

Age Friendly Windham is a committee of dedicated volunteers working to help members in the community to live and age in place and is dedicated to maintaining the independence of our town's residents and helping them thrive. Our mission is to:

- Partner with local and regional organizations and volunteer groups to increase services and programs that make it possible for residents of all ages and abilities to live and thrive in Windham.
- Provide activities geared toward keeping people healthy, active, and engaged in our community.
- Advise the Windham Town Council about infrastructure and policy that will make it easier and safer for Windham residents to live in our community.

As an Age-Friendly community, we are committed to “organize and prioritize our work to become more livable for both older residents and people of all ages”. The AARP 8-Domains of Livability (which include social participation and inclusion, community support, communication, respect, and access to health care) are addressed in this Action Plan.

Age Friendly Windham was established in January 2019 as a subcommittee of the Town of Windham Human Services Advisory Committee. One of our first tasks was to create and organize three ‘town hall’ type meetings and listening sessions to introduce the concept of “Age-Friendly” and to hear from community members regarding what they deemed would be a superior age-friendly community.

From those gatherings, the committee then created a town-wide survey that was posted on Town websites and in The Windham Eagle newspaper. From that survey, it was clarified that transportation and affordable housing were the two greatest concerns. With the guidance of AARP (and the grant monies received by them), the committee presented before the Town Council the need for an official AARP Age-Friendly Community.

It was voted upon and granted by the Council that Windham would be a part of AARP's Age-Friendly Community, and thus Age-Friendly Windham began officially. The progress from 2019 until the present has been a slow one due to setbacks. It is without surprise that the pandemic played a major role in this setback but it is important to mention that our greatest advocate and leader of the group, Deb McAfee, passed away in May 2022 after a long battle with cancer. Without her leadership, it took the committee a while to “steer the ship”, but alas, we are now well on our way to becoming a true Age-Friendly community that is integrative, collaborative, and intergenerational.

A Community Project Coordinator was recently hired and is taking on the tasks of the Action Plan. The coordinator will work April 2023– September 2023 at which time we hope to have other funding in place to continue the work. Americorps, Americorps VISTA, other local grant

opportunities, as well as a municipally funded position will all be explored. The town and our committee are invested in this work and want to find consistent funding. The timing of this grant is a perfect match for our goal of having a staff person to broaden and strengthen our Committee while working toward projects identified in our Action Plan.

Windham is a vibrant, growing community of 18,000 located in Cumberland County 10 miles northwest of Portland, and is considered the gateway to the Sebago Lakes Region. Windham has become increasingly diverse. Immigrants and refugees from countries around the world have found a home here. Our town welcomes all people and all are treated equally regardless of income, race, sex, religion, national origin, presence of children, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected class. Services and programs seek to include all who make this their home.

The US Census Bureau estimates that Windham's population as of July 1, 2021, is 18,761 and that 13.8 percent of the population is 65 and over. Per Capita income is approximately \$40,000 annually. There is a unique mixture of recreational areas, shopping, dining, and important historical sites operated by the Windham Historical Society. Walking and biking trails are also available for all ages and capabilities.

Windham is also unique in that it has an ultra-local, positive and solutions-based weekly newspaper, The Windham Eagle, that is owned by a Windham business person and is mailed directly to all residents of Windham and its neighboring town, Raymond. It is through this weekly newspaper that many individuals who are 65 and older read and gain information about what is occurring in their community.

Windham is often listed as one of the fastest-growing communities in the state. This growth correlates with the growth of the senior population, many residents are requiring additional services that the Age Friendly Windham group can help support. Currently, there are three Avesta Housing communities in Windham that provide affordable housing to seniors with low or fixed incomes. We are currently coordinating with Westbrook Housing on increasing access to affordable housing in the community to reduce the wait list timeline. Anyone living in one of those communities qualifies for the senior scholarship program administered by Windham Social Services for residents participating in Windham Parks and Recreation programs.

Since it was officially established, Age-Friendly Windham has grown in a collaborative effort that includes many Town Departments such as the Windham Police Department, Parks and Recreation, and the Windham Public Library. We also work closely in collaboration with Gorham/Windham/Westbrook Triad - an organization where senior citizens work with Healthcare business partners and law enforcement agencies, Sebago Lakes Region Fuller Center for Housing, a local non-profit that repairs homes for older citizens, St. Joseph College of Maine,

Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Lake Region Senior Center, Regional Transportation System (meeting in September to discuss additional ways to collaborate), and of course, AARP.

