

AARP Age- Friendly Cheshire, CT Action Plan



August 2024

Town of Cheshire, CT

AARP Age- Friendly Community Action Plan

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Introduction

In 2022, under the leadership of the Youth and Human Services-Senior Living Subcommittee and the Cheshire Senior Center, the Town of Cheshire, CT pursued its membership in the AARP Age-Friendly Network. As a result of this commitment, the AARP Age-Friendly Subcommittee was formed. This group of stakeholders including town businesses and agencies, town departments, and community members has advanced this mission of making the Town of Cheshire, CT more age-friendly and accessible to all its community members.

The Age-Friendly Cheshire, CT Action Plan is based on feedback from the information gathering process including our Community Survey, Listening Sessions, Committee Meetings and Focus Groups. The AARP- Age Friendly Committee has engaged individuals, groups, and communities throughout this process and has been meeting quarterly to evaluate the feedback received, to look at this information objectively, to explore areas for growth and improvement, and to create this Action Plan. This is the Town of Cheshire, CT's first five-year cycle, which began in 2022. We hope to achieve the goals outlined in this Action Plan by 2027 and to use this initial five-year cycle as our launching pad for continuous growth and improvement.

Community Partnerships and Collaborations

The AARP Age-Friendly Committee is about community partnerships. This is a group of stakeholders including town businesses and agencies, town departments, and community members. The mission of this group is to bring a voice to all members of our community and provide the highest possible quality of life to all community members, while creating comprehensive programs and services, livable spaces and maximize the ability to age in place. As we moved through this process the group has evolved into this present committee with members representing the following stakeholders:

- Cheshire Senior Center and Transportation Services
- Cheshire Town Manager's Office
- Cheshire Public Library
- Cheshire Parks and Recreation Department
- Cheshire Housing Authority
- Cheshire Police Department
- Cheshire Human Services
- Cheshire Community YMCA
- Cheshire Senior Center Membership and Community Members
- Hartford Healthcare
- Elim Park Baptist Home
- Constellation Homecare and Hospice
- Chesprocott Health District
- Whitney Rehabilitation and Care Center
- Cheshire Junior Women's Club
- Sustainable Cheshire

Community Profile

Characteristics of Cheshire, Connecticut

Demographics

Livable Community Score: 52

Total Population:

29,017

- **Black/African American: 4%**
- **Asian American: 7%**
- **Hispanic/Latino: 5%**
- **White: 80%**
- **American Indian/Alaska Native: <1%**
- **Age 50+: 44%**
- **Age 65+: 20%**
- **% of the population with a disability: 9%**
- **Life Expectancy: 82 years old**
- **Households Without a Vehicle: 4%**
- **Median Household Income: \$124,345**
- **% of the population with income below poverty: 3%**

Source:

<https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/search/Cheshire,%20Connecticut,%20United%20States>

Timeline

2022 – 2024 Assessment and Planning Phases

The Town of Cheshire, CT applied for membership in the AARP Age - Friendly Network and was granted Membership August 31, 2022:

This initiative was led by the Town of Cheshire Youth and Human Services – Senior Living Subcommittee and the Cheshire Senior Center. From these groups, the AARP Age-Friendly Committee was formed and began the survey process, held listening sessions, focus groups, and fostered an environment of open communication between stakeholders including town businesses and agencies, town departments, and community members.

Survey Process: Surveys were launched town-wide on February 13, 2023, and closed on March 27, 2023. These surveys were made available to all town residents ages 45 and older. Residents were made aware of the survey process through town-wide marketing campaigns, including press- releases, paper and electronic newsletters, websites, social media, and in-person meetings and discussions. To capture the largest audience, both paper and digital surveys were made available and paper survey collection sites were set up throughout the town. The goal was to receive 300 completed surveys. This goal was exceeded, and we received 505 completed surveys. Attached is a snapshot of the survey participants' demographics.

Participant Demographics: Results are based on 505 survey responses

What is your age?

- 72% of respondents were above the age of 64: Majority between 64 and 80 years old

What is your gender?

- 26% male: 73% female: 1% non-binary

What is your race?

- 96% of respondents were White or Caucasian

What is your current marital status?

- 67% of respondents were married or living with a partner
- 33% of respondents were separated, divorced, widowed, or never married

What was your annual household income before taxes in 2022?

- 54% of households had an annual income that was less than \$100,000
- 46% of households had an annual income that was greater than \$100,000

Besides, you, do you have any of the following people living in your household?

- 19% of respondents said yes to living with one or more of the following
 - Child/children under 18
 - Child/children 18 or older
 - Child/children away at college
 - Parents
 - Other adult relative or friend 18 or older

In general, how would you rate your health?

- 93% of respondents said good, very good, or excellent

Does any disability, handicap, or chronic disease keep you or your spouse or partner from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities?

- 24% of respondents said yes

Are you currently a family caregiver providing unpaid care to an adult loved one to help them take care of themselves?

- 15% of respondents are caregivers

How likely is it that you will provide unpaid care to an adult loved one in the future?

- 54% of respondents said somewhat, very, or extremely likely

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 54% of respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher

The survey results have been published on the both the Town and Senior Center websites and shared with our Town Council.

