ACTIONS PLAN
Age Friendly South Portland
2021-2022

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Acknowledgements

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Finally, and as always, we are grateful for our committee members, the City Council and City departments, as well as our many partners, supporters, volunteers, and residents for their continued advice, feedback, and encouragement of our mission. Their support does not go unnoticed as we aim to build – and maintain – a city in which all ages can thrive.
Letter of Support

October 15, 2021

Noël Bonam,
Director, AARP Maine
53 Baxter Boulevard, Suite 202
Portland, ME 04101

Age Friendly South Portland (AFSP), an official committee of the City of South Portland, has made monumental strides in improving the lives of seniors in our community, and in turn making the city a better place for us all to live. The South Portland City Council is in full support of the projects in which AFSP has engaged to help both the aging and wider communities.

Highlights of the groups work include programs like the "Sand Buckets for Seniors" and the "Golden Shovel Program" which help seniors stay in their homes.

Misha C. Pride

Mayor and City Councilor
District 3, City of South Portland
Executive Summary

About Age Friendly South Portland

On August 21, 2017, the South Portland City Council voted unanimously to create an Ad hoc Senior Citizens Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) to ensure that the city’s older adult residents “have access to services and infrastructure enabling them to live safely and with dignity as they age.”

The Committee first convened on September 12, 2017. As its initial task, the group was provided with $6,000 to conduct a needs assessment of residents ages 65 years and older. Based on collected survey and focus group data, the Committee identified existing programs available to older adults as well as gaps between needs and services across AARP’s “Eight Domains of Livability:” (1) Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, (2) Transportation, (3), Housing, (4) Social Participation, (5) Respect and Social Inclusion, (6) Work and Civic Engagement, (7) Communication and Information, and (8) Community and Health Services. As a result, the Committee developed a comprehensive strategy including a set of key recommendations on how to bolster existing and develop new ways to improve older adult residents’ capacities to thrive as they age. For more information on the Committee’s findings, please see its Report of Findings & Recommendations (the “Report”).

These findings and recommendations were subsequently reported to the South Portland City Council. Furthermore, on January 22, 2019, the Mayor proclaimed State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020 as “The Year of Senior Residents.” As part of this recognition and receipt of the Committee’s Report, the City Council formally established the Ad Hoc Senior Steering Implementation Committee, now known as Age Friendly South Portland (AFSP), with an appropriation of $15,000. The enabling Council Order charged AFSP with the following tasks:

1. Establish measurable, time-oriented goals for implementing the Report’s recommendations;
2. By January 2020, begin implementing recommendations related to communication of resources, housing maintenance, and transportation;
3. Establish on-going advocacy efforts for items requiring another entity to complete; and,
4. Explore volunteer and grant opportunities, corporate partnerships, and request additional funding to implement and sustain recommended programs.

AFSP established three subcommittees (Communications, Housing, and Transportation), which were charged with achieving the goals set out in the Report. Each subcommittee chair recruited members from the community with an interest, concern, or knowledge based on the topic being addressed. This activity was driven by community volunteers, and has included partnerships with professionals in the aging field such as the City’s Social Services Department, Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging, South Portland Housing Authority, 211 Maine, local service providers, church leaders, and many others.
Our Community

The City of South Portland is located on the southern coast of the State of Maine in the southeastern section of the County of Cumberland, the State’s most populous county. South Portland is the fourth largest city in Maine. It encompasses an area of 12.93 square miles and serves a population of more than 25,000. Each of the city’s residential neighborhoods have their own unique character and charm, while the city enjoys a diversified commercial and industrial economy. The city has been referred to as ‘two cities.’ While the eastern half of the city includes a traditional downtown district, community college, and working waterfront, the western half includes a working railyard, municipal golf course and parks, and over 1,200 diverse businesses. In South Portland, you’ll find the amenities of a major city plus the charm of a classic New England town.

Our Mission, Vision, & Values

Vision: Building a city where all residents can live safely and with dignity as they age.

Mission: AFSP seeks to enhance the lives of all people who live in South Portland, with special focus on residents ages 65 years and older by:

1. Advising the City Council on policy and infrastructure changes that will enhance the livability of South Portland;
2. Partnering with other entities to enhance and improve existing services, and develop additional needed services;
3. Providing opportunities for all members of the community to engage and interact with older residents.

Values:

1. All people have dignity and worth.
2. Growth and development continue throughout the lifespan.
3. The wellbeing of one affects the whole in a community.
4. The best decisions are made when each of the diverse components of a community are included in the decision-making process.
5. Every community is a complex system, both unique and diverse.
6. Strengths and resources provide a foundation for future action that enhance the wellbeing of all.
How We Started

Our Assessment & Report

Upon the establishment of the Committee, the group was provided with $6,000 from the South Portland City Council to conduct a needs assessment of residents ages 65 years and older. A framework for the survey was built using the construct of the World Health Organization’s Eight Domains of Livability, as adapted by AARP to measure age-friendly communities. Survey questions were identified to elicit the survey respondents’ opinions of how they are able to live in their community of South Portland in relation to these standards.

A total of 4,185 surveys were mailed through a professional mailing company to the city’s residents. 1,099 surveys were returned (a response rate of 26%). There were 163 respondents age 60-64 which were excluded for this report due to the responses being from a non-South Portland address or because they were unable to be translated properly. The analysis was conducted using 837 surveys, 704 age 65-84 and 133 age 85 and older. The responses were well distributed among voting districts. Data was entered into Survey Monkey and results were compiled by a professor and graduate assistants at the University of Southern Maine.

Additionally, the Committee convened four separate focus groups. The purpose of these groups were to obtain input from a variety of individuals and organizations that interact with older adults frequently. Representatives from the City included the library, fire and police departments, public works and parks and recreation departments, and housing and transportation agencies. Others interviewed included nurses from community agencies, individuals from religious entities, and representatives from the food pantry, 211 Maine, Community Partnerships Protecting Children, businesses and civic clubs, Chamber of Commerce, Meals on Wheels, and Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging.

Based on collected survey and focus group data, the Committee identified existing programs available to older adults as well as gaps between needs and services across AARP’s “Eight Domains of Livability:” (1) Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, (2) Transportation, (3) Housing, (4) Social Participation, (5) Respect and Social Inclusion, (6) Work and Civic Engagement, (7) Communication and Information, and (8) Community and Health Services. As a result, the Committee developed a comprehensive strategy including a set of key recommendations on how to bolster existing and develop new ways to improve older adult residents’ capacities to thrive as they age. The Report was submitted to the City Council in December 2018.

In its submission of the Report, the Committee suggested that an ad hoc Senior Steering Implementation Committee, now known as AFSP, be appointed to lead and coordinate the work of implementing the Report’s recommendations. The City Council approved this new effort and provided the Committee with $15,000 to assist in the implementation of the recommendations as noted in the Report. The enabling Council Order charged AFSP with the following tasks:

1. Establish measurable, time-oriented goals for implementing the Report’s recommendations;
2. By January 2020, begin implementing recommendations related to communication of resources, housing maintenance, and transportation;

3. Establish on-going advocacy efforts for items requiring another entity to complete; and,

4. Explore volunteer and grant opportunities, corporate partnerships, and request additional funding to implement and sustain recommended programs.

The enabling Council Order identified the duration of committee (January 2022), specified the number of members and officers, allowed for development of subcommittees, and specified that budget expenditures be made by the committee as a whole. The committee established Operating Principles to follow specified policy.

Our Members & Volunteers

Our committee members have been volunteers who have heard about or read about our work via City Council discussion, online, in print, or as word-of-mouth recruitment. They have been residents of varying ages, tending more toward elders, members of a helping profession, business people, city workers, and elected officials.

