



# Age Friendly Ithaca and Tompkins County Action Plan

December 2016

**Tompkins County Office for the Aging**  
[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa)



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# Introduction.....

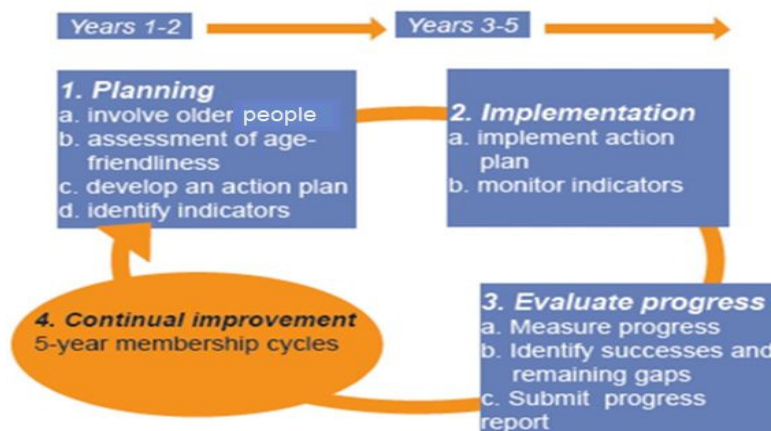
## Age-Friendly Ithaca and Tompkins County

In 2014, the Tompkins County Office for the Aging (COFA) led efforts to apply to participate in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. COFA initiated this effort as a direct result of stakeholder input and recommendations made during numerous consensus conferences that were held to develop the 2015 Strategic Plan for Aging in Tompkins County. Founding members of an initial steering committee that included Lisa Holmes and Lisa Monroe, Tompkins County Office for the Aging; Esther Greenhouse, Environmental Gerontologist; Teri Reinemann, Lynn Gitlow, and Rhoda Meador, Ithaca College, convened to start the formal application process. Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca were accepted into AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Communities in May 2015.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1,000 communities.

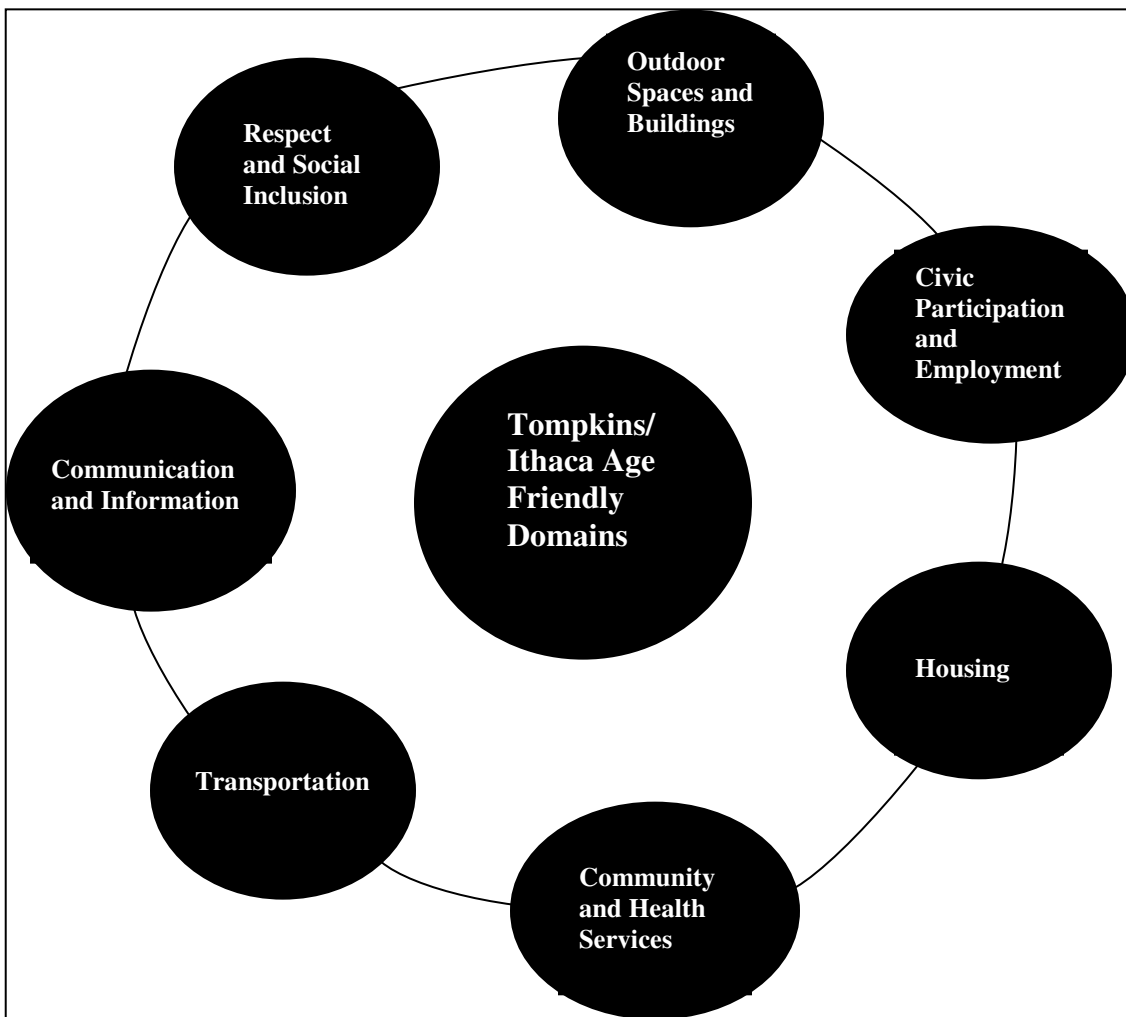
The Network of Age-Friendly Communities helps participating communities become well-designed, livable communities that promote health and sustain economic growth, and make for happier, healthier residents – of all ages. Members of the Network of Age-Friendly Communities become part of a global network of communities that are committed to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives. Being an Age-Friendly community involves engaging in a repeating five year process of planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. **In essence, the initiative is aimed at transforming the social and physical environment to support health and well being for community members across the lifespan.**

*Cycle of WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities©*



The benefits of membership in the network include 1) Access to a global network of participating communities, as well as aging and civil society experts; 2) Access to key information about the program, such as the latest news and information about best practices, events, results, challenges and new initiatives; 3) Opportunities for partnerships with other cities, both domestic and international, and; 4) Public recognition of the community's commitment to become more age-friendly.

The Age-Friendly Ithaca/Tompkins County process includes completion of a needs assessment, followed by an action plan including strategies for improvement in 7 designated domains: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, community and health services, and communication and information.



The Age-Friendly Community initiative will help to further many efforts which are already underway to engage local residents from Ithaca and Tompkins County in the process of planning and preparing for the aging population.



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March 30, 2015

Ms. Beth Finkel  
State Director  
AARP New York  
780 Third Avenue  
33rd Floor  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ms. Finkel:

It is with great pleasure that I write to you today to express Tompkins County's interest in pursuing admission into the World Health Organization and AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative. Along with other selected communities in the nation, Tompkins County is committed to promoting policies to make our community friendly to aging populations.

Tompkins County is home to approximately 12,522 people age 65 and older, and it is our fastest growing demographic. To address the needs of our older adult population, the Tompkins County Office for the Aging has recently convened 8 consensus conferences on different topics related to aging, bringing together a total of 145 community stakeholders, including older adults, business leaders, service providers, law enforcement, academia, and many others. Out of this process, we have crafted a Strategic Plan for Aging in Tompkins County. Through the Age Friendly Initiative, we hope to continue engaging our community to make progress on the recommendations of this plan.

We look forward working with the World Health Organization and AARP New York to continually improve our community so all citizens can age with dignity.

Sincerely,



Michael Lane, Chair  
Tompkins County Legislature

/kf



*Inclusion through Diversity*



## CITY OF ITHACA

108 East Green Street Ithaca, New York 14850

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR • SVANTE L. MYRICK

Telephone: 607/274-6501 Fax: 607/274-6526

March 30, 2015

Ms. Beth Finkel, State Director  
AARP New York  
780 Third Avenue, 33rd Floor  
New York, NY 10017

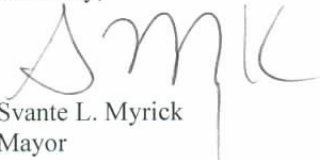
Dear Ms. Finkel:

It is with great pleasure that I write to you today to express the City of Ithaca's interest in pursuing admission into the World Health Organization (WHO) and AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative. Along with other selected communities in the nation, Ithaca is committed to promoting policies to make our community friendly to aging populations.

Ithaca has been named as one of the top cities in which to live and we are proud of that. More importantly, we are proud to be a diverse community that addresses the needs of our population. Toward that end, our local Office for the Aging recently convened 8 consensus conferences on different topics related to aging, bringing together a total of 145 community stakeholders, including older adults, business leaders, service providers, law enforcement, academia, and many others. Out of this process came Strategic Plan for Aging in Tompkins County. Through the Age Friendly Initiative, we hope to continue engaging our community to make progress on the recommendations of this plan.

We look forward working with AARP New York to continually improve our City so all citizens can age with dignity.

