

United Way of the  
Greater Lehigh Valley



Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley  
**ACTION PLAN**

An Age-Friendly Community



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# Acknowledgments

The Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley (AFLV) action plan is the culmination of years of hard work first started by the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging more than 20 years ago. The community partners who have participated in countless meetings, forums, focus groups and conversations are too numerous to name. We must give a big shout-out to our nonprofit community who leaned into this space and shared their knowledge and their love for our community.

We also cannot forget the community residents who were open, honest and forthcoming about their ups and downs, their wins and losses, their highs and lows. It is because of their willingness to share their vulnerabilities that we can present this plan. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to the senior centers of Lehigh and Northampton counties – to their administrators and their teams – for allowing us to connect with their members and gain valuable insights; to the Lehigh and Northampton County Executives and their teams who supported this effort wholeheartedly; to the United Way Greater Lehigh Valley (UWGLV) team members who continue to outdo themselves and give their enthusiastic support to every project and request; and to the age-friendly design team members of the Diabetes Prevention Coalition, the Fall Prevention Coalition, Dementia Friendly Lehigh Valley, Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging and the Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley Steering Committee.

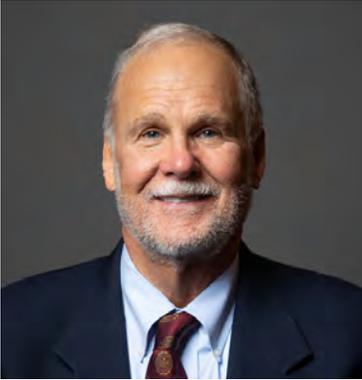
Special notes of gratitude must also be extended to Lehigh Valley Active Life and the Greater Valley YMCA for sharing their spaces, expertise and staff to forward the age friendly agenda. To the United Way VISTAS and United Way interns - thank you for your willingness to do all that was asked without hesitation.

Lastly, a sincere note of appreciation to Becky Bradley and the team at the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and Kellie Von Stein and other members at AARP PA, for always showing up, providing data, creating tools and incorporating the vision of an age-friendly community into the work they do all around the Lehigh Valley area. Thank you!

**The Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley action plan is dedicated to the many individuals who had a hand in building the amazing community that is the Lehigh Valley today. Your work and dedication have assisted in building a community that strives to be inclusive of all people and all ages.**



# Letter from your Lehigh Valley County Executives



Phillips Armstrong  
*Lehigh County Executive*



Lamont McClure  
*Northampton County Executive*

We are pleased to present you with the Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley action plan which is a “living document” developed and vetted by an active and engaged community to increase opportunities and advance inclusion across generations.

According to the World Health Organization, our environments play an important role in determining how we age and how we respond to disease, loss of function and other forms of adversity that we may experience at different stages of life, in particular in later years.

Creating age-friendly environments acknowledges diversity, fights ageism and ensures that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in all that our community has to offer. Barrier-free and affordable housing, accessible public spaces and transportation enable people to stay independent and participate in community life.

The Lehigh Valley has a history of success when we work together and this effort is no exception. We want people of all ages to call this area home, frequent our businesses and work here. Residents who are 65 and older currently represent more than 15% of each county’s population, as compared to 13% nationally, and we expect that figure will continue to grow. In preparation, we need to continue working together to ensure that the Lehigh Valley has the appropriate infrastructure in place so we can best serve all our populations.

On behalf of the executive offices of Northampton and Lehigh Counties, we offer our continued support and commitment as we launch this Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley action plan. We applaud the leaders and stakeholders who have become the champions in the field of aging and are proud to see a growing network of partners who are recognizing that age-friendly communities benefit everyone.



Lamont McClure

*Northampton County Executive*



Phillips Armstrong

*Lehigh County Executive*

# Introduction

*Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley envisions a community where everyone in the Lehigh Valley has the opportunity to age successfully.*



We build communities that treat all residents and visitors with respect, regardless of age, income or physical ability. They are accessible, equitable, inclusive, safe, secure, supportive and enhance opportunities to be socially connected, healthy and active.

This Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley plan ensures that older adults in our community can thrive mentally, emotionally and physically. It serves as a call to action to change our attitudes here in the Lehigh Valley toward ageism, equity and inclusion and outlines the community tools needed to ensure that age-friendly programs, services and policy are available and accessible to all.

This plan is a collective community pivot from programs and services targeted to the individual to initiatives designed to serve our community as a whole. We seek to enhance the Lehigh Valley's broader physical and social environments so that seniors can function optimally in their own home; to be so elder-friendly that current residents desire to remain, former residents want to return and new residents are drawn here to retire.

Completed in the wake of COVID-19, this plan addresses the ongoing and emerging needs for reducing social isolation, overcoming inequities and combating ageism in the Lehigh Valley. It is the culmination of years of community participation and planning, following the acceptance into the World Health Organization/AARP Age-Friendly Communities Network in June 2018<sup>1</sup>, becoming the first dual-counties to join the Network, and kicking off a five-year planning, implementation and evaluation cycle. Network members are committed to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives. This plan outlines how we will leverage existing community strengths and programs while also championing new efforts.

Together, we are forging an age-friendly Lehigh Valley and empowering older adults and the stakeholders who serve them to bring about change at a community level.



*Casa Guadalupe Center*



*Take a Senior Out  
Longwood Gardens*



*Senior Day of Action*



*Casa Guadalupe Center*

<sup>1</sup><https://www.unitedwayglv.org/news/june-2018/lehigh-and-northampton-counties-join-aarp-network>



# About the Lehigh Valley

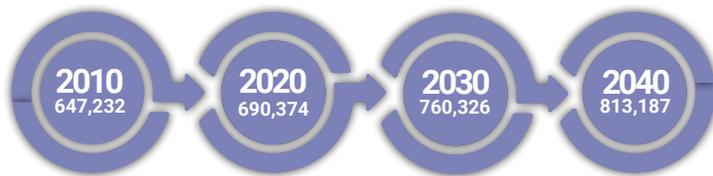
## Population

The population of the United States is rapidly aging, and by 2030, one of every five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older. By 2035, the number of adults in the United States who are older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18.<sup>2</sup> In the Lehigh Valley, community projections suggest that the population of seniors will constitute 22% of the overall population by 2040, with the numbers of seniors aged 75 and older expected to double within this timeframe.<sup>3</sup>

While an aging population presents challenges to the Lehigh Valley, it also brings resources, as residents living longer lives are consumers with buying power and a diverse set of skills and interests, and we need to be ready with a plan to maximize the potential for healthy, happy and equitable living across generations.

