

*"Building a community that
is safe and highly livable
for people of all ages and
abilities..."*



Age-Friendly Laramie

An Action Plan for
Improving Age-
Friendliness and
Livability in Albany
County, Wyoming

Age-Friendly Laramie Action Plan: 2022 - 2025

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Age-Friendly Laramie:

An Action Plan for Improving Age-Friendliness and
Livability in Albany County, Wyoming

Commissioned by Age-Friendly Laramie

August 2022

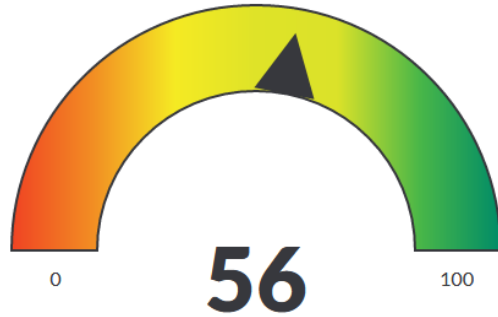
Prepared by: Citizen's Research/Evaluation Action Team—
Age-Friendly Laramie's Action Plan Committee

Age-Friendly Laramie

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Laramie, Wyoming, AARP Livability Rating, 2022

See <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>



The overall livability index score for Laramie, Wyoming is 56. This is in the top half of communities in the U.S.

Demographics

Total Population:

32,381

African American: 1%

Asian: 4%

Hispanic: 10%

White: 89%

Age 50+: 20%

Age 65+: 9%

Households w/Disabilities: 9%

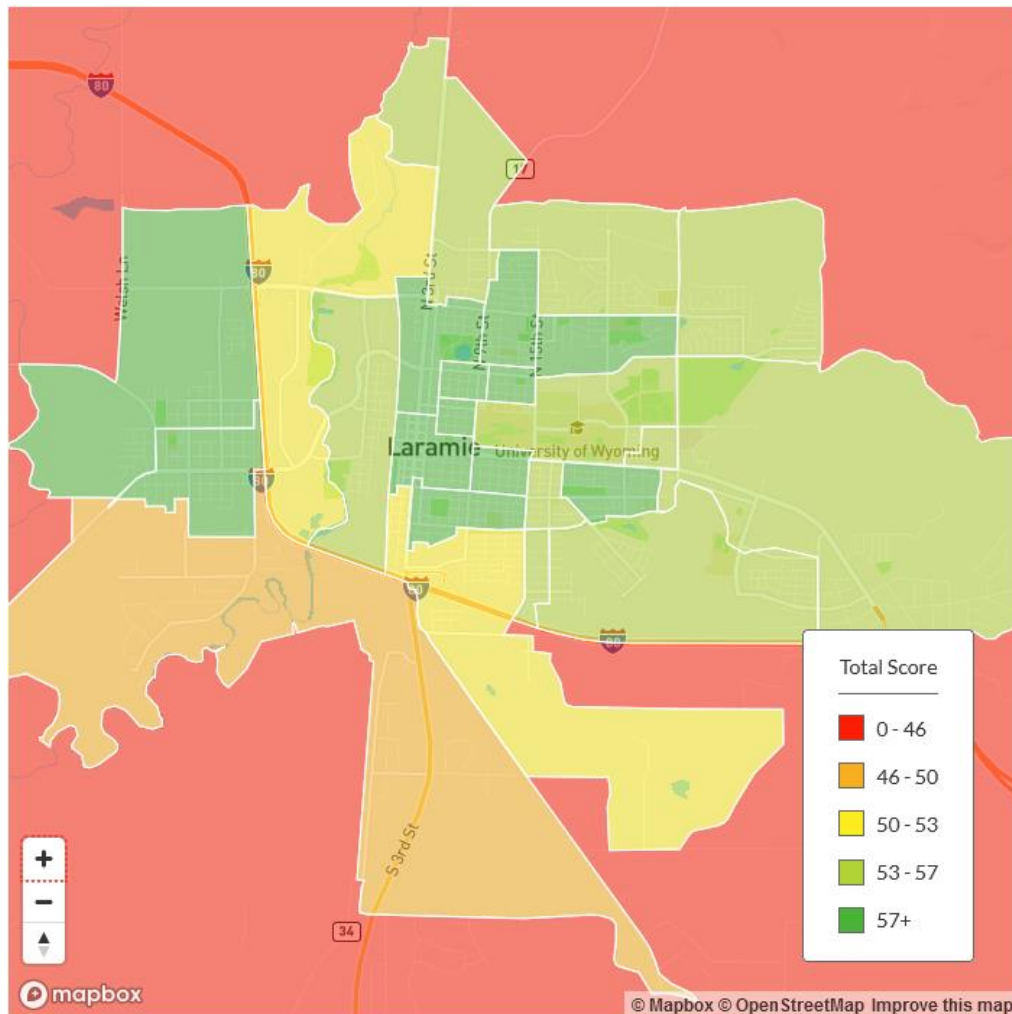
Life Expectancy: 81 years old

Households Without a Vehicle: 7%

Median Income: \$49,547

Poverty: 25%

Upward Mobility: 49 ⓘ



Citizen's Research/Evaluation Action Team (CREATE)

Successful completion of this action plan relied on input from an array of community members with a stake in creating highly livable physical and social environments where individuals can age optimally and in place. Collectively, we referred to those contributors named below as our *Citizen's Research/Evaluation Action Team*, or aptly our *CREATE* group. Many members of *CREATE* have been active with *Age-Friendly Laramie (AFL)* since early visioning sessions at the organization's inception in 2018. As such, the priorities and goals described herein represent a grassroots effort of primary stakeholders who are committed and vested in making Albany County, Wyoming a better place for residents of all ages and abilities to live.

Key members of *CREATE* included executives of the *Age-Friendly Laramie* Board of Directors (hereafter "*AFL Board*"), including Tammy Comer (Executive Director, *Eppson Center for Seniors*; President, *AFL Board*), Maryalice Snider (Director, *Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies*; Vice President, *AFL Board*), Lucille Norwood (Secretary, *AFL Board*), Sarah Carroll (Deputy Director, *Laramie Soup Kitchen*; Treasurer, *AFL Board*), and Jennifer Tabler (Faculty, *University of Wyoming*; Parliamentarian, *AFL Board*). Other current or former members of the *AFL Board* who participated in the creation of this action plan included Babette Cuadrado, Diane DeLany, Bridget Hettgar, Casandra Mittlieder, Lisa Muller, Maraia Rubin (President, *Student Gerontology Association*), Sabine Schenck (*Wyoming Center on Aging*), Susan Simpson, Nancy Sindelar, Germaine St. John, Jessica Stalder (*Hospice of Laramie*), Emma White (*Eppson Center for Seniors*), Bremen Whitlock, and Bernard A. Steinman (Executive Director, *AFL*).