The town of Windham also offers a variety of programs that assist older adults and others in the community that need help in various ways. Four local churches work together to provide a free weekly community for all area residents. Many town residents benefit or volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program, and the town offers a weekly shopping trip provided by Parks and Recreation. The Windham Primary School participates in the Grandparent Program through Opportunity Alliance. Also offered is a Wednesday morning coffee gathering for area veterans at the Veterans' Center. There is also a walking program located indoors at Windham High School through the Adult Education program.

Currently, there are many projects in the works, thanks to the help of our new paid Project Coordinator: We are reaching out to the youth in our community that includes scout clubs and the Windham High School Key Club for intergenerational support and learning. We are also talking with Adult Education and the Katahdin Program, a youth alternative education program. Although a couple of years in the making, there are plans for a community center that will provide space for many social and intergenerational opportunities (pending the new building of a middle school.)

Also, we are working with the local Director of Windham Economic Development Corporation to include our business community in the age-friendly initiative, with a goal toward helping local businesses give access and opportunity to all citizens. We have begun exploring transportation options to include the expansion of medical transportation for residents unable to drive or without access to transportation.

The Age Friendly Windham Committee includes several Town of Windham staff members, staff members from other local entities, representatives from community organizations and volunteer community members.- Current committee members include:

Chair – Lorraine Glowczak, Sebago Lakes Region Fuller Center for Housing

Erica Bell-Watkins - Age Friendly Windham Project Coordinator

Jennifer Alvino Wood, Windham Public Library Director

Tom Bartell, Windham Economic Development Director

Tom Nash, Director of Windham/Raymond Adult Education

Kate Brix, Community Member

Linda Brooks, Windham Parks and Recreation Director

Mark Bryant, Community Member

Rene Daniel, Windham General Assistance Administrator
Marge Govoni, Human Services Advisory Committee
Jean Grant, Human Services Advisory Committee
Amanda Lessard, Windham Planning Director
Mark Morrison, Windham Town Council
Mike Swisko, Community Member, Secretary
Annie Swisko, Community Member
Kathy Kirkpatrick, Community Member
Mary Ann Lawton, Community Member
Mary Hadlock, Southern Maine Agency on Aging
Elizabeth Campbell, Human Services Advisory Committee
Buffy Houpp, Windham/Westbrook/Gorham Triad
Patricia Buck, Windham Police Department
Captain Jason Burke, Windham Police Department
Nick Kalogerakis, Windham Town Council
Nancy Gordon,

Highlights from our Action Plan

OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Goal: INCREASE ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACES

Example: Check compliance of local businesses with ADA accessibility

Successes: Pavilion at Community Park

TRANSPORTATION

Goal: INCREASE ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY OF LOCAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Example: Volunteer Ride Program

Successes: Community Project Coordinator hired

HOUSING

Goal: HELP CITIZENS REMAIN SAFELY IN THEIR HOME AND/OR ESTABLISH SENIOR HOUSING

Example: Work with organizations to facilitate simple home repairs I.e., weatherization

Successes: Advertise Senior Property Tax Assistance program

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Goal: TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERGENERATIONAL SOCIAL INTERACTION

Example: Provide transportation and scholarships for Adult Ed and Parks & Rec Programming

Successes: Well-utilized Senior Scholarship Program overseen by Town of Windham Social Services; Parks & Rec Thursday Shopping Trips

RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Goal: LAUNCH INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECTS

Example: Coordinate with Community to set up regular occurring events

Successes: Weekly & Monthly trips through Parks & Recreation

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Goal: INSURE THAT PEOPLE OF ALL AGES PARTICIPATE IN VOTING, PUBLIC MEETINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK.

Example: Connect local businesses with potential older employees

Successes: Provide thorough voting information through League of Women Voters"

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Goal: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF AGE FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Example: Increase participation & access to information

Successes: Increase Public awareness of programs and website

COMMUNITY & HEALTH SERVICES

Goal: INCREASE COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS THAT PROMOTE AGING IN PLACE

Example: Wellness Fair

Successes: Movement classes & activities through Parks & Recreation as well as Adult education