The initial Committee group consisted of Maxine Beecher, City Council member and initiator of the idea to assist older adults based on her experiences on the Council; Susan Henderson, City Council member and retired nurse educator; Elizabeth Ross-Holmstrom, resident and business consultant; Adele Edelman, resident and retired Area Agency on Aging director; Cathy McDonald, resident and hospital social worker; Sheila Szafran, resident and retired occupation therapist; Bernadette Kroon, resident, physical therapist, and university professor; Linda Best, retired teacher and resident of South Portland Housing Authority; Joan Herzog, resident and nutritionist; Meredith Tipton, resident, epidemiologist, and retired City of Portland Health Department director; and Kathleen Babeu, City of South Portland Social Services director.

Additional volunteers, who were not formal committee members, included Marilyn Reilly, resident with interest in issues of aging and disability; Philip Smith, South Portland Housing Authority social worker; Mary Pelliter, retired nurse; April Caricchio, resident and senior home manager; Michelle Denois, resident, crossing guard, retired teacher, and former TRIAD member; Sharon Martin, community health nurse educator; Kylie Stevenson-Lyon and Jennifer Caswell, students of Bernadette Kroon; Chase Hewitt, City of South Portland intern; Art Handman, City of South Portland Department of Transportation director; and Karla Doyan, Parks and Recreation manager.

When the City Council formed AFSP, Kathleen Babeu, Maxine Beecher, Adele Edelman, Bernadette Kroon, and Susan Henderson continued as members of the new group. Additional members were sought via Sentry articles, the City website, announcements at Council meetings, and via word-of-mouth recruitment. The group opted for nine voting members with
Kathleen Babeu (City liaison) and Susan Henderson (City Councilor) serving as non-voting members. Additionally, the following members were elected to the committee: Deca Delac, City Council member; Diane Gotelli, resident and social worker; Alan Cardinal, owner of a local grocery business; Anthony Grande, resident, traffic engineer, and member of the City’s Bike-Pedestrian Committee; Carol Kilroy, resident with extensive experience with 211 Maine; and Lisa Joyce, South Portland Public Library outreach librarian.

Since this beginning, for various reasons some members have had to step down, including Deca Delac, Diane Gotelli, Adel Edelman, and Alan Cardinal. In their place, the following members were elected: April Carricchio, City Council member; Peter Stanton, resident and chair of the City’s Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (later replaced by Karen Taylor); Chad MacLeod, resident and health informatics communications director; Jana Grant, resident and occupational therapist; and Karen Taylor, resident and retired emergency department nurse manager. Over time, other volunteers have assisted on various projects, including Stephanie Carpenito, resident and hospice nurse; and Philip Smith, South Portland Housing Authority social worker.

**Our Community**

**Historical Background**

The City of South Portland is a coastal community in southern Maine encompassing an area of 12.93 square miles. South Portland was settled as early as 1632, initially part of Cape Elizabeth, and incorporated as an independent city in 1898. South Portland is now Maine’s fourth largest community. Through the years, as a waterfront community with a deep harbor, the city has been home to industrial, commercial activity, and residential areas consisting of more than a dozen unique neighborhoods. The combination of business, industrial and residential land use has been a defining feature of the community.

In 1940, a shipyard was established in the east coast of the community to build cargo ships for Great Britain. When the United States became involved with World War II the shipyard expanded and turned out 274 Liberty and Ocean ships, which accounted for more than 10 percent of all the Liberty ships built during the WWII era. At its peak, the shipyard employed some 30,000 people, including thousands of women, "Wendy the Welders" and "Rosie the Riveters," who took over the jobs vacated by men going into service. The shipyard gradually ceased operations after the war ended in 1945.

Around the time that WWII ended, a pipeline was constructed to bring oil from ships in South Portland to oil refineries in Montreal. Over the years, the harbor also came to host many other petroleum industrial sites. In a city of five square miles, there are 123 petroleum tanks in close proximity to homes and schools.
In the mid-1960s, recognizing the location as having a healthy economic future, the City purchased 137 acres from a pig farm in anticipation of the Interstate-295 spur through Portland and South Portland. When a developer came to the area looking for a spot for a shopping center, South Portland was chosen over Portland, Scarborough, and Falmouth. As a result, the Maine Mall opened its first twenty stores to crowds of shoppers in August 1971. In September of 1972, the total taxable sales for the month were 7.5 million. The Mall employed 2,000 employees and had a 10-million-dollar annual payroll. In the last 30 years, the Maine Mall area has evolved from farmland into the largest retail, commercial, and office complex north of Boston and currently employs more than 3,000 people.

In the western half of the city where the Maine Mall is located, you will also find two world-class computer chip factories, ON and Texas Instruments, as well as Maine’s headquarters for Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield. These businesses provide employment to approximately 6,000 people.

Finally, the City’s multimodal transportation options offer easy access to markets via truck, rail, air, and barge freight transport, with several carriers based in the city. South Portland has multiple highway connections and a variety of transit options, including local and regional bus, Amtrak passenger rail, and convenient jet service. The Portland International Jetport (PWM) offers several direct flights to most major East Coast cities, several Midwest cities, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Driving time to Boston is under two hours and New York is about five hours.

**Age-Friendly Amenities**

Historically, because of the tax benefits of having such a large and diverse growth of business and commercial property, local government is able to provide many amenities to its residents. Residents enjoy excellent public safety services with the Police and Fire Departments staffed with over 115 employees supplemented by 100 call company personnel. The Public Works Department plows many miles of city sidewalks in addition to road maintenance. The South Portland Bus Service operates a fleet of handicapped accessible, transit buses over routes through the city. Through these and other departments, the City is able to provide excellent service to its residents.

Our libraries and public schools are among the best in the state. The Public Library maintains a collection of over 90,000 volumes and offers specialized service to the homebound and shut-ins as well as a unique young adult room in the main library. South Portland is also the proud home of Southern Maine Community College (SMCC). SMCC is Maine’s largest, oldest, and most diverse community college with nearly 6,000 students, over 40 degree programs, two campuses, and seven satellite locations.
The Parks and Recreation Department provides services that improve the quality of life for residents and creates a very active sense of community. It maintains a nine-hole municipal golf course, 525 acres of parkland (of which 300 acres are actively maintained), a municipal beach, and over eight miles of walking trails. The Department also oversees a municipal swimming pool and a community center. Six-week summer recreation camps provide several hundred children with the opportunity to stay active and social throughout the summer. Older adults have many opportunities to gather at the Community Center for a lunch, bingo, walking on the indoor track, and many other activities. South Portland places tremendous value on recreational sports and activities.

The city offers a full array of recreational opportunities including access to an ocean boat launch, marinas, and a well-developed greenbelt/trail network that stretches along the Eastern Trail and East Coast Greenway. Part of Maine’s urban core, South Portland remains connected to our natural environment.

Resident Demographics

According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS), there was an estimated 25,515 residents in South Portland and 10,856 households with an average household size of 2.29 individuals. South Portland has a healthy mix of older and younger residents with 5,693 (22.3%) aged 60 and older. 29% of all households have one or more people 65 years or older. Additionally, 257 grandparents live with their younger (under 18 years old) grandchildren in multigenerational homes. Of those grandparents, 38.1% were responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren.

In the ACS 2015-2019 survey, it was estimated that 90.6% of South Portland residents were U.S. natives, of which 57.9% were Maine born. According to the survey, foreign-born residents make up 9.4% of all residents, of which half were naturalized U.S citizens and an estimated 47.7% entered the country before the year 2010. The largest portion of foreign-born residents came from Africa (41.8), followed by Asia (25.5%), Europe (20.7%), and Latin America (6.7%).

Furthermore, the median income of South Portland households was $69,290, with 5.3% of households with income below $10,000 per year and 5.4% with income over $200,000 or more per year. The average household income in South Portland was $87,097. However, 6.3% were adults over the age of 65 years had incomes less than 100% of the poverty level. Of this number, 76.1% were women and 23.9% were men.
The ACS 2015-2019 survey also noted 62.3% of housing units being single-family houses (including “town houses and row houses”) and 37.6% being multi-unit structures. Of all housing units, 10,856 units were occupied while the remaining 850 were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 63.4% were owner-occupied with the balance renter-occupied. In an ongoing effort to improve the availability of affordable housing stock, South Portland has recently approved the development of 120-plus affordable housing units.

