

Elevating Aging-in-Community *in* Highland Park

A Strategic Guide

*Content developed by Planning/Aging
in partnership with the Aging in a Changing Region
program of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus*

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Executive Summary

Highland Park was one of five municipalities that participated in 2022 in the “Aging in a Changing Region” (*AiaCR*) program, run by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Planning/Aging, and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, funded by the RRF Foundation for Aging. Planning/Aging led two public workshops and reviewed input to identify strategies by which Highland Park could elevate its support of Aging-in-Community. The following strategic recommendations have been grouped into the general categories of Communication, Coordination, and Collaboration, along with a few specific Senior Center recommendations.

Communication Recommendations

- Elevate and promote Highland Park’s commitment to Aging-in-Community
- Continue to publicize existing older adult programs via a variety of platforms
- Establish a satellite resource station for information on existing older adult services and programming
- Practice anti-ageism in all municipal communications and behavior

Coordination Recommendations

- Commit to taking a ‘whole of government’ approach to supporting Aging-in-Community
- Incorporate Aging-in-Community into key municipal conversations and initiatives
- Review existing operations and programs for their Aging-in-Community consistency
- Designate City staff in multiple departments as Aging-in-Community point-persons
- Update and revise Highland Park’s guidance documents to better support Aging-in-Community

- Use an Aging-in-Community lens when viewing Highland Park’s housing stock
- Investigate adding “Missing Middle Housing” options to Highland Park’s housing stock
- Consider Accessory Dwelling Units as an Aging-in-Community option
- Consider establishing an Aging-in-Community set-aside within the Housing Trust Fund
- Recognize and consider the public realm as an essential element of Aging-in-Community
- Strategize on better linking Highland Park’s many transportation and transit resources

Collaboration Recommendations

- Broaden the ownership of and participation with Aging-in-Community
- Establish an Aging-in-Community Commission to play an ongoing policy and review role
- Link Aging-in-Community with Highland Park’s Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives
- Attend the MMC’s Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative and other regional Aging-in-Community activities

Senior Center Revisioning Recommendations

- Engage in strategic planning to help identify the future Center users and their needs and interests
- Better integrate the Senior Center and the Recreation Center
- Provide a greater variety of spaces, including informal drop-in “third places”

It is up to the City and the community at large to review, select and prioritize from this list of strategic recommendations and develop an implementation plan going forward. As Highland Park’s conversation about Aging-in-Community is at an early stage, additional ideas, and strategies for supporting Aging-in-Community can and should be added to this list.



Highland Park’s Aging in a Changing Region engagement was in its earliest stages when the community suffered unfathomable devastation and losses at the July 4th Parade. The engagement immediately went on hold, and it was resumed only after the Core Team indicated that it was appropriate to do so. Then as now, the entire Aging in a Changing Region team offers its heartfelt support to the Highland Park community.

WHAT IS AGING IN COMMUNITY?

Aging-in-Community refers to a coordinated municipality-wide effort to support the evolving needs and interests of its aging population.

Aging-in-Community is inclusive of the narrower term “aging-in-place” which focuses on one’s dwelling, and it uses a broader, community-level lens to identify a set of plans, programs, procedures, and services that in combination help support its older residents.

Aging-in-Community is a key component of “livable community” efforts that address the needs and interests of residents of all ages throughout their lifespans.

Communities that support **Aging-in-Community** are by definition “age-friendly” and “dementia-friendly” communities.

Evidence from notable **Aging-in-Community** programs throughout the United States identifies key components for likely success of a municipality’s **Aging-in-Community** program:

- issue champions divided amongst elected officials (without overreliance upon them), staff leaders, and the overall community
- dedicated human and financial resources for support
- collaborations with key aging network and other municipal stakeholders
- mindful coordination between **Aging-in-Community** and other key municipal priorities

The “Aging in a Changing Region” Program

The metropolitan Chicago region – like most regions throughout the United States – is experiencing substantial growth in the number and percentage share of its older adult population. Municipalities throughout the region are seeing such population shifts, and many municipalities are looking to develop strategies to address these shifts, and to support their growing older adult populations. They are looking to support Aging-in-Community.

Three partner organizations – the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC, serving

the Chicago region’s 275 cities, towns and villages), the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP, the regional planning organization for Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties), and Planning/Aging (a consultancy focused on the intersection of city planning and the growing aging population) – received funding from the RRF Foundation for Aging to assist municipalities’ support of Aging-in-Community. This program – “Aging in a Changing Region” (AiaCR) – builds upon the idea that wherever a municipality is

currently in its support of Aging-in-Community, strategic guidance can help elevate its support going forward.

In 2021 and in 2022, MMC invited municipal participation in the AiaCR program. Interested municipalities submitted applications that combined an assessment of their Aging-in-Community goals and work to date, and assistance they envisioned to help advance these goals. The 2022 Cohort of municipalities – Bellwood and Broadview (*participating jointly*), Highland Park, Maywood, Richton Park, and Yorkville – reflects the region’s diversity in terms of geography, socio-economic factors, community type, and Aging-in-Community experience.






WHAT THIS DOCUMENT ISN'T

-  **ISN'T** a detailed physical plan document with specific infrastructure or other capital projects identified and costed out, with their implementation details outlined
-  **ISN'T** a compendium of 'best practices' from other local or non-local municipalities – while identifying certain approaches from elsewhere can be valuable as references, anything planned for Highland Park should be tailored to the specifics of Highland Park
-  **ISN'T** a write-up of a rigorous, data-driven assessment and planning process with a precise schedule for future evaluations and updates, as Highland Park's involvement with the AiaCR program was a qualitative assessment of current conditions and potential future efforts and strategies



WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS

-  **IS** a practical strategic guide tailored to Highland Park on how to elevate its current support of Aging-in-Community – designed to be used as an ongoing resource, not to gather dust on shelves due to its unreadability or impenetrability
-  **IS** specific topical recommendations of further actions Highland Park may choose to take, either through utilization of its existing resources, joining with other entities in collaborative activities, or by engaging external partners
-  **IS** a working framework of specific action steps that Highland Park can take to elevate its support of Aging-in-Community, and which can be modified, adapted, or augmented at any point to even better meet evolving community needs

Highland Park's AiaCR Application, Goals & Core Team

Highland Park's application for the AiaCR program evidenced enthusiasm for being increasingly supportive of its aging population, and cited a desire for assistance in identifying strengths, assets, weaknesses, and challenges thereto. In each AiaCR community, Planning/Aging convenes and works with a Core Team on scheduling, strategizing about, and planning both the public workshops and the overall engagement, and has come to recognize the value of working with a Core Team that represents a variety of key municipal departments and stakeholders. Highland Park's Core Team was comprised of Deputy City Clerk Ashley Palbitska, who authored the AiaCR application and

offered a big picture municipal perspective, Jennifer Aiello and Christina Earle, who provided insights from their direct work with older adults at the Senior Center, and Rati Akash and Zubin Coleman from the Planning Department, who contributed perspectives from their work dealing with Highland Park's housing and physical environments. In addition to wanting strategic overall Aging-in-Community recommendations, the diverse Core Team also identified engagement goals specific to their work: Jennifer and Christina wanted input for the upcoming Senior Center renovation, while Rati and Zubin asked for recommendations that could link with the upcoming Strategic Housing Plan update.

