



MAY 2026

AGE-FRIENDLY ATLANTA REGION ACTION PLAN

ONE **great** REGION



Atlanta Regional Commission Strategic Framework

VISION

ONE **great** REGION

MISSION

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

VALUES

Excellence | Integrity | Equity

GOALS



Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.



Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.



Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.



Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.



A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.



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MAY 2026



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Executive Summary

The Age-Friendly Atlanta Region Action Plan sets forth a shared vision for a region where all people can live well, age well, and belong. As the regional planning and inter-governmental coordination agency for the Metro Atlanta area, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) recognizes that designing for aging is designing for everyone. Working through data-informed planning and collaborative investments to foster thriving, equitable communities for all residents, the agency supports a variety of designations that serve different, overlapping geographic jurisdictions. These include federal designation as the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Area Agency on Aging and state designation as the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District and Regional Commission. This Age-Friendly Atlanta Region Action Plan aligns with the 11-county region defined as the Atlanta Regional Commission, where the population is growing older and more diverse. This plan builds on decades of regional leadership in planning, health equity, and community engagement. It advances ARC's multiple regional roles, integrating policy, data, and direct service to make aging well an intentional, coordinated regional priority. Grounded in ARC's Live Beyond Expectations strategic plan, this work centers equity, acknowledging that place, race, and economic status continue to shape who has the opportunity to live a long and healthy life in metro Atlanta.

The plan reflects research, analysis, and community collaboration. Quantitative data on demographics, transportation, housing, and health outcomes were paired with qualitative insights from listening sessions and partner engagement across the region. The research cycle developed by the Lifelong Communities staff who created this plan follows a simple rhythm: listen, learn, and act. Listening helps identify local priorities and lived experiences related to aging; learning involves synthesizing data across systems; and acting means identifying clear, achievable initiatives that partners can advance together. Through this process, ARC supports a shared framework for action that connects local knowledge and innovation with regional policy and practice.

AARP identifies 8 Domains of Livability: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Transportation; Housing; Social Participation; Respect and Social Inclusion; Work and Civic Engagement; Communication and Information; and Community and Health Services. The Action Plan framework follows ten domains of livability: AARP's eight, plus two added priorities: Economic Security and Climate Resilience. Drawing upon these domains, the Plan names ten key initiatives that define ARC's vision for Age-Friendly Communities throughout the Atlanta region. These key initiatives are: Age-Friendly Leadership; Community Voice and Insight; Economic Security and Opportunity; Intergenerational Learning and Research; Mobility and Transportation Access; Housing Stability and Aging in Place; Technology, Work, and Opportunity; Belonging and Communication; Health, Wellness, and Caregiving; and Age-Friendly Neighborhoods. Together, these initiatives create a connected vision for healthy longevity throughout metro Atlanta. Each initiative is meant to be measurable, replicable, and responsive to community input.

The work ahead is collaborative. ARC will continue convening local governments, advocates, health systems, and residents to turn these initiatives into results. Live Beyond Expectations will guide implementation and evaluation, ensuring that the plan remains both aspirational and accountable. Becoming an Age-Friendly region is not a single project. It is a shared, iterative process to make metro Atlanta a place where people of every generation can thrive.



Introduction

In June 2024, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) approved a resolution to join AARP's Age-Friendly Communities Network, the eleventh region in the state to do so.¹ In July 2024, AARP designated ARC as an Age-Friendly Region. Demonstrated by [ARC's Lifelong Communities Partnership](#) program and [Livable Centers Initiative](#), ARC has long supported efforts to develop healthy environments where opportunities for business excellence and community connections intersect, promoting high quality of life and standards that help all metro Atlantans thrive. Joining the Age-Friendly Communities program further demonstrates the region's ongoing commitment to enriching the lives of residents across the life course, and the initiative has been adopted as a priority for implementation in 2026. Participation in the program provides ARC with opportunities to share experiences and insights with other Age-Friendly Communities, broadening its impact in promoting consistently positive outcomes and reducing obstacles to thriving across social and geographic groups while striving to ensure the vital conditions for health are met for all people. Finally, the program includes access to AARP's extensive library of Age-Friendly resources, monthly live online educational events, and networking with other Age-Friendly Communities throughout AARP's service area through a variety of methods, including the members-only online discussion board.