The *CREATE* group is indebted to many Albany County residents who participated in our community survey and virtual summit. The purpose of these activities was to extract expertise from stakeholders who live in the community and/or interact frequently with older adults in Albany County. The *CREATE* team wishes to thank all those who participated and shared their important points of view.

We also wish to express appreciation to Sam Shumway (Director, *AARP Wyoming*) and Jennifer Baier (*AARP Wyoming*). As well, we thank Christine McKibbin (Director, *Wyoming Center on Aging*) and Catherine Carrico (Associate Director, *Wyoming Center on Aging*). Each of these individuals have frequently guided us during our quest to make Laramie an easier, more pleasant place to grow older. Our organization's current successes, and those in coming years would not be feasible without the contributions of all those cited above.

The *CREATE* group is responsible for the contents of this report. Inquiries should be directed to Bernard A. Steinman at bsteinm1@uwyo.edu.

Executive Summary

Albany County, and the City of Laramie, Wyoming, like many places across the country is experiencing an aging revolution. Demographic changes will likely lead to greater need for supportive social and physical environments that facilitate healthful living, social inclusion, financial stability, and high quality of life for older residents living in the county.

By planning carefully for coming years, *Age-Friendly Laramie (AFL)* can play an important role in facilitating the ability of older people to remain in their homes and/or their communities for as long as safely feasible. This document describes specific priorities where *AFL* proposes to take action to improve safety, livability, and age-friendliness of Albany County for residents of all ages and abilities. Specifically, action areas included:

General Action Areas

Planning for Growth— *AFL* will seek to be an advocating voice for older adults in the community during planning processes across agencies and organizations.

Raising Awareness— *AFL* will fill an important niche by acting to improve access by older residents to information and avoid duplicative services by gathering resources and disseminating them on its website and through alternative means.

Outreach and Education— *AFL* will work to promote equitable distribution of community resources to those who are most vulnerable through proactive outreach and education to subpopulations that are at greater risk for negative outcomes.

Eppson Center for Seniors— *AFL* will support *ECS* when possible, to ensure their continued success.

Priority Action Areas

Transportation— *AFL* will promote the wellbeing of older residents by supporting safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options in the community.

Housing— *AFL* will work to develop housing options that accommodate aging-related needs, and offer safety, comfort, and social support.

Employment & Volunteer— *AFL* will work toward better access to work and volunteer opportunities for older residents.

Public/Commercial Environments— *AFL* will play a significant role in advocating for supportive environments throughout the community, and educating the

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community on the importance and benefits afforded by creating environments that work well for the greatest number of residents.

Neighborhood Cohesion— *AFL* will act to cultivate social relationships, and promote environments where everyone feels valued, and older adults are viewed as important contributors to the community at large.



Laramie, Wyoming is the Gem City of the Plains

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Introduction

Albany County and the City of Laramie, Wyoming, like many places across the country is experiencing an aging revolution. In fact, our community is growing older on average at an unprecedented rate. In 2017, roughly 15% of the county's residents were age 60 and older, and the number and relative proportion of older residents in Albany County is projected to continue growing in coming decades (see *Age-Friendly Laramie Needs Assessment*, [hereafter "AFL Report, 2020"] accessed here: <https://age-friendlylaramie.org/resources>). Demographic changes will likely lead to greater need for supportive home and community environments that facilitate healthful living, social inclusion, financial stability, and high quality of life for older residents in the county.

Currently, many services for older adults in Albany County are coordinated and provided across the state by the *Aging Division* of the *Wyoming Department of Health (WDH-AG)*. At the local level, invaluable programs and services are available from the *Eppson Center for Seniors (ECS)*. These entities are important resources that are viewed as central points of contact for older residents living in the area. The City of Laramie also has abundant resources in the form community programs, amenities and institutions that are important to improving livability for residents, including the *Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies (FGWR)*, the *Laramie Soup Kitchen*, and the *Wyoming Center on Aging (WyCOA)* at the *University of Wyoming (UW)*, among others.

Nevertheless, careful consideration, coordination between entities, and planning for future growth of the older adult population is needed to ensure that Albany County's older residents are accommodated in their aging-related needs. By planning carefully for coming years, *Age-Friendly Laramie (AFL)* can play an important role in facilitating the ability of older residents to remain in their homes and/or their communities for as long as safely feasible—a widely cited preference of older people.

This document describes specific priorities where *AFL* proposes to



The Biscuits & Jam-- the Eppson Center's own musical group, meets several times per month

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take action to improve safety and livability of Albany County for residents of all ages and abilities. Action areas were derived from recommendations developed, in spring 2020 during the needs assessment conducted in collaboration with evaluators from UW (see *AFL Report, 2020*). The needs assessment reported on the community's current and projected demographic structure and aimed to identify aging-related needs and priorities of its residents.

Completion of the baseline study served to fulfill partial requirements for membership in the *AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities*. This report, intended as a sister-document to the needs assessment serves as a roadmap for *AFL* activities proposed for the next several years (2022 thru 2025).

History of Age-Friendly Laramie

In spring 2018, a group of Albany County community stakeholders led by volunteers from the *UW*, the *ECS*, and the *FGWR* convened to develop an initiative called “*Age-Friendly Laramie*”, hereafter *AFL*. The group's stated mission was to “...Build a community that is safe and highly livable for people of all ages and abilities...”

In early sessions, stakeholders developed a vision of what our age-friendly community should look like and began to mobilize support and resources to consider how issues related to population aging may be addressed now and in the future. As part of these early stages of development, *AFL* procured buy-in from the City of Laramie's mayor and city council, through a resolution to support our efforts to develop a plan for addressing aging-related issues.



An early AFL visioning session

In August 2018, *AFL* applied and was accepted for membership into *AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities*. The goal of that network is to support and promote communities committed to developing opportunities for older residents to live rewarding, productive, healthful, and safe lives (AARP, 2019a).

As part of the process for moving toward the age-friendly designation, *AFL* commissioned a needs assessment to establish its baseline “age-friendliness”. The needs assessment report was submitted to *AARP Wyoming* in 2020 (*AFL Report, 2020*). Additional requirements for securing an age-friendly designation included creating an action plan, implementing that plan, and developing indicators for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout a five-year cycle (AARP, 2019b).