Sincerely,



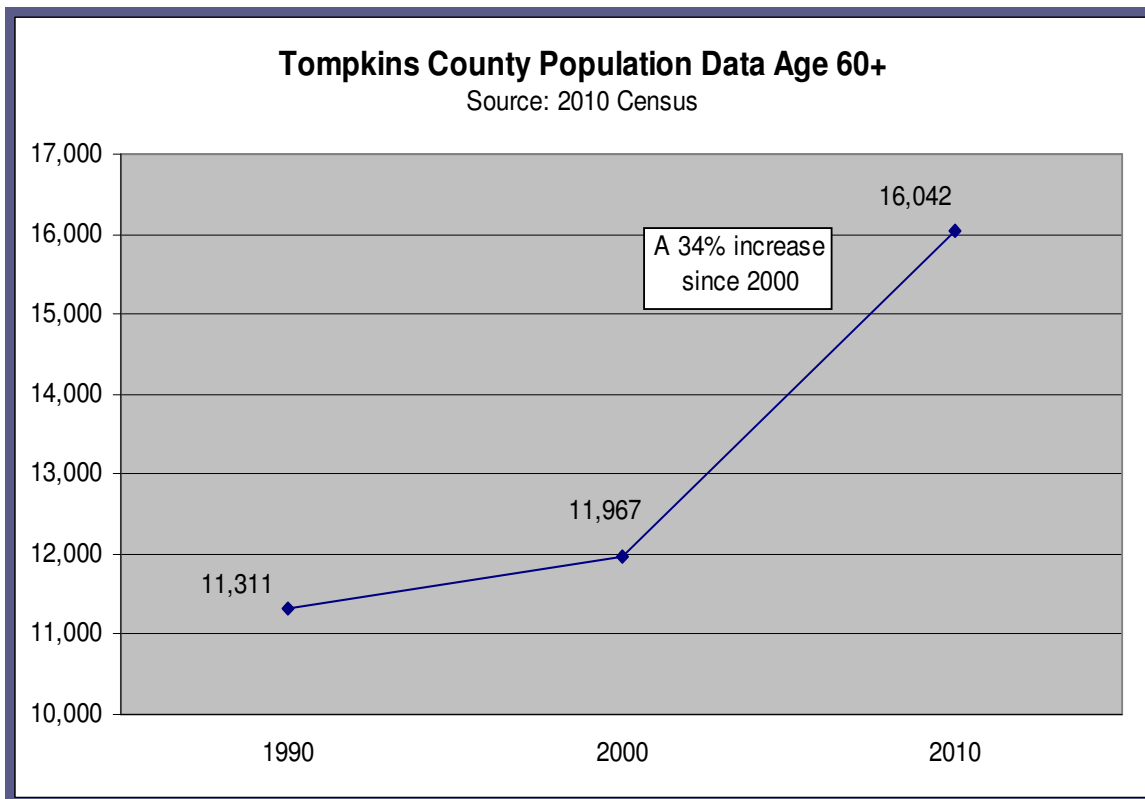
Svante L. Myrick  
Mayor



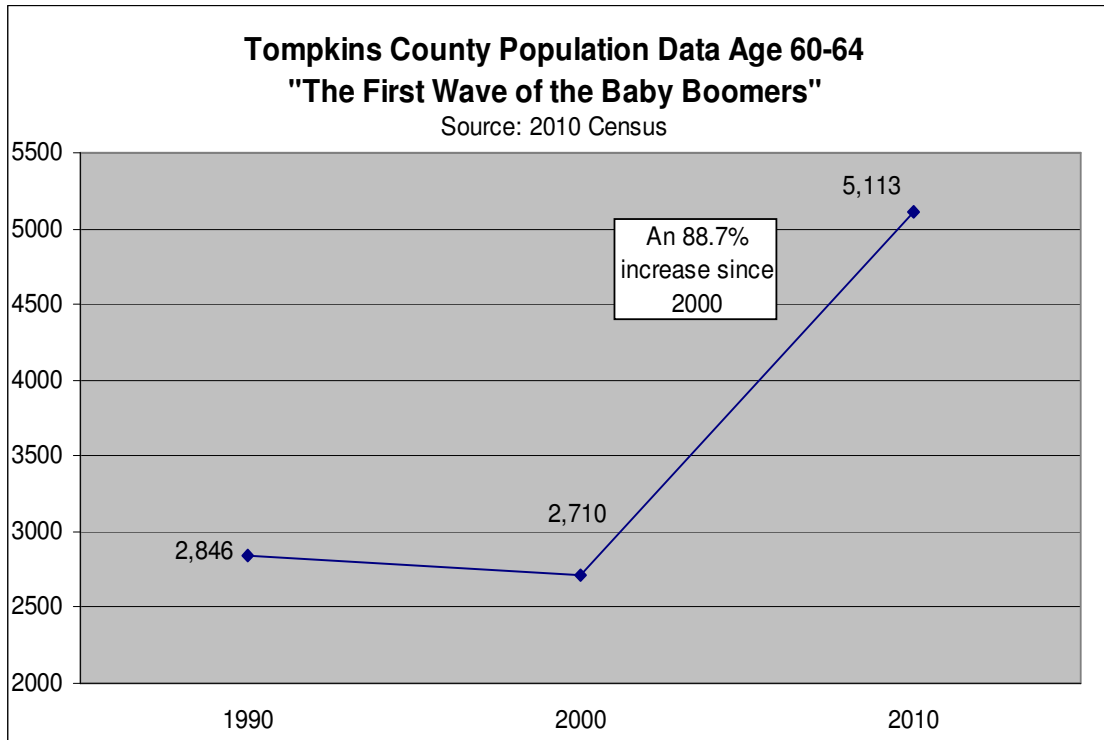
# A Portrait of Ithaca and Tompkins County

Tompkins County's older adult population is growing rapidly and will continue to grow until approximately 2040. At the same time, the younger generations will be relatively smaller in size, exacerbating workforce and caregiving issues.

According to the 2010 Census, there was a 34% increase in Tompkins County's 60+ population from 11,967 people in 2000 to 16,042 people in 2010 (see table below). This increase is largely attributable to the leading edge of the Baby Boomers reaching the age of 60.



A closer look finds that between 2000 and 2010, there was an 89% increase in the population ages 60-64 (see table on following page). The impact of the Baby Boomers entering the ranks of the 60+ population was evident in the results of *TCOFA's 2012 Needs Assessment*: overall, many 60+ Baby Boomers are actively employed, socially engaged, own their homes, drive themselves, and have relatively few long term care needs. This will change over time.



The 60+ population will continue to increase in the coming decades, peaking at approximately 21,590 people in 2030. The 85+ population will increase 54% from 1,252 in 2000 to 2,721 in 2040. The following table is a projection of Tompkins County's population based on age, with the shaded cells highlighting where the peaks in population growth will take place by age cohort.

<b>Tompkins County Population Trends</b>					
Source: U.S. Census and Cornell Program on Applied Demographics					
<b>Year</b>	<b>0-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-74</b>	<b>75-84</b>	<b>85+</b>
<b>2000</b>	84,534	2,710	4,637	3,368	1,252
<b>2010</b>	85,522	5,113	5,711	3,421	1,797
<b>2020</b>	82,699	4,929	8,452	3,947	1,705
<b>2030</b>	81,303	4,159	9,720	5,756	1,955
<b>2040</b>	80,059	3,838	6,526	5,462	2,721

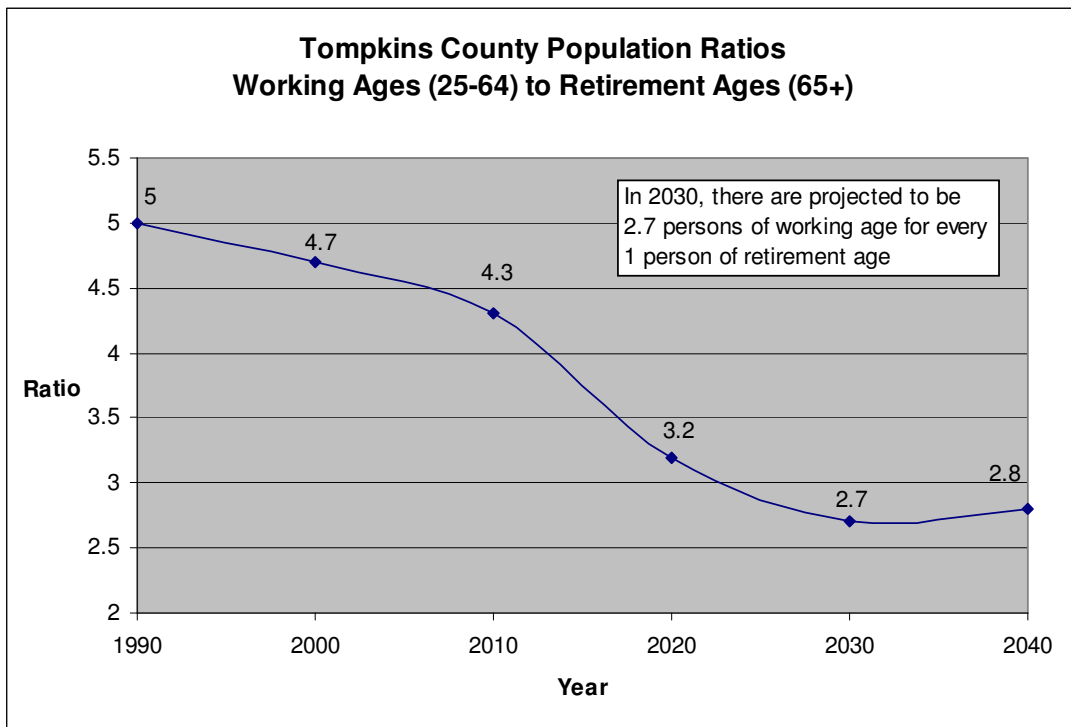
The presence of higher educational institutions are assets to our community, offering research and programming in gerontology, as well as students who actively engage with community elders through volunteering and internships. Tompkins County's older adults are highly educated and civically engaged.



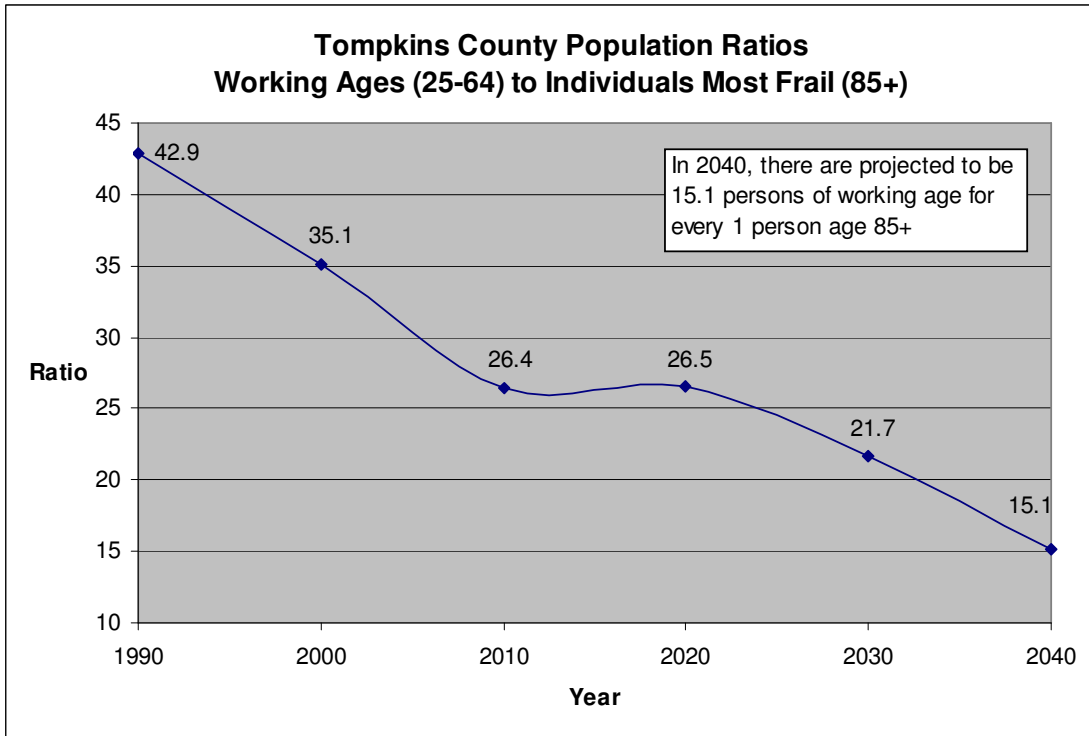
Tompkins County has a vast array of well-networked human service organizations offering assistance to older adults and their families in comparison to similar sized communities. Tompkins County has an array of senior housing options as well as transportation options.

At the same time that the population of older adults is growing, the younger generations will be relatively smaller in size, exacerbating workforce and care giving issues. The combination of these factors will place additional pressures on an already strained local long term care system.

The following graph shows the projected population ratios for Tompkins County, comparing the number of people of working age (25-64) to retirement age (65+). In 1990, there were roughly 5 people of working age (25-64) for every one person of retirement age (65+). This ratio is projected to fall to a low of 2.7 in 2030.



The following graph compares the number of people of working age (25-64) to the number of people age 85+. Individuals age 85+ are more likely to be frail and in need of long term care services. In 1990, there were roughly 43 people of working age (25-64) for every one person age 85+. By 2040, it is expected that there will be roughly 15 people of working age for every one person age 85+.



Tompkins County's 60+ population is predominantly Caucasian (94.7%); however the non-white population in Tompkins County grew between 2000 and 2010. Among those age 60+, Asian Americans now constitute the largest racial group in Tompkins County's minority population, followed closely by African Americans. The language needs of these populations as well as the cultural competency of service providers are important considerations.

<b>Race of Tompkins County Older Adults (age 60+)</b>		
<b>Race</b>	<b>2000 Census</b>	<b>2010 Census</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>95.8%</b>	<b>94.7%</b>
<b>African American</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>Native American</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<b>Asian American</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<b>2 or More Races</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
<b>Total Minority</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>
<b>Spanish Origin</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>

The 2010 Census reported that 5.5 % of Tompkins County's older adults (60+) had incomes at or below poverty level. According to *TCOFA's 2012 Needs Assessment* 29% of Tompkins County older adults were still employed: 59% full time and 41% part time. The data showed a 5% increase in employment between

2004 –2012, indicating that a growing number of workers are remaining engaged in full-time employment later in life.

*TCOFA's 2012 Needs Assessment* indicated that 88% of Tompkins County's older adults own their own homes. Of these homeowners, 50% indicate their home is in need of major repair and 38% indicate that the cost is prohibitive. TCOFA's 2014 Housing Needs/Preferences survey showed that out of 331 respondents, nearly half plan on moving in the next 1-5 years, with the top reason being to reduce maintenance and downsize. The vast majority of respondents (90%) want to stay in Tompkins County. Consistent themes in the survey included the need for affordable housing options located in the City of Ithaca, close to services and public transportation. According to *TCOFA's 2012 Needs Assessment*, 88% of older adults drive private vehicles as their main mode of transportation.

The most common self-reported health condition of older adults is arthritis, followed by high blood pressure, then visual deficits. Fourteen percent report feeling anxious and 12% report feeling depressed; 23% report recently falling or are afraid of falling; 2% report that someone in the household has dementia. Ten percent report that they have not visited in person with anyone in the past week, and 14% don't have a neighbor they feel they can call on if needed.

According to the "Under the Radar: The New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study," elder abuse is a widespread yet under-reported issue, with approximately 3.2 elder abuse cases reported for every thousand individuals age 65+ in Tompkins County. Financial exploitation is self-disclosed at a rate of 42 per every thousand individuals age 65+ in Tompkins County.