This Plan includes an overview of ARC's recent efforts to promote livable lifelong communities, including the [Live Beyond Expectations](#) aging services strategic framework, and a description of the Atlanta Region's existing alignment with AARP's [Age-Friendly Communities](#) program. The Eight Domains of Livability are defined, and examples of the region's current initiatives in each domain are provided. The document also includes the region's five-year plan for participation in the Age-Friendly Communities Network.

¹ Atlanta Regional Commission Becomes 11th Age-Friendly Region in Georgia. 2024. <https://states.aarp.org/georgia/atlanta-regional-commission-becomes-11th-age-friendly-region-in-georgia>.



Age-Friendly Atlanta Region

Overview of the Atlanta Regional Commission

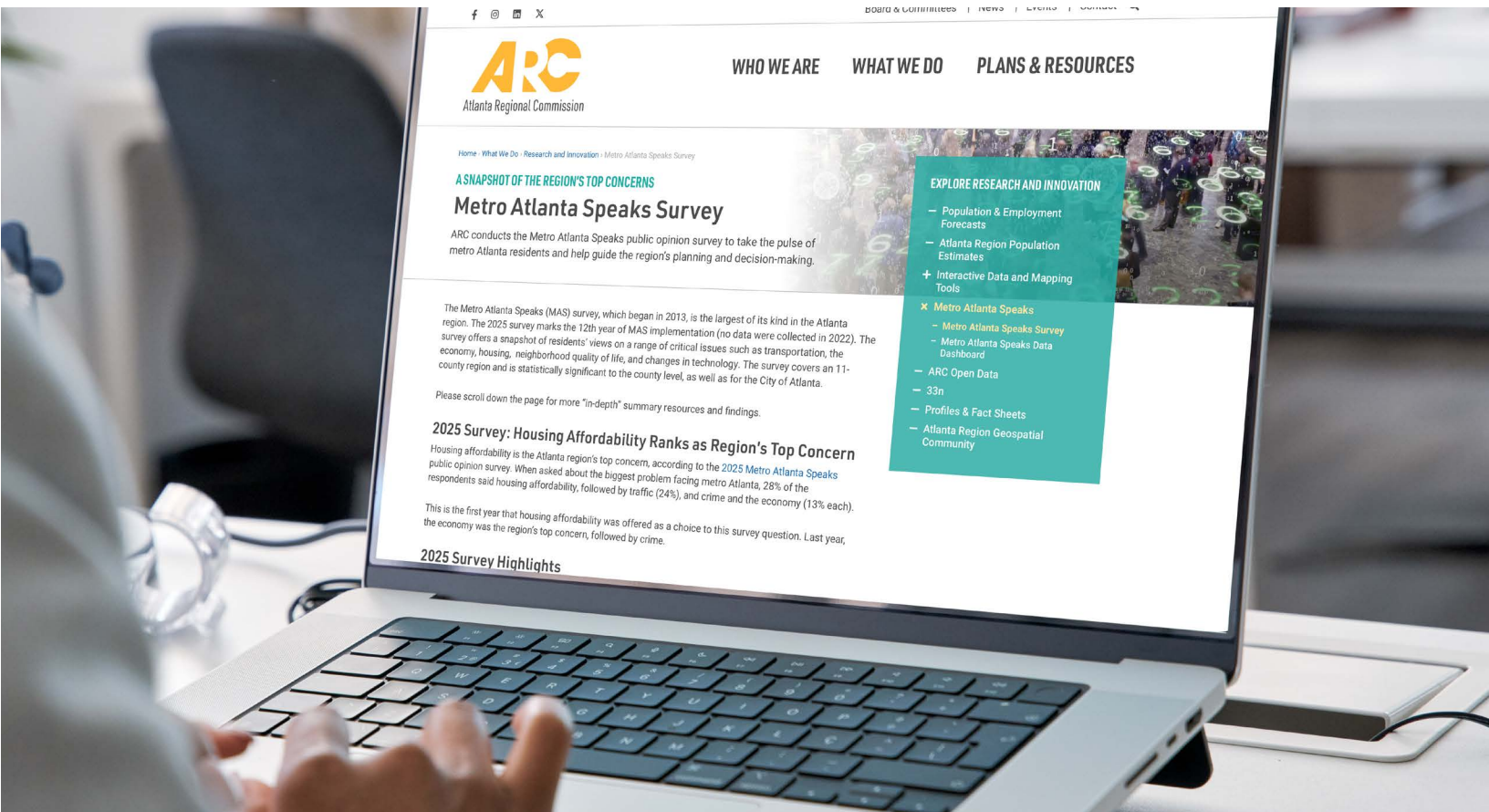
The Atlanta Regional Commission comprises a variety of functions within one single organization with a mission to foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region. Under the laws of the State of Georgia, ARC is designated as a Metropolitan Area Planning and Development Commission as well as a Regional Commission. Thus, it is a federally and state-funded and regulated quasi-governmental agency. The organization operates under rules promulgated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and fulfills several policy-mandated functions. These include ARC's designation as the Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for developing a transportation plan that meets all federal transportation and Clean Air Act planning requirements, providing planning staff to the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, serving as the administrative agency for the Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board, and acting as the local administrative agency for the Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative. As described below, ARC also serves as the state-designated Area Agency on Aging pursuant to the federal Older Americans Act, providing services (directly and through grantees) and policy guidance to improve the quality of life of older adults throughout the region.