A Good Place to Live

South Portland is a community where people want to live, raise a family, and retire. It is a community where people want to have a business, shop, and be entertained. South Portland is also a destination — a place where people want to visit to enjoy the waterfront or be involved in recreational or athletic activities that utilize the City’s outstanding facilities. The city is a desirable community, offering its residents a variety of lifestyles in livable, unique, neighborhoods. While each neighborhood has its own character, strong identity, and sense of place, all neighborhoods are safe, walkable, and provide convenient access to services and community facilities. Our neighborhoods are home to older residents as well as younger households and children. The cultural diversity of the community is a strength and people with different cultures and lifestyles are valuable members of the city’s family.

South Portland provides its children with quality education for the 21st Century in up-to-date facilities utilizing the latest technology. But the community’s educational focus is also on creating a city of lifelong learners through ongoing adult education and collaboration with Southern Maine Community College.

South Portland is a green city. Trees, parks, and open spaces bring nature into the community and make it readily accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities. It is also a community that is focused on minimizing its impact on the environment. The City actively encourages the use of green building techniques. The community collectively works to reduce its carbon footprint. It promotes the use and development of alternative energy sources as well as energy efficiency and conservation, especially for older buildings. It encourages a compact, higher-density, mixed-use pattern of development, as well as transportation alternatives by providing policy development so that people can walk or bike safely and conveniently throughout the city.

South Portland remains a waterfront community. The waterfront is the reason the City developed as it did and remains an important element of the community. While much of the
shoreline remains a working waterfront, the public’s access to the water expands. As older industrial and transportation uses of the waterfront become obsolete or are relocated or upgraded, the shoreline evolves as more of a mixed-use area preserving the opportunity for traditional marine uses while accommodating recreational, business, and even residential uses. The city and its residents continue to be connected to the waterfront.

South Portland continues to be an economically diverse community that adjusts to evolving business opportunities and realities. In addition to being home to the largest retail shopping center in the state, the city also provides community and neighborhood shopping and services in attractive, viable commercial areas. The city’s economic base continues to grow and includes a wide range of businesses, from small, locally owned sole-proprietor, “Main Street”-type businesses, to major manufacturers and international office headquarters. The City strives to ensure that all businesses have access to low-cost energy or are meeting their own energy needs, and works to foster and support economic development in its business community.

South Portland has long been an advocate and supporter of the concept of developing the city as an Age-Friendly community. Various City groups and departments have actively worked to improve walkability, safety, housing, and green spaces for its older residents. The City’s Social Services Department supports elders with tax abatements, helps with transportation costs, access to food pantries, and general welfare checks. The Planning, Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments have and continue to research and plan for improved sidewalks, lighting, safe crosswalks, and accessible green spaces. The City’s Community Recreation Division includes dedicated staff for seniors and senior programming, and the Community Center has a dedicated senior room, providing senior-specific programs and meals. The South Portland Bus Service (SPBS) is dedicated to ensuring persons with transportation disabilities have what they need to use the service. This includes wheelchair lifts on all buses and alternative format access to schedules, routes, cancellation, and detour information. For people who are unable to use the South Portland fixed-route bus service because of disability, paratransit services are provided by the Regional Transportation Program (RTP). All of these efforts are continually evaluated and modified as determined necessary from input of staff and community members.

Because South Portland is a commercial, industrial, and residential city, interests must continually be balanced. Strengths and weaknesses can be two sides of the same coin. A strength of our city is our old established neighborhoods. A weakness of that is that housing stock tends to be old and would benefit from work to increase energy efficiency and also to make repairs and modifications for older residents. Neighborhoods have sidewalks, and while distances are often short, old sidewalks can need repair and Maine has much ice and snow adding to their deterioration. With many businesses and commercial areas, schools, proximity to Portland, tourist sites, and major highways, traffic tends to be heavy and move quickly. In an older city, major routes go through residential and commercial areas, which results in some difficulties for pedestrians and bikers. Because South Portland is a desirable place to live, people want to move here, which increases the pressure to keep housing affordable and available to those with more modest incomes who wish to live and work in the city. Based on our assessments, we have tried to build on strengths and remedy weakness in our community to make it age-friendly for all.
History of Age-Friendly Work

The City of South Portland has always recognized the uniqueness and value of its community, natural resources, and human resources – especially its older residents. In an effort to respond to their older constituents, and address challenges that they were facing as they age in place, two City Councilors recommended that the City establish an Ad Hoc Senior Advisory Committee to ensure the city’s elder residents “have access to services and infrastructure enabling them to live safely and with dignity as they age.” On August 21, 2017, the South Portland City Council voted unanimously to create such a committee. The two Councilors, Maxine Beecher and Susan Henderson, were charged with recruiting members and beginning the work. Members of the committee were recruited, including local business owners, healthcare professionals, professors, elder advocates, and concerned residents.

For more information on the origins of the AFSP team, read the “How We Got Started” section.

See below for AFSP’s 2020 Annual Report to the City Council.

Age Friendly South Portland Annual Report (2020)

As we end an eventful 2020, the year 2021 marks the second anniversary of the Ad Hoc Senior Implementation Steering Committee, now known as Age Friendly South Portland (AFSP), which was originally formed by an order of the South Portland City Council on January 22, 2019. Our committee, an AARP-designated age-friendly community since October 2019, consists of four functioning subcommittees designed to tackle and achieve objectives aligning with the eight domains of livability and as set forth in our initial Report of Findings and Recommendations (December 2018): (1) Communications, (2) Housing, (3) Transportation, and (4) Health & Community.

Over the course of the past year, our committee met on a monthly basis via in-person (pre-pandemic) and Zoom (post-pandemic), and our subcommittees met on an ad hoc basis as needed.

The following sections of this report summarize the key activities taken by our committee, by subcommittee focus areas.

Communications

With the pandemic leaving many residents stuck indoors and isolated from friends and family, one of our first objectives was to identify solutions for getting our and others’ (e.g., the Southern Maine Agency on Aging, the South Portland Community Center, etc.) messages to our residents in ways that they could easily consume and in a timely manner. In addition to our standing column in the Sentry newspaper and routine posts to our Facebook page, we also partnered closely with the South Portland Community Television (SPC-TV) team of Maurice Amaral and Cynthia Czubryt to share key updates.

For example, after the City published its COVID-19 resource webpage, our committee developed a PowerPoint slide deck that summarized and narrated the information, with permission and authorization from the City. This presentation aired regularly on SPC-TV through the early months of the pandemic and was well received by our residents. This initial partnership set us up for success as our Health and Community subcommittee continued to work with SPC-TV to air additional programs that we developed over the year.

In its entirety, our communication strategy seeks to get our materials into the hands of individuals who have access to varying mediums of information – print, television, and online. For age-friendly
communities, this is one of the greatest challenges to overcome; though, we look forward to continuing to make critical partnerships to enable greater access in the upcoming year.

**Housing**

At the start of 2020, our Sand Buckets for Seniors Program, designed to provide individual residences with personal 5-gallon buckets filled with sand to use on slippery walkways around their homes, was becoming a big success. When the program phased out in early March as the winter season ended, our committee knew that it wanted to build on those snow removal efforts with additional programs to support residents in need. The Housing subcommittee, led by Committee Co-Chair, Chad MacLeod, began work in the early summer months to begin planning the following initiatives that are all now operational:

- **Sand Buckets for Seniors**: In collaboration with the Public Works Department, this program launched its second season after more than 250 sand buckets were delivered to residents last season. Denise Michaud from the Public Works Department receives incoming requests and coordinates the buckets’ delivery via a bench of volunteers consisting of local community members, coaches and players from the South Portland Football Program, and individuals from Bath Savings Bank. Already, with only a few storms experienced this season, the program has delivered more than 100 buckets. Ongoing sustainability of the program has been made possible from support by the Home Depot Foundation, which provided our committee with $3,000 worth of buckets and related accessories earlier in the year.