Though the majority of older adults are covered by Medicare, according to *TCOFA's 2012 Needs Assessment*, 13.4% have trouble understanding their insurance and fewer than half of those knew about local health insurance counseling programs that are available to assist them. Eighty-two percent of local older adults take prescription medications daily. Nearly 10% are not enrolled in insurance for prescriptions and 4% do not fill prescriptions or try to make them last longer because of cost.

The majority of Tompkins County's older population (95%) report having a doctor who coordinates their health care needs. Ninety-seven percent had visited their doctor within the last year, and only 2% reported that they had difficulty finding health care due to financial or accessibility problems.

Finally, according to *TCOFA's 2012 Needs Assessment*, Tompkins County's older adult population has access and utilizes technology to a great extent. Eighty-two percent of Tompkins County's older adults have computers with internet access; 80% of older adults have both landline and a cell phone.

# Key Trends

## **Overview of Issues and Needs (Generated from Consensus Conference participants)**

Though our community has much strength on which to build, the questions remain: what do we need to change, improve, and create to provide for older adults now and in the future? How will current services and supports, housing, transportation and overall attitudes need to evolve to meet the demands placed by the aging of the Baby Boomers?

Many of today's 60 and older population, current and future Baby Boomers, do not self-identify as "senior citizens." They are known as an innovative, self-determined generation that will continue to forge ahead to retirement in the same fashion. Many have very specific and individual ideals and they want to design their own experiences. This is important on many levels and will inform how service providers have to change in order to effectively reach and serve the Baby Boom generation.

Many older adults choose to continue working well into traditional retirement years, either because of preference or out of economic necessity. However, there are some jobs where the physical demands are too strenuous to continue. Some retire and then find it necessary to reenter the workforce in order to make ends meet and pay for medical care and expenses, home maintenance and/or rising taxes. With Tompkins County's low unemployment rate, there is competition for scarce jobs, and older workers may be forced to accept positions for much lower pay than their pre-retirement positions. There are biases against hiring older workers who may be perceived as less able to manage technology.

For those who have the ability to comfortably retire, opportunities for volunteerism and civic engagement will become even more desired. Local organizations need a strong infrastructure to recruit, train, support and retain volunteers, including people with disabilities, as well as, a person-centered approach to make the volunteer experiences positive. Often Baby Boomers are interested in experiences that meet their needs and interests rather than fitting within a job description. It is a challenge for organizations to align their needs with volunteers who want to share their knowledge and talents in ways that suit their interests. Volunteer opportunities need to be decentralized throughout Tompkins County so people don't perceive the City of Ithaca as the only place to get involved.

Many of the services that support the aging population and community in general are already operating with strained resources and limited funding. Not only do core programs need to be strengthened and sustained, but they must be enhanced to meet current and future demands.

Transportation issues affect not only older adults, but people of all ages in our rural community. The lack of transportation, especially in rural areas, creates barriers to services and medical care and puts older adults at risk for social isolation which can result in declining health. Same-day transportation service, out of county transportation to regional medical centers, after hours and weekend transportation are all needed. It is difficult to recruit and retain volunteer drivers to support transportation programs such as Gadabout and Friends in Service Help (FISH). Accessibility of transportation options needs to be considered when developing affordable senior and mixed-use housing.

The lack of affordable housing in Tompkins County was mentioned consistently across each Consensus Conference. In 2014, the City of Ithaca's housing vacancy rate was 0.5% when a healthy rate is typically considered 5%. The lack of housing drives housing costs higher. Our community needs a greater supply of affordable housing that serves all generations and creates living environments that enable people. There is an additional challenge of integrating people with severe and persistent mental illness into senior housing. The type of housing, the built environment, the affordability and location are issues that will directly affect the ability for people to continue living at home as they age.

There is a lack of affordable assisted living options in Tompkins County, with no Medicaid-funded assisted living option available. Because of this, some persons with dementia and others whose long term care needs do not rise to the level of skilled nursing care are prematurely placed in skilled nursing facilities. Some elders who cannot afford local assisted living options have to stay at home in unsafe conditions or seek other affordable assisted living options out-of-county. Strict New York State assisted living regulations limit the facilities from assisting residents with basic needs, thereby forcing people who need a small amount of assistance to move to another level of care. In addition, skilled nursing facilities are hard-pressed to provide adequate care for people with dementia and those with psychotic behaviors. Care for people exhibiting these behaviors tends to bounce back and forth between the hospital and nursing homes.

The current medical, mental health and long term care systems are fractured, difficult for older adults to navigate, and stretched thin in terms of resources. These systems are not person-centered, rather they are primarily driven by income/payer source. Individuals are often forced into various systems based on income. Insurance costs and the skyrocketing costs for medical care are a concern for many and even more of burden as people retire and employers are cutting retiree health coverage. Retirees who are not yet age 65 and eligible for Medicare have difficulty affording health insurance. Those on Medicare have a hard time finding local physicians who accept new patients. There is a lack of geriatricians in Tompkins County. Medicaid is currently transitioning to managed long term care across New York State, and there is concern that services will not be granted at the same level as previous fee-for-service Medicaid. People with reasonable resources cannot afford to pay privately for long term care assistance for very long.

Social isolation is an issue for older adults in our rural community, and with families often living at far distances from one another, there are fewer adult children available to provide care and companionship. For older adults living alone without regular social supports, the early and intermediate stages of cognitive decline are difficult to detect until a significant event occurs. In these cases where capacity is in question, it is difficult for service providers to intervene.

People who currently need in-home aide service struggle to find available aides, and as the older population increases, the lack of home health aides will only be greater. As the demographics indicate that those ages 25-44 are far fewer than those age 60+, there simply will not be enough young or middle aged adults to provide the support needed by older adults. The same workforce issues apply to certified nursing assistants in institutional long term care settings. Contributing factors to the lack of aides are low pay, lack of local training and cumbersome regulations to offer training. Currently there is only one certified home health agency in Tompkins County. Not only does this limit availability but it raises issues around consumer choice. The shortage of aides in the workforce places more burdens on families and informal caregivers, leading to burnout and an increased need for respite care. As frail, possibly cognitively impaired elders need more assistance and become more isolated, they are more vulnerable to abuse and financial exploitation.

# Alignment with Other Plans

In order to optimize our ability to implement the recommendations in this Action Plan, it would be beneficial if there is alignment between this plan and the Comprehensive Plans of both Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca. Below are principles and policies taken from the *Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan* and the goals and recommendations taken from the *City of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan* which align well with this Age Friendly Action Plan.

## **HOUSING**

### **Tompkins County Principle**

Tompkins County should be a place where housing is affordable, safe, energy efficient, and appealing.

### **Tompkins County Policies**

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Encourage a variety of housing options in development focus areas.
- Support new development of housing whose total costs, including utility and transportation expenses, are affordable to households with a range of incomes.
- Promote energy efficient housing.
- Provide housing options for an aging population.
- Maintain an adequate supply of housing for people requiring supportive services.
- Improve the existing housing stock.

### **City of Ithaca Land Use Goals**

- Additional housing will provide opportunities for people of all incomes, ages, and abilities to live in the city.

### **City of Ithaca Housing Goals**

- Ithaca will have an adequate supply of safe, accessible, and affordable housing available to all residents, regardless of their life circumstances or special needs.
- The city will be home to a range of housing options, including different levels of affordability and housing types, in each neighborhood.
- The existing stock of affordable housing will be preserved and well-maintained.

### **City of Ithaca Housing Recommendations**

- Continue to utilize Federal funding and seek out additional sources of financial support for developing subsidized housing to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income residents and populations with special needs.
- Explore ways to incentivize landlords to reduce rental housing costs.

- Develop policies to proactively support appropriately located and designed affordable and/or special needs housing that meets an identified market demand.
- Explore policy options to increase the homeownership rate and help homeowners remain in their homes.
- Explore incentives to improve residential property maintenance in city neighborhoods.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Tompkins County Principle**

Tompkins County should be a place where transportation choices are efficient, affordable, and healthy for people and the environment.

### **Tompkins County Policies**

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Maintain and improve critical elements of the existing transportation network to support the safe movement of people and goods.
- Reduce the use of fossil fuels in transportation.
- Shift travel away from driving alone to biking, walking, carpooling/ridesharing, and using public transit.
- Support a pattern of land use that allows people to move efficiently and affordably.
- Provide for the safe and effective movement of freight to, from, and within the county.
- Continue to provide airport services that support community and business needs.
- Consider the needs of populations that are particularly challenged by transportation when developing systems and alternatives.

### **City of Ithaca Increasing Transportation Choice Goals**

- Ithaca will provide an interconnected transportation network that makes it convenient, routine, and feasible for all residents and visitors to walk, bike, and use transit.
- Pedestrian travel will be supported on all city streets through well-maintained and enhanced facilities that meet, at a minimum, Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- Attractive new pathways will run along natural features — such as creeks and gorges — and connect to the street system, enhancing neighborhoods and serving as active transportation corridors.
- Frequent transit service, along with improved stops and shelters, throughout a broad service area will offer increased comfort, safety, and accessibility, particularly in areas serving low-income and elderly people.
- The public parking supply will be managed to enhance vitality in city neighborhoods and commercial areas, support programs that provide alternatives to private car use, and be cost-neutral to the City.



- Pedestrian, bike, and transit improvements will be spread equitably throughout the city so people of all income levels and abilities will benefit from them.
- Shared transportation services, such as bike and carsharing programs, ridesharing and vanpooling, will be actively supported.
- Coordinated regional transportation improvements — ranging from better pedestrian, bicycle and street connections with adjacent municipalities to better bus, rail and airline connections with other cities and states — will help ensure convenient regional mobility.

### **City of Ithaca Increasing Transportation Choice Recommendations**

- Adopt complete streets principles as official City policy to ensure that Ithaca’s streets are well-designed, interconnected, and provide safe and convenient accommodations for all modes of transportation.
- Provide adequate sidewalk width in the commercial core areas of the city, with particular attention to the central core of Collegetown and the areas surrounding the Ithaca Commons.
- Improve pedestrian lighting on public streets.
- Consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in decisions concerning on-street parking.
- Accommodate multiple modes of transportation in all public and private developments and maintenance projects.
- Advocate for the expansion of bus service and air travel to regional destinations and work with TCAT to coordinate local bus service with intercity schedules.

## **OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS**

### **Tompkins County Principle**

Tompkins County should be a place where the built environment promotes healthy, safe, and active lifestyles.

### **Tompkins County Policies**

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Promote bicycling and walking throughout the county by making these transportation modes safe, efficient, and appealing options.
- Encourage the development of lively streets with a variety of opportunities for daily activity, recreation, and social interaction.
- Foster the expansion of a countywide trail network.
- Encourage efforts to improve the accessibility of the built environment to allow everyone to participate in community life.
- Promote parks, community facilities, recreational activities, and networks that support regular social interaction and physical activity.
- Discourage land uses that threaten community health and safety.

### **City of Ithaca Natural Resources Goals**

- The City will provide and adequately fund well-maintained and safe parks, trails, and natural areas.
- Facilities within City parks will be accessible so they may be equally enjoyed by all members of the community.
- All members of the community will have access to the waterfront.

### **CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

#### **City of Ithaca Public Participation Goals**

- All members of the community will know of and have opportunities to participate in governing and decision making processes of interest to them.
- The City's active outreach to the community will support high-quality public participation.
- All members of the community will feel confident that their voices will be taken seriously and given respect in City decision-making processes that are important to them.

#### **City of Ithaca Public Participation Recommendations**

- Explore alternative mechanisms for public participation that would engage more members of the community.
- Continually assess throughout City government who is engaged in City processes and who is not. Develop strategies to understand the interests of, and involve and/or gather the input from those stakeholders who do not participate.
- Seek diverse representation on City boards and advisory committees.
- Continue to improve accommodations that allow people with disabilities to access information and fully participate in City processes.
- Work with the public to identify the most effective ways of involving and communicating with the community and dedicate resources to these methods.

#### **City of Ithaca Workforce Development & Job Training Goals**

- A strong and diverse local workforce will have skills and training that align with the needs of local employers.
- Barriers to employment, such as lack of child care and insufficient transportation, will be eliminated.

#### **City of Ithaca Workforce Development & Job Training Recommendations**

- Continue to work with the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency to provide job training and placement for low- and moderate-income people within the community, in support of the 2014-2018 Consolidated Plan.
- Encourage sufficient County, State, and Federal funding support for Tompkins Cortland Community College, Workforce NY, and other providers to offer robust opportunities for unemployed and underemployed persons to increase their marketable skills and expand opportunities for local jobs to be filled by city residents.

