



Preparing for Montgomery County’s Third Summit on Aging | October 26, 2023

Montgomery County is committed to being a community where all residents can live well and thrive throughout their lifetime. The County’s first two Summits on Aging in 2008 and 2015 inspired numerous efforts—in and out of County government—to help achieve that vision.

Planners of the third Summit welcome your involvement. We hope participants will connect with one another, share ideas freely, and start making plans to help make Montgomery County even more “age friendly.” To make the most of your engagement in this year’s Summit, we invite you to orient yourselves to the Age Friendly movement by reading this document, watching September’s episode of [50+ in Montgomery County](#), and reviewing the County’s [Senior Site](#).

During the Summit, there will be several opportunities for you to share your thoughts on the future of aging in the County, especially during breakout sessions and a town hall meeting led by the Chair of the Commission on Aging. We hope you will attend with an open mind, a collaborative spirit, and an enthusiasm for helping make Montgomery County a true *Community for a Lifetime*.

What is Age Friendly?

Age Friendly Communities is a global initiative created by the World Health Organization (WHO). Launched in 2006, the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities currently includes 1,445 cities and communities in 51 countries, covering over 300 million people worldwide. 791 of these affiliated communities are within the United States, where AARP serves as the network’s coordinator. Age Friendly “encourages states, cities, towns and counties to prepare for the rapid aging of the U.S. population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.”¹

In Montgomery County, we have identified ten interconnected Age Friendly domains, or areas of focus. Since these domains overlap significantly, we work across sectors, departments, and disciplines. Age Friendly Montgomery is powered by our older adult residents, County officials and staff, businesses, nonprofits, and community and educational organizations. It relies on community input and active participation.

Your Role at the Third Summit on Aging

At the Third Summit on Aging this October, we plan to share more about Age Friendly Montgomery’s vision, successes, and ongoing goals. You’ll hear from state and County officials about current data on aging in Montgomery County, and innovative approaches that can help make life in the County more age friendly for everyone.

Montgomery County’s Age Friendly Domains

- Civic and Social Involvement
- Communication and Outreach
- Elder Abuse Prevention
- Employment
- Health and Wellness
- Home and Community Based Services
- Housing
- Planning, Outdoor Spaces, Parks and Community Buildings
- Public Safety
- Transportation and Mobility

¹ https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/Resources/Files/presentation_9-17-2019.pdf



There will be several opportunities for you to share your thoughts on the future of Age Friendly in Montgomery County, including a town hall, panel discussions, and breakout groups. At its core, Age Friendly Montgomery is designed by and for our community residents – so we want to hear your ideas, opinions, and experiences!

History of Age Friendly in Montgomery County

- **2008:** County Executive Isiah Leggett establishes the **Senior Subcabinet on Vital Living**, and the County holds the **First Summit on Aging**. The 2008 Summit establishes and identifies recommendations for eight priority areas: Communication and Outreach Housing and Zoning; Transportation and Mobility; Health and Wellness; Civic and Social Engagement; Home and Community Support Services; Safety; and Employment.
- **2012:** The County adopts the **Commission on Aging’s Senior Agenda**, which establishes a commitment to older adults and sets forth a vision for the County’s older adults in seven areas: Transportation; Housing; Security and Safety; Employment; Socialization and Leisure; Health and Wellness; Communications. The Commission on Aging also recommends that Montgomery County join the **WHO/AARP Age Friendly Communities program**.
- **Summer 2015:** Over the summer, the County conducts surveys and focus groups with older adults (55+) from diverse backgrounds around the County to better understand the needs of the community. Older adults have a general appreciation for the availability and quality of County programs and services, but there is a need for improved communication to promote better awareness of available services. Older adults are concerned about the cost of living in the County, particularly in transportation and housing.
- **December 2015:** The County Executive holds the **Second Summit on Aging**, where stakeholders evaluate progress made since the 2008 Summit, review recommendations from older adult focus groups, and create the County’s current **ten domains of Age Friendly Montgomery** (see above). At the 2015 Summit, the County enrolls in **Dementia Friendly America** and launches **Age Friendly Montgomery** by joining the AARP Age Friendly Communities program.
- **2017:** The County publishes the **Three-Year Action Plan for Age Friendly Montgomery**, and includes progress made toward recommendations from the 2015 summit, as well as priorities, strategies and action steps for each of the ten age-friendly domain areas for the next three years.
- **2018:** The County publishes the **Three-Year Progress Report (2015-2018)**, and details progress made, challenges encountered, lessons learned and next steps for each of the ten domains since Age Friendly Montgomery was launched in 2015.
- **2022:** The **2022 Age Friendly Progress report** gives an update on progress made in each of the ten age- friendly domains, as well as recommendations for future work in each area. (See Appendix A for recommendations relating to each of the domains for future activities.)