- **Community Sand Barrels**: Over the course of the last winter season, a common theme heard from residents via Facebook and email was that walking throughout the City was difficult due to slippery sidewalks along high-traffic routes. So our committee again worked with the Public Works Department, working directly with Doug Howard, to procure 10 recycling bins that could be used as community sand barrels. In collaboration with the Boy Scouts Troop 23 and Cub Scouts Pack 22, our committee and the scouts hand-crafted 10 wooden supports that could prop the sand barrels at an angle that enabled easy access to the sand. The Public Works Department then helped in strategically placing the sand barrels throughout the Knightville and Thornton Heights neighborhoods in areas where residents had previously expressed an interest in having access to sand to carry with them en route. If successful, we will plan to expand the program into additional neighborhoods next season.

- **Golden Shovel Program**: The purpose of this program is to incite lively competition among businesses routinely patronized to ensure that snowy and slippery storefront sidewalks are safe and secure as residents run their errands. For the program’s pilot season, businesses that reside on Ocean Street between the rotary and the Thomas Knight Park are encouraged to clear, sand, and ensure safe access to the walkways and pathways along their storefronts during winter weather for individuals of all ages and/or with mobility issues.
As residents visit these businesses over the course of the winter, our committee seeks to collect their feedback on these storefronts’ walkability and accessibility – which businesses’ sidewalks are clear and easy to navigate, handicap accessible, and conscientious of shoveling/sanding through the day. At the end of the winter season, we will compile all received feedback, share comments with participating businesses for improvement during the next winter season, and award the most-praised business with a golden (painted) shovel!

- Snow Shoveling for Eligible Seniors: Our committee partnered with the Social Services Department to advertise to and receive information on residents who are in need of snow-shoveling services on their private properties this winter season. At the same time, we developed a volunteer repository consisting of individuals willing to provide snow-shoveling services to those residents. Privacy and confidentiality consent is received by the Social Services Department, led by Kathleen Babeu and Laura Siciliano, for recipients and basic background checks are processed and validated by the City’s Human Resources Department, led by Stephanie Weaver and Karla Giglio, for volunteers before any recipient and volunteer is paired. Carol Ann Kilroy, AFSP committee member and retired 211 Maine Call Specialist, serves as the program’s volunteer coordinator, pairing recipients and volunteers and acting as the primary point of contact for mobilizing volunteers when storms arrive and answering miscellaneous questions about the program. At this time, the program has volunteer capacity to serve nearly 30 recipients this winter.

**Transportation**

Early into the pandemic, our committee became aware of residents experiencing difficulty in achieving transportation to critical meetings, appointments, and errands. At that same time, we received a $500 donation from an anonymous source, which we in turn gifted to the Social Services Department to fund needed rides as necessary.

In general, our subcommittee worked in a role of advocacy over the past year in regard to transportation activities. Two subcommittee members serve on the City’s Bike-Pedestrian Committee. When the committee’s Chair, Rosemarie DeAngelis, raised the issue of the City’s busses being unable to access the South Portland Food Cupboard, Councilor Sue Henderson, our committee’s Secretary, initiated a Council Workshop to spearhead the topic.

Our committee had experience in working with the Greater Portland Council on Governments (GPCOG) in a prior pilot grant, Shoppers Link, which involved providing greater transportation to the Food Cupboard. Based on this history, South Portland Director of Transportation, Donna Tippett, was able to collaborate with the GPCOG Grant Director to develop a program to again engender greater access to the critical resource.

Additionally, Anthony Grande, Transportation Subcommittee Chair, is working with the State’s Department of Transportation on a program designed to increase awareness and safety for vulnerable pedestrians, including older adults. These statewide efforts will be translated specifically to target South Portland residents, with imagery and information pertaining to our city. Chair, Anthony Grande, continues to be a strong advocate for our committee in transportation policy and programming, including networking with the Public Works Department, Police Department, Maine Bicycle Coalition, and AARP among others to inform our decision-making and efforts.

**Health & Community**

The important work of our Health & Community Subcommittee can be grouped into two primary categories: (1) falls prevention and community supports and (2) social isolation and engagement.
We started the year excited about the possibilities offered through our partnership with the Southern Maine Agency on Aging (SMAA) to expand our fall prevention courses, Tai Chi and A Matter of Balance, at the South Portland Public Library. Toward the end of 2019 and early into 2020, we saw great attendance of both courses. At the same time, building on the success of our SMAA partnership, we began offering regularly occurring, walk-in and appointment-only sessions with Community Resource Specialists who were available to help residents answer a myriad of questions related to finance, health care, transportation needs, food insecurity, and more. Lisa Joyce, Outreach Librarian and AFSP committee member, led these efforts, helping to organize and identify the necessary funds to support them. When the pandemic arrived, both programs were unfortunately paused indefinitely.

After regrouping to assess our priorities, our subcommittee began meeting virtually and reprioritized its efforts to target social isolation and engagement issues. An idea of Chair Maxine Beecher, we quickly organized “Did You Know? Age-Friendly Chats,” 20–30-minute recorded conversations between Councilor Sue Henderson and a member of the community offering a program or expertise in an area that would likely be of interest to our residents. To date, we have published programs with 211-Maine, the City’s COVID Response Team, and SMAA, and have several additional programs in the queue to be developed. In fact, one program near completion will virtualize a Tai Chi course and have an interview with a certified facilitator in an effort to continue our falls prevention efforts and advocacy. The program has become a wonderful way for our committee to connect with various niches of the community – and to then share that information with our residents. The videos are not only published on our YouTube channel and Facebook page, but are also regularly aired on SPC-TV.

Additionally, members of our subcommittee have strong ties with the Maine Council on Aging, AARP Maine, the Tri-State Learning Collaborative, SMAA, South Portland Community Center, and the South Portland School Department, which has offered us with access to many online informational and educational programs as well as increased knowledge of issues to inform our ongoing work.

**Closing Remarks**

Our committee, 11 members strong, is a small but resourceful and energetic group sincerely interested in making improvements in the lives of our residents of all ages. In addition to the operational work performed by our subcommittees, members of our core committee, including Chair Maxine Beecher, Co-Chair Chad MacLeod, and Secretary Sue Henderson, also serve on a broader initiative led by the Maine Council on Aging designed to help municipalities address the needs of older adults with various data sets.

The idea is simple: When the needs of residents are not adequately met, often the burden falls on the municipality to provide social services and emergency services to compensate. And the full cost-effectiveness of appropriate, proactive City action is not likely to be fully shown in a budget document.

Over the course of a year-long planning project, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Maine Council on Aging, helped our committee with the City Manager, in collaboration with several stakeholders serving in our community – from healthcare providers and health insurance agencies, to food resources and transportation services – to build a “data dashboard” to assess how South Portland compares to city/town peers and county and state benchmarks on areas concerning housing needs, food insecurity, falls prevention, etc. At the end of the project, the taskforce chose one domain, falls prevention, as a focus area to quickly begin devising intervention and prevention programs that the City could support in an effort to realize not only impacts to the budget but measure impacts to the satisfaction and health of its residents. Issues to be considered include identifying factors related to falls, identification of contributing factors such as unmet health needs, including lack of food or medication reactions, and issues in the environment that need remediation.
Additionally, our committee continues to identify funding opportunities to help advance our many programs and activities. Of note is the effort of Council April Caricchio, who helped our committee receive a $15,000 grant from the Jonah and Elizabeth Dyer Charitable Corporation to advance our mission of building a city in which all ages can thrive. This funding will be put to good use as we address challenges for some of our older residents in the coming months.

One of the most subtle, perhaps directly unmeasurable, though most valuable aspects of our work may be the formation of human and information networks that can allow collaborative problem-solving across departments, agencies, and borders. We have talented, skillful, dedicated, and compassionate committee members and volunteers working together to help our older adults age safely in place – even during a pandemic. We thank the City Council for providing us with the opportunity to continue our work, and believe our impact continues to grow, evolve, and demonstrate itself as we make these ever-critical partnerships.