The ARC Board provides strategic direction and oversight for the agency's regional planning and service delivery functions, ensuring alignment with its mission and approving major policies and plans that shape the region's growth and quality of life. The Advisory Committee on Aging serves as a consultative body to ARC's Aging and Independence Services Department, offering expertise and community engagement on aging-related issues. The ACA reviews program priorities, advises on strategies to improve services for older adults, and helps ensure that regional initiatives reflect the needs and perspectives of aging residents. These entities support ARC's capacity to deliver responsive, equitable programs across the Atlanta region.²

ARC's statutory and program designations cover distinct, but overlapping, geographies, reflecting the different ways regional services are organized and funded. As the Regional Commission under the Georgia Planning Act, ARC's governance and core planning role spans the 11-county Atlanta region. As the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), ARC administers aging and independence services across a 10-county service area, prioritizing residents with the greatest social and economic need and connecting them to services through [Empowerline](#). ARC also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), covering the federally defined metropolitan transportation planning area, coordinating with MARTA, ATL, GDOT, and local governments to develop and maintain the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and related multimodal programs. In addition, the organization supports the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District by providing planning staff assistance across the district's multi-county footprint, aligning natural resource, stormwater, and watershed policy guidance with local and regional partners. Finally, ARC also serves as the Administrative Agency for the Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board, coordinating training, career pathways, and employer engagement to strengthen a resilient, age-inclusive workforce.

Different ARC functions align to geographies defined by federal or state program requirements and intergovernmental agreements. These geographic alignments enable ARC to integrate regional planning with direct service delivery, ensuring that strategies adopted by the Regional Commission and the ARC Board are implemented through program geographies (AAA, MPO, workforce, water) that best match service needs and funding structures.

² See the Atlanta Regional Commission AAA Area Plan: <https://cdn.atlantaregional.org/wp-content/uploads/arc-aaa-sfy-2025-area-plan-3-1-2024-final.pdf>.