- Work with the community to identify barriers to employment and possible ways to remove these barriers.
- Work with higher educational institutions to provide training programs to develop advanced job skills.

### **City of Ithaca Cultural Resources Goals**

- Cultural resources will be accessible to the entire community.
- The City will provide and adequately fund City-sponsored events, programs, and other resources, such as GIAC and Ithaca Youth Bureau programming, the Martin Luther King Jr. Walkway, neighborhood investment programs, and public art.

### **City of Ithaca Cultural Resources Recommendations**

- Work with TCAT to provide safe and convenient transportation to events, museums, theaters, and other cultural destinations.
- Create signage and other visually-informative displays to both facilitate wayfinding and promote its cultural resources to an even wider audience.

## **COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

### **City of Ithaca Communication Goals**

- All members of the community will know how to access information about decisions being made and what information is informing those decisions, and all this information will be easily accessible to the public.

### **City of Ithaca Communication Recommendations**

- Provide information and materials in languages, formats, and media that reflect the demographic diversity of the community.
- Invest in communications infrastructure, such as online engagement tools or public computer access within City facilities, to provide enhanced access to information.
- Identify alternative ways of communicating with the public, particularly with those members of the community who typically lack access to information and do not participate in City processes.
- Work with community organizations, neighborhood associations, and educational institutions to communicate with as many residents as possible and to educate the public on how to access information provided by the City.
- Provide links on the City website to services and other information provided by community partners, such as information about transportation options and social services.
- Continue to utilize traditional methods of public outreach, including local newspaper, radio, fliers, and mailings.
- Work with the public to identify the most effective ways of involving and communicating with the community and dedicate resources to these methods.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

### **City of Ithaca Health, Wellness & Support Goals**

- The community's use of active modes of transportation will improve individual health and wellness, as well as environmental sustainability.
- All residents and visitors will have access to parks, trails, recreational facilities, and community activities that support social interaction and physical activity.
- Preventive, ongoing, and emergency health care will be accessible and available to all.
- Physical, economic, and social barriers to health and wellness will be eliminated.
- Public spaces will be welcoming to all residents and visitors.
- The built environment will be accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

### **City of Ithaca Health, Wellness & Support Recommendations**

- Maintain and enhance existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Continue to expand sidewalk, trail, and bike boulevard networks, including along the city's waterways and gorges.
- Ensure there is a range of activities for all ages in City parks.
- Work with TCAT to provide safe and convenient transportation to City parks and recreational facilities.
- Continue to support and promote 2-1-1 services to city residents.
- Identify barriers to health and wellness, and work with community partners to eliminate those barriers.
- Create guidelines for community use of public spaces to promote respectful treatment for all who use those spaces.
- Provide information on City parks, trails, recreational facilities, and programs that is easily accessible to the community.

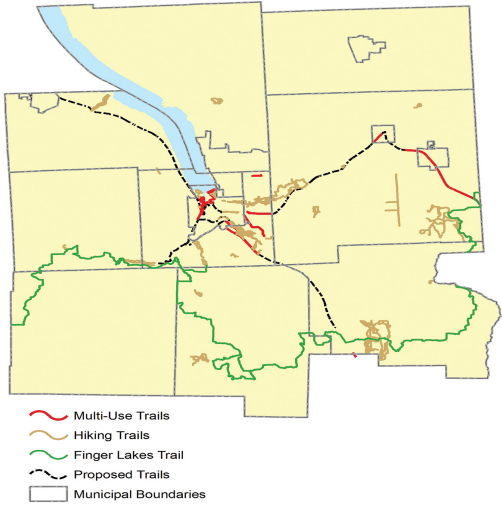
### **City of Ithaca Foodsystems Goals**

- All city residents will enjoy food security.

### **City of Ithaca Foodsystems Recommendations**

- Allow and encourage the location of farmers' markets and small food markets providing wholesome and healthy food throughout the city.
- Collaborate with TCAT to establish a regular shuttle to the Ithaca Farmers' Market and provide convenient service to local grocery stores.
- Promote community gardening sites, harvesting systems, and edible landscapes in all neighborhoods.

# The Plan



# Livability





## **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

### **Our vision**

#### **Outdoor Spaces and buildings**

The design of our buildings and outdoor spaces (and access to them) is an essential component of a successful age-friendly community.

Design features which respect people's needs across the full range of age- and ability-continua enable use and participation by all residents and visitors to our region.

Thus these design features are a significant public health variable--impacting physical activity, social participation, independence for daily living, and engagement in community and life.

The design of outdoor environments like parks and sidewalks, and indoor facilities such as public buildings, libraries, restaurants, recreation facilities and public washrooms, all must consider the physical, social, and sensory needs of users.

The spaces of private businesses, too, must be available to both a multigenerational and diversely abled clientele and workforce.

The outdoor spaces and buildings of our communities should be accessible to all people with respect to age, physical and cognitive abilities, socioeconomic status, and transportation needs.

## **Where we are now**

### **Strengths and Highlights**

The City of Ithaca Sidewalk Policy updated in 2014 comprehensively addresses sidewalk needs rather than the previous piecemeal repairs and construction undertaken by property owners. The City has taken responsibility for sidewalk maintenance leading to reduced costs and faster rates of improvements.

Tompkins County has several community trails which weave through rural areas and provide connections to population centers, including the Black Diamond Trail, the Ithaca-Dryden Trail, the South Hill Recreation Way, the East Hill Recreation Way, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, the Gateway Trail and the Finger Lakes Trail.

Tompkins County residents of all ages participate in educational and recreational activities supported by local parks and municipal spaces through inter-municipal Recreation Partnerships including the Ithaca Youth Bureau and other Recreational Partnerships. The inter-municipal Recreation Partnership includes accessibility to all residents as one of its program values for residents of all ages.

There are organizations like the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, the Transportation Planning Group, the Friends of Stewart Park, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative, the City of Ithaca Disabilities Advisory Council and the City of Ithaca Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Council whose work could be considered support for this domain.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Although the City of Ithaca has adopted a comprehensive Sidewalk Policy, there are many areas in Tompkins County which lack sidewalks or other paths that encourage and support walking. There are also many sections of the County which not only lack sidewalks, but also lack sufficient space on roads for safe walking (or bicycling).

Additionally, while there are several community trails designed to create more walkable paths to population centers, information about these trails and paths could be disseminated in ways to reach larger numbers of people. The lack of knowledge about these trails and paths leads to underutilized paths. Some of these trails remain incomplete or lack connection to other trails. Many are accessible only by private vehicles, further limiting broad community access.

There is insufficient compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- Who is evaluating plans prior to construction
- Not just wheelchairs
- Fear of lawsuits
- Auto-oriented and single-use development patterns
- Accessibility to and from ADA compliant facilities

There is a lack of understanding and knowledge of the full range of needs and behaviors and Universal Design solutions. The key to adoption of Universal Design is the view that it has immediate benefits to everyone in society.

Businesses and organizations would benefit from identifying potential funding sources (grants, loans, etc.) for age-friendly modifications after learning what comprises age friendly.

## **Goals**

Outdoor spaces and buildings considerations include, but are not limited to:

- sidewalks, intersections/crosswalks, bus stops
- streets, roads and road shoulders
- parking: on street, meters, garages, lots
- polling places
- parks and trails
- the Ithaca Commons
- lighting
- connectivity
- transportation
- public and private businesses
- public and private restrooms/bathrooms
- in buildings, an accessible route to key spaces such as lobbies, restrooms, vertical access, meeting rooms, and key spaces

**Goal 1:** Promote a paradigm shift for creators and stewards of the built environment to view their work through an Age-Friendly lens

*Lead Organization: TCOFA, Ithaca College & Cornell University*

### **Tasks**

- 1.1** Present the concepts of the Age Friendly Initiative to the Tompkins County Council of Governments.
- 1.2** Provide an in-depth training seminar on accessibility, Universal Design multigenerational places, and the intersection of aging and the built environment, inviting members of the Tompkins County Council of Government, with the goal of reaching 2 municipalities.
- 1.3** Work in greater depth with 2 municipalities to implement Age-Friendly concepts in planning and zoning efforts.



**Goal 2:** Improve outdoor spaces and buildings to ensure the safety, accessibility and visibility for the continua of ages, abilities, and incomes by removing unnecessary barriers to functioning through informed design.

*Lead Organization: TCOFA, Ithaca College & Cornell University*

**Tasks**

- 2.1** Partner with City of Ithaca Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) on shared priorities, such as sidewalks in the City of Ithaca.
- 2.2** Engage student groups to conduct an assessment of at least one priority area among downtown Ithaca’s buildings and outdoor spaces, as informed by the DAC. Share results and findings with the DAC and City of Ithaca to affect change.
- 2.3** Develop a list of best practices for buildings and outdoor spaces for dissemination to those working in these areas in Tompkins County.
- 2.4** Meet with the Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Tompkins County Visitors Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce to share findings on the accessibility of outdoor spaces and buildings and share best practice list.

**Goal 3:** Promote the walkability of our communities (by addressing connectivity, quality and presence of sidewalks, safety from crime, weather, and falls).

*Lead Organization: Office for the Aging Advisory Committee, Tompkins County Planning Department, Ithaca College, Cornell University and TC3*

**Tasks**

- 3.1** Work with the City of Ithaca and at least one other municipality to conduct a walkability survey.
- 3.2** Work with Tompkins County Planning Department on their development of a sidewalk inventory and Healthy Communities Strategy for the County.



## **Housing**

### **Our vision**

Most people want to “age in community” and live as independently as possible as fully integrated members of their chosen communities. Some wish to stay in their homes and “age in place,” while others seek to relocate within the community to homes that are more easily maintained and accessible. Universal design features enable people to live independently in their homes as long as possible and to visit others and maintain social connections. New construction should focus on the increasing older adult population and provide a variety of housing types and price points.

### **Where we are now**

#### **Strengths and Highlights**

Tompkins County has an array of housing options available which other small, rural communities of similar size do not have. Such options include subsidized senior apartments, family-type homes, enhanced assisted living options and a continuing care retirement community.

Organizations such as Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services and Better Housing for Tompkins County offer home repair services which enable low-income homeowners to make necessary repairs to their homes. The Office for the Aging facilitates the application process for grants and loans for accessibility related repairs and emergency health and safety related repairs. Tompkins Community Action provides weatherization services. In addition, there are a number of

supportive services in our community which help people to age in place in their homes (see Community Support and Health Services, p. 50-52).

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

There is a lack of affordable housing options in Tompkins County for people of all ages. A number of factors, including an inadequate supply of housing, desirability of the community, large college student population, and low vacancy rates, all contribute to high housing costs. Though many older adults desire to live in a central location which is walkable and connected to amenities, housing in such locations has become increasingly unaffordable.

The County's current housing stock is old and often requires expensive retrofitting in order to make it accessible for older adults. Older housing units typically require more maintenance and repairs than newer housing, and deferring this work jeopardizes the safety of residents. High housing costs leave many residents with inadequate financial resources to undertake maintenance and repair, while the growing number of single person and older adult households mean that many are physically unable to undertake home improvement.

The *2014 Tompkins County Senior Housing Preferences Survey* found the top three factors older adults seek in their future homes are affordable cost, single floor design, and easy access to public transportation. Many also expressed a desire for more affordable housing in downtown Ithaca, proximity to services, condominiums, and a concern over the lack of housing options for the middle class. Unfortunately, many older adults currently live in multi-story, older homes with substantial maintenance needs in rural and suburban locations that are not close to public transit. New housing construction has not focused on the older adult population and provided the variety of housing types and price points needed. For example, there has been very little new condominium development since the 1980s, and there is virtually no inventory of single-floor condominiums in the local market. As a result, recent construction of single-floor apartments in buildings with elevator access in downtown Ithaca have attracted a substantial number of older renters despite no effort to specifically build for or market to the senior population. The *Senior Housing Preferences Survey* also indicates seniors are expecting their housing costs (rents or purchase prices) to fall at or below the current median levels, leading to even greater competition for affordable units.

As people age, their incomes tend to decline, making the affordability of housing and services a major issue. The Tompkins County Office for the Aging's *Senior Housing Occupancy Survey* (2011) found an average occupancy rate of 99 percent for the 836 federally assisted senior apartments in the county and an average wait time of six months to one year for the units. Despite an 11.3 percent increase in units between 1999 and 2010, the occupancy rate grew by one percent, indicating the increase in seniors needing these apartments is outpacing development of new units.