**Our Action Plan**

**Introduction**

AFSP’s Action Plan is built upon the information the group acquired during the survey and resource assessment processes previously described which resulted in the development of the Report (December 2018). Since then, the group has continuously devised a series of projects to meet the Report’s recommendations across each of the Eight Domains of Livability as it sees fit based on community input and direction.

**What We Learned**

Throughout this process, it has become evident that our biggest challenge is in the realm of communication. As technology has progressed, our communication methods are almost exclusively tied to digital mediums such as email, social media, and cable television. Print media, radio, and neighborhood gossip and information sharing are becoming less and less available and desirable to get the word out. Which has made it even more important for our group to strategically devise effective ways to get information out to our older adult population, those technically savvy and not, as it relates to our projects and partnerships across each domain.

The Report’s survey results backed up the need of this effort. The majority of respondents received most of their information from newspapers, television, and word of mouth. There was a clear recognition that developing a strong media campaign would be critical to the success of any efforts the group was to undertake to assist our target audience. Respondents indicated that they “did not know where to find information,” “heard about it too late to participate in community events,” and “would have accessed the program but was not aware of it.”

Therefore, a communication plan was deemed imperative in the implementation of the Report’s recommendations as, without an adequate way to inform older adults of resources and programs available to them, our efforts would not be accessible.

Upon review of the remaining items, it became apparent that within the range of identified needs and gaps, we would have to divide them into priority tiers. A deeper dive would require
making a distinction between short-term and long-term goals of program development, advocacy efforts, and communication of resources to help in navigating the service system.

Who Will Do The Work

Initially, AFSP organized into four subcommittees: (1) Communication, (2) Housing, (3) Transportation, and (4) Health & Community. Though the names of the subcommittees closely aligned with the Eight Domains of Livability, our teams often worked on recommendations from more than one domain. For example, our Housing subcommittee pitched in on (a) Housing, (b) Building & Outdoor Spaces, and (c) Civic Participation projects; our Transportation subcommittee worked on (a) Transportation and (b) Buildings & Outdoor Spaces recommendations; our Health & Community subcommittee addressed (a) Community Support & Health Services, (b) Social Participation, and (c) Respect and Social Isolation topics; and our Communication subcommittee spanned all domains.

Because of this fluidity and the need for greater flexibility, our group decided in February 2021 to instead structure our work on a project-by-project basis, whereby projects per domain would be prioritized, a lead would be identified to take charge of a particular project, and members would volunteer to support the project according to the lead’s direction. Each project lead would then schedule ad hoc meetings as needed with their project team members and report back to the core committee on a monthly basis with progress updates as well as with any key decisions needing to be voted on by the committee for approval prior to moving forward with next steps. Over the last several months since this restructure, AFSP has been able to work more dynamically and nimbly both within the pandemic as well as based on available volunteer time and resources.

Lastly, we couldn’t do this work without our partners, supporters, volunteers, and residents. For that reason, we’ve listed the invaluable resources that contribute to each domain’s work, from the City Council and many City Departments, to the Southern Maine Agency on Aging and Maine Council on Aging, to the South Portland Housing Authority and Maine Department of Transportation. Age-friendly efforts intertwine into nearly every fiber of our society, so we’ve learned how to partner, network, and create important friendships to do our work.

Why We Are Proud

South Portland is proud to note that this initiative was begun, developed, and implemented solely by volunteers. Community members came together to address a need that they saw, aided by the City Council, supported by the City Manager, and welcomed by City departments, the business community, and public and private social service organizations. Our goal: to affect change in how South Portland can best meet the needs of our older residents.

AFSP evolved from a City-appointed Senior Advisory Committee charged to “identify gaps between needs and available services and determine partnerships and options to fill.” Though this effort was achieved, the group felt it necessary to continue further. In reporting our results to the City, we added a recommendation to create a Senior Steering Implementation Committee to lead and coordinate the work of implementing the recommendations, thereby
ensuring that our work would not just sit on the shelf. At the end of our first year of this implementation process, the City was designated an age-friendly community by AARP.

**Domain-Specific Action Plans**

**Communication & Information**

**Vision:** Establish a comprehensive manner including both digital and print communications that increases access of information among older adult residents pertaining to services, programs, and partnerships that may provide value in improving their lives as they age.

**Findings:** Per the Report, respondents wanted access to informative and reliable information about neighborhood events, suggesting a local newsletter that older adults could sign up to receive. The majority of respondents preferred printed materials (73%) as their primary source of learning about community events and activities. It was noted that adding phone numbers to website references would also be helpful, as many older adults do not use computers. A suggestion was made to create a community bulletin board to post community events and to look to Scarborough and their programming efforts as an example of how to effectively communicate with older adults.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**

- Need a good (reliable, detailed, and inclusive) source of information on neighborhood (by district?) events, activities and clubs.
- Not aware of upcoming events-monthly senior newsletter would be nice.
- Need a local newsletter that seniors sign up to receive services, events.
- It would be helpful if you could mail us the schedule of things taking place at the community centers, a printed schedule would be good.
- Would like to have printed information via USPS on what is available at community Rec center. Know I can find out more via internet but don’t always check that in timely manner. Miss some community events because I didn’t know about them until after the fact.
- Would like a phone number for ads (sic) not just computer websites.
- Let people know if there is a community bulletin board posting events, classes, gatherings, and how or where to access it, and keep it updated.

**Goals & Action Steps:** Communication is one of the cornerstones of building a community where individuals can age in place. Even prior to concluding the initial survey of South Portland’s older adult residents, the Committee recognized that communication to our residents needed to have a strategic approach in order to meet them where they were.

For the last decade, society and commerce increasingly has moved into the on-line/internet arena for communicating with their customers. However, while many older persons are
computer savvy, there are many who are not and which therefore need additional, alternative access to information.

AFSP seeks to maintain a comprehensive communication system that effectively provides older adult residents with timely information pertinent to their interests, needs, and preferences in a variety of mediums, both print and digital.

**Report Recommendations:**

1. Establish an older adult information kiosk at the South Portland Community Center
2. Establish a column in the Sentry newspaper
3. Provide content to air on the South Portland Community Television
4. Encourage providers and churches to sign up for the City newsletter
5. Create a resource directory for older adults and make it available in print and online methods

**Action Plan:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rec. Reference</th>
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<th>Member(s)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish an older adult information kiosk at the South Portland Community Center</td>
<td>K. Babeu</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Publish bi-weekly articles in the dedicated “Healthy Living” column in the Sentry newspaper.</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Partner with SPC-TV to air content/programs regularly as they become available. For example, COVID-19 resources, falls prevention/intervention materials, etc.</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>S. Henderson</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Create Food Resource flyer; disseminate in print to high frequent locations through the city</td>
<td>K. Babeu</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Create a focused Resource Directory Guide specific to older adults’ needs</td>
<td>K. Babeu</td>
<td>K. Barth</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Create a Facebook page dedicated to showcasing our committee’s activities and news for older adults</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Endorse technology education and access supports for older adults through partnership with the Library</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources:** South Portland Sentry, South Portland Community Center, South Portland Public Library, South Portland Community Television, City of South Portland, South Portland Social Services Department
**Housing**

**Vision:** Ensure sufficient housing options and assistance with home maintenance and related chores in order to allow residents to remain in their choice of housing as they age.

**Findings:** Per the Report, respondents lived primarily in single-family homes or condominiums (66%), with a greater number older respondents residing in apartments (13%) or senior housing (20%). A minority percentage of respondents (33%) noted that home maintenance was a challenge, of which the majority indicated that they did not need help with cost or labor for home repairs. On the other hand, there were a significant number of respondents (66%) who noted the need for help with snow removal and property tax relief.