The Lehigh Valley has been diversifying at an increasing rate for decades. 70% of the population today is white, which has decreased from 99% in 1970. The population of non-whites is five times more than in 1990, and the proportion of Hispanic or Latino residents has grown exponentially over the last 50 years. Today, 21% of the region's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.<sup>5</sup>

### Lehigh Valley Population Projection



Currently, Lehigh County's population is growing by roughly one percent per year.

### Percentage of Each Race Who Identify as Hispanic or Latino



Source: US Census Bureau 2020 Census

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://sal.muhenberg.edu:8080/librarydspace/bitstream/10718/3339/1/LV-Seniors-Healthy-at-Home-2015-Update.pdf>, PENNSYLVANIA: 2020 Census

<sup>4</sup> <https://lvpc.org/datalv.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://lvpc.org/datalv.html>



**LEHIGH VALLEY - FAST GROWING REGION IN EASTERN PA<sup>4</sup>**

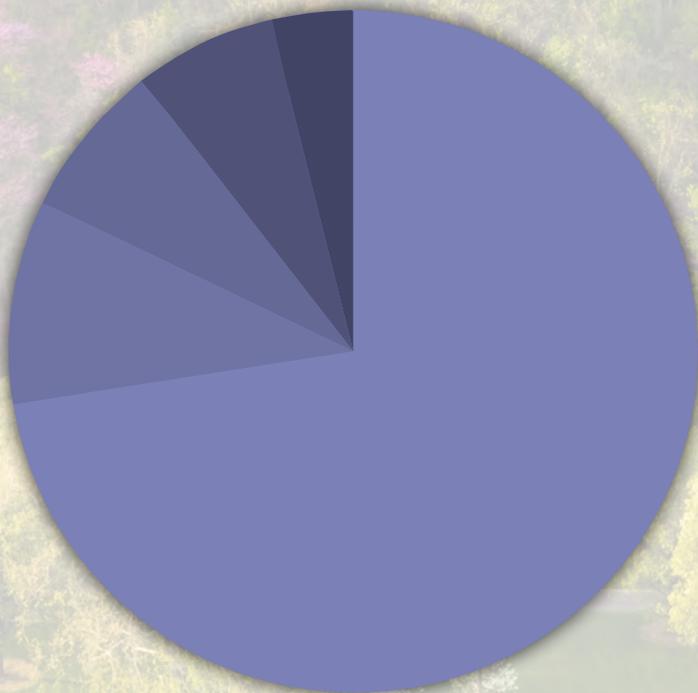
**LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON COUNTIES ENCOMPASS 726 SQUARE MILES**

**27**  
**BOROUGHES**

**32**  
**TOWNSHIPS**



## Racial Makeup of the Lehigh Valley



<b>ASIAN</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
<b>BLACK</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
<b>TWO OR MORE RACES</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
<b>WHITE</b>	<b>70.3%</b>

# History

## Native Americans

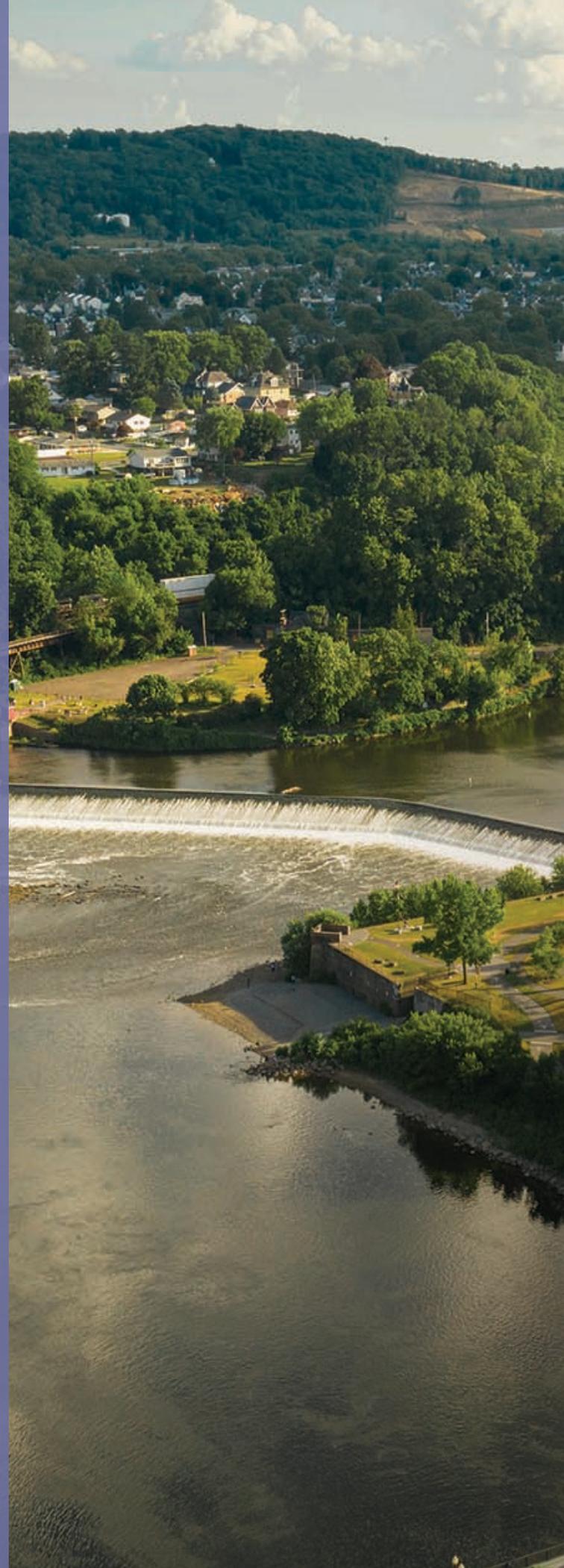
The first humans to settle in the Lehigh Valley were Native Americans, and the best known were Lenni Lenape (meaning “real” or “original” people) of the Delaware Nation.

Reminders of the Native American culture that existed in the Lehigh Valley preceding the arrival of the first Europeans live on in geographical names like Tatamy, Macungie and Catasauqua, as well as in the hundreds of Native American artifacts featured in exhibits at local museums like the Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum. The Lenape villages that once dotted the region are long gone; however, their people pushed westward after the infamous “Walking Purchase” instigated by the sons of William Penn in 1737, which defrauded the Lenape of approximately 1,200,932 square miles located in Lehigh, Northampton, Bucks, Carbon, Schuylkill, Monroe and Pike counties.<sup>6</sup>

## European Americans

The first Europeans in the Lehigh Valley were Scots-Irish who settled in what is now Northampton County and they were followed by large numbers of Germans, Protestant farmers and members of the Lutheran and Reformed faith, who immigrated to the Valley in the 1730s.