Highland Park residents enjoy its magnificent lakefront setting as one of its prime amenities.



Highland Park's Aging-in-Community Context

A review of Highland Park's demographics, its guidance documents, and key elements of its physical and built environment is valuable and helps place this Aging-in-Community engagement and the strategic recommendations within a more complete community context.



Residents of all ages enjoy Highland Park's active Downtown.

Highland Park's Demographics

Looking at Highland Park's demographics shows that it is at a significantly different stage of community aging than Lake County's overall or the seven-county CMAP region.

Highland Park is Steadily Aging

	Highland Park		Lake County		CMAP Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Under 5	1,961	6.6%	40,058	5.7%	508,895	6.0%
5 to 19	5,839	19.7%	150,869	21.6%	1,624,354	19.2%
20 to 34	2,320	7.8%	128,263	18.3%	1,781,246	21.1%
35 to 49	5,615	19.0%	135,625	19.4%	1,688,609	20.0%
50 to 64	6,591	22.3%	145,100	20.7%	1,625,883	19.2%
65 to 74	4,244	14.3%	59,474	8.5%	713,897	8.4%
75 to 84	2,150	7.3%	26,840	3.8%	348,205	4.1%
85 and Over	876	3.0%	13,453	1.9%	160,449	1.9%
Median Age	47.2		38.5		37.7	

Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey five-year estimates

[CMAP Community Data Snapshot | Highland Park \(illinois.gov\)](https://www.cmap.org/Community-Data-Snapshot/Highland-Park)

Age Cohorts, Over Time

	2000	2006-2010	2016-2020
19 and Under	28.5%	27.2%	26.4%
20 - 34	12.7%	9.8%	7.8%
35 - 49	24.2%	21.4%	19.0%
50 - 64	19.4%	21.8%	22.3%
65 and Over	15.1%	19.8%	24.6%
Median Age	40.6	44.7	47.2

Source: 2000 Census; 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 American Community Survey five-year estimates

[CMAP Community Data Snapshot | Highland Park \(illinois.gov\)](https://illinois.gov/cmap)

Highland Park's 65 years and over population cohort represents 24.6 percent of its total population, as compared to the same cohort representing 14.2 percent of overall Lake County and 14.4 percent of the region's population. Highland Park's larger 65 and over population is balanced almost completely by its' significantly smaller 20 to 34 years cohort, which comprises 7.8 percent in Highland Park, as compared to 18.3 percent in overall Lake County and 21.1 percent of the region. Interestingly, Highland Park's 19 & under cohort is back in within one percentage point of overall Lake County and the region.

Not surprisingly Highland Park's sizable 65 years and over cohort affects its median age, which is 47.2 years as compared to overall Lake County's 38.5 years and the region's 37.7 years.

The growth of Highland Park's older population cohorts, largely at the expense of its younger and middle-aged cohorts can be seen over time, as Highland Park's 50 to 64 years and 65 years and over cohorts have grown steadily since 2000, as shown in the chart above.

This scenario may be seen in separate ways: without doing an in-depth population study, it appears that one positive factor behind it is residents moving to Highland Park at earlier, typically family-building life stage, developing deep community roots, and choosing to remain in Highland Park through later life stages. Seen less positively, it may be observed that Highland Parks' older population choosing to age-in-community – particularly in sizable homes they have lived in for several decades even as their interests, needs and abilities have evolved – has squeezed the available housing stock and impacted the opportunities for younger adults to locate in Highland Park and allow for the repetition of this community regeneration cycle.

Regardless of one's perspective on this demographic fact pattern, the issue of Aging-in-Community already is and will continue to be a major element of life in Highland Park and it should also represent a significant component of community conversations and planning initiatives.

Guidance Documents

A review of Highland Park's guidance documents shows that unlike many communities, Highland Park does not rely upon a Comprehensive Plan to articulate its community goals and aspirations, as its most recent Comprehensive Master Plan is from 1997 and is clearly outdated. Highland Park instead developed a series of Neighborhood Strategic Plans from 1998-2001 and continues to update them. In addition, Highland Park developed and relies upon a set of topical strategic plans such as the Strategic Business Development Plan (*currently being updated*), the Strategic Housing Plan (*also currently being updated*), the Historic Preservation Plan adopted in 2022, the 2020-2022 Sustainability Plan, and the MoveHP Plan (*also currently being updated*). All these plans maintain ongoing consistency with the Zoning Ordinance, and when the City's Comprehensive Plan is updated at some point, these specific strategic plans will serve as its baseline. While many of these plans are explicitly or implicitly consistent with and/or supportive of Aging-in-Community, none of them identify it as a key goal.

It is envisioned that this engagement, and its strategic recommendations to elevate Highland Park's current support of Aging-in-Community, are entirely consistent with these existing City goals and guidance documents.

City Hall has graced its Saint Johns Avenue location for nearly a century.

Housing Stock

According to the 2020 American Community Survey data, a high percentage (*over 76 percent*) of Highland Park's housing is in detached single family homes, almost half of which (*over 48 percent*) have four or more bedrooms, and the vast majority of which (*nearly 84 percent*) are owner-occupied. While this engagement did not study pricing data, available and proxy data suggests it is safe to say that Highland Park's housing costs are relatively high, and that affordability is a challenge to a portion of Highland Park's residents. This is part of the reason that Highland Park has long been a leader in trying to address housing affordability on a municipal level, including its development and management of affordable housing developments dating back to 1978, its 2001 adoption of an Affordable Housing Planning and Implementation Plan, and its 2002 adoption of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and the Inclusionary Housing Plan adopted in 2003 to provide financial resources for affordable housing development and preservation.