Focus group members backed the need for snow removal assistance and help with decluttering and cleaning around the home. These members also felt that choices for affordable housing were limited, denying older adults enough options to move from their single-family home to a congregate setting in their community. Waiting lists for subsidized housing, unavailability of options for those not eligible for subsidized housing, and prohibitive costs relative to income were also considered to impact affordable housing options. Rising expenses in term of taxes, utilities, and repairs were cited as challenges to individuals remaining in their homes.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**

- *We are on fixed income and we could use someone to help with the snow when it piles up.*
- *Having a list of names for inexpensive helpers for occasional job around home that family members don’t have time for.*
- *I have had problems finding help for household repairs and leaf raking, other maintenance issues. Difficult to find help to pay for this, sometimes I require help with heavy jobs/mowing/carrying/shoveling other outside chores.*
- *Taxes are too high and will force me to move away as I am transitioning to a fixed income.*
- *Property taxes are prohibitively expensive, I need more help paying them or lower them for seniors.*
- *My biggest concern is housing. Affordable apartments for single elderly woman are scarce.*

**Goals & Action Steps:** AFSP aims to ensure that residents have housing options as they age. This entails working with the City and the South Portland Housing Authority to identify and develop a comprehensive complement of housing types, supports, and affordability of living environments within which residents can select or remain in the housing of their choice that best meets their needs. This expansive undertaking will be accomplished by a variety of activities and through a range of efforts, from advocacy initiatives to increase the stock of affordable housing units or modify homes to make them more affordable and accessible, policy support to address the burden of property taxes for those on fixed and/or limited incomes, and program development to offer home maintenance services to older adults.
**Report Recommendations:**

1. Gather data about developing a plan to decrease tax burden on older adult citizens

2. Develop a volunteer handyman service for older adults by working in the school systems and with area service clubs to provide for snow removal, lawn care, and small home project repairs

3. Establish a vetting process for reliable contractors for older adults’ work with the business community

4. Promote available programs that exist for energy efficiency and safety

5. Ensure that the Planning Department, Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee, Housing Authority, and Affordable Housing Committee devise a plan for changes needed as people age; needs include affordable housing including apartments, accessible housing as population ages, and walkable neighborhoods

6. Require all housing designed as 55+ and built with private funds to meet ADA building requirements

**Action Plan:**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Promote others’ plans to decrease tax burden on older adult residents through our committee’s communication methods (e.g., Facebook, Sentry, etc.) and advocate for more money in City’s tax relief fund for the benefit of older adult residents and encourage increased use of the fund.</td>
<td>S. Henderson</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Create a volunteer-based snow shoveling service for low-income older adult resident; increase the amount of shovelers and recipients with each year’s program.</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>C. Kilroy</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identify grant funding to develop a volunteer handyman service for older adults by working in the school systems and with area service clubs to provide for lawn care and small home project repairs.</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Promote energy-efficient programs and services available to older adults through our committee’s communication methods (e.g., Facebook, Sentry, Did You Know, etc.); focus on Window Dressers for initial outreach efforts.</td>
<td>L. Joyce</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advocate for increasing the amount of affordable housing in the city by supporting the City’s assessment of existing housing</td>
<td>S. Henderson</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Member(s)</td>
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<td>stock, zoning changes to allow accessory dwelling units and increased density.</td>
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</table>

**Resources:** City of South Portland, South Portland Social Services Department, South Portland Housing Authority, South Portland School Department, Maine Council on Aging.

**Buildings & Outdoor Spaces**

**Vision:** Ensure that South Portland’s buildings are ADA compliant and its many outdoor spaces are safe and easily accessible to older adults, especially those with mobility limitations.

**Findings:** Per the Report, a significant majority (98%) of respondents said that they felt safe at home and in their community. They are able to access buildings and outdoor spaces throughout the city. However, the challenge of poorly maintained and unsafe sidewalks, as well as poorly lit streets and unsafe intersections were experienced by over half of the respondents. The buildings and outdoor spaces are easily accessible, but the paths to get there (via roads, sidewalks) are not.

When asked, “Is there anything else you would like us to know?” the single largest comments received were with respect to buildings and open spaces. Respondents overwhelmingly spoke to inadequate street lighting, poorly maintained sidewalks, limited parking, lack of snow removal services particularly on sidewalks and where City plows leave snow in driveways, speeding traffic, and difficulty crossing intersections.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**

- Fix the sidewalks, so that older people can walk without falling.
- Heavy traffic and high rates of speed on streets make walking dangerous and unsafe for children and adults with limited mobility.
- Focus on helping people traveling on foot and bikes for a safer, healthier community. Bike lanes inadequate now. Need safe bike lane on Casco Bay Bridge, I’ve tried crossing it at times with traffic. It’s a too close call at times. Why not widen walking so foot and bikes can be in same lane.
- Getting around by foot is dangerous because of speed limits are not enforced and cross walks should be painted several times a year and have large signs in the middle road to indicate pedestrian crossing. Photo radar should be used to control speeding and encourage respect for traffic laws.
- I am disabled and have to pay for snow removal. Then the sidewalks plow comes through and blows snow into my walk and driveway. Makes me very upset as I cannot afford to have it done again, one time is hard enough.

**Goals & Action Steps:** Access to outdoor spaces and recreational facilities is a vital part of healthy living. Older adults remain healthier when they can routinely enjoy these public
resources. People need public places to gather—indoors and outdoors. However, issues like unsafe sidewalks or insufficient benches to rest, or inaccessible public buildings and facilities can impair walkability, increase risk for injury and fall-related incidents, and discourage social activity and engagement.

AFSP supports parks and other green spaces, safe streets, sidewalks, outdoor seating, and accessible buildings that can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

**Report Recommendations:**

1. Work with the Bike/Pedestrian Committee and existing City initiatives and Public Works to:
   a. Develop a dialogue with districts and neighborhoods that communicates needs to appropriate City committees or departments and regular feedback on progress of initiatives to residents
   b. Prioritize specific goals related to making streets safe for all users and which address traffic speed, crossing lights, cross walks, and bike lanes
   c. Continue safety initiatives for crossing the street on Cottage Road and Broadway
   d. Request report on the ongoing sidewalk upkeep plan
   e. Increase focus on maintaining clear access to City buildings and sidewalks, especially during inclement weather
   f. Establish a regular inspection plan for lighting
2. Develop a plan for volunteers to provide sand from Public Works to older adults who request it during the winter season
3. Set up economic incentives to have buildings become more ADA compliant and more age-friendly
4. Work with local businesses to sponsor a regularly scheduled “older adults shopping” day
5. Survey all South Portland parks, describing their accessibility; ensure a few parks in each neighborhood are fully accessible

**Action Plan:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Assume the role of advocacy by serving on the City’s Bike-Pedestrian Committee</td>
<td>T. Grande</td>
<td>S. Henderson</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Create a walking event in partnership with Maine DOT and Bike-Ped Committee</td>
<td>T. Grande</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rec. Reference</td>
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<td>to promote awareness and establish community dialogue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Draft communications for the Sentry re: pedestrian safety recommendations.</td>
<td>T. Grande, C. Kilroy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b, 1c</td>
<td>Work traffic and pedestrian safety initiatives through the AARP Challenge Grant, and work in conjunction with the City and the Maine DOT.</td>
<td>T. Grande</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b, 1c</td>
<td>Work with the State’s Department of Transportation to increase awareness and safety of vulnerable pedestrians, including older adults.</td>
<td>T. Grande</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b, 1c</td>
<td>Network with the SP Public Works Department, Police Department, Maine Bicycle Coalition, and AARP.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>T. Grande, S. Henderson, L. Joyce</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e</td>
<td>Create a snow-shoveling program (i.e., Golden Shovel Program) that incentivizes frequently patronized businesses to keep their sidewalks clear, safe, and accessible.</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>M. Beecher, S. Henderson, L. Joyce</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e</td>
<td>Place community sand barrels throughout busy neighborhoods (Ocean Street, Thornton Heights, Cottage/Willard Square) in the city for general use among residents, and develop assessment for effectiveness of program.</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>S. Henderson</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Provide five-gallon buckets filled with sand free-of-charge to older adult residents in need of keeping pathways around their home less slippery in the winter months.</td>
<td>S. Henderson</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Set up economic incentives to have buildings become more ADA compliant and more age friendly.</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Survey all South Portland parks, describing their accessibility and ensure a few in each neighborhood are fully accessible.</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources:** AARP Maine, Maine Department of Transportation, Bicycle Coalition of Maine, City of South Portland, South Portland Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee, South Portland Economic Development Committee, South Portland Boy & Cub Scouts, Home Depot Foundation, resident volunteers.
Transportation

**Vision:** Establish a multi-faceted, efficient transportation system with cost-effective options to address a wide range of transportation access issues and needs.