In addition to these legislated functions, ARC provides data and expertise on regional planning and governance. The Research and Data Analytics department maintains an open-access data portal, a research blog, and leads projects such as the annual [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) survey, in which residents of the region provide their feedback on a variety of issues affecting the metro. ARC conducts community engagement and listening sessions, focus groups, and attends educational and community resource events. The agency gathers feedback from constituents from all groups, seeking in particular to reach residents traditional methods have failed to reach. Not only do ARC teams work to gather thorough and illuminating feedback, but they also share findings and resources broadly, improving the quality of life for all people living and working in the region. The agency's mission is to *foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments*, and it aims to accomplish this mission working toward five goals:

1. Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta metro area.
2. Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.
3. Regional services delivered with operational excellence and efficiency.
4. Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.
5. A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

ARC's commitment to being an Age-Friendly region reflects its mission and goals (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. ARC's Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals Statement

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A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

The Atlanta region offers both a representative and a unique urban context. As the largest metropolitan area in the Southeast United States, it offers an example for practitioners in other urban environments, where climate concerns, transportation, housing, and other components of Age-Friendly programming are common considerations. Yet Atlanta also offers specific characteristics: the city's historic and social context have led to unique opportunities around its racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity, its sprawling metro, and its long history of fostering leadership partnerships across sectors and groups. The cooperation between disparate groups throughout the metro stands as a testament to the resilience and strength of the city's local coalitions. ARC exemplifies the functional outcomes of this spirit of cooperation and the related culture of growth and prosperity inherent to metropolitan Atlanta.

ARC population forecasts estimate that by the year 2050, twenty-two percent of the region's residents will be sixty-five or older; nearly 1.4 million people living in the Atlanta metro will fit into this group.³ While people who attain old age are increasingly thriving, and old age does not necessarily result in specific needs, research demonstrates that as people age, they are more likely to experience health conditions requiring support, including conditions related to mobility, cognitive function, and activities of daily living.⁴ The region will see a higher proportion of residents than ever before with needs related to social support, infrastructure, and home modifications. As this segment of the population also experiences social inequalities like poverty, isolation, and reduced access to resources like health care at higher levels than other groups,⁵ ARC is planning for population shifts accordingly, innovating social, economic, and physical conditions to meet the needs of this growing segment of metro Atlanta's population.

³ ARC Series 17 Forecast. 2024. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/arcsearchanalytics/viz/ARCSeries17Forecast/Introduction>.

⁴ 12 Common Chronic Conditions Among Adults. July 10, 2025. <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/XnwI9/1/>.

⁵ Committee on the Health and Medical Dimensions of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults, Board on Health Sciences Policy, Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences, Health and Medicine Division, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, and National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. *Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.



