

AGE-STRONG BURLINGTON

An Action Plan from the Burlington Aging Council 2024

Ageism and Ableism are engrained in our attitudes, our public policies, our institutions, and our infrastructure. They are systemic. Those over 65 years old join a dependent classification akin to those under 18, though much less visible. The Goal for Burlington is one of inclusivity, building an age-friendly community for all. The universal benefit is that improving the conditions of and opportunities for older adults in a community improves the lives of all.

On April 26, 2021 the City Council [formally created the Burlington Aging Council](#), and on May 2nd the Mayor signed the resolution, with the purpose of:

- elevating the contributions of older adults in Burlington;
- raising issues facing older adults in Burlington and the organizations that serve them;
- making policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council to address gaps, needs, and opportunities that impact older adults in Burlington;
- ensuring that the voices of older adults in Burlington are at the forefront of City policy; and
- creating and maintaining a “Burlington Plan on Aging” to act as a guiding template for City policy and initiatives.

The Action Plans that follow are consolidated around 5 principal areas:

- a. Social Connection and Engagement
- b. Family Caregiver Support
- c. Financial Security
- d. Optimal Health and Wellness
- e. Housing, Transportation and Community Design

The objective in organizing actions is to raise awareness of both needs and opportunities, and to provide guidance on moving Burlington along a conscious path to being a fully Age-Friendly Community. Burlington, as a single entity cannot do everything to ensure that as members of our community age, they are offered opportunities and support that allow them to contribute and have a sense of belonging, as well as provide them with the care and support they need to continue their lives with dignity. The action plans that have been incorporated into this document are not comprehensive, but they are targeted to what the Aging Council believes is possible. The action plans align, as much as possible with the State’s [Age Strong Plan](#), and provide a basis for synergy and coordination with the many partners who provide direct services. These action plans are meant to engage our community of all ages to make Burlington a city that works for all. For this to be more than a slogan, the Burlington Aging Council urges the city to make the necessary investments and policy changes needed to advance a clear focus toward an Age-Friendly city.

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AGE STRONG BURLINGTON Action Briefing: Priority measures

The Burlington Aging Council addressed its charge by determining that actions needed to simultaneously provide for both self-determination and for necessary safety and protection in this diverse sector of our community. Burlington residents, aged 65 and over, represent approximately 11.6% of the city's population, some 5175 residents, slightly more than the number of those 18 and under. Members of this demographic are all too often lumped in a single class of "seniors, old people, elderly," or some other term that connotes declining capability and need for care, representing a deficit for the community. The story that is not told is that this portion of our community is as diverse as any other group of Burlington citizens in their background, heritage, capabilities and needs. The Council built its approach to building out an action agenda that emphasized both a systemic approach to opportunity and potential contribution, as well as a more coordinated and efficient system of services to meet their diverse needs in coordination with the many partner organizations working with this sector and the state of Vermont with its new Age Strong Vermont plan.

A Summary of Priority Actions for Consideration:

1. Dedicated City staff support that:

- Fills the role of an Older Adult Ombudsperson to coordinate the efforts of the Aging Council and City Departments to:
 - Provide direct service to employers, and work with partners to advance opportunities for training, education, and resources for older workers of all backgrounds.
 - Build Age-Friendly criteria into city employee job descriptions and performance reviews.
 - Provide city staff with adequate training and upskilling to succeed in supporting these efforts, expanding City staffing functions in key city departments (e.g., REIB, CEDO, Planning, DPW, Parks, Recreation & Waterfront).
- Supports functions to advance social connection and engagement, and optimal health and wellbeing across city departments and the coalition of local service organizations in Age Strong Burlington.
- Provides full support for a reinvigorated Burlington Aging Council to continue in its mission to elevate the contributions of older adults in Burlington; raise issues facing older adults in Burlington and the organizations that serve them; support current and address new policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council to address gaps, needs, and opportunities that impact older adults in Burlington; ensure that the voices of older adults in Burlington are at the forefront of City policy; and maintain and monitor the "Burlington Plan on Aging: Age Strong Burlington," acting as a facilitator for City policy and initiatives, and to advance

advocacy at the state level for adequate program resources, and targeted investments at the local level.