**Findings:** Per the Report, a personal vehicle is an older adult’s primary mode of transportation (93% respondents ages 65-84 years, and 68% respondents ages 85+ years), followed by rides from family members and friends for those ages 85+ years. There was no mention of the use of volunteer ride service. The lack of transportation did not impede respondents from going places. Clearing of ice and snow was the most cited response to the question of what would help respondents get around to use businesses or shopping, followed by designated parking options and better street lighting. Nearly one-third (31%) of the respondents ages 85+ years cited the need for affordable ride services. Focus groups participants felt access to various forms of transportation such as bus, taxi, and RTP were lacking in availability and were costly. Walking to and from public bus stops was identified as difficult, challenges as to getting to the bus stops, timing of trips, and drop-off locations were also cited as barriers to using public transport.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**

- Better bus service to and from Portland would be very helpful and would be something I would use regularly. My idea is an additional route to shorten existing ones, with smaller buses making more frequent trips.
- South Portland bus has limited weekend hours.
- Volunteers could run the shuttle if one or two people were available. Many people cannot afford a taxi or to wait in cold/hot weather for a bus.
- More frequent bus stops.
- Bus routes that come much closer to housing.

**Goals & Action Steps:** The issue of adequate transportation for older adult residents is undoubtedly one of the most challenging services to develop. Not surprisingly, it is most challenging to offer a service so broad and encompassing that meets the unique needs of individuals. Trip purpose and distance, timing issues, pickup and delivery, and assistance with entering and exiting a vehicle are just some of the common obstacles that require creativity and additional financial and human resources while maintaining efficiency and cost effectiveness.

AFSP hopes to develop a citywide transportation network building on existing resources to provide free and low-cost rides to facilitate mobility of residents to meet medical and food security needs. We support, encourage, and promote safe, reliable, and easy-to-use travel options to get people of all ages where they need to go.

**Report Recommendations:**
1. Convene a focus group with older adults to identify their desired transportation destinations focusing on medical care, drug store, and food shopping needs

2. Convene a meeting of all public and private transit providers in the community to compare and contrast available services

3. Develop a city-wide transportation network building on existing resources to provide free and low-cost rides to facilitate mobility of residents to meet medical needs and grocery shopping

4. Expand transportation services to allow social participation in events at recreation center, library, high school plays, and concerts

Action Plan:

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pilot the Shoppers Link program to assist with older adults’ transportation needs.</td>
<td>T. Grande</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Summarize research and data collected in the City and in the metro area to identify desired transportation destinations (e.g., Food Cupboard) as well as the corresponding public and private transit resources to meet those needs.</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Routinely donate funds to the City’s Social Services Department to provide free medical-related rides to in-need individuals who request services.</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources: Greater Portland Council of Governments, Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, Metro Coalition, South Portland Transportation Department, South Portland Transit Advisory Committee, South Portland Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee, South Portland Social Services Department.

Community Support & Health Services

Vision: Promote programs and partnerships to help older adult residents obtain access to affordable health care and community services that help them live comfortably and with dignity as they age.

Findings: Per the Report, when asked if respondents had someone to help with personal care, one-third indicated that they did not have someone to assist them. It is unclear if this response was because they do not need help or if they do not have someone to help. A very small number of individuals said they were not able to pay for basic expenses and all were under the age of 85 years. Similarly, the few respondents who said they had gone to bed hungry in the last month were also under the age of 85 years.
Focus group members identified the need for supportive services in the form of case managers and advocates as benefiting seniors. Such services would assist in navigating the health and social service system, provide oversight with medication management and reduce the incidents of unnecessary 911 calls and emergency room visits. Education on a variety of age related topics was deemed as helpful and increase need for family support and respite services. They also felt that food insecurity may be an issue and specifically cited the method of publicizing the availability of food pantries and access to them as challenges.

Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:

- I worry about my elderly neighbors with no local family, transportation issues, declining cognitive abilities and no one to monitor their status. Community commitment to seniors: Programs, resources such as transportation, events and cultural embracing them, their values to our community.

- Although I have no issues at the time, I have two elderly neighbors who live at home. I try to check on them but it worries me that they have no reliable help for shopping or health care. They are very isolated. Thank you for looking at this topic.

- Lots of seniors with memory issues are lonely, isolated but do not necessarily need all daycare services. They would like a weekly get together-perhaps at the senior center- for a few hours. Thank you.

Goals & Action Steps: As the nation’s and Maine’s older adult population grows, as does the group’s longevity. Despite overall gains in life expectancy, there are subpopulations that continue to experience health disparities as they age. Improving health and maintaining health for a population that is living longer requires improved access to health and social services that promote and protect wellness and wellbeing.

AFSP strongly believes that all older adult residents should have access to affordable health care and community services that help them live comfortably and with dignity, and supports the coordination and promotion of services to help meet the needs of older adults and caregivers.

Report Recommendations:

1. Establish an older adult citizen advocate working in a proactive role to help older adults navigate the system

Action Plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rec. Reference</th>
<th>Activity/Program</th>
<th>Lead(s)</th>
<th>Member(s)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Partner with SMAA to receive “Community Resource Specialists” who can offer their services via walk-in appointments for residents</td>
<td>L. Joyce</td>
<td></td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rec. Reference</td>
<td>Activity/Program</td>
<td>Lead(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Create in-person programming options for falls prevention (e.g., T’ai Chi, Matter of Balance)</td>
<td>L. Joyce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Develop and explore virtual programming options for falls prevention (e.g., T’ai Chi, Matter of Balance)</td>
<td>C. MacLeod, L. Joyce</td>
<td>Sue, Stephanie, Karen, Maxine</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Serve on Maine Council on Aging’s “Data Dashboard” initiative focused on the South Portland municipality</td>
<td>S. Henderson, M. Beecher, C. MacLeod</td>
<td>L. Joyce, B. Kroon, T. Grande</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Closely support the Maine Council on Aging’s “Data Dashboard” falls prevention intervention and prevention programs</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Develop “Did You Know?” age-friendly chats, recorded conversations between AFSP members and community experts in various fields/interests</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Network with MCOA, AARP Maine, Tri-State Learning Collaborative, SMAA, SPCC, SP School Department, and others to access education materials and knowledge</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Support the Maine Department of Agriculture’s Farm Share program for older adults</td>
<td>L. Joyce</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources:** Southern Maine Agency on Aging, South Portland Community Center, South Portland Public Library, Maine Council on Aging, AARP Maine, Tri-State Learning Collaborative, South Portland School Department, South Portland Community Television.

**Social Participation**

**Vision:** Help enhance older adult residents’ quality of life and longevity by developing and promoting programs that encourage and assist with their social participation and physical activity within the community.

**Findings:** Per the Report, of the total respondents less than half answered the question “what prevents you from socializing more?” For those that did, no one to go with, mobility issues, and finding out about events too late were the most common responses. There were a number of “other” responses which cited health as a deterrent to socializing more. In short, the data did not support evidence that social participation was lacking for South Portland’s older adult residents.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**

- *SoPo library is a wonderful asset to the city, you didn’t ask any questions about the library;*
• We are excited about the new upcoming hot tub at the pool, super for elder therapy. The rec center generally does a fantastic job addressing the needs of the local seniors—wonderful programs, great variety. Kudos

• I am still very active. I still play tennis, and am a musician. I am also still working part-time. I would love to see SoPo further expand available recreational resources for seniors. For example: indoor tennis courts, weight training activities, musical social groups;

• The things I need and want at this moment are more exercise classes for seniors at a low cost. I know there are classes at the community center and I admit I have not looked at the online brochure this fall. I want yoga and I know several who would like a class that concentrated on balance and just good strengthening and basic strength training. Also would like painting classes where they have had in the past. Maybe knitting and crocheting;

• I moved to South Portland in 1998, very nice here! Now that I am retired, I attend several outings offered through the Recreation Center (55+), keep up the good work!