Listening Sessions: Formal listening sessions were held at the Cheshire Senior Center. The first session was held on October 22, 2022, and the second session was held on January 30, 2023. During these sessions, attendees were introduced to the AARP Age-Friendly mission, notified about the upcoming survey process, and encouraged to actively participate in open dialogue and discussions. These larger formal Listening Sessions paved the way for smaller focus group meetings that are held monthly at the Cheshire Senior Center. Community members are encouraged to attend these open focus group meetings and ask questions. These monthly focus group meetings will continue throughout the process.

Creating and Developing an Action Plan: The AARP Age-Friendly Committee has been meeting quarterly. This group is constantly evolving, inviting new stakeholders including town businesses and agencies, town departments, and community members. All are encouraged to join and participate in this group. This committee has been evaluating the information gathered from the town wide survey, listening sessions, and focus groups and assessing our areas of strength and our need for growth. This has been done in a domain specific format and the following action plan is a result of the process that has taken place over the last two years.

Action Plan by Domain

Communication and Information

As a result of the survey findings and listening sessions, it was made clear that community members have limited knowledge of the resources available to them. Also, some community members do not feel comfortable using technology and have difficulty accessing information due to their limited knowledge.

Plan: Create a Comprehensive Resource Booklet for town residents available in both print and electronic formats. This booklet will be updated at regular intervals.

Goal Date: 2024 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Cheshire Senior Center

Plan: Create a more technology friendly environment and increase user confidence through both individual and group training at the Cheshire Public Library, Cheshire Senior Center, and Cheshire Housing Authority.

Goal Date: 2025 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Cheshire Public Library, Cheshire Senior Center, and Cheshire Housing Authority

Transportation

Over the past two years our ADA transportation utilization for our older and disabled people has increased over 40%. This increased utilization has encouraged us to look at our fleet of vehicles and evaluate our ability to provide more community members with safe and effective transportation services.

Plan: Continue to evaluate the transportation needs of our community and acquire new vehicles through the State of CT DOT 5310 Grant Program and ARPA funds. Also, maintain membership with Greater Waterbury Transit District to provide greater regional access for our community members. Distribute this information through electronic and paper newsletters, resource booklets, and social media to educate community members about transportation options and resources.

Goal Date: 2024 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Cheshire Human Services and Cheshire Senior Center

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Outdoor spaces and buildings are utilized by community members and accessibility is an area to explore for older community members and community members with disabilities. The addition of walking paths and park benches can make these areas more accessible.

Plan: Continue renovation of Bartlem Park to create an inclusive gathering space and programming for all community members, including summer concerts, festivals, and activities.

Goal Date: 2027

Responsibility of: Cheshire Town Manager's Office and Cheshire Parks and Recreation.

Housing

Questions regarding housing options for older and disabled people within the community and the ability to age safely in place have been a topic of discussion in our listening sessions, focus groups, and our community survey.

Plan: A restructuring is taking place within the Human Services Department to help address this need. The Senior Center keeps an active housing inquiry list to inform community members when senior and lower income housing options become available. Construction and structural updates are actively taking place at Cheshire Housing Authority. Additionally, the Town is actively participating in the newly created Hope for Our Community, a 501(c)3 that will bring together organizations, individuals, and resources from our community to combat housing insecurity with referrals and direct assistance.

Goal Date: 2024 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Town Manager's Office, Cheshire Human Services, Cheshire Senior Center, and Cheshire Housing Authority.

Social Participation

Programs and services are offered across departments and agencies that provide and encourage social participation. However, with increased concerns regarding caregiving and social isolation, and its impact on both mental and physical health, growth in this area can come in the form of outreach.

Plan: Continue community programs that are adjusted and adapted with the changing needs of the community with a focus on evidenced- based programs, home visits, support and educational groups, and a telephone outreach program for isolated individuals.

Goal Date: 2024 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Cheshire Human Services, Cheshire Senior Center, Cheshire Parks and Recreation, Cheshire Public Library and Cheshire Community YMCA.

Health Services and Community Supports

Access to health services and community support is vital for individuals to age in place. Access to these services comes in various forms, including transportation to medical appointments and facilities, health screenings, vaccination clinics, insurance counseling, proper medication disposal, and ongoing community education.

Plan: Meet the above listed concerns by providing transportation services, free comprehensive health screening programs and vaccination clinics, CHOICES certified counseling, an accessible medication disposal program, and evidence-based programming.

Goal Date: 2024 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Cheshire Human Services, Cheshire Senior Center, Cheshire Police Department, Chesprocott Health District, and Cheshire Community YMCA.

Respect and Social Inclusion

The intersection of aging and disability needs to be explored along with other identities and groups that individuals relate or belong to. Creating inclusive policies, celebrating differences and a welcoming community, allows individuals to feel valued as a member of their community and encourages dialogue to create awareness and change.

Plan: Awareness and education programs for town committees and departments, and local businesses about topics including Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease, ADA accommodations, Elder Abuse and Elderly Protective Services, Public Safety, Emergency Preparedness, and the LGBTQ+ Community. Continued membership and collaboration with LGBTQ+ Movable Senior Center Initiative, The Connecticut Healthy Collective, and The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative.