New housing units are needed that incorporate universal design principles, both for owners and renters and that are affordable to a wide range of incomes. Universal design features enable people to live independently in their homes as long as possible and to visit others and maintain social connections. These units should ensure that seniors have opportunities to connect with transportation options in order to more fully engage in their community.

When older adults require additional services beyond independent living, the options for those with lower incomes are scarce. Currently, only one assisted living facility in Tompkins County provides a limited number of units on a sliding fee schedule for low-income seniors, and there are no Medicaid-funded assisted living units within the county. Those seniors relying on Medicaid must either find assisted living units outside of the county or move to skilled nursing facilities, which provide a higher level of care at higher operating costs while affording less independence than those seeking assisted living units typically desire.

## **Goals**

**Goal 1:** Educate and disseminate information regarding accessibility and visitability in design for new housing development, rehab projects, and places of public accommodation. Provide tools to municipalities regarding planning and zoning to enable development that is age-friendly.

*Lead Agency: Tompkins County Office for the Aging*

### **Tasks**

- 1.1** Offer an educational session on accessibility and visitability in design for new housing and rehab projects to the Tompkins County Council of Governments.
- 1.2** Provide an in-depth training seminar on accessibility, Universal Design, the intersection of aging and the built environment, and multigenerational places information, inviting members of the Tompkins County Council of Government, with the goal of reaching 2 municipalities. Utilize tools and resources available through *Livable New York* as well as others.
- 1.3** Utilize the Office for the Aging's website as a go-to resource for background materials on accessibility, visitability, and age-friendly planning and zoning tools.

**Goal 2:** Advocate for the development of additional accessible affordable housing to meet housing needs across the lifespan.

*Lead Agency: Tompkins County Office for the Aging, Tompkins County Planning Department*

### **Tasks**

- 2.1** Meet with municipal officials and developers to inform them about the housing needs of older adults in order to make the development of affordable accessible housing a priority.

- 2.2** Conduct housing needs/ preferences surveys as well as senior housing occupancy surveys in order to track need and monitor progress as the housing shortage is addressed.

Goal 3: Advocate for additional home repair funding to enable lower income older adults to age in place.

*Lead Agency: Tompkins County Office for the Aging, INHS/Better Housing for Tompkins County*

#### Tasks

- 3.1** Apply for home repair grant funds for low income homeowners through New York State Homes and Community Renewal as available and appropriate.
- 3.2** Target additional flexible funds, such as Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) funds, to home repairs as available and appropriate.
- 3.3** Solicit donated funds and materials for home repairs from local businesses and chain stores to make limited funding go further. Track donations with a goal of \$5,000 in donated funds per year.



## **Transportation**

### **Our vision**

Transportation is a system that includes mobility related services for all ages and levels of need in the community. It is inclusive of private and non-profit transportation, public transportation, parking, walkability, and biking. Available, affordable, and accessible transportation is the key to support the health, mobility, activity, and participation of people *across* the lifespan. Age-segregated solutions to mobility lack the economy of scale that can be achieved by engaging all providers. Such solutions are, therefore, impractical and wasteful. Given that transportation is a means to access life supporting/sustaining services and activities, it is also important to consider how services can be accessed online or transported to residents. Food delivery, mobile health services, prescription delivery and other mobile services are therefore also included in the transportation domain. Our vision includes the integration of existing systems: coordination of resources to create a seamless and comprehensive system offering access to people wherever they are in the county and whatever their transportation needs are. This will lead to more efficient and effective use of existing resources.

## **Where we are now**

### **Strengths and Highlights**

Ithaca is a transportation-rich community with both public and private transportation options supporting safe, affordable, and green transportation. Residents benefit from air and bus service to travel to out-of-county destinations. TCAT is the major provider of fixed-route bus service within the county. A growing network of bike lanes, mixed use trails and an active transportation advocacy organization encourage biking and walking.

Paratransit service is offered by Gadabout and the TCAT Paratransit service. Friends in Service Helping (FISH) provides rides to residents of Tompkins County, mostly older adults, to medical appointments in the county and the outside the county using a network of volunteer drivers. Particular organizations provide van service or rides to their members/clientele including GIAC, some senior housing operators, Disabled American Veterans, and the American Cancer Society. Area taxi service includes a wheelchair accessible taxi. All TCAT buses are wheelchair accessible.

Tompkins County actively encourages ridesharing by providing an online Zimride Rideshare portal to residents that helps people going the same way connect and share rides. Cornell, Ithaca College and TC3 also host Zimride networks to their students and faculty. Ithaca Carshare provides, in addition to area car rental companies, the opportunity for participants to drive vehicles without having the costs of ownership. Ithaca Carshare also provides an accessible Carshare membership for people at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Line.

Several organizations in Tompkins County provide resources that help people access transportation. The Human Service Coalition's 2-1-1 consumer helpline provides residents with one call access to transportation information and referrals to transportation providers. 2-1-1 is also partnered with FISH to receive trip requests. Catholic Charities provides transportation support to people looking for work through free and discounted bus passes. Cooperative Extension's Way2Go Program educates and encourages residents to use accessible and sustainable transportation options through educational programming (mobility how-to videos, AARP Smart Driver classes, Streets Alive, Bike to Work day and more!) and an online transportation directory ([way2go.org](http://way2go.org)).

The Tompkins County Coordinated Transportation Plan and the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council foster integration and coordination among mobility providers. A committee of mobility providers and stakeholders meets monthly to implement this plan and is particularly focused on better serving the mobility needs of people with disabilities, older adults, people with limited English proficiency, and people in poverty.

## Challenges

In spite of the rich array of transportation resources in the county, we lack integrated mobility solutions that will appeal to, engage, and work for everyone in the community. A system that offers access to mobility for everyone will serve seniors efficiently and well. In particular, seniors need a system that is resilient (not subject to budgetary waves), redundant (if one avenue doesn't work, there is another), and reliable, so they can have confidence, for example, that when they give up a car, they will not be isolated. This need applies to all Tompkins County residents and is particularly critical for low income and rural residents. For example, local Collective Impact efforts to support school-family connections, food security throughout the County, and positive re-entry from prison all identify transportation as critical and wanting.

There are numerous existing programs—volunteer as well as governmentally supported—and transportation providers within the County. To a great extent, these operate within “silos” of user/target populations. Past plans in the County, for example the 2014 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, have focused on filling gaps where there are needs. Now we need to focus on integrating what exists to make it both more accessible and affordable for users and providers alike. By way of illustration, here are some of the observations and challenges we listed in our domain meetings.

- Transportation needs for the elderly are well documented in the survey completed by the County Office for the Aging and listed among Unmet Needs in 2014
- Sustainable funding is critical for continued support of Gadabout, TCAT and other services
- Volunteer transportation programs (FISH, Gadabout) struggle to recruit and retain drivers
- Rural Connections to TCAT are limited
- Some facilities retain vans for their own use, vans that might be shared
- Insurance and liability coverage restrict how vehicles can be used
- There is a lack of service for the Urgent Medical transportation which doesn't rise to the level of a 911/emergency
- Systems that handle transportation requests are separate and not integrated, leading to confusion and inability to connect to service when needed
- There are concerns with downtown parking accessibility, especially among the elderly
- There is a lack of same day accessible transportation within the county
- There is a need for coordination for out of county travel (Sayre, Syracuse, Rochester)
- Connection between the transportation and the healthcare/wellness sector is currently weak



- State funding is slow/contracts are held up which can impact transportation projects

## Opportunities

- There is room for coordination between different needs and sectors
- Greater service and efficiency could be provided if there were a single phone number and website that could book transportation services, answer consumer transportation questions and provide support for complicated transportation requests (cross county trips for example.) The 2015 updated Tompkins County Coordinated Transportation Plan calls for such a service
- A comprehensive system for which consumers pay must be available to those who cannot pay
- We can begin with identification of low hanging fruit
- There is room to reinvent volunteer driver services - expansion to regional scope
- Individual service providers do not have the resources or, in some cases, the motivation, to initiate an integrated mobility system; however, they could be brought together to increase and streamline their provision of services
- We need to develop new business models to serve transportation demand. These models exist in Europe
- The Village model exists for one-call access to transportation services
- Our challenge: to foster the political will to make significant change in existing transportation systems
- A "third party" alliance of government, business, and citizens could lead an integration effort

## Goals

**Goal 1:** Generate broader interest and acceptance of the vision of an integrated transportation system

*Lead Organizations: Tompkins County Coordinated Transportation Planning Committee; Cooperative Extension Way2Go Program*

**Task 1.1** Discuss, catalyze and support for the vision of integrating transportation services. Such an approach will utilize emerging technologies for ride scheduling, and will incorporate the principles of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) to create a system of seamless mobility services for all ages.

**Task 1.2** Establish and facilitate a working group willing to develop and organize support for an integrated transportation system. The group will be representative

of key stakeholders including transportation service providers, government, business, education, health care and community members.

**Task 1.3** Explore feasibility of Mobility as a Services (MaaS) in Tompkins County, and apply for NYSERDA grant in 2017 to conduct feasibility study.

Goal 2: Increase awareness, utilization and integration of existing services such as Gadabout, FISH, Love Living at Home and other senior transportation providers

*Lead Organization: Tompkins County Office for the Aging*

**Task 2.1** Convene leaders of volunteer transportation providers to discuss current services, trends, and determine further points of collaboration.

**Task 2.2** Develop communications plan to increase ridership and increase the number of volunteer drivers

Goal 3: Raise awareness of programs that bring services and support TO people. Explore and develop additional services

*Lead Organizations: Tompkins County Office for the Aging, 211*

**Tasks**

**3.1** Research existing programs in Tompkins County which bring services to people, and create an inventory/service list

**3.2** Publicize the service list to increase the utilization of these services

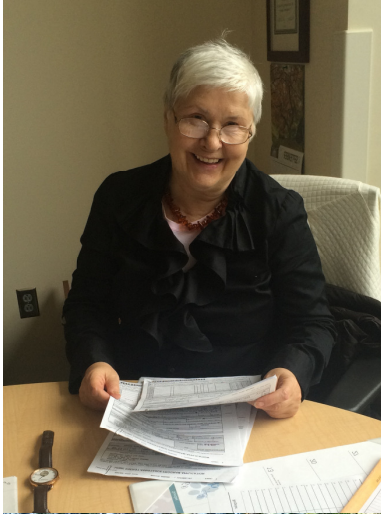


Tompkins



# Lifestyles





## **Employment and Civic Participation**

### **Our vision**

Adults in their later life are a vital source for the social and economic vitality of the community through paid and unpaid employment (volunteering), self-employment and business development. Employment and Civic Participation connects people with opportunities that allow them to contribute their skills and experience throughout their lifespan to address our local community's challenges.

Workplaces benefit from the employment of older workers who can contribute to the "brain trust" of a multigenerational work environment. "Encore talent" (mature worker) retention, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities, and succession strategies are key human resource priorities, which includes creating an inclusive environment for mature workers and job seekers. Adults in their later life seek opportunities for high impact roles in the local community to share their talents and create a legacy. Profit and non-profit organizations, including educational institutions, must align themselves to catalyze the power of experience provided by

mature workers and volunteers. Engagement of older adults in educational and scholarly activities provides reciprocal learning opportunities across generations.

## **Where we are now**

### **Strengths and Highlights**

#### **Support from City and County Government**

The City of Ithaca supports the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) Senior Program, helping to make it possible for older adults to socialize and stay connected. The County supports the many programs and services of the Office for the Aging.

#### **Support for Retirees**

There is a need to talk about volunteer opportunities before people retire, and Cornell University offers workshops to employees on the transition to retirement which are fully subscribed. Additionally, Lifelong offers the “Lifelong Transitions” classes designed specifically for pre-retirees opening up even more community resources. Tompkins County is a learning-oriented community that is home to Cornell University, Ithaca College and Tompkins Cortland Community College which offer a multitude of opportunities for older adults to experience and take part in educational, cultural and community events that appeal to this community of often self-described “life-long learners.”

#### **Support for Volunteers**

Additionally, our County has a long history of activism and philanthropy which has benefited our citizens. Older adults may well be looking to stay engaged and connected and there are numerous opportunities available to them. The Volunteers Connected program (formerly RSVP) matches people’s skills and abilities with available volunteer needs at local not-for profits. The United Way, the Office for the Aging, Hospicare and the Cancer Resource Center to name only a few, have volunteer options for those interested in becoming involved. Some organizations offer very strong training and support to their volunteers. The 2-1-1 Information and Referral line is a resource that can help connect people with volunteer opportunities.