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Unfortunately, *AFL's* progress toward latter stages of the process was delayed by the emergence of COVID-19 in the spring, 2020. Nevertheless, during this time, *AFL* received status as a 501 (c) (3), developed its organizational bylaws, and elected officers and a board of directors to oversee the organization's activities. We continued planning for future projects and those that could be undertaken safely during the height of the pandemic.

In fall 2021, *AFL* hosted a virtual age-friendly summit to gather input from stakeholders who work in agencies, businesses and organizations that serve older adults in the community. Additionally, *AFL* was able to establish its presence on the Internet, via its website, which can be accessed here: <https://www.age-friendlylaramie.org>.

In spring, 2022, key *AFL* stakeholders reconvened to discuss the organization's future, and develop ideas for acting on priorities identified in its needs assessment. This report documents those discussions and serves as *AFL's* action plan for the next three years (2023 thru 2025).

Summary of Needs Assessment Findings

This report is intended to be read as a sister-document to the needs assessment submitted to *AARP Wyoming* in 2020 (*AFL Report, 2020*). For that report, evaluators from *UW* surveyed community stakeholders to gauge their perceptions of Albany County as a place where residents could age well, and to identify priorities for changes that would better promote aging in place.

In addition to the community survey, data were compiled from publicly available information obtained through the U.S. Census Bureau, and via direct discussions with members of the community. The following bullets represent key findings of the needs assessment that serve as context for our action plan.

Summary of Demographic Profile Results:

- In 2017, there were an estimated 37,944 people living in Albany County. The majority (72%) of the population were under age 45, and about 28% were aged

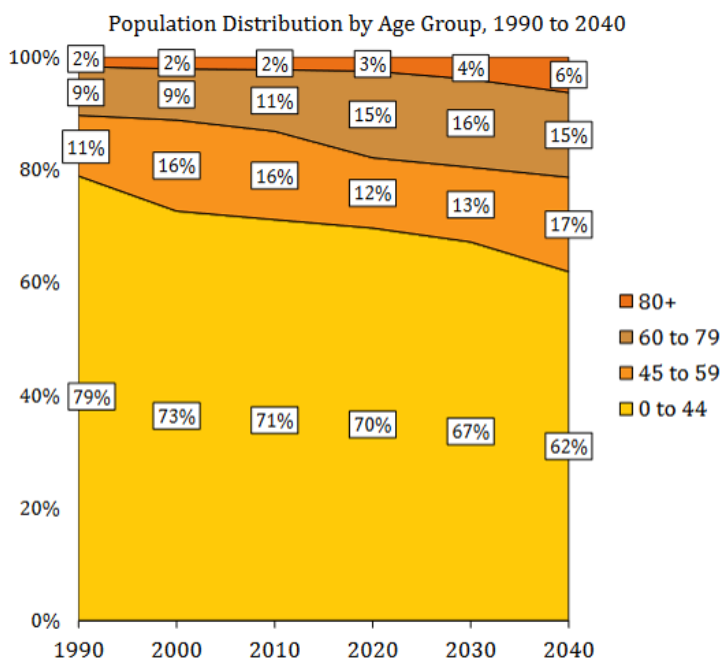


Cover of *AFL's* needs assessment

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45 or older. Residents who were aged 60 to 79 made up about 13% of the population, and another 2% were aged 80 and older.

- Between 2010 and 2017, the county saw a decline of more than 10% in the number of residents aged 45 to 59; whereas the population aged 60 and older grew by nearly 23%.
- The older population (aged 60 and older) is majority female (54.1%) and White (97.7%).
- About 1 in 3 residents aged 65 to 74 remained in the workforce.
- A large proportion of residents who are aged 65 and older—about 1 in 3 (33.5%)—lived alone in their households.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population for 1990 thru 2010; Projections for 2020 thru 2040, Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Economic Analysis Division (<http://eadiv.state.wy.us>)

Demographics tell us a lot about the future

- More than 1 in 4 (26.1%) Albany County households included at least 1 person who was aged 60 or older.

- The median income for residents aged 65 and older was \$47,218. The median income for older men who lived alone was \$40,223; whereas older women who lived alone were substantially worse off, with a median income of \$24,063.

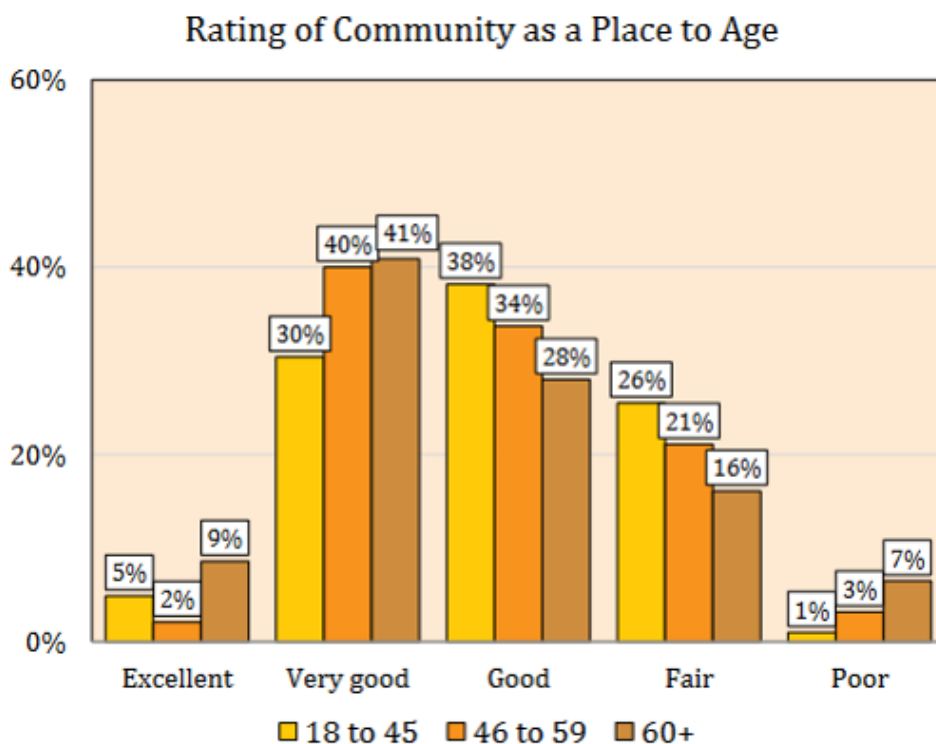
- Among residents aged 65 to 74, about 1 in 4 men (27%) and women (24%) reported at least one disability. After age 75, about 49% experienced one or more disabilities, including 39% of men and 57% of women.

Summary of Community Survey Results:

- About 3 out of 4 (76%) community residents rated their community as a “good”, “very good” or “excellent” place to live as one ages. Notably, almost 7% of respondents aged 60 and older rated their community as a poor place to live as they age.