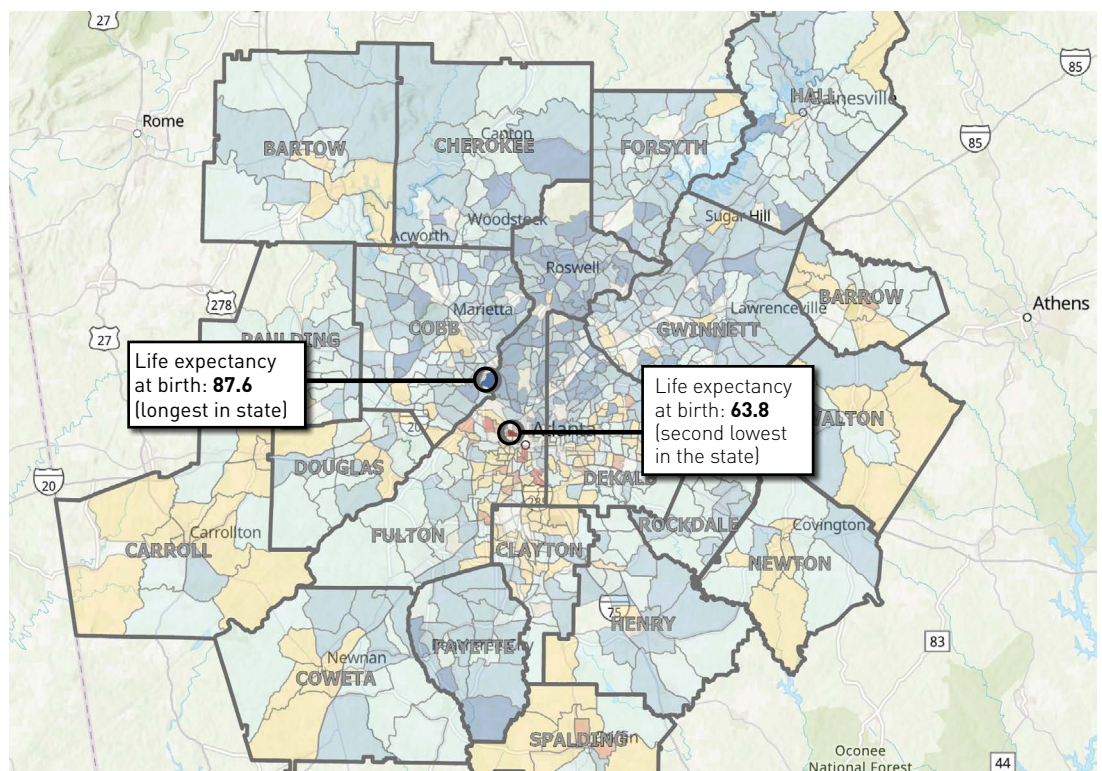
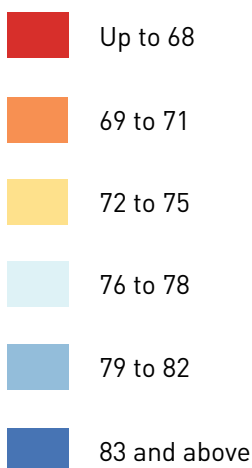
Live Beyond Expectations

As described above, in addition to its designation as one of the twelve Regional Commissions in the State of Georgia, ARC also serves as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). In this capacity, ARC provides services (directly and through grantees) to support aging residents, people living with disabilities, and care partners throughout the ten-county metropolitan Atlanta region. ARC works to develop long-range plans to accommodate the region's rapidly growing population of older adults. The agency offers and administers services designed to maximize the independence, health, and well-being of older persons, individuals with disabilities, and their care partners. Finally, AAA staff participate in agency review of all jurisdictional partners' comprehensive plans and plans for developments of regional impact for Age-Friendly appropriateness.

Under the Older Americans Act (OAA), the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees and supports the state's AAA's to assist older individuals, at-risk adults, persons with disabilities, and their families and caregivers to achieve safe, healthy, independent and self-reliant lives. In its role as AAA, ARC meets five basic functions for this population: administration, advocacy, coordination, outreach, and program development. ARC offers many services to older adults and their families, including case management, in-home services, respite, transportation, home-delivered meals, congregate meals, senior recreation, legal services, and more. This work supports individuals in need of services throughout the region, while the AAA's Strategic Planning Unit builds upon knowledge gained from these operations to offer recommendations and insights for other departments within ARC.

Fig. 2. U.S. Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates Project, 2010-2015

Life Expectancy at Birth



Source: U.S. Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates Project, 2010-2015



Because of the unique historic and social context of Atlanta described above, ARC has implemented creative solutions to the realities of intersecting drivers of inequality at play in the region, and its [*Live Beyond Expectations*](#) (LBE) 2020-2025 aging services strategic plan aligns with the ethos of AARP's Age-Friendly Communities. LBE aims to address disparities in life expectancy by focusing on vital conditions for health throughout the region (see Figure 2). LBE activities include community-engaged research, public education, and resource-sharing events, and direct support such as mini-grants and technical assistance.