#### **Support from Employers**

Employers in Tompkins County value diversity, including the hiring of older adults and persons with disabilities. There are a large number of talented older workers who hold professional positions at Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College. Individuals can continue working in these positions well into traditional retirement years because they are typically low in physical

demands. For those older adults who are struggling obtaining employment, Tompkins Workforce NY assists with job seeking, resume building, and technology education.

There is an increasing trend in employers providing a living wage to their employees.

There is a tremendous amount of information available about local employment trends and areas of job growth. This information helps to plan for future needs.

### **Support from Local Agencies**

Many needs of older individuals are currently being met by non-profit organizations such as Foodnet, Gadabout, Friends in Service Helping (FISH), and Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC). These agencies benefit from the high rate of volunteerism from talented, energized members of the community. The richness of these services and many others help to strengthen the economy.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

#### **Volunteerism Challenges**

Our local non-profit organizations often lack the infrastructure to recruit, train and support volunteers. This infrastructure is essential to having the volunteer experience be a positive and meaningful one. There also needs to be recognition that Baby Boomers may no longer see volunteer commitments as long term and they are more interested in a person-centered approach to volunteering – one that may be short-term and meet their interests and needs rather than fitting into a proscribed job description. At the same time, members of older generations are in long standing volunteer positions which they enjoy. Organizations must be able to meet the needs of both long term and short term volunteers.

#### **Employment Challenges**

Workers face a variety of challenges as they seek employment at later age. Tompkins County's dependence on Cornell as an employment hub tends to drive average wages down throughout the County. Not all positions at Cornell pay well or provide pensions or retirement. Tompkins County's low rate of unemployment leads to high demand and competition for few job openings, with little flexibility in jobs. There is competition between older workers and younger workers for scarce jobs. Students are willing to work for less, driving wages down. Many older workers who have retired have to accept jobs at much lower wages than their previous positions; this change in income can be difficult to sustain.

Unfamiliarity with changes in technology can limit the positions older workers are best suited for. At the same time, employers perceive older workers to be less able to manage technology, and therefore hiring practices can be biased against older

adults. If employed, older adults may face decrease in benefits due to their employment wages. The term *benefit cliff* describes the paradox of decreasing benefits with increased income. Guidelines for benefits have strict cut offs which prevents some individuals from receiving services when they are close to qualifying. It is a challenge to change these benefits because they are not under local control.

The loss of factory and manufacturing jobs in Tompkins County has led to an erosion of the middle class. Rarely are jobs offering pensions, and middle-income individuals are not eligible for economic aid programs.

### **Transportation Challenges**

Transportation and parking can often present as a deterrent for older adults to get involved. In the rural areas, transportation is more limited and in the City parking can be a challenge. The colleges in particular present difficulties for older adults and/or rural residents who may not know where or even if you are allowed to park on the campuses. Public transportation for rural locations is expensive and time consuming. Our weather can be a challenge, particularly for older drivers or even walkers who may hesitate to venture out in inclement weather.

### **Technological Opportunities**

Accessing the expertise of the student population in terms of the knowledge of technology presents a real opportunity for both older adults and students. Older adults are eager to learn more about various aspects of technology, such as smart phones, texting and tablets, and students can be great teachers. Technology presents opportunities for continuing education for older adults and networking with a broader world community. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) are one example of a recent technological development in distance education and learning. MOOCS offer free interactive user forums that help build community for students and teachers.

## **Goals**

**Goal 1:** Support transition planning for soon-to-be and new retirees.

*Lead Agency: (As noted after each task)*

### **Tasks**

- 1.1** Regularly publicize long-term and short-term community volunteer opportunities available with the Volunteers Connected program. Utilize Lifelong's weekly e-mail blast, the monthly Volunteers Connected newsletter as well as the Senior Circle newsletter. (United Way and Lifelong)
- 1.2** Offer a minimum of 4 in-person presentations to senior groups regarding volunteer opportunities within the community. (Lifelong)

- 1.3** Offer at least one training to local non-profit organizations on how to recruit, train and manage older adult volunteers. (Human Services Coalition)

**Goal 2:** Support older adults seeking employment opportunities

**Tasks**

- 2.1** Publicize Workforce New York as a hub of support for older workers, assisting with resume writing, technology, part-time employment opportunities, workshops and other employment-related services. Include a minimum of 2 articles per year in the Senior Circle newsletter, 2 annual Facebook posts, and 2 articles in TCOFA's online newsletter using Constant Contact. (Tompkins County Office for the Aging, Workforce NY)
- 2.2** Share information on local agencies which offer alternative options including those that promote barter systems, cooperative volunteer banks, time trading programs and/or other similar programs. Include one article per year in the Senior Circle newsletter, one Facebook post per year, and one article in TOCFA's online newsletter using Constant Contact. (Tompkins County Office for the Aging)





## **Culture of Respect and Inclusion**

### **Our vision**

A culture of respect and inclusion is not a one-way conversation. Rather, it is, at its core, a giving of value to voices of all ages in order to create a dialogue that provides for mutual benefit and responsibility among all age groups. The paradigm, of course, is that younger cohorts can benefit from elders sharing their lifelong experiences and perspectives. Likewise, the lives of aging adults are enhanced when opportunities for engagement and cross-generational interaction exist in their housing choices, neighborhoods, workplace, and other venues for their ongoing public and private interests.

### **Where we are now**

Tompkins County is an eclectic group of cross-generational identities – represented by an assortment of cultures, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, and socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, creating a sustainable and holistic strategy for a successful aging community will require the promotion of a culture of respect and inclusion for all age-friendly lifestyles.

In order to work toward this ideal, local efforts will include activities targeted at both the *protection* (i.e., enforcement of age discrimination laws) and *promotion* (i.e., outreach and education programs) of public and private policies that lead to elder respect and inclusion.

## **Goals**

**Goal 1:** *Age-Friendly Protection Efforts:* Enforcement of age-based anti-discrimination protections (i.e., local, state, federal human/civil rights laws).

*Lead Agency: Tompkins County Office of Human Rights*

### **Tasks**

- 1.1** Respond to the public's complaints of age discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation.
- 1.2** Address accessibility-based violations, in both public and private settings (e.g., ADA, Section 504 of the Rehab Act, Architectural Barriers, etc.)
- 1.3** Track and ensure that requests for reasonable accommodation for seniors and persons with disabilities are addressed appropriately.
- 1.4** Enforce senior citizen lease termination protections.
- 1.5** Reduce or eliminate discriminatory housing ads and steering tactics.
- 1.6** Identify and address exclusionary public policies based on age.

**Goal 2:** *Age-Friendly Promotion Efforts:* Creating opportunities for collaboration, healing, bridge-building, dialogue, and celebration among all age categories.

*Lead Agency: Tompkins County Office for the Aging*

### **Tasks**

- 2.1** Offer one annual county-wide fair housing/equal opportunity employment workshop for seniors, persons with disabilities, housing providers, employers, service providers, etc.
- 2.2** Develop or join at least one annual jointly-sponsored community celebration, award ceremony, or talent/art show that highlights and provides multi-generational benefits.



# Well-Being





## **Communication and Information**

### **Our vision**

Technology is the vehicle through which much of society communicates, conducts business, and increasingly exchanges information. However, with ever-changing advances, technology often creates a divide between generations, isolating many older adults from the younger generation and from key information and resources needed to function as part of their communities. Access to libraries, print media and organizations that provide information and referral services, including the Office for the Aging, NY Connects and the Human Services Coalition/211, is vital, as is increasing access to digital technology and the internet. Our vision is to ensure that older adults have access to these information and communication resources.

### **Where we are now**

According to the *2012 Needs Assessment of Tompkins County Residents Age 60+* conducted by the Office for the Aging, Tompkins County seniors are significantly more connected with technology than the national average. In 2012, the Pew

Research Center found 53% of seniors use the internet<sup>1</sup> whereas in Tompkins County, the vast majority of survey respondents (81.6%) said they have a computer with internet access in their home. The likelihood of not having a computer increased with age (Table 38), with the highest proportion (24.3%) of respondents without a computer being 85 or older. This trend is mirrored nationally. Respondents were most likely to use their computer for email and researching topics of interest (Table 39). Other frequently noted uses included bill paying, banking and finances, online shopping, weather, news and sports, work related activities, and games and entertainment.

Table 38  
Age of Respondent by Lack of Computer Access

	Frequency	Percent
<b>60-64</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
<b>65-69</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12.2%</b>
<b>70-74</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13.5%</b>
<b>75-79</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20.3%</b>
<b>80-84</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20.3%</b>
<b>85+</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 39  
Frequency of Usage Computer Activities

	A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total N
<b>Email to family/friends</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Video/phone to family/friends</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>58.1%</b>	<b>327</b>
<b>Social networking</b>	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>55.1%</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>Researching health/medical topics</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>48.8%</b>	<b>23.6%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Researching topics of interest</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>326</b>

Tompkins County older adults most frequently reported getting information from the newspaper or from television with over 70% saying they get their information from these sources a lot of the time (Table 40). Nearly 80% of Tompkins County older adults indicated they had both a land line and a cell phone for their telephone service (Table 41), almost 16% only have a landline and 4.5% have only a cell phone. Nationally, 69% of seniors report having a cell phone.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, lower income respondents were much less likely to have cell phone access than higher income respondents, but still over half reported having both a cell phone and a land line.

<sup>1</sup> Zickuhr, Kathryn & Mary Madden, *Older Adults and Internet Use*, Pew Research Center, June 6, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Zickuhr, Kathryn & Mary Madden, *Older Adults and Internet Use*, Pew Research Center, June 6, 2012.

	A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
	%	%	%	%	Total N
<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>70.3%</b>	<b>15.8%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Radio</b>	<b>50.3%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>398</b>
<b>Television</b>	<b>70.5%</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Senior Newsletter</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>35.8%</b>	<b>33.0%</b>	<b>20.9%</b>	<b>397</b>
<b>Pennysaver</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	<b>42.2%</b>	<b>393</b>
<b>Internet</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>397</b>
<b>Email list-serves</b>	<b>24.6%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>Word of mouth</b>	<b>51.2%</b>	<b>41.0%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>393</b>

	Below 100% Poverty	100-220% Poverty	220% - Median	Above Median	Total N	Percent
<b>Landline only</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>16.0%</b>
<b>Cell only</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
<b>Both landline and cell</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>79.7%</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>374</b>	
<b>Percent</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>20.9%</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>47.9%</b>		<b>100.0%</b>

## **Goals**

**Goal 1:** Promote Age Friendly Ithaca/Tompkins.

*Lead Organization: Age Friendly Steering Committee*

### **Tasks**

- 1.1** Form an Age Friendly Tompkins/Ithaca Community Coalition to oversee Age-Friendly Community Plan design and implementation.
- 1.2** Develop outreach campaign to promote community support and involvement in the Age-Friendly Tompkins/Ithaca Community initiative.
  - 1.2.a.** Create "elevator" speech
  - 1.2.b.** Identify speaker pool
  - 1.2.c.** Identify target audiences: e.g. elected representatives, Chamber of Commerce, county agencies. Provide at least 2 presentations annually.

**Goal 2:** Ensure that elders have access to information and communication resources.

*Lead Organization: Tompkins County Office for the Aging*

**Tasks**

- 2.1** Promote the Tompkins County Office for Aging/ NY Connects program as a clearinghouse of information and assistance regarding programs, opportunities and resources for older adults. Metric: increased calls to TCOFA/NY Connects.
  - 2.1.a.** Integrate with COFA annual public information/outreach plan.
  
- 2.2** Mount a multi-pronged approach to disseminate information among the various generations and the different strata of the 60+ population. Include various means of dissemination including social media, e-mail, radio and print media, in order to reach technologically savvy elders as well as those who cannot access the internet. Metric: increased number of Facebook posts, likes, shares.
  
- 2.3** Develop effective public information and consumer education using a variety of technologies, with messaging that speaks to Baby Boomers. Consider the unique issues and needs of various groups residing within Tompkins County including rural residents, various racial and ethnic identities, and the LGBT community.

**Goal 3:** Provide educational opportunities to improve the computer and communication technology skills of older adults who wish to learn.

*Lead Organizations: Lifelong and Ithaca College*

**Tasks**

- 3.1** Pair Ithaca College students with older adults who wish to learn about computers, cell phones, tablets and other technology through Lifelong's computer learning lab. Offer at least 4 classes each semester, serving at least 50 older adults per year.