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- About 43% of respondents reported living in their community for 25 years or more, including 14% who have lived in their community for 45 years or more.
- Most respondents aged 60 to 79 (58%) and aged 80 and older (80%) indicated that it was “very important” or “extremely important” for them to remain in their community as they age.
- Many Albany County residents (93%) say that it is “very important” or “extremely important” for them to live independently as they age.



Laramie, Wyoming is perceived to be a good place to age

- Regarding **Housing**, survey respondents rated trustworthy home-repair contractors (96%), affordable housing options (86%), and seasonal services such as lawn or snow-removal services (84%) as highest priority. In most cases, participants stated that each housing resource was either unavailable, or they were not sure whether the resources existed in the community.
- Regarding **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings**, the greatest priorities included well-maintained public buildings for people with different physical abilities (93%); sidewalks that are in good condition (91%); and well-maintained restrooms that are accessible to people with disabilities (86%). A small majority (56%) of respondents perceived well-maintained buildings to be absent in Albany

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County; whereas 80% and 77%, felt that sidewalks were inadequate and that public restrooms were not accessible, respectively.

- Regarding ***Transportation***, 97% of survey respondents reporting driving themselves as their primary means of travel. Among adults aged 60 and older, other often-reported modes of transportation included walking (60%), riding a bicycle (39%), or having others give them a ride (21%).
- Transportation resources with the greatest priority included well-lit streets (97%), well-maintained streets (94%); traffic signs that are easy to read (92%); and safe and accessible public transportation (90%). A small majority (60%) of respondents perceived the need for well-lit streets to be unmet, and (74%) of respondents perceived well-maintained streets to be absent in Albany County; 62% believed that the need for public transportation was not adequately met.
- Most survey respondents indicated that they were in good health on average, with a majority stating that their health was either “very good” (46%) or “excellent” (27%) compared to other people their own age.
- Many respondents of all ages (82%) report exercising several times a week or every day. The least active group was made up of respondents aged 46 to 59, 7% of whom participate in physical activity once a month or less.
- Regarding ***Health & Wellness***, resources with the greatest priority included respectful hospital and clinical staff (96%); well-maintained healthcare facilities (96%); a variety of healthcare professionals (95%); and affordable home health care providers (92%). A small majority (57%) of respondents perceived the need to increase the number of medical specialists, and 85% of



Laramie, Wyoming, nestled in the Rocky Mountains

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respondents perceived affordable healthcare providers to be absent in Albany County.

- Most respondents reported being well-connected via relationships with families, friends, and neighbors. Many respondents of all ages (94%) reported that they interact with others by phone, in person, email or social media (such as Facebook) at least once a week, including 68% who interact once a day or more with others.



Foster Grandparents and Pups

- In the area of **Social Participation**, resources with the greatest priority included affordable activities for residents of all ages (90%), accurate and widely publicized information about social activities (86%), and a variety of cultural activities for diverse populations (81%). Eighty percent of respondents of all ages also indicated that activities involving young *and* older people were either “very important” or “extremely important” to them.
- Regarding **Volunteering & Civic Engagement**, the greatest priority was related to provision of information about local volunteer activities that is easy to find. Among respondents of all ages, 80% said that this resource was “very important” or “extremely important” to have in the community. Nevertheless, 77% responded that the resource was either “not available”, or they were unsure whether it was available.
- In the area of **Civic Participation & Employment**, the area of greatest priority was related to the availability of jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Among respondents of all ages, 87% stated this was a “very important” or “extremely important” priority. Additionally, 84% of all respondents indicated that this priority was not currently available in the community.
- Among the youngest age cohort (18 to 45), about 62% rated the likelihood of their continuing to work for as long as possible as a “very likely” or “extremely likely” outcome. Although a somewhat smaller effect, the same trend was found

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for those aged 46 to 59 (53%), and among respondents aged 60 and older (50%).

- In the area of ***Community Information***, a significant number of respondents indicated a need for access to community information in one central location (78%), and most respondents (87%) indicated that this need was not met in the community.
- For respondents aged 60 and older, the most commonly cited source for acquiring needed information was the *Eppson Center for Seniors* (94%). Many older adults also get information by word-of-mouth from family and/or friends (93%), and via the Internet (90%).

Summary of Qualitative Results:

- Focus Groups and Key Informant interviews identified a need to prioritize issues of social isolation and inadequate distribution of information, which often lead to inappropriate use of resources intended for other purposes.

Developing Action Priorities

The *AFL Report* (2020) culminated in the development of twelve evidence-based recommendations for addressing aging-related needs of older residents in Albany County. The qualitative nature of the recommendations ranged from being very general and applicable across most age-friendly domains (e.g., planning for growth of the older adult population) to larger specific actions within individual age-friendly domains (e.g., to improve access to appropriate housing).



Stakeholders sharing ideas

In order to allow valued community input on how to address the recommendations, an *AFL* committee of devoted residents called the *Community Research/Evaluation Action Team (CREATE)* hosted a virtual summit for potential stakeholders, vested in ensuring the well-being of older people in the community. In general, invitees were identified based on their status as community stakeholders working in organizations, commercial entities, or institutions that interact closely with older residents in the county. We invited local policymakers, researchers, business owners, non-profit operators, medical and long-term care professionals, housing and transportation providers, city department managers, and the local media to provide input. In total,

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invitations to the virtual summit were sent to 142 individuals/entities in the community, and 38 (28%) accepted and attended the event.



Artworks abound in Laramie, Wyoming

Initially, we created four “General Actions Areas” (described immediately below) based on recommendations that apply to addressing aging issues in the community, generally. For example, we recognized that in order to address specific problems pertaining to the larger issues of transportation or housing, it would be necessary to more generally plan for greater numbers of older adults in the community.

Thus, general action areas apply to our endeavors, overall. The four proposed areas of general action included: 1) Planning for Growth; 2) Raising Awareness; 3) Engaging in Outreach and Education; and 4) Supporting the *Eppson Center for Seniors*. Without these general actions, larger, more specific actions would be difficult to implement.

Additionally, the *CREATE* group prioritized five large domain-specific priority actions on which to focus resources. These included actions related to 1) Transportation; 2) Housing; 3) Employment/Volunteer Opportunities; 4) Public/Commercial Environments; and 5) Neighborhood Cohesion. These areas of action compose our “Priority Action Areas” described below beginning on page 13.