One of the predominant sects to settle in the Lehigh Valley were the Moravians, who believe all people to be equal, so their cemeteries held Germans, Irish, Indians and those of African descent. From these beginnings grew a unique broad cultural environment in which music, art and education flourished, as did religious tolerance. Their massive communal dwellings, churches and industrial structures remain today as landmarks in Bethlehem and Nazareth.<sup>7</sup> It was the iron and coal industries that attracted a second influx of immigrant workers to the Lehigh Valley in the mid-1800s, with at least 50 different nations and ethnic groups identified among them; their descendants still living in the Lehigh Valley today.



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41179657>

<sup>7</sup> <https://delawareandlehigh.org/about/history/transformation-of-people-and-places/>



## African Americans

When Bethlehem was founded in 1741, the Moravians brought African slaves to help build the city, with church registers recording the Christianized names of slaves, and in some cases, the African names and villages where they were captured.<sup>8</sup>

The U.S. Census for 1860 listed just under 150 Black people living in the Lehigh Valley, at that time a total population of 10,000 people. It was the construction of the railroads and canals that brought more Black people to the Valley in the second half of the 19th century, and then in the 1920s and later, it was hopes of working in the Lehigh Valley factories, including Bethlehem Steel.<sup>9</sup>

## Hispanic

The first Latinos were enticed to move to the Lehigh Valley from Mexico in 1923 by labor recruiters from Bethlehem Steel. It wasn't until the late 1940s that the Valley's Latino population began to grow. Puerto Ricans arrived steadily throughout the 1950s and 60s, and by the early 1970s, some Spanish-language newspapers were being published in the Lehigh Valley.<sup>10</sup>

## 2020 Census

Since 2010, the population of the Lehigh Valley has grown by nearly 40,000 people. The Hispanic population has seen the largest gains of any racial or ethnic demographic – increasing by more than 48% in Lehigh County and 43% in Northampton County.

There have been significant increases in the Lehigh Valley's Black (29%) and Asian American (37%) populations as well.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/baseball-gardening-race-and-ethnicity-racial-injustice-financial-markets-9dfa08f86495471ea163a2926ebf17b4>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.wfmz.com/features/history-headlines/history-headlines-black-lives-in-the-lehigh-valley/article\\_9931ded4-09ae-11eb-b42d-3fa2c41ee28e.html#:~:text=South%20Bethlehem's%20Black%20population%20began,Valley%20Railroad%20in%20the%201850s](https://www.wfmz.com/features/history-headlines/history-headlines-black-lives-in-the-lehigh-valley/article_9931ded4-09ae-11eb-b42d-3fa2c41ee28e.html#:~:text=South%20Bethlehem's%20Black%20population%20began,Valley%20Railroad%20in%20the%201850s)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.mcall.com/news/mc-xpm-1999-04-18-3255157-story.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mcall.com/news/breaking/mc-nws-census-2020-new-data-release-20210812-jajtkq7u5c35mzfmdy7q6af5a-story.html>

# Challenges

to an  
*Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley*





*New Bethany Ministries*

**1 IN 3 SENIORS** SAY  
THEY  
**LACK COMPANIONSHIP**

**1 IN 4 SENIORS** SAY  
THEY  
**FEEL ISOLATED**  
SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC

## Social Isolation

Social isolation is a lack of social connections and can lead to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated. Social isolation is associated with a nearly four times increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization and 57% increased risk of emergency room visits. Additionally, there is an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, dementia and death. Mental health is also at a greater risk of being compromised.

Isolation can occur as a result of feeling disconnected from the larger community. Lack of access to and/or knowledge of community resources, lack of transportation, cultural and language differences, health status, physical disability and chronic illness are some of the factors that can lead to isolation. And the destructive impact of social isolation on older adults is well documented and is determined to be more harmful than smoking 15 cigarettes per day.

COVID-19 emphasized an already emerging concern about the impact of isolation on the physical and mental health of older adults. Directives to minimize activities and to shelter-in-place often left those accustomed to receiving in-home services alone and fending for themselves, while others used to managing their lives were forced to seek assistance to support basic needs such as grocery shopping. The death toll wrought by this virus coupled with a diminished social network and lack of engagement with others has caused ever increasing anxiety and depression, reduced sense of purpose and meaning and a higher risk of cognitive impairment.

A recent survey of Lehigh Valley seniors<sup>12</sup> reveals that one in three respondents report that they lack companionship, and that one in four report feeling isolated from others since the start of the pandemic. Some seniors are especially vulnerable to long-lasting loneliness, including seniors who live alone, those who are low-income and those who have difficulty meeting their basic needs.

<sup>12</sup> Lehigh Valley Seniors: Healthy Aging 2021 Update

In the wake of the pandemic, the Pennsylvania State Data Center collaborated with the Pennsylvania Population Network to create a report<sup>13</sup> to assess the risk for loneliness and social isolation among Pennsylvania seniors. Northampton (52) and Lehigh (59) counties both received an above average score indicating a higher risk of each.

- ▶ Finances, living arrangements and resource access were ranked and averaged for final scores which in turn were normalized using the total number of counties to develop a score from 1 to 100, where 1 represented a low risk for isolation and 100 represented a high risk.

Out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, both Northampton and Lehigh are at above average risk, ranking 41st and 53rd respectively, with the risk for isolation at 52 (on a scale of 1-100) for Northampton County, and 59 for Lehigh County.

## Ageism

Ageism, an everyday challenge facing older adults everywhere, is the stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of their age.<sup>14</sup> Implications of ageism include health issues, being overlooked for employment, restricted from social services and stereotyped by the media and in everyday conversation.

## Equity

The terms equality and equity are often used interchangeably, but their meanings are very different. While equality is typically defined as treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities, equity refers to proportional representation (by race, class, gender, age, etc.) in those same opportunities.

There is a noticeable disparity in access to opportunity between different racial and ethnic groups. White individuals are twice as likely to live in an area with very high opportunity compared to non-whites. While Hispanics or Latinos make up nearly one in five residents, just under 38% of the demographic group has high or very high access to opportunity compared to 79% of non-Hispanics or Latinos. This disparity stems from barriers to a variety of factors for non-white individuals.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup><https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d8bf4fdbf5454657ae5d9caf6238f32f>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.who.int/ageing/ageism/en/>

<sup>15</sup><https://lvpc.org/datalv.html>

# COVID-19

## Impact and Implications





## Health Equity Considerations

Across age brackets, COVID-19 death rates for African Americans most closely resemble the death rates of white Americans a decade older. For example, the death rate for an African American individual between 55-64 is higher than that of white persons aged 65-74, and age-specific death rates for Hispanic/Latino people fall in between.<sup>17</sup>

## Food Insecurity

Percentages of those who are food insecure are higher among those in their pre-Medicare years, as well as those who are African American or Latino, and those with lower household incomes or lower levels of education.