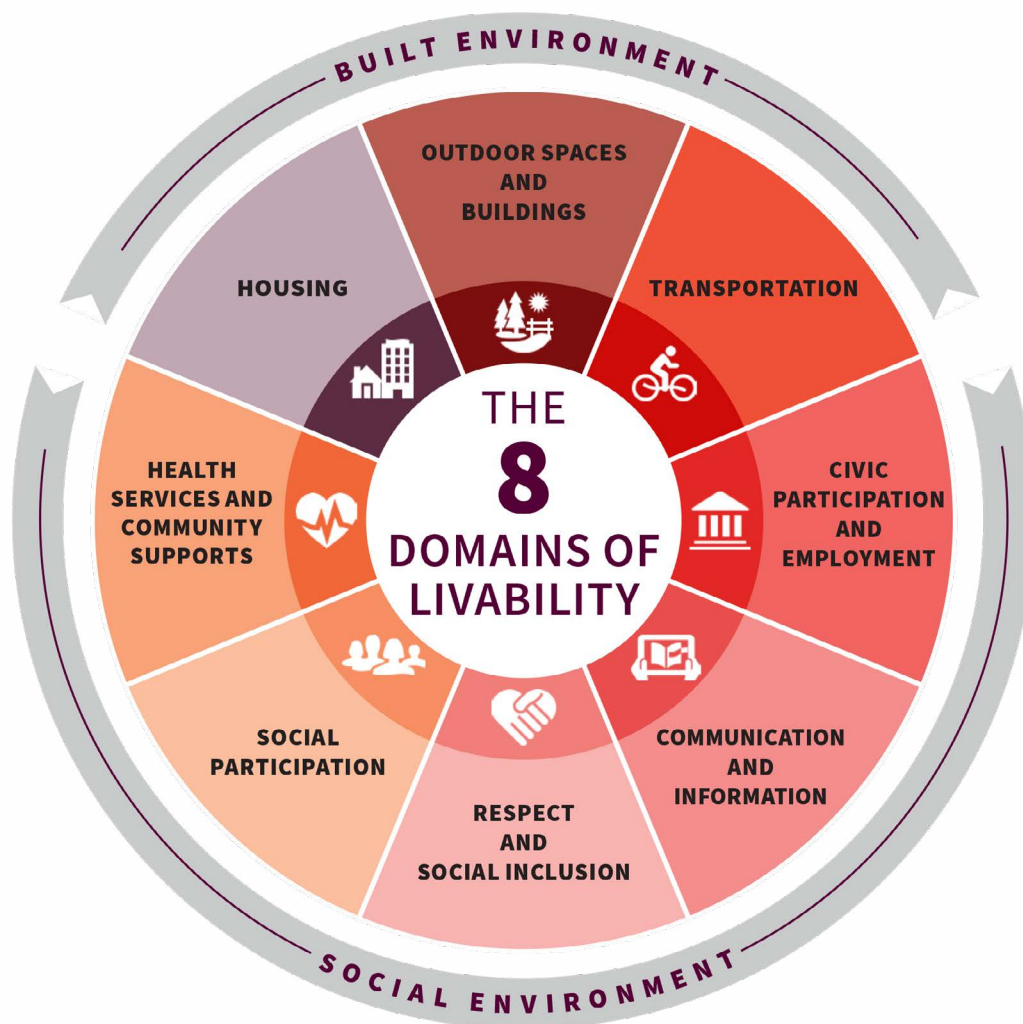
Age-Friendly Communities: The Eight Domains of Livability

The framework AARP provides for its Age-Friendly Communities program relies upon [Eight Domains of Livability](#) (see Figure 3):

- ◆ Outdoor spaces and buildings
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Civic participation and employment
- ◆ Communication and information
- ◆ Respect and social inclusion
- ◆ Social participation
- ◆ Health services and community supports
- ◆ Housing

Prioritizing access to high quality conditions within these domains improves the quality of life for all residents of a community, including those who are aging. AARP encourages increasing the availability of resources along these domains to improve the well-being of all community members.