Much of the discussion of housing in Highland Park continues to center around affordability, and this was the case in this engagement as well.



Community Walkability/Accessibility

Highland Park enjoys a lakefront location with four beaches, and many large parks, which give it an extremely high measure of park access – almost three times that of the overall region – as seen below.

The elevated level of park access is a significant component of overall community walkability, along with a network of sidewalks, paths, and trails. Highland Park is working to further improve community walkability by developing and updating the open space and streetscape elements of various Neighborhood Strategic Plans, and by updating its other plans, notably MoveHP, its bicycle and pedestrian plan, currently being updated, in part by adding a “complete streets” policy that will serve all modes of transportation, non-motorized and motorized.

Park Access, 2015

	Highland Park	Lake County	CMAP Region
Accessible Park Acreage per 1,000 Residents	15.5	9.49	5.78

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning analysis of the 2015 Park Access Layer.

*Neighborhood parks (smaller than 35 acres) are considered accessible for residents living within 0.5 miles; community parks (35 acres or larger) are considered accessible for residents living within 1 mile.

[CMAP Community Data Snapshot | Highland Park \(illinois.gov\)](http://www.cmap.org/Community-Data-Snapshot-Highland-Park)

Transit

Highland Park is a well transit-served community, with several Highland Park stations along Metra Rail's Union Pacific North Line connecting downtown Chicago and Kenosha, Wisconsin, and several Pace Bus fixed routes running throughout or along Highland Park's edges.

In addition, Highland Park offers to older adults and people with disabilities the Highland Park Connector fixed route service at various residential, commercial, and civic locations, and benefits from the Moraine Township Paratransit Van, and the West Deerfield Township's “Going Places” program's demand transportation services which offer older adults and people with disabilities rides to locations within a 15-mile radius, with medical appointments receiving priority.



Highland Park owes much of its popularity to its excellent transit accessibility.



Workshop #1 was held in the grand ballroom at the Senior Center.

Highland Park's Public Workshops

A key element of the AiaCR engagement was a pair of public workshops that Planning/Aging – with Core Team guidance – planned and conducted. The Core Team decided that the two workshops would both be aimed at receiving residential input, along with having key municipal staff and other stakeholders attend and participate. In order to accommodate different elements of the resident population, Workshop #1 was staged mid-morning, and Workshop #2 was staged at the end of the typical workday. The workshops were publicized via the City's website, in the Highlander, and through the Senior Center, and residents of all ages were welcomed.

At both workshops, Planning/Aging provided background on Aging-in-Community to help attendees understand the term, which was framed in a 'livable

communities for all ages' manner, as community values typically held by older adults – appropriate and affordable housing options, well-managed and reliable transportation options, convenient goods and services, accessible safe places to gather, access to engagement opportunities throughout the community, and responsive municipal staff and leaders – are virtually identical to values held by younger adults. After this background, the centerpiece of the workshops were the facilitated discussions that engaged all attendees to share their lived experiences and perspectives.

Workshop #1 was held on Thursday morning, October 27th. Its attendance was about 20 people, about 1/2 residents, and the other 1/2 City staff and stakeholder partners and Core Team members. While

Workshop #1's resident attendance may have been unintentionally diminished by it being scheduled on a day that the Connector was not in operation, the discussion was valuable but limited due to the small crowd size.

Workshop #2 was held on Wednesday evening, November 30th, and despite it being a cold blustery evening shortly after Thanksgiving, thanks to a robust publicity campaign, its attendance was over 30 people, again approximately 1/2 residents, and the other 1/2 City staff and stakeholder partners, a couple of elected officials, and Core Team members. Workshop #2 was video recorded so that residents and others unable to attend can watch it in its entirety via the City's website link. Workshop #2's facilitated discussion inspired very lively conversation, as residents and stakeholders engaged about what constitutes a genuinely caring community that is supportive of Aging-in-Community, and what are the appropriate roles that the City, individual residents, and various stakeholder partners can play to help engender it.



Workshop #2 was held in a more intimate Senior Center room, which supported lots of attendee dialogue.

Key Input

It was notable that several attendees indicated that they were at the workshops thinking both about themselves as residents, their parents (*generally their mothers*) who are Aging-in-Community in Highland Park, as well as their children, of whom they wondered whether they might eventually be able to do so.

Certain significant points stood out from the facilitated discussions with residents and others at the two workshops, including:

- Attendees cited things that Highland Park currently does well to support Aging-in-Community, including providing affordable housing, various transportation options, the Senior Center offering a range of programs and support services, downtown's density and its' range of commercial and other services, and the opportunities to engage in community affairs
- Attendees cited certain things that Highland Park could improve upon to better support Aging-in-Community, including offering tax breaks and financial benefits for older adults living on fixed incomes, and providing more streamlined communications and comprehensive information about existing services, programs, and events
- Attendees were divided as to how they sought out and received information, some using digital means with others using hard copy means, and all utilized both formal and informal (*word of mouth*) means
- There was a lot of discussion about the Senior Center (*where the workshops were held*). Some attendees indicated that they feel that it offers good services, excellent parking and accessibility, and that it "has great bones," while others



Highland Park's single-family and multi-family housing stock ranges from historic to humble, and from majestic to modest.

indicated that they feel that it gives off a “hand-me-down” rather than a high-end vibe, does not offer modern or high-end services, and should make users feel more engaged to the community

- There was a good bit of concern expressed about the need to provide a range of programs and services for older adults, including affordable ones for those who may have difficulty paying
- Attendees expressed concerns about how older adults are sometimes addressed, and that younger folks often overlook or make unfortunate assumptions about older adults
- Attendees mentioned the need for better intergenerational engagement opportunities, with knowledge-sharing going in both directions, with younger folks providing technology-oriented guidance, and highly skilled, retired older adults sharing their accumulated skill sets
- Attendees felt that Highland Park (*as with most communities*) dedicates too few resources towards supporting older adults, which was seen as counter-intuitive due to the overall aging of society
- Asked specifically about their current and potential future housing, most attendees indicated that they currently live in single-family houses, and about half stated that they envisioned moving at some point to smaller, single-story, lower maintenance, more affordable housing options, which they hope may be in Highland Park but fear not
- It was stated that Highland Park's housing stock is missing both more affordable and creative “missing middle” housing, and retirement community options, and that some residents have left Highland Park due to seeking such options