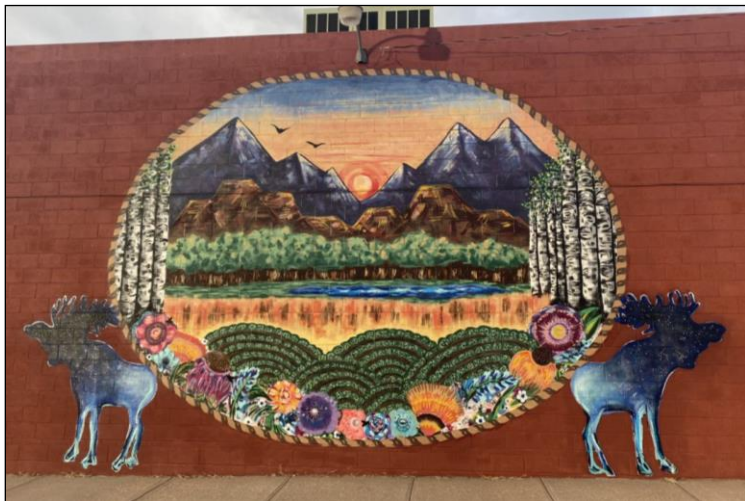
General Action Areas

Planning for Growth

Recommendation: *Support planning for growth in the number and proportion of residents who are age 60 and older. Understand that increased numbers of older residents will impact virtually every aspect of the community.*

By 2040, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that those aged 60 or older will make up 21% of the population in Albany County (see *AFL Report, 2020*). As the number and proportion of older adults grow, communities will need to adjust to meet this group’s unique needs.

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One of Laramie's many beautiful murals

AFL can play a central role in guiding planning for the changes that will result from population aging. Working in collaboration with departments and agencies that develop programs and policy regarding older adults (e.g., Laramie City Council, City Departments, *ECS*), *AFL* can offer expertise, and primary stakeholder perspectives to influence decision-making processes.

As part of this general action area, *AFL* will seek to be an advocating voice for older adults in the community during planning processes across agencies and organizations.

Raising Awareness

Recommendation: *Identify and capitalize on programs and services that already exist in different departments and organizations throughout Albany County. Strive to raise awareness of stakeholders, including older adults and their families, as well as service providers and professionals, about what is already available.*

Many resources for older adults exist across Albany County, with many localized in the City of Laramie. However, needs assessment results suggested that many older residents or their younger family members may be unaware of available resources or how to access them. Within the community, several organizations have compiled current listings of resources that are available. For example, the *Laramie Soup Kitchen* maintains a comprehensive updated list of vital services for individuals in the community. Similarly, in 2021, *AFL* distributed a pamphlet listing resources available locally for low-income older adults. (These informational documents can be accessed on the *AFL* website). Moreover, individuals and their families who experience chronic illnesses may have specific informational needs that require specialized knowledge to address. Resources that are available at *UW*, such as those produced by the *Dementia Support Center*, within the *Wyoming Center on Aging (WyCOA)* may be crucial but difficult for some to access.

Thus, *AFL* can fill an important niche by acting to improve access by older residents to information and avoid duplicative services by gathering resources and disseminating them on its website and through alternative means. It is important to ensure that

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resources are up-to-date and available in different formats to reach the largest swath of older residents (many of whom may have no access to the Internet), and their families. As well, *AFL* can continue to produce, maintain and disseminate its own materials, online and in hard copy. When *AFL* participates in local events, dissemination of materials to the public can be a regular activity.

Outreach and Education

Recommendation: *Although many older residents of Albany County are healthy, socially engaged, and financially secure, in planning, consider that many are not. Communities that are age-friendly should benefit all residents, without regard to physical limitations or financial standing. Consider focusing priorities on the needs of residents with inadequate resources to encourage inclusion of this high-risk segment of the population.*

Older adults can become vulnerable to negative health and social outcomes for a variety of reasons, including low-income status, their living situation (e.g., living alone), and their disability/functional status, which could impact their access to goods and services in community. As stated, approximately 33% of older adults living in Albany County live alone, and many of those who live alone, especially women, have incomes much lower than the median. In general, the likelihood of acquiring at least one disability increases with age.

It is important for age-friendly communities to provide accessible opportunities for social engagement among vulnerable groups. The age-friendly domain of *Respect & Social Inclusion* involves providing opportunities for older adults to cultivate social relationships, feel part of the community, and have access to resources. Respect, in this



Pickleball is a popular activity among older adults in the community

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context refers to positive behaviors and attitudes toward individuals regardless of age that promote feelings of acceptance, value, and appreciation by the community.

The role of *AFL* in ensuring equitable distribution of community resources to those who are most vulnerable should take the form of proactive outreach and education to subpopulations that are at greater risk for isolation. *AFL* can have an important role in promoting engagement among targeted groups of older adults to help ensure inclusion in activities and events that promote independence, improved health, more frequent positive interactions with others, and general wellbeing.

Eppson Center for Seniors

Recommendation: *Consider and encourage innovative ways to support the Eppson Center for Seniors. As a well-known and well-established resource for older residents, it is important to ensure their vitality into the future. Find ways to leverage age-friendly efforts on the positive reputation of the senior center.*

The *ECS* offers a wide array of services and social activities to older residents that help to keep them active and healthy in the community. In addition to health and wellness programs, recreational activities, and transportation services, *ECS* also offers high quality congregate meals to residents in a comfortable highly social “group dining” environment. For older adults who are homebound, *ECS* provides hot home-delivered meals and other forms of support, including social visits. The senior center is also an important provider of information to older adults and their families. Thus, *ECS* serves an integral role as the hub for aging-related programs and services in Albany County. As such, it is important for *AFL* to support *ECS* when possible, to ensure their continued success.

Qualitative results of the needs assessment suggested the importance of developing a range of activities to interest people across many age groups. As new cohorts of older adults become eligible to participate in activities, programs and services, *AFL* can work in collaboration with *ECS* to develop activities to attract individuals of all ages to the center. Intergenerational activities have potential to benefit all parties, regardless of their age. For example, in spring 2022, *AFL* worked with *ECS*, and the *Student Gerontology Association (SGA)*; a local student group associated with *UW* to build and maintain a community vegetable garden on the grounds of *ECS*. Individuals from multiple age groups participated in building the beds, planting and harvesting the crops, and enjoying the bounty.

By supporting activities that pique the interests of younger-older adults, or adults who are pre-retirement age, many current non-participants may begin to view *ECS* and its programing as more applicable to their interests, and could encourage greater

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involvement with *ECS* programs and services, whether through volunteering or participating directly in the center's activities.



The Eppson Center for Seniors

In coming years, as population aging continues, *AFL* should strive to be viewed as a dedicated partner and supportive organization of *ECS*, to supplement their crucial contributions to the community.