Following the onset of the pandemic, nonprofit organizations providing meals to seniors reported that with delivery services curtailed in some areas due to lack of volunteer drivers or changes in meal delivery strategies, it was more difficult for seniors to obtain food, and that seniors, understanding that they are at greater risk for complications from COVID-19, are hesitant to leave their homes to pick up meals or go to the grocery store.<sup>19</sup>

## Social Isolation

Many of the older adults who were already experiencing social isolation are now increasingly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic, organizations including Lehigh Valley Active Life and AmeriCorps have worked together to find ways to connect with seniors virtually. Regular telephone check-ins provide companionship and the chance to see who may need help with food, transportation or other resources, while partners assess the need for a more formal program to reach our most at-risk seniors.<sup>20</sup>

## Income Equity Considerations

For those with sufficient resources, taking the precautionary measures needed to stay healthy and safe in a pandemic is clear, but for low-income families and seniors who are food insecure, practicing safe social distancing can be a challenge, especially if they depend on group meals at senior centers or food pantries.<sup>21</sup>

With rising food costs, limited availability of products in stores and diminished access to public transportation, the pandemic has only deepened the divide for Lehigh Valley residents who are food insecure. Overall, store prices remain about 5% higher on average than they were a year ago.

Take a Senior Out  
Allentown Art Museum

**AFRICAN AMERICANS  
MAKE UP ABOUT 13% OF THE U.S.  
POPULATION.  
THEY ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY  
A QUARTER OF COVID-19-RELATED DEATHS.**<sup>16</sup>

**1 IN 7 ADULTS BETWEEN  
AGES 50-80  
WERE ALREADY  
FOOD INSECURE  
BEFORE THE PANDEMIC**<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/06/16/race-gaps-in-covid-19-deaths-are-even-bigger-than-they-appear/>

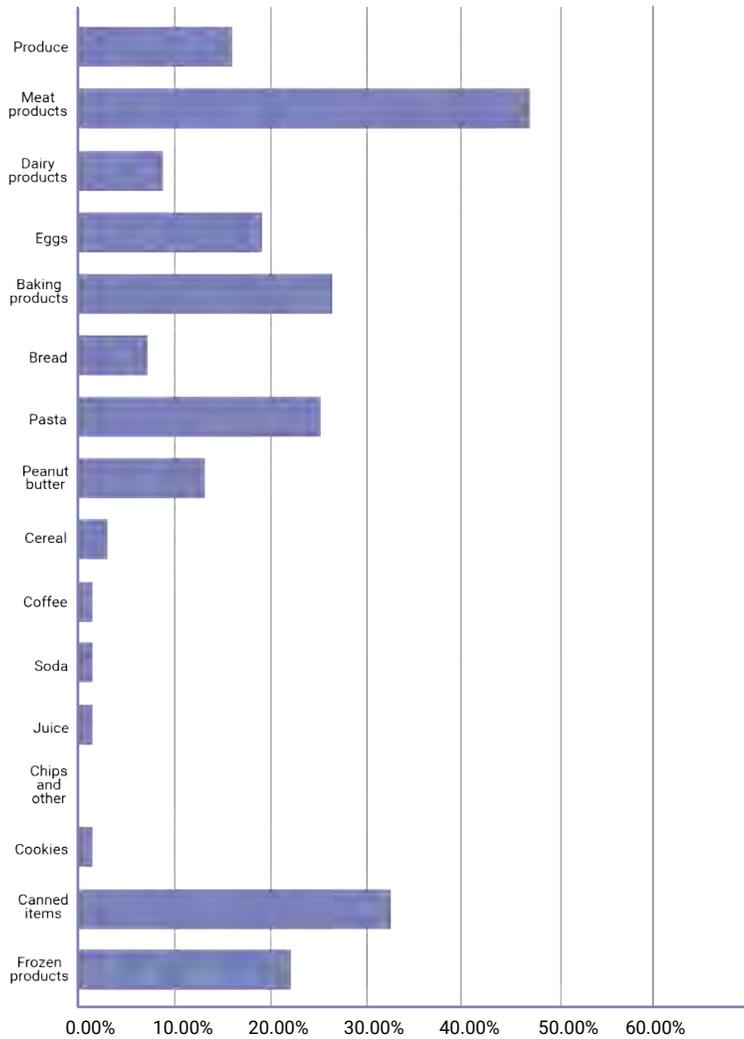
<sup>18</sup> <https://www.healthagingpoll.org/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://lvaic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/15260\\_LVAIC-State-of-the-Lehigh-Valley-Report-2019-2020.pdf](https://lvaic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/15260_LVAIC-State-of-the-Lehigh-Valley-Report-2019-2020.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unitedwayglv.org/news/may-2020/new-report-shows-one-in-six-older-adults-feel-isol>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/03/16/for-millions-of-low-income-seniors-coronavirus-is-a-food-security-issue/>

Which of the following food items has been more difficult to purchase?



"I used to find everything I needed at one or two stores. Now I find myself having to go to three, four, or even more to find the products I need, because some stores do not have the items or do not have them at reasonable prices."

-Lehigh Valley resident

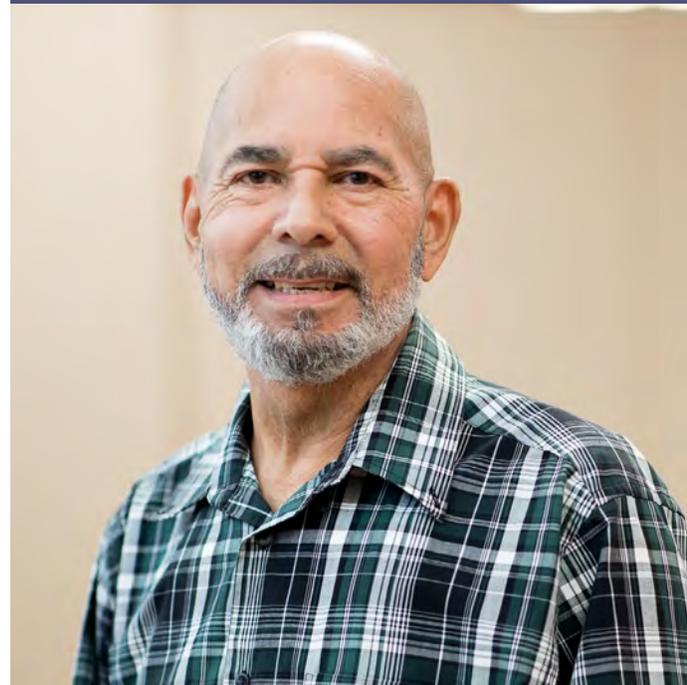
**93% OF RESIDENTS EXPERIENCED LIMITATIONS ON GROCERY STORE ITEMS AND HOURS OF OPERATION.<sup>22</sup>**

## Social Equity Lens

It is important to note that in order to achieve equity, policies and procedures may result in an unequal distribution of resources. This is especially important to consider as community leaders and organizations deal with the uncertainty and potential long-term impacts of COVID-19.