2. Issue key Proclamations and hosts Special Events to educate the community, elevating the contributions of and raising issues facing older adults in Burlington, ensuring that the voices of older adults in Burlington are at the forefront of City policy.

- [Family Caregiver Awareness](#) Campaign – Beginning in November 2024 (Family Caregiver Month).
- [National Employ Older Workers Week](#) – September.
- Provide a clear public resolution declaring [Agism and Ablism as public health threats](#), and committing Burlington to actively fighting agism and ablism through policy and programs, providing resources and attention needed to enable all community members to enjoy a full and fruitful life, contributing to the greater good, and receiving support as it is needed.
- Create baseline data on key indicators of successful social connection and engagement with all city departments around their programming and work and add it to the City Dashboard.

3. Create an Official City Resource Site (web based)

- City Staff working with the BAC will set up a web-based City Resource site that will include:
 - a list of family caregiver resources.
 - resources to support older workers and employers seeking to hire and retain older workers.
 - a single point of information access to City Programming that enhances social engagement and connection and advances healthy aging.
 - resources for older adult housing and transportation information.
 - a Dashboard indicating progress on the Age Strong Burlington Plan with connections to the State's Age Strong Plan progress reports.

4. Advance a focused City policy Agenda

- Review of City Human Resource policies that affect accommodation for employees of the city who are family caregivers and report to the Burlington Aging Council with recommendations and a timeline for what modifications and enhancements can be made to flexibly meet the needs of the city and the employee.
- Through the Library, Burlington Parks & Rec, and other partners expand investment in digital literacy resources specific to the needs of older community members. Include alternatives that are culturally appropriate and translated into a variety of languages
- Increase opportunities for Home Share programming in Burlington.

- Direct DPW and BPRW to coordinate planning efforts put in place supportive physical amenities to make Burlington a year-round accessible active city providing opportunity for activity in support of health in line with the WHO's Active Aging Policy Framework.
- Require all new construction to adhere to Universal Design Standards.
- Update PlanBTV: Burlington's Comprehensive Plan (2019) with a focus explicitly including the growing older population. Require PlanBTV to incorporate a comprehensive strategy to prioritize the needs of older adults in elements of community design.
- Build a Policy/Program/Resource Framework to address the specific needs of older adults in the event of another emergency (e.g., pandemic) and to meet the challenge of the ongoing climate emergency as it specifically impacts older adults.
- Assess the status and future need for staffing and funding of efforts needed to expand age friendly infrastructure and design efforts across all city departments.

5. Direct City Departments to Advance or Expand Programming for older adults

- Evaluate and provide additional funding to continue and expand the CEDO/Age Well pilot to train / develop PCAs to increase workforce for in home supports/Personal and Home Health Aides to increase this critical and skilled workforce in providing services in home and institutional settings.
- City departments that make use of national service programs (e.g., AmeriCorps) will also make use of national service programs for older adults (e.g., AmeriCorps Senior). Determine if these programs can also fulfill some of the functions required to support the future work of the Aging Council.
- Provide incentives to fill the gaps with volunteer and assisted ride programs.
- Expand the 50+ Programming of Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department to ensure that all older adults can access a variety of affordable opportunities for exercise within an inclusive environment. Align planning with the state's comprehensive physical activity plan, and provide evidence-based physical activity and strength training programs to promote positive health outcomes.
- Build on the success of the CORE Adult Center (run by Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department) and engage partners to support the development of a part-time care facility in Burlington to assist older adults with higher intensity care needs (Adult daycare) and provide respite to family caregivers.
- Expand funding for and promotion of the Housing Access Modifications program at CEDO.