- When asked about transportation and community walkability and accessibility, some attendees made a linkage between their current and future housing needs and having better access to fixed and on-demand transportation options
- There was a good bit of discussion about gaps in the current Connector transportation service and how it needs to be augmented to better support Aging-in-Community
- Discussions about overall community walkability and accessibility pointed out a mismatch between the general excellent state and maintenance of the downtown as compared to missing sidewalks and mobility challenges in some neighborhoods
- Attendees in general indicated pride in the high standards and the state of maintenance throughout much of Highland Park
- There were divergent opinions about how well Highland Park supports isolated older adults lacking family or caregiver support networks. Some attendees indicated that the Senior Center and other stakeholders can make referrals and help provide support once they are aware of specific needs, others wondered whether the provision of more case workers and social workers would boost the overall assistance level, and noted that this issue likely varies in different community sub-populations
- This discussion led to the mention that Highland Park is a diverse community with substantial Hispanic and Russian-immigrant populations who are often under-represented in community dialogues

Resident Input Forms

In addition to the two public workshops, residents of all ages were invited to complete and submit a short informal survey document that gave them an opportunity to share their lived Highland Park experience. The Resident Input Forms were made available online, and Highland Park residents showed tremendous willingness to complete the forms to share their input and lived experiences.

Over 420 Resident Input Forms were submitted (*far more than any other AiaCR municipality*). While respondents ranged in age from their 30s to their 90s, about 90 percent were above 59 years old, and the respondents were spread rather evenly between those in their 60s, 70s and 80s, with about ten respondents in their 90s. Respondents' tenure living in Highland Park appeared spread from recent arrivals to those who'd lived virtually their entire lives in Highland Park, with the most common



Neighborhood business districts have distinctive signage and characters.

answers being tenures of between 20 and 39 years.

Much of the input from the submitted Resident Input Forms reiterated themes from the public workshops, including that respondents get their general and older-adult focused information from a variety of formal and informal, digital, and hard copy sources, that a fair number of older adults avail themselves Senior Center-provided and other older-adult supporting services and programs such as exercise or educational classes, transportation, housing, and health-related programs.

Most respondents currently live in single-family homes, which they say meet their current needs, but less than two-thirds believe will meet their future needs – as shown in the graphics at right.

Respondents indicated that that their desired future housing would likely differ from their current housing by being smaller, single-story, more easily maintained and more affordable, and possibly offering support services.

Does your current housing meet your current needs?

Yes 

No 

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Will you be able to age in your current housing (Stay) or will you have to move at some point (Move)?

Stay 

Move 

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



Highland Park has long offered a mixed-use “living-above-the-store” tradition, at a small scale...



...at a medium scale in several neighborhoods around town...



...and at a larger scale in Downtown Highland Park.

Stakeholder Assessments

In addition to receiving input from residents, key municipal staff and elected stakeholders were asked for their perspectives on how well Highland Park currently supports Aging-in-Community. 41 assessments – from elected officials to a wide range of staff from the City Manager’s office, Community Development, Finance, Administration, Fire, Police, and Public Works departments – were submitted and reviewed.

Key points from this stakeholder input included:

- A range of input stating that both they and Highland Park’s residents shared from a limited to moderate knowledge of the existing older adult services provided to Highland Park’s older adult residents
- While getting feedback from older residents on existing or missing services is often a challenge as many are not comfortable with digital communication, the feedback received is mostly positive, with some concerns about a shortage of information and/or programs

- Appreciation of in-house experts to whom specific or complicated questions can be referred, often to key Senior Center staff
- Across-the-board feelings that Highland Park currently supports Aging-in-Community moderately or very well, with existing municipal and Moraine Township services cited
- Concerns or barriers to the current level of Aging-in-Community support cited were language or technical barriers, limits to community knowledge of existing services, affordability of services and of living in Highland Park, walkability/accessibility gaps, the need to expand transportation, affordable housing, and mental health services, and the need to better coordinate between different service providers
- Many specific ideas were offered addressing the specific concern areas identified above, some of which are reflected in the strategic recommendations offered below

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR ELEVATING AGING-IN-COMMUNITY IN HIGHLAND PARK

✔ COMMUNICATION

Elevate and promote Highland Park's commitment to Aging-in-Community

Continue to publicize existing older adult programs via a variety of platforms

Establish a satellite resource station for information on existing older adult services and programming

Practice anti-ageism in all municipal communications and behavior

✔ COLLABORATION

Broaden the ownership of and participation with Aging-in-Community

Establish an Aging-in-Community Commission to play an ongoing policy and review role

Link Aging-in-Community with Highland Park's Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives

Attend the MMC's Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative and other regional Aging-in-Community activities

✔ SENIOR CENTER REVISIONING

Engage in strategic planning to help identify the future Center users and their needs and interests

Better integrate the Senior Center and the Recreation Center

Provide a greater variety of spaces, including informal drop-in "third places"

✔ COORDINATION

Commit to taking a 'whole of government' approach to supporting Aging-in-Community

Incorporate Aging-in-Community into key municipal conversations and initiatives

Review existing operations and programs for their Aging-in-Community consistency

Designate City staff in multiple departments as Aging-in-Community point-persons

Update and revise Highland Park's guidance documents to better support Aging-in-Community

Use an Aging-in-Community lens when viewing Highland Park's housing stock

Investigate adding "Missing Middle Housing" options to Highland Park's housing stock

Consider Accessory Dwelling Units as an Aging-in-Community option

Consider establishing an Aging-in-Community set-aside within the Housing Trust Fund

Recognize and consider the public realm as an essential element of Aging-in-Community

Strategize on better linking Highland Park's many transportation and transit resources

Recommendations for Elevating Aging-in-Community in Highland Park

The following recommendations have been grouped into the broad general categories of Communication (*and knowledge-sharing, both internal and external*), Coordination (*between Highland Park's different programs and goals*), and Collaboration (*with existing and potential partners*), followed by a few specific Senior Center recommendations.

COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Elevate and promote Highland Park's commitment to Aging-in-Community

Highland Park should express its support for Aging-in-Community more visibly and explicitly, as it is difficult to find commitment

to Aging-in-Community in Highland Park's communications, including but not limited to the City's website, where a search for Aging-in-Community leads primarily to this engagement or to references to the more dwelling-specific "aging-in-place" or to Highland Park's designation as a "Dementia-Friendly" community, which is similar to but also more narrow than a holistic Aging-in-Community. A clear statement such as "Highland Park actively support Aging-in-Community!" could set the tone that the City takes a "whole-of-enterprise" approach towards Aging-in-Community, whereby support of older adult residents is purposefully integrated into the work of all municipal departments and sister agencies, and not isolated to any one entity.