Prioritized Action Areas

Based on recommendations contained in the *AFL Report*, (2020), *AFL* will also prioritize five action areas related to important domains of livability described below.

Transportation

Recommendation: *The City of Laramie and Albany County can improve quality of life and social engagement among older people by developing convenient, affordable, and reliable local transportation options for residents who are unable to drive safely or who prefer to travel using public transportation options or other alternatives, including bicycling and walking.*

As a local advocacy organization, *AFL* can promote the wellbeing of older residents by supporting safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options in the community. For many older adults, driving themselves remains the primary mode of transportation. Often, attributes of the physical environment, including inadequate lighting and poor signage can create challenges to driving safely, regardless of age.



The University of Wyoming provides many invaluable resources to the community

For individuals who can no longer drive themselves, or who prefer not to drive themselves, highly livable communities support public transportation that is reliable and frequent, stops that are accessible, clean, well-lit, and with adequate seating. Furthermore, age-friendly communities may support volunteer transport services in places where public transportation is too limited (WHO, 2007).

Albany County community members identified affordable, accessible, and reliable public transportation as an unmet need in the community (see *AFL Report*, 2020).

WE PROPOSE WORKING TOWARD IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

Action 1: Explore, identify, and act on problematic community-level attributes that make safe driving by older adults difficult

Example: Advocate for adequate, accessible signage, and signals (e.g., through regular interaction with city council and/or city departments).

Goal: Improve traffic safety in the community

Measure: Number of traffic-related safety issues initiated or responded to per year

Success: Initial success will be marked by advocating to improve at least 2 traffic safety-related issues (e.g., advocate for longer crossing times) per year within 3-year period

Action 2: Conduct an initial audit of available community transportation options, and explore and act on issues that arise in the area of public transportation

Example: Advocate regularly within city meetings to increase such services for older adults; advocate for adequate seating and covered stops

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Goal: Improve public transportation options in the community

Measure: Number of advances in public transportation; number of advocacy events attended

Success: Initial success will be marked by advocating to improve at least 2 public transportation issues per year within 3-year period

Action 3: Explore and act on community-level attributes that promote alternative modes of transportation (e.g., biking, walking)

Example: Assess usability and access to bike paths; assess neighborhood sidewalks for walkability

Goal: Improve alternative transportation options in neighborhoods to increase safety and encourage active, healthful lifestyles for residents of all ages

Measure: Number of sustained activities (e.g., walkability assessment) developed to improve alternative sources of transportation

Success: Initial success will be marked by developing at least 2 sustained projects (e.g., sidewalk/bike path audits) within 3-year period

Action 4: Take the lead in developing a rideshare program with volunteer network of prospective drivers

Example: Engage community groups (e.g., UW students, Eppson Center clientele, and others) to provide rides to older adults who may be unable to drive themselves

Goal: Begin development of *Laramie Senior Rideshare Network* (LSRN) to support informal transportation needs of older adults who do not drive

Measure: Progress toward LSRN development; number of participants in the network

Success: Establishment of LSRN with at least 10 driver participants in a 3-year period

Committee: AFL Transportation Committee, chair/members to be determined

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Potential Partners: *Laramie City Council, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Laramie Traffic Safety Commission, ECS, UW Transit and Parking, Laramie Connections, Disabled American Veterans*

Housing

Recommendation: *Consider creative solutions to address shortages of supportive and affordable housing options for older residents, including exploration of cutting-edge housing alternatives for older people (e.g., “Village” model, see Scharlach et al. [2012]; accessory dwelling units, see Seliger [2012]; group-living options), and adaptation and/or modification of current home-environments.*

Qualities of age-friendly communities with regard to the domain of *Housing* include maintaining a housing stock that provides comfortable shelter from weather, and interior spaces that allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways (WHO, 2007). Affordable housing options, especially those that include adaptive features such as home modifications or universal design elements can make it possible for residents with physical limitations to remain independent in their homes and communities. In addition, housing that blends shelter and services, such as assisted living or continuing care retirement communities, may allow individuals to remain relatively independent and socially engaged with others, even if they are no longer able to stay in their homes.

Many older residents (33.5%) live alone in Albany County (see *AFL Report, 2020*), placing them at increased health and safety risks. Thus, working to develop housing options that accommodate aging-related needs, and offer the safety, comfort, and assurance in having others around who are willing to assist when needed is important.

WE PROPOSE WORKING TOWARD IMPROVING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING, WITH GOOD PERSON/ENVIRONMENT FIT THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

Action 1: Explore feasibility and potentially develop/implement cutting-edged housing options for older residents

Example: Develop committee to explore innovative housing alternatives that target older adults; create knowledge and assess feasibility of specific alternatives

Goal: Produce knowledge on what alternatives are feasible to fit Laramie’s unique social and cultural environment

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Measure: Feasible options for unique housing in Laramie

Success: Produce report and present to appropriate audience current feasible options and suggested future steps within the 3-year period

Action 2: Raise awareness in the community about the importance of housing for aging in place

Example: Presentations on the roles of home modifications in keeping older adults in their preferred home environments

Goal: Develop buy-in from the community to support growth in alternative housing options

Measure: Number of presentations given

Success: Initial success will be marked by presenting to at least 2 community groups per year, within 3-year period

Action 3: Develop alternatives for modifying housing structures to meet the needs of older residents (e.g., home modifications); advocate for flexibility in zoning and city rules to encourage creative solutions (e.g., accessory dwelling units; cohousing)

Example: Collaborate with the *Wyoming Home Modification Action Coalition (WYHMAC)* to increase access to home modifications in Albany County

Goal: Develop resources and strategies for assessing home, individual health, and recommending appropriate home modifications to improve person/environment fit

Measure: Number of persons/homes assessed and modified

Success: Initial success will be marked by availability of resources to modify 3 homes per year within 3-year period

Action 4: Explore and act on housing issues associated with affordable housing for older adults

Example: Promote and improve access to programs already in existence such as the *Section 8* program for low-income older adults

Goal: Maximize federal resources that address housing issues for low-income older residents

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Measure: Number of older residents assisted by programs

Success: Initial success will be marked by developing a protocol for directing low-income residents to available resources by assisting with at least 2 cases per year within 3-year period