According to the Center for Disease Control,<sup>23</sup> some of the many inequities in social determinants of health that put racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19 include<sup>23</sup> :

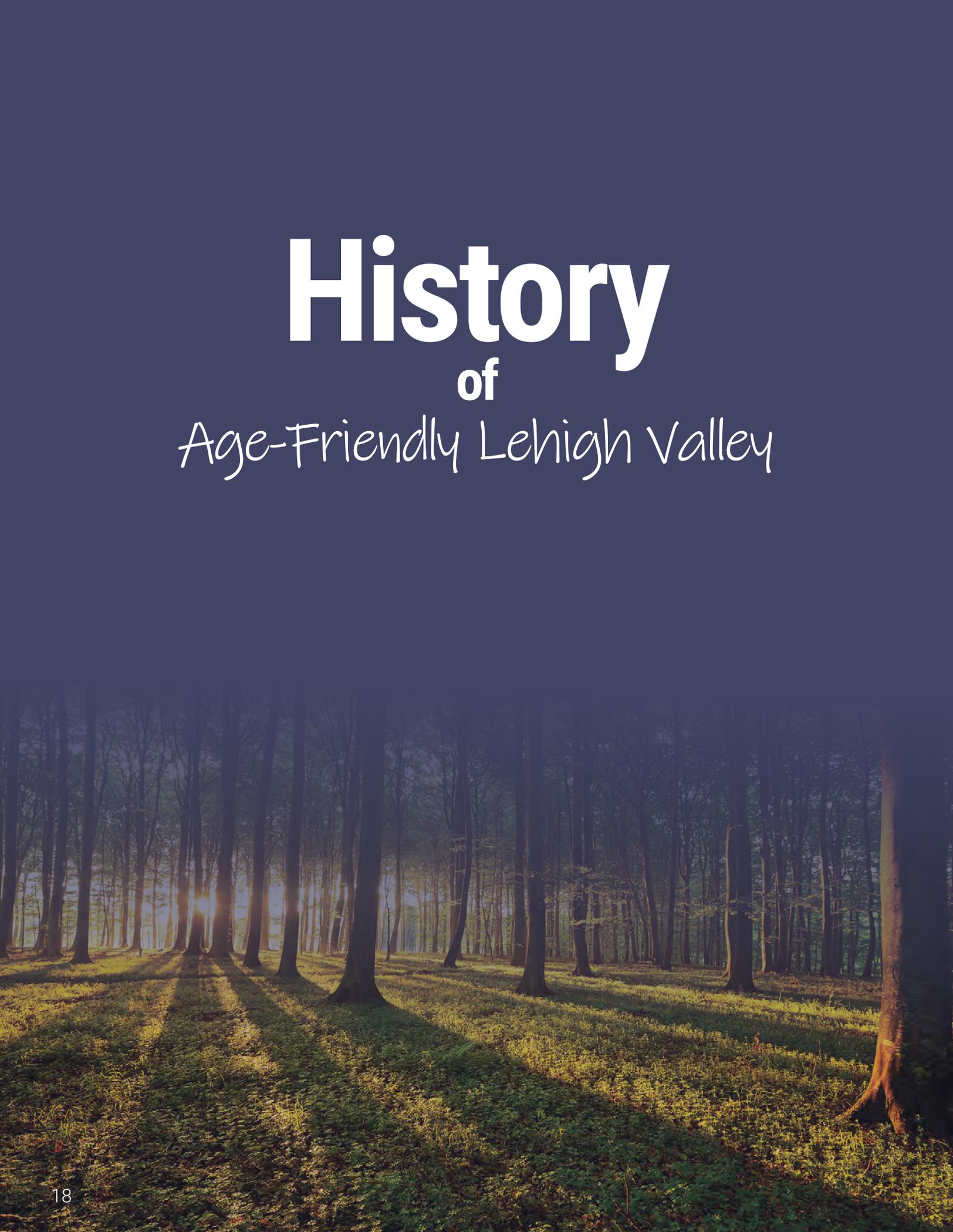
- Healthcare access and utilization
- Occupation
- Education, income and wealth gaps
- Housing



Casa Guadalupe Center

<sup>22</sup> [https://lvaic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/15260\\_LVAIC-State-of-the-Lehigh-Valley-Report-2019-2020.pdf](https://lvaic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/15260_LVAIC-State-of-the-Lehigh-Valley-Report-2019-2020.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html#anchor\\_1595551043298](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html#anchor_1595551043298)



# History of Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley

Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley evolved from the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, a nationally recognized collective impact movement of more than 300 seniors and employees at 100 for profit, nonprofit and government entities throughout the Lehigh Valley. The Alliance aimed to ensure seniors stay healthy and have a better quality of life.

Twenty years ago, the Alliance began with a mission to build a collaborative consisting of community members from various sectors to address the emerging needs of the growing older adult population. The mission and vision were rooted in ensuring that older adult needs were met and that those same older adults were at the forefront of defining the goals and implementing the strategies that would allow them to age with grace and dignity.

Today, Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley aims to take that initial vision a step further by connecting to the World Health Organization and AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This connection ensures that there is equitable and inclusive awareness and access to these various resources for all seniors. Aging in place has emerged over these last two decades as a core principle and focus of healthy aging. Older adults, here in the Lehigh Valley, as well as across the globe, indicate their preference to remain in the places where their careers flourished, they raised their families, planted their gardens, took their children to school and built their social and professional networks. Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley works to deepen this commitment to building social networks by working to ensure that all Lehigh Valley residents enjoy a vibrant, healthy quality of life.

## Data Collection

Data collection ultimately used in developing the Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley action plan began in 2015, with a phone survey of Lehigh Valley seniors, commissioned by United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and conducted by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion.<sup>24</sup> This survey provided a snapshot of the Lehigh Valley senior population, similar to the one generated in the 2014 survey and report, *Lehigh Valley Seniors Healthy at Home*.

