

# Age Friendly Ithaca/Tompkins County Domain Descriptions and Contacts

For more information visit the Tompkins County Office for the Aging Age Friendly page at [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa) or call 274-5482

## 1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Esther Greenhouse, Environmental Gerontologist

[esg@esthergreenhouse.com](mailto:esg@esthergreenhouse.com)

Lynn Gitlow, Ithaca College Dept. of Occupational Therapy

[lgitlow@ithaca.edu](mailto:lgitlow@ithaca.edu)

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 citizens. Thus these design features are a significant public health variable--impacting physical activity, social participation, independence for daily living, and engagement in 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 for both a multigenerational and diversely abled clientele and workforce.

## 2. Housing

Paul Mazzarella, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services/  
Better Housing for Tompkins County

[pmazzarella@ithacanhs.org](mailto:pmazzarella@ithacanhs.org)

Rick Cowan, INHS/BHTC [rcowan@ithacanhs.org](mailto:rcowan@ithacanhs.org)

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. Many people currently live in multi-story, older homes with substantial maintenance needs in rural and suburban locations that are not close to public transit. Given the large number of older homes in Tompkins County, there is

a significant opportunity to promote repairs and retrofitting of existing housing units to improve their safety and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities. 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. New housing construction should focus on the older adult population and provide a variety of housing types and price points.

### **3. Transportation**

Jonathan Maddison, Way2Go, Cornell Cooperative  
Extension of Tompkins County [jwm346@cornell.edu](mailto:jwm346@cornell.edu)

Transportation includes walkability, biking, public transportation, private or non-profit transportation, roadways, and parking. Tompkins County is a transportation-rich community with a large fixed-route public transportation system (TCAT), door-to-door transportation & paratransit service (Gadabout), a volunteer driver program (FISH), Ithaca Carshare, several taxi companies, and more. In conjunction with these transportation services there are education and information programs (Way2Go, 2-1-1, AARP, etc.) that reach community members and older adults with education and information about transportation. Providing a variety of available, affordable and accessible means of transportation is a key to supporting the mobility, activity and participation of people across the lifespan.

### **4. Civic Participation and Employment**

Cassie Joseph, Cornell University [cpj25@cornell.edu](mailto:cpj25@cornell.edu)

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. Civic Participation and Employment provides pathways for engaging people in their later life by connecting them 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 full 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. For profit and non-profit organizations, including educational institutions must align themselves to catalyze the power of experience provided by mature workers and volunteers.

## **5. Respect and Social Inclusion**

Karen Baer, Tompkins County Office of Human Rights  
[kbaer@tompkins-co.org](mailto:kbaer@tompkins-co.org)

Respect and Social Inclusion speaks to the way older adults are treated and valued. An age-friendly community makes decisions with older citizens in mind, involving them in planning, wherever possible. Our most experienced residents must be valued for the many contributions they make and have made. Tompkins County is a diverse community with many cultures, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities and preferences represented. Activities, events, programs and services should take our diverse population into account.

## **6. Communication and Information**

Teri Reinemann, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute  
[treinemann@ithaca.edu](mailto:treinemann@ithaca.edu)

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, are vital in addition to increasing access to digital technology and the

internet. The goal of this domain is to ensure that elders have access to these information and communication resources.

## **7. Community Support and Health Services**

Beth Harrington, Tompkins County Department of  
Emergency Response [bharrington@tompkins-co.org](mailto:bharrington@tompkins-co.org)  
Lisa Holmes, Tompkins County Office for the Aging  
[lholfmes@tompkins-co.org](mailto:lholfmes@tompkins-co.org)

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.

## **8. Lifelong Learning and Research**

Rhoda Meador, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute  
[rmeador@ithaca.edu](mailto:rmeador@ithaca.edu)  
Khaki Wunderlich, Tompkins-Cortland Community College  
[wunderk@tc3.edu](mailto:wunderk@tc3.edu)

Tompkins County is a learning-oriented community that is home to Cornell University, Ithaca College and Tompkins Cortland Community College. These institutions engage the community in a diverse array of cultural, educational, and research initiatives that improve the lives of older people. Many other community organizations also offer lifelong learning opportunities such as concerts, lectures, classes and workshops. Engagement of older adults in these educational and scholarly activities provides reciprocal learning opportunities across generations.