6. Support a robust Outreach and Engagement Process

- Allocate funding to support the education of the BIPOC and New American advocates and associations on family caregiving practices and supports. Develop multilingual resources for Burlington residents, and support training and education for service providers to better understand and support the variety of cultures of caregiving in our community.
- Fund a Marketing Campaign to highlight older worker experiences and employer success stories and narratives.
- Work with GMT to increase usage of public transportation, with special attention to the needs of older adults.
- Conduct a comprehensive Needs Assessment, with targeted emphasis on understanding the needs of the older adults, including BIPOC and New American communities, addressing technology access, affordability, and supports focused on infrastructure, capabilities, training/education, path to 6G.

7. Support new partnerships

- Work with GMT, DPW, and other relevant agencies on processes and funding needed to support a standardized bus stop amenity plan that addresses winter maintenance. Apply a similar process to handicapped parking spaces.
- Direct City Departments, such as the Police Department to pursue partnerships with community organizations (e.g., UVMMC Emergency Department) to identify older individuals at risk of experiencing homelessness (or experiencing homelessness) so that they can more effectively connected with resources.
- Collaborate with and include diverse social and cultural groups to ensure inclusion of all older residents.
- Support GMT staffing and resource needs to accomplish this. Work with GMT to ensure that the fare structure is transparent and understandable to riders, and that it considers the needs of older riders in terms of access, comfort, and AFFORDABILITY.
- Build a Technology for Connection Initiative for older adults, based on a community needs assessment. Identify and secure funding for technology infrastructure and access. Collaborate with partner groups to expand and standardize the use of in-home technology to help older adults age in place.
- Promote the newly adopted BTV Neighborhood Code to increase opportunities for middle housing with an emphasis on accessibility and affordability for older adults.
- Increase collaboration between city departments (e.g., Fletcher Free Library and Parks and Recreation) to collaborate with community partners to expand the accessibility to and participation in volunteer programs, especially those that offer additional support and assistance to help older adults stay in their homes.

Provide focus on outreach to local BIPOC, New American, LGBTQ+, and other groups to promote volunteer information and opportunities within these groups.

- Support the expansion of existing Burlington programs that work to connect housing, health care, and social supports for aging residents, with an emphasis on broadening the provision of diverse types of housing options/situations depending on level of independence.
- Expand the supply of affordable age-specific housing options. Work with housing organizations to increase affordable and accessible assisted living opportunities. Collaborate with developers and partners to create opportunities to provide affordable dementia-focused housing.

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AGE STRONG BURLINGTON: Vision of an age-friendly city