Continue to publicize existing older adult programs via a variety of platforms

Residents attendees at this engagement's public workshops confirmed that current older residents and their caregivers rely on a range of media – hard copy and digital, formal, and informal – to learn about and access available services and resources, sign up for them, or provide feedback on community input. Rather than attempt to determine a single consensus communication platform, Highland Park should continue to recognize that different residents rely on differing communication, including in a range of languages spoken in their homes.



The 175+ year-old Francis Stupey Log Cabin is Highland Park's oldest standing residence.

Residents' access to the many beautiful parks also provides access to amenities such as Farmers Markets in the parks.



Establish a satellite resource station for information on existing older adult services and programming

The public workshops underscored that many residents feel that they lack comprehensive knowledge of existing older adult service, programs, and events available in Highland Park, and that this lack of knowledge likely restricts the ability of older adult residents to avail themselves of these resources. While most such information is available at the Senior Center, its location remote from downtown Highland Park may limit its utility as a single resource. A possible response would be the establishment and maintenance of a satellite resource station, remote from the Senior Center, likely located at or near City Hall, at which residents and stakeholders could learn about and access hard copy information about existing resources. This resource center could initially be established by staff working with the Aging-in-Community Commission (see below), with provisions for its ongoing maintenance and updating determined upfront.

Practice anti-ageism in all municipal communications and behavior

Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes. Just as anti-racism is the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism, anti-ageism seeks out, calls out, and looks to change anything that perpetuates ageist ideas or behavior. Consciously ensure that all references to Highland Park's older adults characterizes them as civic assets and resources to be leveraged, rather than viewing them solely through a needs-based or a medical lens. Most of Highland Park's older adults live independently among the general population, rather than in buildings that specifically cater to and support older adults, so they should be celebrated for their independence and contributions to Highland Park more so than for their dependence.

While this is not currently an issue on the City website, it is notable that the homepage's Resident tab includes a link to the Senior Center, with no other references or links to older adults. Would any older adults possibly see this as an implicit suggestion that this is the sole way that older residents are viewed?

COORDINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Commit to taking a 'whole of government' approach to supporting Aging-in-Community

Experience elsewhere also indicates that a key success factor for building and sustaining a robust Aging-in-Community program is positioning it within a whole of government framework, wherein diverse governmental departments and sister agencies coordinate in addressing shared issues or challenges, rather than delegating Aging-in-Community to a single department or agency. While Highland Park is fortunate to have such a strong Senior Center and staff, as well as other key civic resources, it is important that all of City government buys into and plays a continuing role with the Aging-in-Community initiative so that it does not get siloed just within the Senior Center.

Incorporate Aging-in-Community into key municipal conversations and initiatives

To do this, Aging-in-Community should become an important lens through which proposed or existing City projects, programs or strategies are viewed and evaluated – regardless of whether the initiatives are seen as primarily benefitting Highland Park's housing, economic development, transportation, sustainability, or other key City agendas. This evaluation should ask: how do or how would these plans, programs or strategies impact the older adult population? In doing this, the city will likely find that impacts on older adults will often be consistent with impacts on the overall population – this underscores the notion that support for Aging-in-Community is a key component of being a livable community for all ages.



The Recreation Center – and its adjacency to the Senior Center – offers a great opportunity for an integrated approach to Aging-in-Community.

Review existing operations and programs for their Aging-in-Community consistency

City and sister agency staff should conduct a system-wide assessment of their own operations, facilities, plans, and programs to identify any elements, requirements or wording that explicitly or unintentionally undercut support for Aging-in-Community, and work with the Aging-in-Community Commission (*see below*) to remedy any findings. Even if this review does not unearth barriers, it may reveal opportunities for enhancements to foster broader community (*not limited just to older adults*) participation.

Designate City staff in multiple departments as Aging-in-Community point-persons

While certain individuals – particularly Senior Center staff – may already play this role for the overall Highland Park municipal government, it is likely that not all residents know this and may search

for who to contact on a department-by-department basis. Designating and publicizing a specific staff liaison in each key public-facing department or sister agency as their Aging-in-Community point-person would make government more accessible, as an older adult resident wanting to address a specific question or concern would be able to contact the designated Aging-in-Community point-person within, for example, the Park District, the Building Division within the Community Development Department, or the Finance Department, rather than search various departments for the appropriate way to do so. The Aging-in-Community liaisons should meet regularly and share contacts to learn from one another and address issues proactively and in a coordinated manner.

Update and revise Highland Park's guidance documents to better support Aging-in-Community

As the Comprehensive Plan is quite outdated, and serving a limited purpose, it clearly needs to be updated. While much of the traditional purpose of a Comprehensive Plan as a community guidance document that gets modified periodically has been given to the City's topical strategic plans and its various neighborhood plans, a Comprehensive Plan is important for articulating municipal goals and values. As these various strategic plans get modified and updated, those updates should mindfully reflect Aging-in-Community considerations. And once the Comprehensive Plan does get updated, the update should specifically include Aging-in-Community, by specifically incorporating Aging-in-Community strategies and implementation initiatives within the Land Use, Housing, Mobility, Neighborhoods, and other such chapters, or as a standalone section.



Convenient access to amenities and social engagement options are an important element of Aging-in-Community.



Highland Park currently offers a wide range of older adult housing facilities.



Some facilities offer supportive services such as assisted living and memory care.

Use an Aging-in-Community lens when viewing Highland Park's housing stock

As most of Highland Park's older adults currently live independently throughout the community, it will very likely become the case that some may find their current housing will not support their ability to age well and safely, due in part to a need to navigate stairs to access fundamental living or support spaces such as bathrooms or laundries, or simply not needing or being able to maintain their large homes. Many of these residents will be looking for safe, affordable, and accessible housing options to support them as they age in Highland Park. Viewing Highland Park's housing stock through an Aging-in-Community lens could better identify older-adult related housing needs, help quantify gaps, guide housing-related policy decisions, and inform development and redevelopment planning.