Outreach where age-friendly was initially discussed include the first Age-Friendly Forum held in 2017, a Mayor's Roundtable, the 1st World Diabetes Day, Fall Prevention Week and several legislative senior fairs and visits.



<sup>24</sup> <http://sal.muhlenberg.edu:8080/libraryspace/bitstream/10718/3339/1/LV-Seniors-Healthy-at-Home-2015-Update.pdf>

# 2018 Age-Friendly Forum

On Tuesday, June 12, 2018, Lehigh Valley community members gathered to envision a more livable, inclusive and respectful Lehigh Valley, at the Age-Friendly Community Forum. It was then that Lehigh and Northampton counties became the first dual-counties to join the World Health Organization/AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Speakers included Lanetha Mathews-Schultz Ph.D., professor and chair of political science at Muhlenberg College; Becky Bradley, Executive Director at Lehigh Valley Planning Commission; and Joann Grossi, State President at AARP Pennsylvania. With audience participation, they identified the Lehigh Valley’s assets, challenges and possible innovations in each of the eight domains of livability.

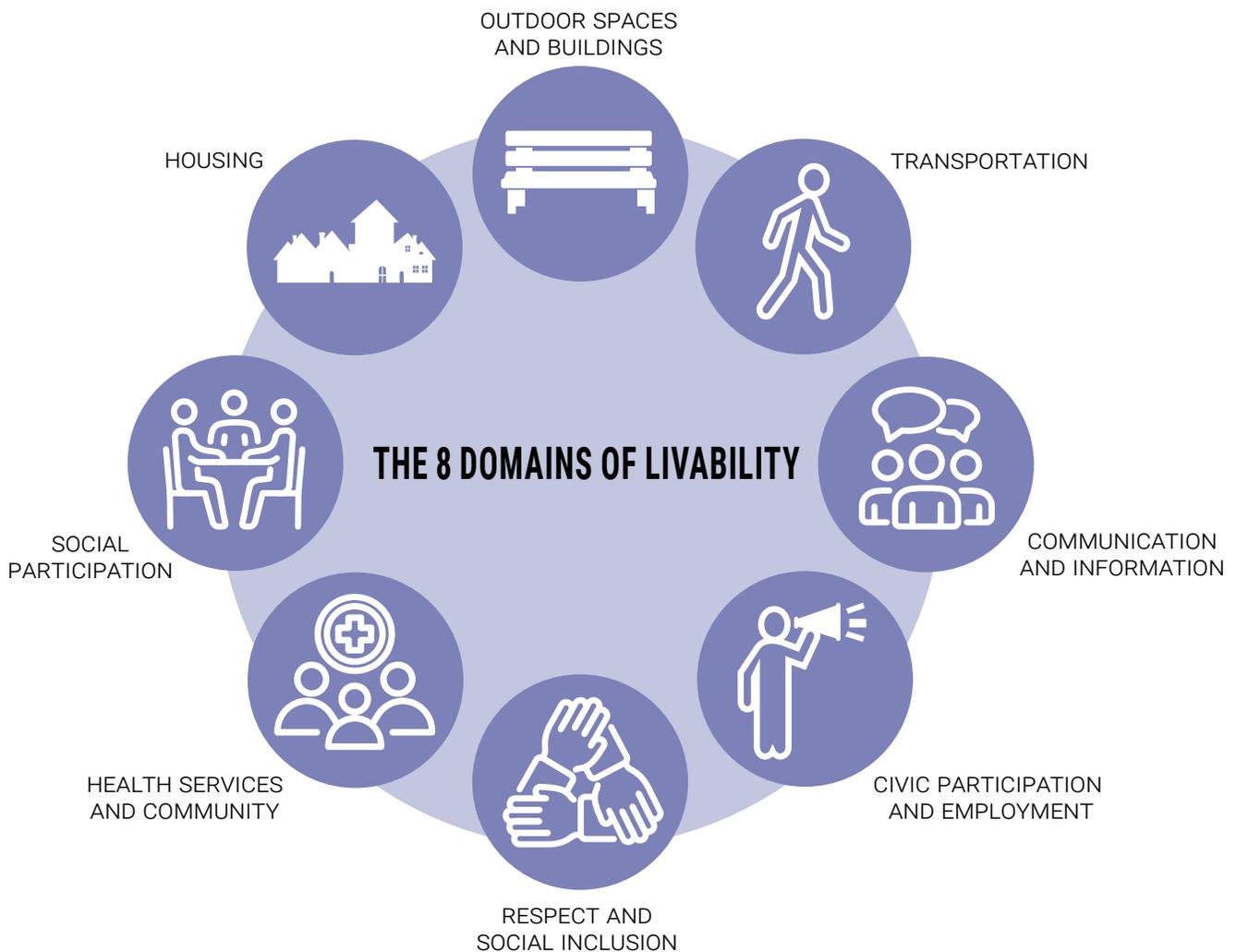
## Meetings and Outreach since the 2018

Since the 2018 forum, a series of meetings and events have happened where much of the information that shaped this plan was gathered.

For a complete list of the meetings and outreach visit <https://www.unitedwayglv.org/aflvpublications>.

## 8 Domains of Livability

The World Health Organization and AARP built a framework of domains, or key issues, used by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities to make regions more livable and inclusive for every generation.



# Key Findings



Domain	Pre-COVID-19-Needs	Post-COVID-19 Needs*
<b>Outdoor Spaces and Buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased accessibility to outdoor spaces and buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to safe points of entry to outdoor spaces and community hubs</li> <li>Touchless points of entry to buildings</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved accessibility, reliability and safety of public transportation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced and waived fares for public transportation during times of public crisis</li> <li>Safe transportation to and from medical appointments and food/grocery delivery</li> <li>Improved communication on safety measures</li> <li>Recognition of public transit operators and delivery professionals as front-line workers</li> <li>Touch-less crossing signals</li> <li>Improved accessibility and safety of public bus stops</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns over supports and barriers to aging in place include personal, economic and building/design concerns, along with a need for alternative living options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24/7 shelter services for seniors</li> <li>Financial assistance for older adults</li> </ul>
<b>Community Support, Food Security and Health Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance with barriers to health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance with barriers to health services</li> <li>Access to healthy food</li> <li>Wellness checks for seniors</li> <li>Resources, information and policy addressing the needs of families using adult day care and long-term care facilities</li> <li>Advocacy efforts to promote interaction between residents living in long-term care facilities and their families and friends</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible resources to keep seniors connected<sup>25</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible resources to keep seniors connected<sup>25</sup></li> </ul>