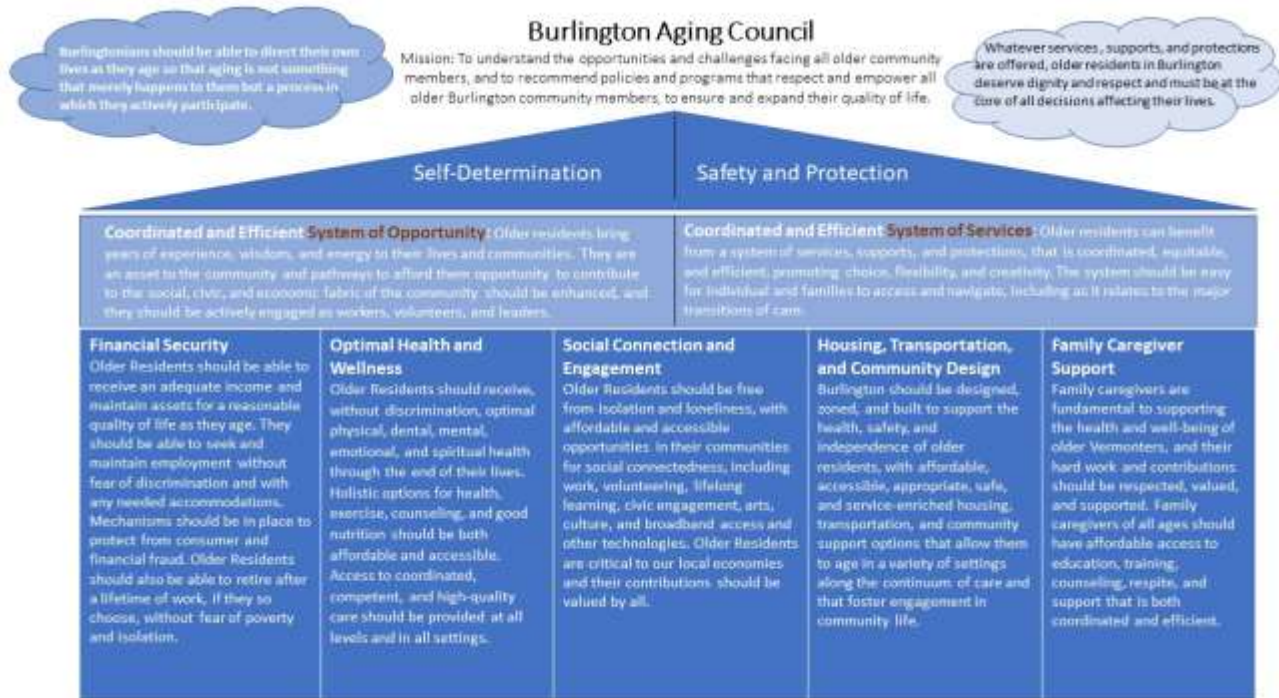
Burlington Aging Council

Mission: To understand the opportunities and challenges facing all older community members, and to recommend policies and programs that respect and empower all older Burlington community members, to ensure and expand their quality of life.

Age Friendly Burlington

An Age Friendly Burlington will balance offering and enhancing self-determination and self-actualization with an infrastructure for safety and protection.

- **Self Determination** will be at the core of a coordinated and efficient system of opportunity. Older residents bring years of experience, wisdom, and energy to their lives and communities. They are an asset to the community and pathways to afford them opportunity to contribute to the social, civic, and economic fabric of the community should be enhanced, and they should be actively engaged as workers, volunteers, and leaders.
- **Safety and Protection** will be at the heart of a coordinated, efficient, and self-evident system of services. Older residents can benefit from a system of services, supports, and protections, that is coordinated, equitable, and efficient, promoting choice, flexibility, and creativity. The system should be easy for individual and families to access and navigate, including as it relates to the major transitions of care.



The Burlington Aging Council built a **plan of action** for the City around five core areas: Social Connection and Engagement; Family Caregiver Support; Financial Security; Optimal Health and Wellness; Housing, Transportation and Community Design.

Age Strong Burlington Goals

Social Connection and Engagement

Older Residents will be free from isolation and loneliness, with affordable and accessible opportunities for social connectedness, including work, volunteering, lifelong learning, civic engagement, arts, culture, and broadband access and other technologies. Older Residents are critical to our local communities and their contributions are valued by all.

Family Caregiver Support

Family caregivers are fundamental to supporting the health and well-being of older Vermonters, and their hard work and contributions are respected, valued, and supported. Family caregivers of all ages should have affordable access to education, training, counseling, respite, and support that is both coordinated and efficient.

Financial Security

Older Residents will receive an adequate income and maintain assets for a reasonable quality of life as they age. They can seek and maintain employment without fear of discrimination and with any needed accommodations. Mechanisms are in place to protect from consumer and financial fraud. Older Residents can retire after a lifetime of work, if they so choose, without fear of poverty and isolation.

Housing, Transportation, and Community Design

Burlington is designed, zoned, and built to support the health, safety, and independence of older residents, with affordable, accessible, appropriate, safe, and service-enriched housing, transportation, and community support options that allow them to age in a variety of settings along the continuum of care and that foster engagement in community life.

Optimal Health and Wellness

Older Residents receive, without discrimination, optimal physical, dental, mental, emotional, and spiritual health through the end of their lives. Holistic options for health, exercise, counseling, and good nutrition should be both affordable and accessible. Access to coordinated, competent, and high-quality care is provided at all levels and in all settings.