Investigate adding "Missing Middle Housing" options to Highland Park's housing stock

The phrase "Missing Middle Housing" refers to a spectrum of house-scale buildings with multiple units in walkable neighborhoods, which might help address some of Highland Park's housing needs by providing additional downsized housing options to help support Aging-in-Community. It could be a valuable exercise

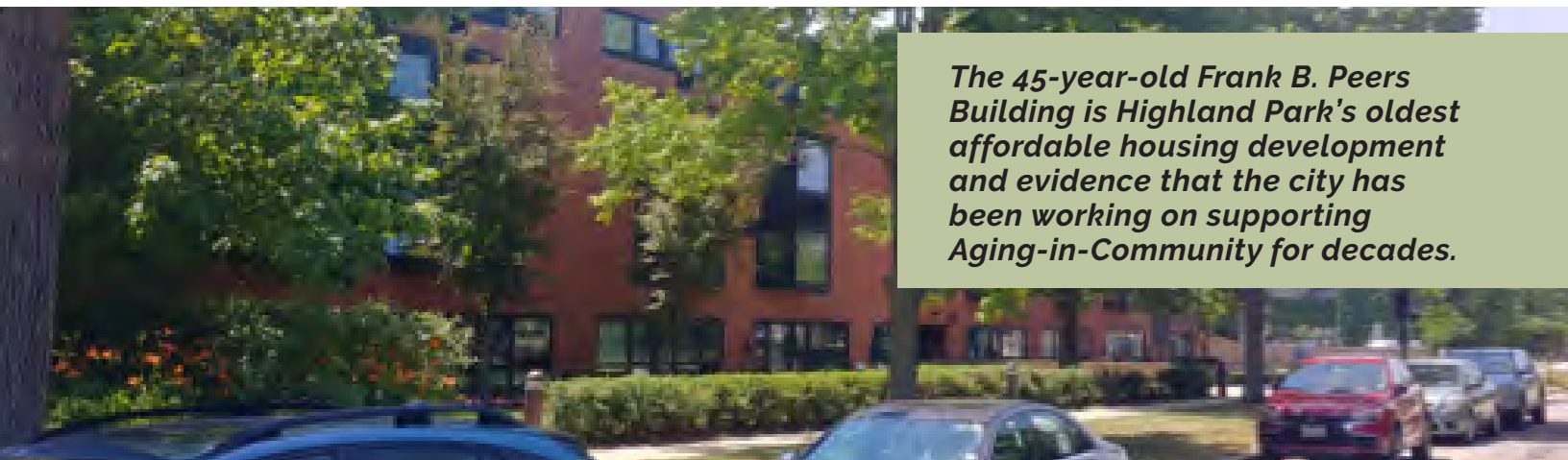
as part of the ongoing Strategic Housing Plan update to utilize the Missing Middle Housing framework and check the Zoning Ordinance's Residential District definitions to determine whether Missing Middle Housing types would be allowable.

Consider Accessory Dwelling Units as an Aging-in-Community option

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are increasingly being legalized as a matter of right in communities throughout the country as a housing option with potential Aging-in-Community and affordability benefits, as they can be used either for on-site caregivers or as a downsizing option that would allow older adults additional options of aging within their current neighborhoods. Highland Park's Zoning Ordinance and Rental Registration Program will likely need to be reviewed for potential modification required to allow for ADUs, and the community should openly discuss this potential change with an eye towards the Aging-in-Community benefits.

Consider establishing an Aging-in-Community set-aside within the Housing Trust Fund

Highland Park is well-known for having long planned, developed, and supported affordable housing, including age-specific housing for older adults. These efforts have led to the current inventory of over 200



The 45-year-old Frank B. Peers Building is Highland Park's oldest affordable housing development and evidence that the city has been working on supporting Aging-in-Community for decades.



Consider the obvious safety issues when residents of all ages must use neighborhood streets to get around.

affordable housing units. Many residents, however, are concerned about their ability to afford to remain in Highland Park as they age, and the demand for affordable housing from different sectors of the community continues to far outstrip the supply. The Housing Trust Fund, established as an outgrowth of the Affordable Housing Plan, is flexible in how its funds may be used, and the types of housing it supports. Establishing, funding, and maintaining an Aging-in-Community set-aside within the Housing Trust Fund could be another valuable tool in Highland Park's Aging-in-Community strategies.

Recognize and consider the public realm as an essential element of Aging-in-Community

Highland Park's public realm and its walkability and accessibility are essential elements of a livable community for all ages and its support of Aging-in-Community. Workshop attendees pointed out connectivity gaps within certain neighborhoods and areas of town. The absence of safe and walkable sidewalks throughout much of the city is an impediment not just to Aging-in-Community but to overall community livability. This

perspective is consistent with and could be incorporated into ongoing planning efforts such as the updates to the MoveHP and Neighborhood Strategic Plan updates.

Strategize on better linking Highland Park's many transportation and transit resources

Highland Park is a resource-rich community when it comes to transit and transportation options, with Metra commuter rail, Pace buses, Highland Park's Connector service, Moraine and West Deerfield Townships' on-demand services, and volunteer driver programs offered by Faith in Action and other not-for-profit or faith-based groups. Yet many older adult residents indicate that they continue to primarily rely on private automobiles for most of their trips, due to perceived or real concerns about service hours, route limitations, and scheduling requirements. Convening all these providers into a summit to strategize over ways to better coordinate and link existing services and address concerns and gaps would be a valuable effort, possibly organized in conjunction with the ongoing update to MoveHP as a "complete streets" component.

COLLABORATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Broaden the ownership of and participation with Aging-in-Community

It was extremely helpful that the Core Team included staff from several key departments. Building from this, a wide swath of Highland Park should collectively “own” Aging-in-Community, in part to embed this commitment into City practice and insulate it from potential future electoral or personnel changes. Experience elsewhere has shown that overreliance on specific issue champions – particularly elected ones – can jeopardize a community's commitment to Aging-in-Community if it gets too strongly associated with outgoing officials' or staff persons' agendas. Additionally, consciously including residents beyond older adults themselves will help make this a community-wide initiative.

Establish an Aging-in-Community Commission to play an ongoing policy and review role

A broadly-constituted entity such as an Aging-in-Community Commission would help expand issue ownership. This Commission might include a range of members representing the public and private sectors, including key stakeholders (*sister agencies such as the Park District and Public Library, and the local business community, faith communities and schools*), and residents including -- but not limited to – older adults, who (*with staff support*) might be charged with: meeting regularly; reviewing development and redevelopment proposals as to their impacts on Aging-in-Community; preparing and presenting to the City Council an annual 'State of Aging-in-Community' report; and helping sponsor Aging-in-Community events.