Goals & Action Steps: Social participation and social networks can decline with age for a number of reasons, including children leaving home, retirement from paid employment, and the onset of physical limitations. However, continued engagement with others is an important factor contributing to health and well-being throughout the life course. Participation in community activities can help older adults stay informed about important resources, remain physically and mentally active, support and strengthen social ties, and reduce negative aging stereotypes.

AFSP supports learning, fitness, social, cultural, and spiritual activities for older adults as well as intergenerational activities that are accessible, affordable, safe, and fun.

Report Recommendations:

1. Establish a young older-adult volunteer companion group through the Department of Parks and Recreation

2. Work with high school seniors to establish a “Seniors-to-Older-Adults” group through the school system

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish a young older-adult volunteer companion group through the Department of Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Work with high school seniors to establish a “Seniors-to-Older-Adults” group through the school system</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Support the South Portland Historical Society in their effort to establish a</td>
<td>L. Joyce</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M. Beecher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Resources:** South Portland Department of Parks & Recreation, South Portland Historical Society, South Portland Public Library, South Portland Community Center, South Portland Community Television, South Portland Social Services Department.

**Respect & Social Isolation**

**Vision:** Encourage – and celebrate – social engagement and participation across all races, ethnicities, and age groups as a way of fostering higher quality, inclusive services for all residents.

**Findings:** Per the Report, almost all respondents (99%) indicated that they felt safe both at home and in the community. However, focus group members felt social isolation to be a problem for older adult residents.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**

- *Something needs to be done about the problems on Main Street. It is no longer a safe place. I have lived in SP all my life and until the last 5 years considered it a safe place to raise a family. My children and grandchildren used to walk to the Friendly's and Dunkin Donuts but I no longer consider it to be safe for them.*

- *I am concerned about the Thornton Heights area. I lived there for 46 years and am now afraid to even stop there.*

- *In both Shaw's and Hannaford virtually no places to sit down within the main part of the store.*

**Goals & Action Steps:** Everyone wants to feel valued. Celebrating and drawing upon the wisdom and experience of older adults encourages intergenerational and multicultural understanding, while at the same time working to eliminate ageism and ensure consistent levels of high quality service for all ages.

AFSP supports the expansion of programs and services that engage and empower older adult residents in their communities by creating intergenerational opportunities and additional access to older adults in diverse settings.

**Report Recommendations:**

1. Include social isolation as interaction with health, transportation, information availability, and financial resources

**Action Plan:**
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish &quot;solo older adults&quot; and &quot;solo grandparents&quot; social engagement groups</td>
<td>C. MacLeod</td>
<td>L. Joyce</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop an older adult phone call check-in service</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish a neighbor-to-neighbor telephone check-in network</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Create care packages for older adults residing in certain neighborhood(s)</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop brief &quot;Did You Know?&quot; programs (2-5 minutes) providing misc. updates from committee members</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>To-Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources:** Southern Maine Agency on Aging, South Portland Public Library, South Portland Community Center, South Portland Community Television, South Portland Social Services Department.

**Civic Participation**

**Vision:** Assist older adults in finding additional job, volunteer, and other civic opportunities as they age to meet community needs, as well as encourage them to share their skills with younger generations to alleviate their demands.

**Findings:** Per the Report, a large number of respondents (77%) stated that they were not interested in volunteer opportunities and less than half of the respondents (33%) answered the question on the desire to socialize more via volunteer opportunities. Those who indicated a barrier to more socialization cited cost, mobility issues, and finding out too late about opportunities as primary reasons.

**Survey/Focus Group Excerpts:**
- *Volunteer opportunities should be better advertised;*
- *I’d like to work part time but can find anything I can get to affordably. Jobs needed.*

**Goals & Action Steps:** Over the next few decades, the U.S. population will witness an unprecedented growth in the population ages 65 years and older. Because of population aging, the nation’s workforce has undergone significant changes with respect to age. By 2020, we will witness a decrease in the relative proportion of labor force participation of young people and prime age working people, and a significant increase in older workers. Which means that older adults are working later in age than ever before – for both interest and income.

AFSP supports the improvement of older adult residents’ opportunities for civic engagement and employment as they age given the necessity and dependency our communities will increasingly have on them to continue to fill the roles they traditionally would have been able to retire from at an earlier age.
Report Recommendations:

1. Establish an Older Adult Coordinator for volunteers to recruit volunteers and establish volunteer activities/programs

Action Plan:

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish Volunteer Coordinator to support Snow Shoveling Program; compile available volunteers to assist with other volunteer-led programs</td>
<td>C. Kilroy</td>
<td>S. Henderson, A. Caricchio, L. Joyce, B. Kroon</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources: South Portland Social Services Department.

Conclusion

Closing remarks from our founder and current Chair, Maxine Beecher:

As I sit here thinking about the growth that AFSP has accomplished over the last few years, I can’t help but think about our members, our volunteers, and our partners who have come forward to assist with the health, wellness, and safety of the older adults in our community. More importantly, I think about the passion that these individuals have brought to our table. With your indulgence, I’d like to explain why our age-friendly network makes our city of South Portland feel like more of a community of interconnected villages rather than the state’s fourth-largest municipal population.

We have always thought that South Portland is well positioned to become a premier age-friendly community. It has many natural elements for a viable livability standard now and in the future. As a committee of the City Council, we have generously been given funds over the years both from the Council as well as from other charitable organizations to accomplish our varied projects. But the use of those funds wouldn’t have been successful without the guidance and direction of our members, volunteers, partners, and residents alike who are always so willing and passionate about overseeing and pitching in on critical project whenever called upon.

To illustrate this collaborative work, we can turn to our hallmark program, “Sand Buckets for Seniors,” in which we provide five-gallon sand buckets to residents in need during the winter months to keep the walkways around their home less slippery. Beginning with our Public Works Department, their staff have a dedicated phone operator to receive requests from residents who either want to receive a new sand bucket or to refill of an existing one. And those residents hear about this service, and know how and when to contact the Department, through the articles we place in the South Portland Sentry newspaper. The South Portland Sentry allows us to post this timely information at no cost, knowing that our programs serve the good of the community. Once the Department’s staff receive the names and addresses of the requesting residents, they head to the salt shed to prepare the buckets for pickup by our wonderful
volunteers, often caring residents as well as the South Portland High School football team. These volunteers arrive with pickup trucks and friends and family to load up the ordered sand buckets and hand-deliver them to residents. And all along, we have The Home Depot Foundation to thank for always replenishing our supply of sand buckets when our materials run low.

I choose the “Sand Buckets for Seniors” program simply as a way of demonstrating that the project is truly a team effort. But the same could be said for our other many programs, including our sand shoveling services, our falls prevention/intervention events, our donations to the State’s farm share program and to our City’s Social Services Department for transportation assistance, our T’ai Chi and A Matter for Balance courses held at the Public Library, or our “Did You Know?” video broadcasts on South Portland Community Television (SPC-TV) – and the list goes on.

We believe that if the City acts on the recommendations described in this Action Plan, as it has done with our initial Report’s recommendations (2018), we will continue to work toward our goal of becoming a community in which our residents can truly age in place. What I can say about our members, volunteers, and partners is that we don’t quit. And so since that is true, I have great confidence that we are on the right path toward building a city in which all ages can thrive. As we say in our “Did You Know?” video broadcasts on SPC-TV, stay tuned for more updates from the AFSP team – as we always have something in the making to better the lives of our older adult residents!

Thank you,

--Maxine Beecher and the rest of the Age Friendly South Portland team.