**Goal 4:** Utilize points of entry and trusted community organizations to provide outreach to raise awareness of issues of importance to older adults.

*Lead Organization: Tompkins County Office for the Aging*

**Tasks**

**Employment/Volunteering**

- 4.1** Inform human resources professionals (SHRM, JSEC) about services for retirees and caregivers including Medicare, volunteering, and community-related opportunities such as Lifelong Transitions. Offer written materials annually plus one in-person presentation.

- 4.2** Promote agencies such as Workforce New York which can assist older adults with resume writing, technology, part-time employment opportunities and other employment-related services. Include one article annually in the Senior Circle newsletter, as well as 2 annual Facebook posts.
- 4.3** Promote the long-term and short-term community volunteer opportunities available through the Tompkins County Get Connected database at United Way and Volunteers Connected Program at Lifelong. In addition, promote local agencies which offer alternative options for volunteering and receiving services such as barter systems and time trading programs. Include one article annually in the Senior Circle newsletter, as well as 2 annual Facebook posts.

### **Outreach to Physicians**

- 4.4** Reach out through the clinically integrated network of providers and Guthrie to publicize resources for older adults through methods such as posters in practitioners' offices and Cayuga Medical Center. Meet annually with Guthrie to distribute posters and brochures.
- 4.5** Utilize the Fingerlakes Office Managers Association, which meets monthly and represents different practices in the CAP network, to distribute information programs for older adults. Attend one FLOMA meeting annually to distribute posters and brochures.
- 4.6** Educate patients and caregivers to make informed decisions about health insurance, prescription drug coverage, health care and self-care (including what Medicare does and doesn't pay for in regard to long term care). Include one article quarterly in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook quarterly.
- 4.7** Assist individuals in planning ahead to pay for long term care including education about long term care insurance and the New York State partnership plans. Include one article annually in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook annually.
- 4.8** Raise awareness about advance directives, palliative care and hospice services before and at end of life. Include one article annually in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook annually.
- 4.9** Raise the general awareness of aging and long term care issues among philanthropic organizations in the community. Provide one educational presentation about long term care issues to a meeting of local philanthropic organizations.



- 4.10** Promote tools to support informal care networks, such as Share the Care, and also including online resources such as Lotsa Helping Hands, Take Them a Meal, Caring Bridge and similar resources. Include one article annually in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook annually.

### **Scams, Fraud and Financial Abuse**

- 4.11** Convey practical and timely information to individuals and families about scams, magazine subscriptions, and over-solicitation by charities using effective messaging by trusted sources. Include one article quarterly in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook quarterly.
- 4.12** Promote presentations by the Attorney General's Office and Cornell Cooperative Extension staff on the range of scams, fraud, and such problems. Post/share information about such presentations on Facebook quarterly.
- 4.13** Raise awareness among older adults about elder abuse, and about financial abuse by family members in particular. Include what happens when organizations such as Adult Protective Services intervene so that people understand the scope and limitations of the process. Include one article annually in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook annually.
- 4.14** Consult with an elder law attorney to write an article to educate older adults and caregivers on the Medicaid five year look-back period, and the fact that their assets will be used to pay for necessary care should they go into a nursing home. Include article in the Senior Circle newsletter, and post on Facebook.
- 4.15** Include information about financial exploitation, abuse, and scams when providing outreach at health fairs and senior housing. Offer information at a minimum of 4 annual outreach events.



## **Community Support and Health Services**

### **Our vision**

Access to a network of home and community-based services is critical to supporting people throughout the lifespan. Health promotion and disease prevention assist in improving the health of the community and reducing or delaying the need for supportive services. The provision of medical, mental health, dental and long term care should be integrated and person-centered, and should include family caregivers as an essential component of care planning. Programs and activities to reduce social isolation and enhance independence at home are important for promoting the health and well being of our citizens. Workforce issues, transportation, supportive housing, public information and volunteer programming all play a role in the availability of and access to community supports.

### **Where we are now**

#### **Strengths and Highlights**

Community support and health services encompass both mental and physical health and well-being. Services within this area will involve medical care, mental health, long term care and prevention of financial exploitation and elder abuse, among other topics. Ithaca and Tompkins County offer many resources and options for services in these areas that are accessible and informative. With the clinical integration network and a culture of collaboration among human service agencies

there are opportunities to identify community needs and to then meet them. This can yield improved quality of life and independence for elders.

### **Community Supports for Wellness**

Within Tompkins County there is a local hospital, Cayuga Medical Center, which has expanded and offers several medical specialties so that people can obtain many services such as behavioral health care, cancer treatment within the county and not have to travel elsewhere. Area agencies and programs such as the Office for the Aging/NY Connects and the Human Services Coalition's 2-1-1 Information and Referral are hubs for up-to-date information about local services.

Community Centers like Lifelong and the Greater Ithaca Activities Center sponsor elder wellness programs including opportunities for socialization.

Programs are offered for people living with the stress of chronic illness (including Stanford University Chronic Self Management Programs: Healthy Living Program, Powerful Tools for Caregivers program, Diabetes Self-management Program). Supportive organizations like the Cancer Resource Center and the Finger Lakes Independence Center are a resource for those coping with illness. There are safety net services, including long term home aide service (EISEP and Medicaid), Foodnet Meals on Wheels and food pantries. Hospicare is a vital partner for those with palliative care needs.

The presence of the academic community creates a lively environment and opportunities for recreation and education and partnerships with community partners to address local needs. The Ithaca College Gerontology Institute provides professional training which enhances the capabilities of local aging services and mental health providers. Cornell University holds pre-retirement workshops and hosts a listserve for Cornell retirees and caregivers.

Project CARE provides 100 or more friendly visitors from local colleges and the community to visit older adults for socialization and intellectual stimulation. Local faith communities help bring people together.

There are a number of nutrition-related services including Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), Meals on Wheels, and food pantries, including a Mobile Food Pantry.

### **Community Supports for Mental Health**

Many of the services available in Tompkins County to people of low income, older adults or individuals with disabilities also are of great benefit to people with mental health needs. These include senior housing with service coordination, assisted living residential and dementia care options, including some assisted living at Longview for those who cannot afford to pay market rates.

Tompkins County has many therapists in private practice with expertise in aging and support of caregivers. The County Mental Health Clinic and Family and Children's Service also include geriatric mental outpatient services and outreach programs for those who have difficulty traveling to appointments. The Crisisline and other services of Suicide Prevention and Crisis Services provide strong support to those who have been through suicide of a loved one, trauma, and other times when people are feeling fragile.

The Mental Health Association helps link individuals with mental health services, including many different types of support groups in Tompkins County.

Tompkins County has an array of caregiver services, as well as the ability to connect long distance caregivers with local agencies and community resources through the Office for the Aging/NY Connects and the Human Services Coalition's 2-1-1 Information and Referral Service.

### **Community Supports for Long-term Care**

Tompkins County has 6 home care agencies and others in contiguous counties who serve Tompkins County clients. Home care services include essential patient education and teaching to empower individuals to perform self-care. The Finger Lakes Independence Center's loan closet allows people to try out and borrow adaptive equipment. Foodnet's Meals on Wheels service is readily available for people when they are discharged from the hospital and will provide meals with no waiting list. Titus Towers, Tompkins County's largest senior housing complex, recently received a significant grant from the New York State Department of Health to hire 2 full-time nurse case managers, allowing residents to age in place with more supports. There are also many informal support networks, and "neighbors helping neighbors" in our community, which has helped to create safe places for people to make connections and to share personal triumphs and challenges with each other.

### **Community Supports to Prevent Financial Exploitation and Elder Abuse**

The recognition and prevention of financial exploitation and elder abuse requires diligence on the part of all agencies involved in ensuring the well-being of older adults. As mentioned, Tompkins County has multidisciplinary and cross-agency collaboration. Many professionals know each other and will exchange information when there is suspicion of wrong doing. A representative from the Attorney General's Office is available in Ithaca monthly to provide information and to discuss individual's concerns when they are uneasy or unsure where to go. Adult Protective Services (APS) staff investigates reports of abuse/neglect of adults, provides financial management, case management, and legal interventions necessary for the protection of at-risk adults.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Medical Care**

Insurance and financial coverage for the cost of medical care is a major concern for many. An increasing number of employers are cutting their retiree health coverage. New Medicare clients may have difficulty finding a physician to care for them and people moving into the county from elsewhere may have difficulty locating a physician who accepts Medicare. Dental care is inadequately covered by Medicare and other private insurance, which has consequences for elders' nutrition. There is a lack of geriatricians locally and no generally available geriatric psychiatrist.

Older adults living in our rural community face barriers to adequate medical care. Out-of-County medical transportation is a problem, especially for those not on Medicaid. Evidence-based chronic disease programs in Tompkins County may be under-utilized due to the differences between sparsely-networked rural areas and densely-populated areas.

Social isolation may result in declining health for some older adults. Cognitive decline may be unnoticed by caregivers who are not often present or who are greatly stressed.

Some persons with medical conditions may not understand the condition, a medical test that is required, or the purpose and consequences of the medication they are supposed to take. Medical practitioners have too little time to explain and many individuals do not ask questions of their medical practitioner. Discharge instructions need to be comprehensible and feasible so that people can take care of themselves and not miss information that could lead to their readmission to the hospital.

There are problems with accurate transmission of Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) when patients are transferred between the hospital and a facility or their homes. This can result in unwanted or inappropriate treatment or care during a delicate time for the patient.

There is no medical detox center in Tompkins County.

### **Mental Health**

Many individuals experience "caregiver burnout" including those caring for the elderly with dementia as well as parents caring for adult children with developmental disabilities or severe and persistent mental illness as they age. There is a need for early respite care instead of waiting until caregiver burnout sets in.

There is a challenge of integrating people with severe and persistent mental illness into senior housing and assisted living. Some people with mental illness have had behaviors leading to multiple evictions, making housing difficult to find when needed.

Skilled nursing facilities are hard-pressed to provide adequate care for people with dementia and those with psychotic behaviors. Social workers on staff have limited time to address issues. National policy precludes hiring social workers to deliver therapy. Cayuga Medical Center's Behavioral Health Unit is perceived as not being able to perform thorough medical assessments and medication management for geriatric patients sent there from long term care facilities. Care tends to bounce back and forth between the hospital and the nursing home.

Many older adults do not seek out or utilize mental health services when needed. There are obstacles faced by substance abuse clinics and other mental health providers in getting reimbursement for geriatric outreach services.

### **Long-term Care**

There is a desperate shortage of qualified paid caregivers, including home health aides and certified nursing assistants to deliver personal care and respite for family caregivers. Contributing factors are the low pay, lack of local training, and cumbersome regulations to offer training. The relatively low unemployment rate in Tompkins County reduces the pool of potential aides. Limited training opportunities for aides make it harder for consumers to find qualified aides. Currently there is only one certified home health agency in Tompkins County, and this raises issues around consumer choice.

Another issue is the shortage of assisted living residential care options affordable to low and middle income people in Tompkins County at all levels of care. There are no enhanced level assisted living beds available in the county to those who cannot afford private pay rates or whose resources become depleted after paying privately for a time. Those relying on Supplemental Social Security and others who cannot afford the rates for a basic level of assisted living have to look out of county when there is not a bed available at Longview for them. Some people choose to stay at home in unsafe conditions rather than move out-of-county to find affordable assisted living.

Medicaid is transitioning to Managed Long term Care, and there is concern that the managed care organizations will not grant services at the same level as traditional fee for service Medicaid. Another concern is that managed long term care organizations tend to offer telephonic case management instead of in-person home visits.

### **Financial Exploitation and Elder Abuse**

Regarding financial exploitation and elder abuse, there are situations where it appears to a service provider that an older adult is being exploited but the situation is not severe enough to intervene. Many situations are not clear cut. Sometimes the older adult is protecting the abuser.

The intermediate condition between full capacity and lack of capacity (where guardianship may be appropriate) may result in an individual's susceptibility, especially to phone scams. The person's home phone number can be changed, but scammers can locate the target individual again and financially exploit the person repeatedly. It can be hard for service providers to step into such a situation because the individual is not incompetent and has the right to make their own choices.

Phone scams in particular are increasing and becoming more sophisticated. Some are coming from overseas. Some vulnerable older adults expend their limited resources by responding to phone solicitations, ordering items that they will never use, give to charities, and the like.

## **Goals**

**Goal 1:** Ensure that the approach to discharge planning (including discharges to institutional settings) is well coordinated and connected with available community resources.