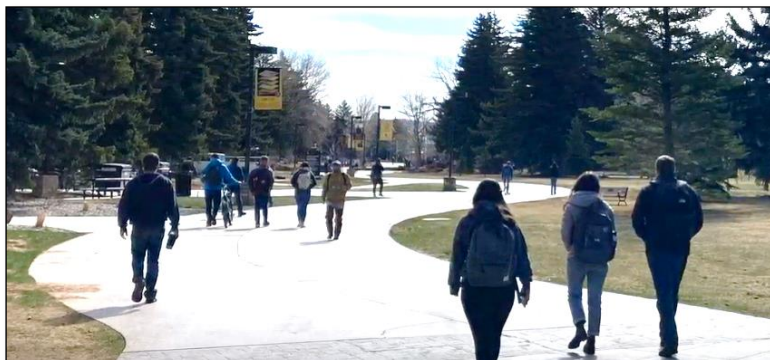
Committee: AFL Housing Committee, chair/members to be determined

Potential Partners: Wyoming Home Modification Action Coalition, Laramie City Council, Cheyenne Housing Authority, Wyoming Institute for Disabilities, Wyoming Independent Living, Wyoming Department of Health—Aging Division, My Front Door

Employment & Volunteer Options

Recommendation: *Develop strategies for including older residents in meaningful and purposeful activities, such as employment and volunteer opportunities. Work to reduce discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes that result in underutilizing older residents as a human resource.*

Communities that are age-friendly strive to develop a range of work and volunteer opportunities that include recognition, guidance and often compensation for personal time and costs. Training resources may also be available for older adults seeking post-retirement employment opportunities. Survey respondents acknowledged the importance of adequate employment and/or volunteer opportunities for fostering a sense of personal wellbeing.



Younger residents in Laramie are an important resource for AFL

At the same time, age-friendly communities work to prevent discrimination on the basis of age, and encourage the hiring, retention, promotion, and training of older employees (WHO, 2007). Older workers have proven to be competent, reliable, and

adept at learning new skills, yet stereotypes about older people as employees often remain as barriers to their employment.

WE PROPOSE WORKING TOWARD BETTER ACCESS TO WORK AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

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Action 1: Encourage buy-in from local businesses and organizations, with respect to hiring older adult workers

Example: Create campaign to seek commitments from business throughout the community to hire older people

Goal: Established network of employers in the community who hire older workers

Measure: Number of employers in network

Success: Initial success will be marked by at least 5 small to large businesses committed to hiring older adults within 3-year period

Action 2: Take the lead in developing a volunteer network that matches older adults with meaningful and purposeful volunteer activities—be proactive in engaging with already existing volunteer opportunities, to increase representation of older adults as volunteers in those activities; promote volunteering within *ECS* by younger-older adults

Example: Facilitate proactive involvement of older adults in community volunteer activities such as the “Big Event” or events held by the *ECS*, such as the “Family Fun Night”

Goal: Support engagement by older adults with formal volunteer activities

Measure: Number of formal volunteer activities engaged with in a year

Success: Initial success will be marked by engagement with at least 2 formal volunteer activities per year within 3-year period

Action 3: Develop activities to educate the community about older workers

Example: Activities that encourage intergenerational engagement; workshops that address aging stereotypes for potential employers

Goal: Reduce stereotypes that may be barriers to good employment opportunities for older adults

Measure: Number of individuals who engage with educational activities

Success: Initial success will be marked by at least 100 individuals interacting with activities within a 3-year period

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Action 4: Develop or promote training opportunities (within *AFL* or with partners such as *WyCOA*) to increase employability of older adults

Example: Tech-2-Connect; programs to teach resume development skills

Goal: Developing employment skills of older residents

Measure: Number of older adults involved in programs

Success: Initial success will be marked by at least 100 individuals interacting with programs within a 3-year period

Committee: *AFL* Employment/Volunteer Committee, chair/members to be determined

Potential Partners: *Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, UW, SGA, Department of Workforce Services, AmeriCorps Seniors* (i.e., *FGWR, RSVP, Senior Companions*), *Senior Community Service Employment Program, Experience Works, United Way, and WyCOA*

Public/Commercial Environments

Recommendation: *Raise awareness among commercial entities regarding accessibility issues impacting older adults and persons with disabilities. Work to increase inclusion of residents by optimizing age-friendliness of public and private environments and settings.*

A large part of ensuring quality of life and high livability for residents of all ages in Albany County involves maintaining accessible public and private buildings and spaces that are clean, pleasant, and safe. Indeed, commercial places where people gather, such as restaurants and businesses are often the basis for valued interactions and exchanges between residents.



Downtown Laramie sign lights up downtown

Consideration paid to high quality outdoor environments and buildings can encourage their use, resulting in positive health and beneficial economic outcomes. Additionally, well-designed public/commercial environments can have substantial impact on the mobility and independence of older residents. While the Americans with Disabilities

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Act (ADA) requires that public spaces be accessible for persons with disabilities (e.g., vision and hearing loss or mobility impairments), there remain barriers to accessibility in public/commercial spaces that could deter or prevent older adults living with disabilities from accessing these spaces.

Thus, AFL can play a significant role in advocating for supportive environments throughout the community, and educating the community on the importance and benefits afforded by creating environments that work well for the greatest number of residents.

WE PROPOSE WORKING TOWARD IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

Action 1: Develop educational tools for community businesses and organizations that teach the benefits of including older adults in business considerations (e.g., potential financial impacts on bottom line)

Example: “Community Commerce project” to develop educational modules that target local businesses and their employees, such as restaurant workers

Goal: Improve awareness in the community about aging, and resulting changes that could influence participation by older adults in the local economy

Measure: Number of local businesses engaged in activities

Success: Initial success will be marked by at least 5 small to large businesses engaged in activities within 3-year period

Action 2: Develop support for helping businesses be more accessible to older people, regarding the physical environment

Example: Develop checklist for businesses that take into consideration of physical circumstances of older consumers (e.g., vision, hearing); encouraging creative solutions (e.g., a drop-off option in front of downtown businesses to address potentially long walking distances)

Goal: Improve physical environment with respect to person/environment fit of local businesses

Measure: Number of local businesses engaged in activities

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Success: Initial success will be marked by at least 5 small to large businesses engaged in improving accessibility within 3-year period

Action 3: Develop ways to financially support businesses in their efforts to become more age friendly

Example: Improve grant-writing capacity to seek financial resources to assist with costs of modifying environments to accommodate older adults

Goal: Increase financial resources available for improving physical environments of local businesses

Measure: Number of grants received to support environmental improvements of local businesses

Success: Initial success will be marked by successfully applying for at least 1 supportive grant within 3-year period

Committee: *AFL Public/Commercial Environments Committee, chair/members to be determined*

Potential Partners: *Laramie City Council, Downtown Laramie Business Association, WYHMAC, Albany County Tourism Board, Laramie Chamber Business Alliance, Advisory Commission on Disabilities*

Neighborhood Cohesion

Recommendation: *Promote neighborhood cohesion through activities that encourage positive interactions with fellow residents. In regard to aging in place, many needs can be met through neighborly reciprocity and volunteering to help those with whom we have affinity.*

The age-friendly domain of *Respect & Social Inclusion* involves providing opportunities for older adults to cultivate social relationships, feel part of the community, and have access to resources. Livable communities promote environments where everyone feels valued, and older adults are viewed as important contributors to the community at large.