Current State of Age Friendly in Montgomery County

The County has made significant strides in its mission to become Age-Friendly. The table below illustrates sample accomplishments and in-progress initiatives. They are organized across three Summit on Aging focus areas: “**Designing a Community for Longevity**,” “**Caring for and Supporting Each Other**,” and “**Staying Connected and Engaged**.”

	Sample Accomplishments	In-Process
Designing a Community for Longevity	Expansion of affordable housing units for seniors at 30% and 40% of area median income, including at St. Anne’s Senior complex, North Montgomery Senior complex, Sandy Spring Senior Village, Silver Creek Senior Living, and Willow Manor at Fairland.	The Leggett apartment building, a housing apartment tower adjacent to a public aquatic center in downtown Silver Spring (opening 2023). The development includes 267 affordable apartments for ages 62 and older and a Holy Cross Hospital Wellness Center.
	The County's new master plan, <u><i>Thrive 2050</i></u> , acknowledges the need for “Missing Middle” housing types – including accessory dwelling units (ADU’s) and clustered housing to provide more choice, enhance intergenerational interaction, and promote aging in place.	DHCA is convening a public/private Affordable Senior Housing Workgroup. Its goal is to find ways to provide affordable housing in each new senior development or in a comparable alternative.
	Career Gateway, 50+ Employment Expos and Outreach to Employers enable workers over 50 to find quality jobs.	The County's Pedestrian Master Plan will improve accessibility, safety, and comfort for all residents.
	Design for Life: County offers tax credit to make homes accessible. An upgraded the website to clarify how program this works.	The County is working with Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together to make accessibility modifications to the homes of eligible residents.
	County Council passed a law to allow Accessory Dwelling Units on smaller residential zones.	
Caring for and Supporting Each Other	Direct Care Workforce Task Force generated 26 recommendations to the County on ways to attract direct care workers and increase their numbers in this County.	Holy Cross Hospital is developing local PACE program providing comprehensive medical and social services as an alternative to nursing home care.

	<p>The Elder Abuse Task Force works to investigate and prosecute elder abuse crimes and to educate the public about crimes against older adults. It also organizes the annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.</p>	<p>An interagency workgroup is developing a plan to decrease the barrier of transportation to medical appointments.</p>
	<p>Montgomery County Police provide education, outreach, and follow-up to on staying safe in homes and communities and has special efforts geared toward information for individuals with dementia and their families.</p>	<p>Village volunteers contributed 57,000 volunteer hours in 2021. There are now over 25 active villages in the County.</p>
	<p>Montgomery County Fire and Rescue created the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) program, which allows MCFR to collaborate with nurses and social workers to meet the needs of frequent 911 callers.</p>	
Staying Connected and Engaged	<p>The Commission on Aging re-branded its <i>50+ in Montgomery County</i> cable TV show.</p>	<p>Age Friendly workgroup leaders provide monthly informative pages in the <i>Beacon</i> newspaper.</p>
	<p>Montgomery County Recreation celebrated 75 centenarians living in the County (May 2023).</p>	<p>The Montgomery Connects program provides older adults and other residents with access to computers and offers training and affordable broadband services.</p>

The County also faces several **ongoing challenges** to Age Friendly Montgomery, including:

- Engaging and re-engaging older adults in County programming following the pandemic.
- A lack of sufficient, affordable housing for older adults, as well as a need to produce and preserve more affordable units for the growing older adult population.
- A need for partnerships between agencies, with programming and outreach to strengthen older adult public safety, consumer protection and identity theft/fraud prevention, and social services.
- Recruiting and retaining skilled direct care staff to meet needs for home care and support services.
- Reductions in transportation services due to driver shortages following the pandemic, resulting in reduced mobility for older adult residents.

What Our Community Says

Older adults in Montgomery County express high satisfaction with recreational opportunities and public safety. However, the high cost of living remains a significant barrier.



78% of older adults who responded to the 2021 Montgomery County Resident Survey (MCRS) said that **recreational opportunities** in the County are “good” or “excellent” and recommended that the County expand popular older adult fitness classes. 53.5% of Area Agency on Aging (AAA) survey respondents said that they have participated in County fitness classes.



Older adults generally have a positive view of **safety** in the County, including a strong sense of safety while being out and about in the County during the daytime. However, 47% of MCRS respondents feel that crime has gotten either somewhat or much worse over the last two years. Several respondents also recommended better traffic signage to improve road safety for drivers, pedestrians, and bikers in the County.