*Lead Organization: Health Planning Council*

### **Tasks**

- 1.1** Host biannual discharge planning networking luncheons and other opportunities to increase awareness of community supports.
- 1.2** Encourage the use of electronic medical records (including electronic medical orders for life sustaining treatment or e-MOLST) by community based organizations. Offer training to community based organizations to enhance staff awareness and capacity for electronic medical records.
- 1.3** Monitor and inform the community about Delivery System Reform Incentive Program (DSRIP) projects related to discharge planning.

**Goal 2:** Support caregivers and patient-advocates during discharge from hospital to home.

*Lead Organization: TCOFA*

### **Tasks**

- 2.1** Offer training to family caregivers regarding hands-on needs like transfers, bathing, dressing, falls, and other topics for which training has not traditionally been available.
- 2.2** Advocate for increased funding for respite care for caregivers.

**Goal 3:** Elevate the way our community values and honors personal care aides on a professional level, including how they are treated, as well as the income, benefits and training they receive.

*Lead Organization: Visiting Nurse Services*

**Tasks**

- 3.1** Educate and assist home health organizations to provide training in life skills to support home health care workers.
- 3.2** Host a recognition luncheon for home health aides.
- 3.3** Advocate for a living wage and funding to increase Medicaid reimbursements to fund living wages for direct care workers.

**Goal 4:** Advocate for the following programs and services within Tompkins County which are currently unavailable and for which there is a significant community need:

- 1) A Medicaid funded Assisted Living Program (ALP);
- 2) A Medical Model Adult Day Program to assist individuals and caregivers with long-term care needs;
- 3) Additional units of secure and affordable dementia care

*Lead Organization: TCOFA*

**Tasks**

- 4.1** Educate state and local legislators and officials at the NYSDOH; compile and share data about unmet needs in the community.
- 4.2** Write letters of support and provide oral and written testimony when needed.

**Goal 5:** Promote the seniors helping seniors concept through supporting the establishment of a "village" in Tompkins County.

*Lead Organizations: TCOFA and Love Living at Home*

**Tasks**

- 5.1** Ensure that the emerging Love Living at Home initiative is well integrated with the Office for the Aging and other elder services to avoid duplication.
- 5.2** Explore ways in which similar services may be made available to more rural areas of Tompkins County.

**Goal 6:** Ensure training is available for health care professionals and social workers regarding geriatric and psychological issues.

*Lead Organizations: Ithaca College Gerontology Institute and Health Planning Council*

- 6.1** Disseminate information about geriatric training for primary care physicians and CEUs for social workers.



## Implementation Timeline

### Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Promote a paradigm shift for creators and stewards of the built environment to view their work through an Age-Friendly lens</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Present Age Friendly Initiative to Tompkins County Council of Governments		X		
	1.2 Provide training seminar inviting members of the Tompkins County Council of Government and reach 2 municipalities		X		
	1.3 Work in greater depth with 2 municipalities to implement Age-Friendly concepts in planning and zoning efforts.			X	X
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Improve outdoor spaces and buildings to ensure the safety, accessibility and visitability by the continua of ages, abilities, and incomes by removing unnecessary barriers to functioning through informed design.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Partner with City of Ithaca Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) on shared priorities	X	X	X	X
	2.2 Engage student groups to conduct an assessment of at least one priority area among downtown Ithaca's buildings and outdoor spaces		X		
	2.3 Develop a list of best practices for buildings and outdoor spaces for those working in these areas			X	
	2.4 Meet with the Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Tompkins County Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce to share findings and best practices.			X	
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Promote the walkability of our communities (by addressing connectivity, quality and presence of sidewalks, safety from crime, weather, and falls).</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	3.1 Work with the City of Ithaca and one other municipality to conduct a walkability survey			X	X
	3.2 Work with Tompkins County Planning Department on sidewalk inventory and Health Communities Strategy		X	X	X

## Housing

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Educate and disseminate information regarding accessibility and visitability in design for new housing development</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Offer educational session on accessibility and visitability to the Tompkins County Council of Governments		X		
	1.2 Provide in-depth training seminar inviting the Tompkins County Council of Government and 2 other municipalities		X		
	1.3 Utilize the Office for the Aging's website as a go-to resource		X	X	X
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Advocate for the development of additional accessible affordable housing to meet housing needs across the lifespan.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Meet with municipal officials and developers to inform them about the housing needs of older adults in order to make the development of affordable accessible housing a priority.	X	X		
	2.2 Conduct housing needs/preferences surveys and senior housing occupancy surveys			X	
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Advocate for additional home repair funding to enable lower income older adults to age in place.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	3.1 Apply for home repair grant funds for low income homeowners	X	X	X	X
	3.2 Target additional flexible funds such as Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) funds	X	X	X	X
	3.3 Solicit donated funds and materials for home repairs from local businesses and chain stores to make limited funding go further	X	X	X	X

## Transportation

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Generate broader interest and acceptance of the vision of an integrated transportation system</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Discuss, catalyze and support the creation of an alliance for integrating transportation services	X			
	1.2 Establish/ facilitate a working group of key stakeholders to develop and organize support for an integrated transportation system.		X	X	X
	1.3 Explore feasibility of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in Tompkins County, and apply for NYSERDA Grant for feasibility study.		X		
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Increase awareness, utilization and integration of existing services such as Gadabout, FISH, Love Living at Home and other senior transportation providers</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Convene leaders of volunteer transportation providers to discuss current services and trends		X		
	2.2 Develop communications plan to increase ridership and increase number of volunteer drivers		X	X	X
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Raise awareness of programs that bring services and support TO people. Explore and develop additional services</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	3.1 Research and document existing programs in Tompkins County		X		
	3.2 Publicize service list to increase the utilization of these services			X	X

## Employment and Civic Participation

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Support transition planning for soon-to-be and new retirees.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Regularly publicize long-term and short-term community volunteer opportunities available with the Volunteers Connected program. Utilize Lifelong's weekly e-mail blast, the monthly Volunteers Connected newsletter as well as the Senior Circle newsletter.	X	X	X	X
	1.2 Offer a minimum of 4 in-person presentations to senior groups regarding volunteer opportunities within the community.	X	X	X	X
	1.3 Offer at least one training to local non-profit organizations on how to recruit, train and manage older adult volunteers			X	
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Support older adults seeking employment opportunities</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Publicize Workforce New York as a hub of support for older workers, assisting with resume writing, technology, part-time employment opportunities, workshops and other employment-related services. Include a minimum of 2 articles per year in the Senior Circle newsletter, 2 annual Facebook posts, and 2 articles in TCOFA's online newsletter using Constant Contact.	X	X	X	X
	2.2 Share information on local agencies which offer alternative options including those that promote barter systems, cooperative volunteer banks, time trading programs and/or other similar programs. Include one article per year in the Senior Circle newsletter, one Facebook post per year, and one article in TOCFA's online newsletter using Constant Contact.	X	X	X	X

## Culture of Respect and Inclusion

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b><i>Age-Friendly Protection Efforts: Enforcement of age-based anti-discrimination protections (i.e., local, state, federal human/civil rights laws).</i></b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Respond to the public's complaints of age discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation.	X	X	X	X
	1.2 Address accessibility-based violations, in both public and private settings	X	X	X	X
	1.3 Track and ensure requests for reasonable accommodation for seniors and persons with disabilities are addressed appropriately	X	X	X	X
	1.4 Enforce senior citizen lease termination protections	X	X	X	X
	1.5 Reduce or eliminate discriminatory housing ads and steering tactics	X	X	X	X
	1.6 Identify and address exclusionary public policies based on age	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b><i>Age-Friendly Promotion Efforts: Creating opportunities for collaboration, healing, bridge-building, dialogue, and celebration among all age categories.</i></b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Offer county-wide fair housing/equal opportunity employment workshops			X	
	2.2 Develop or join one annual jointly-sponsored community celebration that highlights and provides multi-generational benefits		X	X	X

## Communication and Information

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Promote Age Friendly Ithaca/Tompkins.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Form an Age Friendly Tompkins/Ithaca Community Coalition	X			
	1.2 Develop outreach campaign		X	X	X
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Ensure that elders have access to information and communication resources.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Promote the Tompkins County Office for Aging/NY Connects program	X	X	X	X
	2.2 Mount a multi-pronged approach	X	X	X	X
	2.3 Promote effective public information and consumer education	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Provide educational opportunities to improve the computer and communication technology skills of older adults who wish to learn.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	3.1 Pair Ithaca College students with older adults who wish to learn about technology through Lifelong's learning lab	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Utilize points of entry and trusted community organizations to provide outreach to raise awareness of issues of importance to older adults</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	4.1 Inform human resources professionals about services for retirees and caregivers		X		
	4.2 Promote Workforce New York as a hub of support for older workers		X	X	X
	4.3 Promote long-term and short-term community volunteer opportunities. Promote local agencies which offer alternative options		X	X	X
	4.4 Reach out through the clinically integrated network of providers and Guthrie		X	X	X
	4.5 Utilize the Fingerlakes Office Managers Association		X	X	X
	4.6 Educate patients and caregivers to make informed decisions		X	X	X
	4.7 Assist individuals in planning ahead to pay for long term care	X	X	X	X
	4.8 Raise awareness about advance directives, palliative care, and hospice services	X	X	X	X

		<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
	4.9 Raise the general awareness of aging and long term care issues among philanthropic organizations			X	
	4.10 Promote tools to support informal care networks	X	X	X	X
	4.11 Convey practical and timely information to individuals and families about scams, magazine subscriptions, and over-solicitation	X	X	X	X
	4.12 Promote presentations by the Attorney General's Office about scams	X	X	X	X
	4.13 Raise awareness among older adults about elder abuse and financial abuse		X	X	X
	4.14 Consult with an elder law attorney about the Medicaid five year look-back period		X		
	4.15 Include information about financial exploitation, abuse, and scams when providing outreach	X	X	X	X

## Community Support and Health Services

		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Ensure that the approach to discharge planning (including discharges to institutional settings) is well coordinated and connected with available community resources.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	1.1 Host biannual discharge planning network luncheons	X	X	X	X
	1.2 Encourage the use of electronic medical records (including electronic medical orders for life sustaining treatment or e-MOLST) by community based organizations. Offer training to community based organizations to enhance staff awareness and capacity for electronic medical records.		X		
	1.3 Monitor and inform the community about Delivery System Reform Incentive Program	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Support caregivers and patient-advocates during discharge from hospital to home.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	2.1 Offer training to family and caregivers regarding hands-on needs	X	X	X	X
	2.2 Advocate for increased funding for respite care for caregivers	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Elevate the way our community values and honors personal care aides on a professional level, including how they are treated, as well as the income, benefits and training they receive.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	3.1 Educate and assist home health organizations	X			
	3.2 Host a recognition luncheon for home health aides	X			
	3.3 Advocate for a living wage and funding	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Advocate for the following programs and services within Tompkins County which are currently unavailable and for which there is a significant community need:</b> <b>1) A Medicaid funded Assisted Living Program (ALP);</b> <b>2) A Medical Model Adult Day Program to assist individuals and caregivers with long-term care needs;</b> <b>3) Additional units of secure and affordable dementia care</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	4.1 Educate state and local legislators and officials at the NYSDOH	X	X	X	X
	4.2 Write letters of support and provide oral and written testimony	X	X	X	X



		2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Promote the seniors helping seniors concept through supporting the establishment of a "village" in Tompkins County.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	5.1 Ensure that Love Living at Home is well integrated with the Office for the Aging	X	X	X	X
	5.2 Explore ways in which similar services may be made available to rural areas	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 6</b>	<b>Ensure training is available for health care professionals and social workers regarding geriatric and psychological issues.</b>				
<b>Tasks</b>	6.1 Disseminate information about geriatric training for primary care physicians and CEUs for social workers.		X	X	X

# References

The following documents were cited in this plan.

**2012 Needs Assessment of Tompkins County Residents Age 60+**

Pages 7, 10, 11 and 44

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa/surveys/facts>

**Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan**

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<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/ComprehensivePlan/FINAL-March%2012-low%20res.pdf>

**Plan Ithaca: City of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan**

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<http://www.cityofithaca.org/DocumentCenter/View/4054>

**Ithaca City Sidewalk Policy**

Page 23

<http://www.cityofithaca.org/219/Sidewalk-Policy>

**2014 Tompkins County Senior Housing Preferences Survey**

Page 27

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa/surveys/facts>

**Senior Housing Occupancy Rate Survey (2011)**

Page 27

<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa/surveys/facts>

**Livable New York**

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<http://www.aging.ny.gov/LivableNY/Index.cfm>

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