Domain	Pre-COVID-19-Needs	Post-COVID-19 Needs*
<b>Social Participation/ Respect and Social Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access and availability to services and activities</li> <li>• Improve access to and communication about opportunities for respectful interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs to reduce social isolation and loneliness</li> </ul>
<b>Civic Participation and Employment<sup>26</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wider variety of civic participation opportunities that support and assist with overcoming barriers to volunteering and engaging in civic matters</li> <li>• Available employment opportunities along with assistance overcoming impediments to working.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect of human rights and dignity in regard to life-saving medical care</li> <li>• Social, economic and humanitarian responses recognizing the needs of older people, particularly women who are more likely to live in poverty and without access to healthcare in older age</li> <li>• Platforms for our seniors' voices to be heard and respected</li> </ul>

\* The needs listed reflect feedback from virtual meetings and conversations that took place from April 1– October 31, 2020, as well as emerging data and post COVID-19 AARP resources.<sup>27</sup> To respond to the ever-changing needs of our community, our list of domains now varies slightly from the WHO/AARP framework:

- Combined the domain of Social Participation with the domain of Respect and Social Inclusion
- Changed Community and Health Services to Community Support, Food Security and Health Services
- Added the domain of Safety and Emergency Preparedness

<sup>25</sup><https://www.hhs.gov/blog/2020/09/10/harnessing-technology-to-address-loneliness-and-social-isolation.html>

<sup>26</sup><https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/news/2020/05/covid-19-older-persons/>

<sup>27</sup><https://covid19.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NLC-AARP-Infographic-17x11-Livability-Domains-and-COVID-19.pdf>

# Goals and Cornerstone Initiatives



# Goals

Historically, policy on aging has focused on the delivery of services to targeted individuals. In contrast, Age-Friendly community initiatives have shifted the focus from individuals to communities as a whole, with the goal to change older adults' broader physical and social environments and enhance their capacity to function optimally in their own homes and communities.<sup>28</sup>

With this shift in mind, we have crafted action items in the form of goals and cornerstone initiatives, grouped by domains of livability.

**These initiatives will be tackled with the goal of making our region more livable and inclusive for every generation by addressing key issues facing older adults, including ageism, social isolation and equity.**

## 1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Increase accessibility to the social and physical health benefits provided by parks, trails, open spaces and public buildings.

**Strategy:** Identify, map and communicate key points of access to outdoor spaces and public buildings that organically serve as gathering places and informal sources of information. Conduct walk audits.

## 2. Transportation

Increase awareness about transportation options that are in place Valley-wide, including public and private transit and ride-share. Increase safety and accessibility of public bus stops.

**Strategy:** A visible transportation services campaign that provides relevant information in multiple languages and engages the community with positive messaging about staying connected. Increase safety and accessibility of public bus stops.

## 3. Housing

Equity in access to housing for all residents.

**Strategy:** Assess the current state and develop viable solutions for equitable and affordable housing.

## 4. Civic Participation and Employment

Encourage a positive attitude toward hiring seniors and recruiting volunteers.

**Strategy:** Visibility campaign celebrating older adults and their ongoing contributions. Highlight the benefits of engaging with older adult workers and volunteers. Research attitudes on aging in the region. Create opportunities to showcase the talents of older adults.

## 5. Community Support, Food Security and Health Services

Increase awareness about healthy aging in place. Keep individuals connected with family and community. Promote expanded access to services that help ensure that residents' full range of emotional, social and physical needs are met. Increase food access.

**Strategy:** Visibility campaign for area-wide communication and policy change that supports designation of family members and friends as essential caregivers.

## 6. Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Ensure the safety and reassurance of older adults in the event of a personal or large-scale emergency.

**Strategy:** Convene an emergency preparedness coalition utilizing a cross-section of organizations and develop a plan/website.

<sup>28</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/55/2/191/658089>

# Cornerstone Initiatives

## OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Encourage and promote the benefits of walking as a path toward mindfulness, wellness and connectedness.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
Cities of Allentown Bethlehem and Easton AARP, Pennsylvania D&L Trail Various townships and boroughs in the region Lehigh Valley Berks Planners Association	• Create a AFLV walking team	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing levels of engagement</li> <li>Diverse intergenerational team</li> <li>Increased awareness of the D&amp;L trail and other outdoor spaces</li> <li>Better health outcomes</li> <li>Updates/improved safety</li> </ul>
	• Incentivize/advocate/educate	1	2	3	
	• Conduct walk audits across the region	1	2	3	
	• Create walking challenges/outdoor spaces	1	2	3	
	• Targeted outreach	1	2	3	
	• Define specific health related objectives	1	2	3	

## TRANSPORTATION

Increase awareness of the transportation opportunities in the Lehigh Valley. Enhance safety and accessibility to existing services.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority TBD Nonprofit and government agencies Lehigh Planning Commission ShareCare Faith in Action Sights for Hope	• Research current state of public bus stops and update accordingly	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive 'map' of all bus stops</li> <li>Increased accessibility and comfort</li> <li>Database of transportation options</li> <li>Increased knowledge of transportation options</li> </ul>
	• Compile resources of Lehigh Valley transportation options	1	2	3	
	• Convene stakeholders	1	2	3	
	• Plan to increase capacity and access	1	2	3	
	• Advocate for reduced/waived fares for public transportation, especially during public crisis	1	2	3	

## HOUSING

Develop affordable and equitable housing opportunities.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission RHAB Ripple Inc	• Map density of older adults by region	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable housing solutions</li> <li>Homeless connected to options</li> </ul>
	• Needs assessment	1	2	3	
	• Assess access to resources	1	2	3	
	• Engage stakeholders	1	2	3	
	• Develop long-term solutions	1	2	3	

## CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Improve the attitude of the community towards hiring and recruiting seniors.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley TBD Non profit and government agencies Workforce Board Lehigh Valley LV Reads/Talk Read Sing Phoebe Ministries	• Develop an ageism study	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness of impact/presence of ageism</li> <li>Increased employment and volunteers among older adults</li> </ul>
	• Showcase older adults sharing skills	1	2	3	
	• Create opportunities for engagement	1	2	3	