Link Aging-in-Community with Highland Park's Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives

Everyone ages, although their aging experiences are impacted by their cultural traditions. Therefore Aging-in-Community can be creatively used as a means by which Highland Park can simultaneously support its older adults and reach out and engage with all components of its diverse population, learning from different cultural groups ways to engage and revere their older adults, using multi-cultural events like food, craft, and music festivals as ways to draw people together, and as a portal to an ongoing and robust Aging-in-Community conversation.

Attend the MMC's Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative and other regional Aging-in-Community activities

The quarterly Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative meetings typically include representatives of several dozen regional municipalities involved with Aging-in-Community activities and provide topical knowledge and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Highland Park's experiences with and lessons learned from the AiaCR program will be of interest to other municipalities. Involvement with the Collaborative also serves as a good portal to other regional Aging-in-Community activities sponsored by a range of stakeholder entities, such as the bi-monthly American Society on Aging topical roundtables (*see the Appendix for further resource information*).



The entrances to the Recreation Center and the Senior Center are separate and feel very different.

SENIOR CENTER REVISIONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Engage in strategic planning to help identify the future Center users and their needs and interests

Senior Centers around the country are grappling with planning for their futures by identifying their potential future user base, those users' interests and needs, and just as importantly what would attract or repel them from using the Center. This should be a key component and pillar of the upcoming renovation work.

Better integrate the Senior Center and the Recreation Center

Regardless of the Centers' names, part of the renovation effort should be establishing better linkages between the Senior and Recreation Centers. At present, the two have different entries that provide two very different experiences: entering the Recreation Center one encounters an active space and a manned information desk providing a wealth of community information (*although not much about the Senior Center*), while entering the Senior Center (*often through a side door with a small sign*) one encounters a largely empty space with a lengthy walk before encountering activity.

At a minimum, the welcoming and information-gathering experiences should be consolidated and better integrated, both for the immediate benefit of the users of each, and more broadly for consistency with Highland Park's message that Aging-in-Community is about engagement rather than separation, and that intergenerational connections benefit the entire community.

Provide a greater variety of spaces, including informal drop-in "third places"

The emptiness of the Senior Center's entry and main lobby is off-putting, and gives the facility an unintentionally formal feel, whereas many potential users would likely prefer and frequent one or more informal gathering spaces, known to sociologists and planners as "third places" neither home nor work, where people connect with others, known and unknown, over shared interests or activities.

Aging-in-Community Resources

Listed below are some of the better centralized document repositories at which to find aging-in-community resources. There may be some redundancies as certain documents may be included in multiple repositories. Some of these repositories will provide links to additional resources. Carefully evaluate any resources found here for their applicability to Highland Park's specific interests and needs.

Highland Park Municipal Resources

Listed below are direct links to many of the key Highland Park municipal resources that were discussed herein as important components of support for Aging-in-Community.

Senior Center

www.cityhpil.com/resident/senior_center/index.php

Senior Transportation Opportunities

www.cityhpil.com/resident/senior_center/transportation_opportunities.php

Connector Bus Schedule

https://cms6.revize.com/revize/highlandparkil/resident/senior_center/docs/Connector%20public%20schedule%202021%20Final.pdf

Public Transit

www.cityhpil.com/environment/transportation/public_transit.php

Affordable Housing

www.cityhpil.com/resident/affordable_housing.php

Park District of Highland Park

www.pdhp.org

Highland Park Library

www.hplibrary.org

Aging in a Changing Region Partner Organization Resources

[Aging-in-Community - Mayors Caucus](#)

Aging-in-Community is one of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' signature initiatives, and it has developed and assembled resource materials and documents both for its Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative and as part of this Aging in a Changing Region program.

[Home - CMAP \(illinois.gov\)](#)

The Chicagoland Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the seven-county metropolitan Chicago region, and develops and provides plans, programs, and other initiatives.

[CMAP Community Data Snapshot | Highland Park \(illinois.gov\)](#)

CMAP has assembled Census and other data over time into data snapshots for each municipality in the region.

[94b4305c-4586-4bd3-acf1-e177194f8820 \(illinois.gov\)](#)

CMAP developed this Aging in Place white paper in 2016.

[Planning Aging-Supportive Communities](#)

This 2015 American Planning Association (APA) Planners Advisory Service report was primarily authored by Brad Winick

of Planning/Aging. APA members can download the report for free, others are required to purchase it for \$25.

Local/Regional Aging-in-Community Aging Network Organizations Serving Highland Park

[AgeGuide](#)

AgeGuide (*officially known as AgeGuide Northeastern Illinois*) is the Area Agency on Aging as designated by the federal Older Americans Act and the Illinois Department on Aging, and serves as the planning and service agency for DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties, and supports partner agencies to provide a range of aging-in-community services, with Lake County services provided primarily by Catholic Charities ([Lake County \(catholiccharities.net\)](#))

[MORAINE TOWNSHIP](#)

Moraine Township provides a range of services to an area covering most of Highland Park. Its services for income-qualified individuals include various general, emergency and utility assistance, and a food pantry. Also, Moraine Township provides paratransit service for older adults, disabled individuals, and caregivers to medical care, errands, volunteering, and other trips within 15 miles.

[About Us | West Deerfield Township](#)

West Deerfield Township covers the western portion of Highland Park, and provides many services to older adults, including health and mental health services, financial assistance, a food pantry, and library delivery. West Deerfield Township's "Going Places" program is an on-demand transportation service to medical and non-medical destinations.

[Faith in Action Volunteers \(fiahelp.org\)](#)

Faith in Action has provided a range of services to support Highland Park's older adults Aging-in-Community, including caregiving, transportation, and other services.

[Family Service of Lake County | \(famservice.org\)](#)

Family Services provides a range of support services for older adults Aging-in-Community in Highland Park, including counseling, caregiving and advocacy services.

Aging-in-Community General Resources

[ASA Roundtables](#)

The local chapter of the American Society on Aging stages free bi-monthly topical Roundtables, often on aging-in-community topics. Currently being staged virtually due to COVID-19, they had previously been presented at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Bonnie Ewald ([Bonnie Ewald@rush.edu](#)) serves as the roundtable coordinator.

[AARP Livable Communities Publications and Resources](#)

This repository is the best location at which to explore AARP's many resources, including its Livable Communities and Public Policy Institute initiatives and publications, and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.

[AARP Illinois](#)

The AARP-Illinois state has a number of staff persons involved with advocacy and community engagement, and who may be able to provide linkages to AARP's extensive data resources.