Transportation is a common barrier for older adults. 45% of MCRS respondents said ease of car travel is “fair” or “poor,” similar to the 46% who said that ease of public transit is “fair” or “poor”. Rising traffic levels, insufficient RideOn and Call N’ Ride service frequency, and difficulty getting to stops were among the most common complaints. Many also say that transit routes are inconvenient, which makes it difficult for them to access medical and recreational amenities. Many say that they would like more door-to-door transportation options for older adults.



Housing is a significant challenge for older adults in Montgomery County. 76% of older adult MCRS respondents said that the availability of affordable, quality housing in the County is “fair” or “poor”. Older adults are eager for more affordable housing options, particularly for middle class residents who don’t qualify for current affordable housing programs. Older adults also hope to see more independent/assisted living facilities in the County. Older adults want more options for downsizing, more affordable in-home and home maintenance services, and more information on available housing options.

Overall, **affordability and cost of living are seen as the most significant challenges for older adults** in the County. 78% of MCRS respondents said that the cost of living in the County is “fair” or “poor”. Older adults expressed a need for more affordable home health services, particularly for those in the middle class. Older adults also expressed a desire for more senior discounts on food, parking, and entertainment to make life in the County more affordable, as well as a desire for lower property and recordation taxes.

A full summary of trends from the MCRS and AAA surveys can be found in Appendix B.



Appendix A: Summary of Recommendations from the 2022 Age Friendly Progress Report

Civic and Social Involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect older adults with ongoing, meaningful volunteering opportunities • Promote culturally diverse participation in civic and social engagement programs • Increase older adults' access to technology • Invest in outreach efforts to increase civic engagement • Support and grow intergenerational activities
Communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote County programs, services, and resources more effectively via a targeted communications strategy, in collaboration with the Commission on Aging, Office of Public Information, Office of Community Partnerships, and community organizations. • Work with the Commission on Aging to improve the timeliness, accuracy, and accessibility of the Senior Website • Develop and strategically distribute a Fact Sheet for the public on how to access information about County programs and services. Work with the Office of Community Partnerships to translate and distribute to targeted communities. • Expand nonprofit and County agency participation in the resource fair at the Beacon's 50+ Expo
Elder Abuse Prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully advocate for an additional APS investigation unit for 2023 • Expand Family Justice Center, and co-locate public and private services • Build capacity to meet increasing number of abuse, neglect, and exploitation reports • Hire a certified fraud examiner on SAO staff dedicated exclusively to investigating financial exploitation cases against seniors
Employment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain three main priorities: workers (and job seekers) 50+, employers, and fighting age discrimination • Continue to expand awareness about resources for job seekers in collaboration with Office of Public Information and Commission on Aging • Collaborate with Montgomery College Workforce Development to promote resources for job seekers • Arrange presentations to business/employer organizations, to share information about the benefits of hiring/retaining 50+ workers. • Work with Montgomery County Office of Human Resources to include information on age discrimination as part of regular employer/employee briefings
Home and Community-based Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate public-private stakeholders to increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of in-person and virtual supportive programs ○ Supports and resources for the culturally and linguistically diverse community ○ Collaborative activities that address the needs of the "whole person" older adult



- Ability for persons living in all geographic areas of the county to successfully access activities that will positively impact health outcomes
- Provide thoughtful outreach campaigns to motivate and provide support for older adults who have been significantly isolated during the pandemic Increase funding for in-home services e.g., meals, respite care and existing service that enable older adults and their families to age-in-place.

Health and Wellness
● Reduce financial barriers to participation in the day club for early-stage memory loss
● Coordinate bus transportation between the County, contractors, the county recreation director, and early-stage memory loss club manager to help seniors participate
● Continue the Dental Program for Seniors, Active Aging Week activities and Walk MD Day, and other successful programs
● Prioritize addressing social isolation and mental health issues related to social isolation
● County and Jewish Council for the Aging should establish communication and partnerships with area healthcare/agencies/businesses that serve older adults, to ensure that all are aware of the continuum of activity for seniors

Housing
● Redouble efforts to protect, preserve and produce affordable housing, especially for the 20,000 renter households earning up to 30% of AMI who are spending more than half their income on rent
● Continue support for tenants to avoid eviction and homelessness (i.e., tenant financial counseling, free legal assistance, emergency housing assistance)
● Provide financial resources to low-income homeowners to help them prepare their homes for renting. This was a need identified by staff at the Housing Initiative Partnership
● Maintain free tenant counseling services and free legal assistance for renters, as initiated during Covid-19
● Provide rent stabilization for low-income adults