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AFL's community garden projects have just begun

Highly livable communities may provide opportunities for intergenerational gatherings and activities where younger and older people can learn from one another, and honor what each has to offer. Additionally, communities that strive to be age-friendly maintain community settings and events that attract people of all ages by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences (WHO, 2007).

WE PROPOSE WORKING TO PROMOTE BETTER COHESION WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

Action 1: Explore and develop opportunities for forming mutually beneficial intergenerational connections between younger and older residents

Example: Laramie Senior Wellness Garden program, which promotes intergeneration cooperation in growing food and maintaining garden spaces throughout the community

Goal: Increase opportunities for people of different age groups to interact in mutually fulfilling activities

Measure: Number of sustained activities developed to increase intergenerational engagement

Success: Initial success will be marked by successfully developing at least 2 sustained projects within 3-year period

Action 2: Develop social activities that promote engagement among younger and older residents in neighborhoods throughout Albany County

Example: Neighborhood block party

Goal: Increase cooperation between neighbors of all ages, support neighborly reciprocity to meet needs

Measure: Number of neighborhood-level events held

Success: Initial success will be marked by successfully planning and holding at least 2 neighborhood events within 3 year period

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Action 3: Explore and develop cutting-edged programing that assists older adults in procuring the neighborly support they may need to remain independent in their homes

Example: Community Time Banking network (CTBN)

Goal: Improve support between neighbors

Measure: Progress toward CTBN development; number of participants in the network

Success: Establishment of CTBN in at least one neighborhood, with at least 5 participants

Committee: *AFL* Respect and Social Inclusion committee, chair/members to be determined

Potential Partners: *UW, SGA, City Council Wards, Public Library, Department of Parks and Recreation*



The numbers of older adults is not the only thing growing in Laramie, Wyoming

Using the Action Plan

This *action plan* was developed to serve as a guide for *AFL* in its efforts to improve livability, and promote aging in place while working toward greater age-friendliness throughout Albany County. As conceived by our team, the term “action” refers to broad steps taken in domains of livability, where *AFL* can feasibly enact positive change during the next several years (2022 to 2025).

Our proposed actions are purposefully described in broad terms to allow flexibility in the specific activities that will be developed and implemented to achieve each action’s wider goals. We recognize that the actions proposed will require creative thinking and the mobilization of community resources to see them into fruition. Our prioritized actions represent desirable outcomes that we aim to achieve through committee work

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within *AFL*, and through the continued development of important relationships between stakeholder entities in the community.

In addition to guiding the actions we *do* take, this plan also establishes parameters, which limit the scale and scope of our age-friendly endeavors. We acknowledge that findings of the *AFL Report (2020)* point to areas of potential action that are *not* addressed in this plan. For example, the important need for ensuring good health in the community relies on effective recruitment and retention of highly qualified medical professionals with geriatric training to meet the growing demand for health-related services. None of our proposed actions *directly* address this important attribute of high community livability. Given the resources currently available to *AFL*, we have determined the best way to move forward is to contain efforts within important domains where change is most feasible and will have measurable positive impact on older people in the community.



Rocking bassist of the Biscuits & Jam

Indeed, in its early stages of development, *AFL* cannot directly attend to *all* identified areas of need. Thus, it will be important for the organization to engage closely with other entities that have similar stakes in the wellbeing of older residents (e.g., *UW* medical training and research programs; *Ivinson Memorial Hospital*). *AFL* can play a central role in developing and maintaining Laramie's aging network of stakeholders to promote efficient leveraging of resources available in Albany County.

Next Steps

Since its inception, *AFL* has been a grassroots endeavor, involving residents of all stripes in imagining its vision. Although led by key stakeholder groups in the community (*ECS*, *FGWR*, and *UW*), its goals and actions have been developed by many primary stakeholders who are most vested in ensuring that Albany County is prepared to support aging in place.

Our next steps will continue in this vein, as we develop citizen-led committees charged with implementing the actions described herein. In addition to standing committees outlined in *AFL* bylaws, we propose five new committees corresponding to our proposed priority actions. Chairs of these committees, to be named, will lead in developing specific activities to move us closer to the stated goals of our actions. The five new committees are the following: 1) Transportation; 2) Housing; 3) Employment/Volunteer; 4) Public/Commercial Environments; and 5) Respect and

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Social Inclusion. Committees will be composed of primary stakeholders (e.g., older adult residents of the county), as well as representatives of agencies and organizations that share our purpose and goals.

In addition to committing resources to our stated actions, *AFL* must also continue taking steps to ensure its vitality and long-term sustainability as a nonprofit organization. For example, in order to fund its projects, *AFL* must develop capacity to procure financial support via grant-writing, donation-seeking, fund-raising activities, and through service revenue. In the medium-term, we envision growth that could include paid staff and a “bricks and mortar” headquarters in which to house the organization. However, to achieve these loftier goals, *AFL* must first establish a sound financial footing, as its basis.

Finally, *AFL* must continue to seek buy-in from stakeholders throughout the community, and to mobilize its valuable resources that are available to promote high livability in Albany County. Many of the actions described in this plan will depend on the generous contributions of volunteer time, and collaboration with existent programs and service providers. Thus, it is important for *AFL* to continue developing high visibility, productive relationships, and positive perceptions of it by Laramie’s residents.



Laramie, Wyoming: A scenic, small-sized, western city

Conclusion

Population aging is well underway in Albany County, Wyoming. It will continue for decades to come, to impact virtually all aspects of life in our community. Planning will be central to successfully navigate the demographic changes and resulting challenges that inevitably lie ahead.

As greater numbers of residents face changes— often losses and limitations— that are associated with aging, it may become tempting for stakeholders in the community to view an older (on average) population as a problem to be overcome. However, through effective, careful planning, we may be fortunate to view the larger proportion of older residents as a collective asset for improving quality of life and community livability for all Albany County residents. This positive perspective is a main tenet underlying the actions proposed in this report.

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In the long run, efforts to promote age-friendliness may be viewed as investment in the community and its residents. In pursuing *AFL's* goals, to improve our physical and social environments, we can promote physical and mental health, financial wellbeing, and encourage valued independence that Laramie's older residents will rely on to support their aging in place.

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