[Resources for Age-Friendly Communities |](#)

[The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation](#)

The New Jersey-based Taub Foundation includes aging-in-community as one of its primary focus topics and maintains a comprehensive and well-organized aging-in-community library.

[Age-Friendly Resources | Grantmakers in Aging \(giaging.org\)](#)

New York City-based Grantmakers-in-Aging is the preeminent membership organization for philanthropies focused on aging issues. It maintains a resource center full of GIA-funded and other resources.

[Publications \(usaging.org\)](#)

Washington DC-based US Aging (*formerly the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging – “n4a”*) maintains an extensive searchable database of primarily n4a-sponsored reports and other documents.

[Research \(ncoa.org\)](#)

The Washington DC-based National Council on Aging (*ncoa*) provides research articles and other materials for older adults, caregivers, aging professionals, and advocates, primarily developed by ncoa staff and its partners.

[The National Institute of Senior Centers \(ncoa.org\)](#)

The National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) is a program of ncoa and is the largest national membership organization dedicated to serving senior center professionals, and it provides members with a wealth of topical resources, including the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center.

Planning Resources

[Communities for All Ages | MARC](#)

The Kansas City region's “Communities for All Ages” and “First Suburbs Coalition” programs are two of the country's preeminent regional and municipal Aging-in-Community programs. The program and its participating municipalities have developed a wealth of valuable resources.

[Grandview 2030 by grandview1 - Issuu](#)

Grandview, Missouri's 2020 Comprehensive Plan update specifically calls out throughout the document plan elements that meet Communities for All Ages specific recommendations for helping Grandview better support Aging-in-Community. This is one of the clearest examples of linking Aging-in-Community and a Comprehensive Plan.

[Building a Community for All Ages | City of Raymore, MO](#)

In 2017, Raymore, Missouri developed and adopted this fine standalone Aging-in-Community plan in part to achieve the highest (Gold) level recognition in the Communities for All Ages program. This plan specifically links to the city's previous plans.

[Community for All Ages Plan by City of Lees Summit - Issuu](#)

In 2018, Lee's Summit, Missouri developed and adopted this multi-sectoral plan that informs its Comprehensive Plan and other plans.

[Search \(planning.org\)](#)

(American Planning Association resources search results for “aging-in-community”)

The American Planning Association maintains a resource library searchable by topic, including this link to Aging-in-Community resources.

Transportation/Accessibility Resources

[Aging and Disability Transportation Overview | NADTC](#) *(National Aging and Disability Transportation Center)*

NADTC is a program initially funded in 2015 by the Federal Transit Administration and administered by Easterseals and the former National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). Its resource center provides information on transportation for older adults and people with disabilities.

[Home - National Center for Mobility Management](#)

The National Center for Mobility Management is a program of NADTC that focuses on and maintains resources on person-centered transportation services.

[Sidewalk Accessibility Tools \(uic.edu\)](#)

The University of Illinois at Chicago's Applied Health Sciences' Disability and Human Development department has partnered with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and other partners to provide a suite of Sidewalk Accessibility Tools and can help support communities to access and improve their existing sidewalk networks.

Housing/Aging-in-Place Resources

[North West Housing Partnership - Affordable Housing, IL \(nwHP.net\)](#)

This northwest metropolitan Chicago area suburban five-town collaborative runs several housing programs, including their Handyman Program which helps support aging-in-place and aging-in-community.

[Aging in Place Resources | Aging In Place Resources for Seniors Living at Home](#)

Aginginplace.com is maintained by its Oregon-based founder Patrick Roden, a nurse by training, and it maintains a

comprehensive set of resources dedicated to supporting older adults aging in place.

[Welcome - HomesRenewed™ Resource Center](#)

HomesRenewed was founded by Maryland-based contractor and aging-in-place advocate Louis Tenenbaum and its website provides various aging-in-place materials and resources.

[Aging in Place: Growing Older at Home | National Institute on Aging \(nih.gov\)](#)

The National Institute on Aging is a program of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and has developed a database of aging-in-place resources.

[Home Sharing | Center of Concern](#)

Des Plaines-based Center of Concern provides a broad range of services to support its mission "...to provide housing solutions, support services, and counseling for older adults, people with disabilities, and others in need, enabling them to live with dignity and independence." It manages a longstanding home sharing program throughout Cook County.

[IHDA - Illinois Housing Development Authority](#)

This state agency's mission is "to finance the creation and preservation of affordable housing in Illinois" and administers numerous programs to support lenders, developers, local government, nonprofits, community groups, homeowners and renters in delivering and maintaining affordable housing.

[Missing Middle Housing: Diverse choices for walkable neighborhood living](#)

Opticos Design founder Daniel Parolek coined the term "Missing Middle Housing" to convey the provision of enhanced housing options for sustainable, walkable communities. This link provides examples and resources for consideration.

Ageism Resources

[Home \(reframingaging.org\)](http://reframingaging.org)

The Reframing Aging Initiative began in 2012 as a shared initiative of eight national aging organizations to find out how the American public perceives of aging, and once it was determined that this perception was negative, developing an infrastructure of strategies and techniques to convey more positive and supportive messaging. This website offers many tools and resources.

[Old School: Anti-Ageism Clearinghouse](#)

This clearing house was established by anti-ageism activist Ashton Applewhite and her colleagues, and it provides free and vetted resources to help educate people about ageism and how to dismantle it.

Intergenerational Resources

[Resources - Generations United \(gu.org\)](http://generationsunited.org)

Generations United is the preeminent national advocacy and informational organization supporting intergenerational collaborations, programs, and policies. Established by a group of organizations that focused on different portions of the lifespan, it maintains a resource library.

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Highland Park Residents

Well over 400 Highland Park residents participated in this engagement, including over 400 who submitted online or written Resident Input Forms, and almost two dozen residents who attended and participated in the two public workshops. Their input was invaluable to the project.

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document itself was produced to be supportive of aging-in-community. All of the graphic details – font selection, a minimum 12-point font size, page layouts, the inclusion of graphics, avoiding the use of reversed-out text on light colored backgrounds, etc. – were made to make this document easily legible for anyone with visual sensitivity issues. Just as the body of this document makes the case that municipal decisions supportive of aging-in-community are innately supportive of livable communities for all ages, this document itself should be seen as innately supportive of readers of all ages.

One final aging-in-community recommendation is that all municipal documents, websites, social media postings, etc. should consciously strive to be easily legible for all viewers, including – but not limited to – older adults.