Goal Date: 2024 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Town Manager's Office, Cheshire Human Services, Cheshire Senior Center, Cheshire Police Department, Chesprocott Health District.

Civic Participation and Employment

Civic participation is encouraged through town committees, private initiatives, and volunteerism. Cheshire Senior Center is partnered with the volunteer organization UR Community Cares to provide intergenerational volunteer services to help meet the needs of older and disabled people. Additionally, town departments and partners, including the Cheshire Senior Center, Cheshire Public Library, Cheshire Parks and Recreation, Chesprocott and Cheshire Community YMCA provide volunteer opportunities for our community members. In completing the survey process and through our listening sessions and focus groups, a need for skill building employment education programs is an area to explore.

Plan: Continue partnership with UR Community Cares and enhance volunteer opportunities. Additionally, create job training programs and opportunities for older and disabled people, including resume building and technology training.

Goal Date: 2025 and ongoing

Responsibility of: Cheshire Senior Center, Cheshire Public Library, Cheshire Parks and Recreation, Chesprocott, and Cheshire Community YMCA

Summary of Action Plan Activities for the Town of Cheshire, CT

	Communication & Information	Transportation	Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	Housing	Social Participation	Health Services & Community Supports	Respect & Social Inclusion	Civic Participation & Employment
Senior Center	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Town Manager's Office	X		X	X			X	
Public Library	X				X			X
Parks & Recreation Department	X		X		X			X
Housing Authority	X			X				
Police Department	X					X	X	
YMCA	X				X	X		X
Health District	X					X	X	X
Human Services	X	X		X	X	X	X	

Appendix



**TOWN OF CHESHIRE
CHESHIRE SENIOR CENTER**

**240 Maple Avenue, CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT 06410
Telephone (203) 272-8286 FAX (203) 272-6296**

August 15, 2024

Dear Cheshire Community,

The AARP Age-Friendly Committee is pleased to present the Cheshire, CT action plan. The plan is a thoughtful, inclusive, and comprehensive approach to ensuring our community's older and disabled adults have an adaptable, vibrant, and responsive environment in which to live and thrive. Finding ways to enhance our transportation options, information and referral systems, health and community support, and decrease social isolation for those over 50 years of age are just a few of the priorities of this plan. The AARP Age-Friendly Committee is committed to this community and recognizes the importance of aging in place.

The plan is a culmination of working with and listening to the older and disabled people in our community and learning what they want as well as what they need to age in place. With over a dozen community partners, the Age-Friendly Committee is focusing on meeting these needs. The Age-Friendly process provides a wealth of opportunities for us to learn and engage in an existing environment and improve the lives of the older and disabled people who live in this community.

We are doing this work knowing that not only will it benefit all older and disabled people, but every person who wishes to age in place.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Theroux, LCSW, CDP

Stefanie Theroux, LCSW, CDP

Coordinator of Senior Services

Municipal Agent for the Elderly



**TOWN OF CHESHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT 06410
Telephone (203) 271-6690 FAX (203) 271-6626

August 15, 2024

Dear Cheshire Community,

The Cheshire Human Services Department is proud to support the AARP Age-Friendly Committee's Cheshire, CT action plan. This plan has been carefully developed in collaboration with local community agencies, municipal departments, and the older and disabled people in our community. Over the past year through community conversations, surveys, and individual interviews we have explored ways to enhance our transportation options, information and referral systems, health, and community support, and to decrease social isolation for our older adults. The AARP Age-Friendly Committee is committed to the Cheshire community and has made facilitating aging in place for our older residents a priority.

Through promoting civic engagement services and opportunities, raising awareness around respect for others and social inclusion, increasing access to health services and community supports, addressing housing insecurity, encouraging social participation, responding to the increased need for transportation services, and increasing accessibility to outdoor spaces and buildings we are ensuring that the Town of Cheshire is an age friendly and accessible place for all community members.

Sincerely,

Michelle Piccerillo

Michelle Piccerillo, MS, LMFT

Human Services Director

Town of Cheshire

TOWN OF CHESHIRE



Arnett Talbot, Assistant Town Manager
84 South Main Street, Cheshire, CT 06410
Tel: 203 271-6660 ♦ Fax: 203 271-6639
Email: atalbot@cheshirect.org

August 20, 2024

Dear Cheshire Community,

On behalf of myself and the Town Manager, I am pleased to offer our full support of the AARP Age-Friendly Committee's Cheshire CT Action Plan. Developed with the inclusion and input of all stakeholders, this plan provides a well designed roadmap to achieve our community objectives to support our senior residents in all areas, including housing, transportation, socialization, and accessibility.

We are confident that the implementation of this plan will ensure that not only is Cheshire an age-friendly place to live, it is also a place that enhances the quality of life for our older community members and confirms their value to our society.

We commend the ongoing work of the AARP Age-Friendly Committee and their critical efforts to meet the needs of our older residents, and we reiterate our support for this Action Plan.

Regards,

Arnett Talbot

Arnett Talbot
Assistant Town Manager