregivers.
- Greater volunteer support.
- Transitional and affordable housing options.
- More recreation and events.
- Better communication and reduced tax burden.

Ways to improve quality of life

- More local stores and centralized social spaces.
- Better communications and access to information.
- An annual senior seminar.
- Greater tax equity and funding using a sliding scale.
- Increased availability of PCPs, arts programs, and better transit.

Top priorities for the future

- Enabling residents to live long-term in their homes.
- Leadership buy-in and better infrastructure.
- Improved public transportation and accessible recreation.
- Support for mixed-age interaction and voter engagement.
- Support for unhoused populations.

Little Falls

What residents love about their community

- It is convenient, safe, and full of natural beauty.
- There is a strong sense of community and caring people.
- The school system and libraries are valued.
- The city is evolving with new opportunities.

Features residents enjoy that did not exist 5–10 years ago

- Improved bike trails between towns.
- The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI).
- The development of Rotary Park.

Needs for now and the future

- Stronger partnerships and better community outreach.
- More accessible and communal housing.
- Phone banks, Y outposts, info cards, and better handicap access.
- Affordable internet and more alignment between industry and local skills.

Ways to improve quality of life

- Improved access to primary care.

- More respectful communication.
- Better public transportation options.

Top priorities for the future

- Expanded communication and affordable broadband.
- Affordable housing and improved healthcare.
- Public transit options including rideshares and taxis.
- Safe environments for vulnerable adults.
- Recruitment of new residents and walkable communities.

What needs to work better

- Transportation and pedestrian safety.
- Open, respectful communication from community leaders.
- Improved food access and community pride.
- Increased collaboration and collective work.

Old Forge

What residents love about their community

- Strong community spirit and helping neighbors.
- The natural beauty and environment.
- Civic involvement and grassroots efforts.
- Multi-generational engagement and authenticity.

Features that did not exist 5–10 years ago

- The View Arts Center and active library programs.
- Food pantries, improved walkability, and internet connectivity.
- A thriving farmers market.

Needs for now and the future

- Access to nursing homes, assisted living, and respite care.
- More emergency services and companion care.
- Meals on Wheels and mental health services.
- More county-level support and regional collaboration.
- Affordable housing and support for families.
- Improved property maintenance and mixed-use development.

Top priorities

- Housing: mixed-use apartments, affordable rentals and homes.
- Healthcare: consistent visiting nurses, emergency care, and medical transport.
- Transportation options for better access across the region.

Appendix 3

Focus Group Themes and Emerging Priorities

Age-Friendly Herkimer County Focus Group Analysis Summary

The data was collected through note taking. The analysis was conducted through qualitative methodology of emerging themes under the domain topics. The analysis and summaries were shared with the working groups for each of the domain areas.

Below is a brief summary of Emerging Themes from the Age Friendly Herkimer County Age-Friendly Focus Groups 2024.

Summary of Emerging Themes

Defining Livable Age-Friendly Communities:

This domain was the first topic asked in each of the focus groups. The discussion almost always led into other topic areas which were most often housing and transportation. Age-Friendly was defined by many to have opportunities for socialization as part of affordable housing and surrounding community.

Most participants grew up in Herkimer County. Some participants lived in Herkimer County all of their lives moving to various parts of Herkimer County depending on situation many others moved away for school, marriage, and employment. Those who moved away and came back to Herkimer County returned to be near family and friends. Most individuals who attended the focus groups wanted to remain in Herkimer County as they aged but they recognized that there would be supports that they would need to age in place. Housing, transportation, and in home supports were areas of concern that attended the focus groups. Below is a summary of each domain.

Housing & Outdoor Spaces: Community Priorities

- Increase access to affordable housing options.
- Expand community education and outreach on housing topics.
- Support community beautification efforts.
- Enhance infrastructure and neighborhood quality of life to promote sustainability.
- Secure funding for tree planting initiatives.
- Expand the **Blocks & Blooms** program to encourage community gardens.
- Improve outdoor recreational spaces, including bike paths, pollinator gardens, and exercise stations.
- Develop designated outdoor music spaces.
- Create more single-story housing and condos for older adults.
- Encourage block parties to build community connections and increase safety.
- Increase access to health services to help residents remain independent.
- Support communal living options such as intergenerational neighborhoods, tiny homes, pods, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Educate building inspectors on evolving housing models and code flexibility.
- Develop and distribute a **Home Accessibility Kit** or guide for retrofitting older homes (e.g., railings, ramps)—include how-to instructions, service providers, and supply sources.
- Create a volunteer list of younger individuals who can assist with lawn care, snow removal, errands, and social support.
- Install bus shelters and support safe streets initiatives.
- Add benches in public areas to support rest and accessibility.

Transportation & Health Services: Community Priorities

- Expand home health services in northern Herkimer County.
- Increase funding availability for residential ramp installations.
- Improve transportation access to medical specialists.
- Add bike racks and bike lanes for safer active transportation.
- Develop partnerships with local groups to assist with home upgrades and accessibility improvements.
- Leverage Herkimer County health profession programs and student interns for potential in-home care.
- Provide funding and support for in-home technology, such as telehealth, check-in systems, and training on accessing MyChart and other medical portals.
- Offer community wellness programs including mindfulness meditation, interfaith spiritual support, and cognitive activities.
- Expand public transportation availability across the county.
- Distribute printed flyers or brochures listing available health and social services.
- Build and maintain safe bike paths and walkable neighborhoods.
- Establish a centralized community information hub.
- Increase the availability and coordination of home care services.

Social Participation, Respect & Inclusion – Communication & Information

- Address neighborhood disconnects; many residents no longer know their neighbors.
- Create more opportunities for neighbor gatherings to reduce isolation.
- Improve representation of village and town officials in community planning processes.
- Foster intergenerational connections between youth and older adults.
- Maintain and promote a countywide **Monthly Activities Calendar**.
- Establish a **Civic Engagement Center** or dedicated **Senior Center**.
- Increase marketing of free college classes for older adults.
- Ensure a steady schedule of reliable monthly events.
- Address social isolation through proactive outreach and delivery of relevant information to isolated individuals.
- Emphasize the importance of staying active, neighborly, and feeling valued and included.

Civic Participation & Employment: Community Priorities

- Promote job sharing and part-time employment options for older adults.
- Educate employers on ageism and how to create age-diverse, productive work environments.
- Meet older workers “where they are” in terms of experience and flexibility.
- Expand outreach to older volunteers and those interested in returning to the workforce.
- Develop a **Volunteer Opportunity Guide** detailing locations and roles available.
- Create transportation solutions for older workers who do not drive.
- Offer a variety of flexible volunteer and job activities tailored to older adults.
- Ensure employers provide flexible work hours for aging workers.
- Support ongoing training for older adults to learn new skills, including digital literacy.
- Encourage employers to help older employees transition into new roles or responsibilities.
- Provide structured learning opportunities for older adults to build computer and workplace skills (e.g., through Northstar).
- Develop and distribute a **Job Search Guide** tailored for older adults.
- Launch public education campaigns to reduce ageism and promote the value of older workers in the workforce.

Appendix 4
Additional Resources

Resources:

Health Across All Policies

https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/health_across_all_policies/docs/roadmap_report.pdf

Smart Growth Principles

<https://www.upstateforever.org/blog/land-planning-policy/10-principles-of-smart-growth>