# Cornerstone Initiatives

Community Support, Food Security and Health Services

## SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS (RESPECT, INCLUSION, PARTICIPATION)

Increase the social networks of older adults.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
TBD Non profit and government agencies Community Faith based leaders SeniorCorps RSVP PA Council on Aging Arts Quest PA Council on the Arts Local area seniors centers Adult day centers	• Visitation calls	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased social connection</li> <li>Increased connectedness</li> <li>Increased access to information/resources</li> <li>Increase neighborhood engagement</li> <li>Increase intergenerational volunteer opportunities</li> <li>Increased knowledge of solutions that work</li> <li>Increased knowledge of the impact of social isolation</li> <li>Increase social networks and community engagement</li> </ul>
	• Senior Connection bags distributed quarterly	1	2	3	
	• Define/plan community hubs	1	2	3	
	• Offer caregiver webinars and resources	1	2	3	
	• Community Ambassadors established	1	2	3	
	• Build capacity of volunteer groups	1	2	3	
	• Align with statewide social isolation initiatives and gather data	1	2	3	
	• Individuals take individual steps to increase connectedness	1	2	3	
	• Letter and card writing	1	2	3	

## HEALTH EQUITY AND FOOD ACCESS

Increase access to affordable healthcare. Increase access to nutritious and healthy food choices.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
LV Diabetes Coalition Chronic Illness Talk Force Dementia Friendly LV Fall Prevention Lv Casa Oasis Meals on Wheels Food Pantry LVHN STLUHN Allentown Health Bureau Bethlehem Health Bureau Resilience LV Kellyn Foundation	• Educate and build awareness about fall prevention, diabetes and dementia	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness, access and wellness</li> <li>Increased awareness</li> <li>Increased</li> <li>Access to healthy food during public health or other emergency situations</li> </ul>
	• Needs assessment/data collection	1	2	3	
	• Increase access to equitable affordable healthcare	1	2	3	
	• Build capacity of delivery services	1	2	3	
	• Support the work of local hospital networks	1	2	3	
	• Support increased access to SNAP	1	2	3	
	• Educate older adults on benefits of SNAP	1	2	3	
	• Convene stakeholders; gather data	1	2	3	
	• Develop strategies for key partnership opportunities	1	2	3	
	• Increase access to healthy foods through mobile markets and grocery/pantry delivery	1	2	3	
• Develop food access emergency plan	1	2	3		

## DEMENTIA AWARENESS

Educate community about dementia. Support the dementia Friendly LV coalition.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
Dementia Friendly LV AARP PA Alzheimer's Association Deleware Valley Chapter LVHN STLUHN Bethlehem Health Bureau Allentown Health Bureau Resilience LV	• Increased dementia training for healthcare workers including doctors	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to earlier diagnosis and care</li> <li>• Increased awareness and acceptance</li> <li>• Increased sustainable support for caregivers</li> <li>• Increased awareness on the impact to caregivers and families</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate</li> <li>• Caregivers and those with dementia are welcomed and engaged</li> </ul>
	• Community conversations/culturally related materials developed	1	2	3	
	• Increase numbers of LV Dementia friends	1	2	3	
	• Support and train caregiver facilitators	1	2	3	
	• Develop Dementia Friendly LV toolkit	1	2	3	
	• Develop dementia friendly spaces	1	2	3	
	• Create and build DFLV newsletter and website	1	2	3	

## COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Establish communication strategies to increase access to useful, relevant information; AFLV becomes information resource.

Proposed Partners	Objective	Year			Outcome/Measure
TBD nonprofit agencies Catholic Charities AARP PA	• Build and release website	1	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase connection to resources and other opportunities</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate</li> </ul>
	• Identify needs	1	2	3	
	• Distribute materials in spanish	1	2	3	
	• Partner with other agencies	1	2	3	
	• Disseminate information	1	2	3	
	• Increase access to information for the visially and hearing impaired	1	2	3	
	• Continue to explore options to increase accessibility for populations of concern	1	2	3	

# Thank You



# Thank You to Our Partners

AARP Pennsylvania  
Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley Steering Committee  
Allentown Art Museum  
Allentown Community Ambassadors  
Allentown Health Bureau  
Allentown Vision 2030  
Alzheimer's Assn Delaware Valley Chapter  
Americorps VISTA  
Arts Quest / Banana Factory  
Bethlehem Health Bureau  
Bethlehem YWCA  
Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center  
Casa Guadalupe Center  
Casa Oasis  
Catholic Charities  
Cities Of Allentown, Bethlehem, And Easton  
Dementia Friendly Lehigh Valley  
Lehigh Valley Diabetes Coalition  
Disability Friendly Lehigh Valley  
D&L Trail  
Easton Area Neighborhood Center  
Fall Prevention Coalition  
Fleming Foundation  
Fund For Racial And Social Justice  
Greater Easton Development Partnership  
Greater Valley YMCA  
Hispanic Center Of The Lehigh Valley  
Interns – Rutgers, Penn State, LCCC, East Stroudsburg University  
Kellyn Foundation  
Jewish Family Service Of The Lehigh Valley  
Lehigh And Northampton Transportation Authority  
Lehigh County Area Agency On Aging  
Lehigh County Department Of Community  
And Economic Development  
Lehigh Valley Active Life  
Lehigh Valley Aging In Place  
Lehigh Valley Association Of Independent Colleges  
Lehigh Valley Center For Independent Living  
Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council  
Lehigh Valley Health Network  
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission  
Lehigh Valley Reads  
Meals On Wheels Of The Greater Lehigh Valley  
Muhlenberg Institute Of Public Opinion  
Northampton County Area Agency On Aging  
Pennsylvania Council on Aging  
Pennsylvania Department of Health  
Phoebe Institute On Aging Advisory Council  
Phoebe Ministries  
Pinebrook Family Answers  
Project Lifesaver/Silver Alert  
Promise Neighborhood Lehigh Valley  
Reciprocity Llc  
Resilient Lehigh Valley  
RHAB  
Ripple Community Inc.  
Savvy Caregiver/Dr. Ken Hepburn  
Sharecare Faith In Action  
Senior Corps RSVP  
Sights For Hope  
St. Luke's University Hospital Network  
United Way Of The Greater Lehigh Valley  
United Way Worldwide Aging Advisory Council  
Volunter Center Of Lehigh Valley  
Workforce Lehigh Valley  
State Senator Pat Browne  
Senator Bob Casey  
Congresswoman Susan Wild  
State Representative Steve Samuelson  
County Executive Phillips Armstrong  
County Executive Lamont McClure  
State Representative Mike Schlossberg  
State Representative Peter Schweyer

## Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley Leadership Team

The Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley Leadership Team is a mix of community leaders who volunteer their time to engage the Lehigh Valley in the Age-Friendly Communities Program under the direction and leadership of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. Committee members work together to expand awareness of opportunities for residents to voice their opinions on age-friendly efforts. This committee also assists with the oversight, creation and implementation of the Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley Action Plan and will collect feedback in preparation for the next steps.



Scan the QR code for a full list of team members and community partners.



**Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley**

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