Planning, Open Spaces, Parks and Buildings
● As part of every master plan, sector plan and parks initiative, identify initiatives and programs that enhance the quality of life for County residents 60+
● Stay informed about the latest trends in senior friendly design and programming
● Ensure that programs and amenities are inclusive to all ages and abilities, not specifically geared to one segment of the population
● Partner with other County agencies or private companies for delivering new facilities and programs
● Increase communication about available programs and amenities



Public Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain and expand the Fire and Rescue Service Community Outreach program, which provides educational training on community risk reduction to new recruits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek new partnerships with County and community organizations to expand reach to the public, including ethnic, faith-based, and harder-to-reach communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to explore new opportunities for in-person and virtual educational/information sessions, and assess public demand for in-person vs. virtual programming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big data can be an effective means of channeling resources to the right place to better serve vulnerable populations -- this should be an ongoing, funded priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships are critical for ensuring senior public safety: when engaging with a vulnerable senior resident, each senior public safety department should be aware of the range of risks, and be aware of the departments which can provide services to address the specific needs of the resident

Transportation and Mobility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County should help recruit volunteer drivers for volunteer-provided transportation services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that transportation is available when needed for those needing wheelchair accessible transport, or transportation to medical appointments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the new Department of Transportation ambassador, who will focus on reaching underserved populations with transportation information

Appendix B: Older Adult Needs in Montgomery County- Key Themes in Resident Surveys

Highlighting key patterns found in both the AAA Community Survey and the [Montgomery County Resident Survey](#) (MCRS).

Affordability

Cost of living in Montgomery County is a major issue for older adult residents. 78% of MCRS respondents rated the cost of living in the County as “fair” or “poor” (as opposed to “good” or “excellent”).

Respondents’ recommendations on affordability include:

- **Affordable home health services**, as middle-class seniors who do not qualify for existing aid often cannot afford the full costs of home health services out of pocket
- **More affordable housing options**, particularly for middle class residents (such as condos)
- **Senior discounts** on food, parking, and entertainment
- **Lower taxes**, particularly on property and recordation taxes
- **Elimination of state taxes on pensions and Social Security payments**

Housing

76% of MCRS respondents rated the availability of affordable, quality housing in the County as “fair” or “poor”. When ask to rate the availability of affordable, conveniently located housing out of 7, 40% responded with a 1, 2 or 3 out of 7.

Respondent recommendations on housing include:

- **More affordable housing options**, particularly for middle class residents (such as condos)
- **Greater availability of independent/assisted living facilities.**
- **More options for downsizing**, for seniors who wish to stay in the County



- **More affordable in-home services**
- Better options for snow/leaf removal, lawn care, and other **home maintenance services**
- **More information** on senior housing options overall

Transportation

Transportation is a common barrier for older adults, across both surveys. 45% of MCRS respondents rank ease of car travel as “fair” or “poor”, while 46% rank ease of public transit as “fair” or “poor”.

Common concerns include:

- **Rising traffic levels**, as well as poor traffic signage, enforcement, and signal timing.
 - 50% of MCRS respondents feel that **traffic has gotten either somewhat or much worse** over the last two years.
 - 47% of MCRS respondents rate **traffic enforcement** as “fair” or “poor”
 - 45% of MCRS respondents rate **traffic signal timing** as “fair” or “poor”
- **Insufficient RideOn and Call N’ Ride service frequency** for these services to be a reliable option
 - Only 6% of AAA respondents reported using transportation services designed for older adults.
- **Difficulty getting to bus/metro stations** in order to utilize public transit
- **Inconvenient transit routes**, as many medical, social, and cultural amenities are inaccessible by public transit.
- **Desire for more door-to-door services**, to help circumvent the above barriers
- **Insufficient street repair and maintenance** in the County

Safety

Older adults generally have a positive sense of safety in the County, including a strong sense of safety while being out and about in the County during the daytime.

Respondent recommendations on safety include:

- **Creation of a vetted home services directory**, where seniors can find contact information for trustworthy handyman, repair, and contractor services. A common concern is allowing unvetted service companies into one’s home, particularly for seniors who live alone.
- **Better traffic signage** to improve road safety for drivers, pedestrians, and bikers in the County.
- **Stronger crime prevention**, as 47% of MCRS respondents feel that crime has gotten either somewhat or much worse over the last two years.

Recreation

78% of MCRS respondents rated recreational opportunities in the County as “good” or “excellent”, and 53.5% of AAA respondents reported participating in fitness classes in the community.

Respondent recommendations include:

- **Increased frequency of Senior Fit and Bone Builders programs**, which are popular among seniors
- **More free fitness classes**
- **Increased fitness offerings in more senior/recreation centers** across the County, instead of concentrating offerings in the biggest centers.
- **Evening offerings** to include those seniors who still work professionally
- More senior offerings in **Upcounty areas**