Figure 3. AARP's 8 Domains of Livability



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

As the Atlanta region grows and ages, ensuring that public spaces remain safe, connected, and welcoming is essential. **By 2050, over 900,000 metro Atlanta residents will be over the age of 75⁶** — a group that consistently reports a desire to stay active, engaged, and connected to their communities.⁷ Accessible sidewalks, shaded seating, and thoughtfully designed public buildings help make that possible, enabling people of all ages and abilities to gather, socialize, and maintain independence.

ARC supports local governments in advancing these goals through planning initiatives that prioritize accessibility and high-quality design in the built environment. The [Green Communities Program](#) encourages sustainable development practices that improve community health and comfort, while regional trail and greenway investments such as the [Flint River Gateway Trails](#) and [Chattahoochee RiverLands](#) expand opportunities for people to experience nature, exercise safely, and connect with nearby destinations. These projects place a strong emphasis on ADA-compliant design, connectivity across neighborhoods, and improvements in areas lacking transit or safe pedestrian routes. Components of these plans align across domains, for example, mitigating heat risk. The Regional Development Plan, [Growing Together for 2050](#), demonstrates ARC's commitment to linking projects like these in one comprehensive regional framework, serving as a convener and resource hub for residents and leaders.



Arts Center East in City of Roswell was submitted to ARC's Green Communities as a Greyfield Site that renovated a residential home into an art gallery and facilities for cooking, painting and clay, wheel, and pottery classes.

As the AAA, ARC also works to ensure older residents can enjoy these spaces through programs that enhance access to outdoor environments and safe community buildings. Senior Centers, supported by the AAA, provide garden access, group outings, and recreational programming. ARC's Aging & Independence Services Quality Team monitors facilities and transportation vehicles for compliance with grant requirements, including to ensure seniors can move confidently and safely between indoor and outdoor spaces. Even small modifications such as adding shade structures or improving seating significantly enhance comfort and usability for people with mobility challenges, while decreasing risks associated with heat exposure.

ARC will continue to make recommendations and provide technical assistance to local governments to expand access to well-designed parks, sidewalks, and public buildings that support active living and social connection.

⁶ ARC Series 17 Forecast. 2024. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/arcresearchanalytics/viz/ARCSeries17Forecast/Introduction>.

⁷ AARP. 2018. "AARP Survey: 75 Percent of Retirees Want to Stay Put." <https://www.aarp.org/money/retirement/retirees-age-in-place-aarp-study/>.

Investments that link recreation areas with transit and neighborhood centers will be especially critical to helping residents age well in the communities they love.

Transportation

Mobility is foundational to healthy aging. Being able to get to work, medical care, grocery stores, social activities, and loved ones keeps people connected and independent. Yet transportation remains one of the top concerns older adults raise in ARC’s community engagement, particularly in parts of the region where walking is unsafe and transit options are limited. As metro Atlanta’s population ages, ensuring that people can safely and affordably move around their communities is essential.

As both the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Area Agency on Aging for the region, ARC is uniquely positioned to advance transportation systems that meet the needs of older adults. The agency leads the region’s coordinated planning efforts, working closely with MARTA, the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and local governments. Through initiatives such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, *Walk. Bike. Thrive!*, and the Atlanta Regional TDM Program, ARC promotes a multimodal network that includes fixed-route transit, demand-response paratransit, micro-transit, and multi-use trails. A strong focus on safety, including a regional goal of zero traffic deaths, directs investments toward pedestrians and other vulnerable road users, especially in communities with higher crash risks. ARC recently published its most recent [Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update](#), demonstrating the agency’s role in ensuring safe, reliable access to transportation throughout the region.

Affordability also presents a major barrier to mobility and aging in place. The Housing and Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index shows that “Regional Moderate” households in metro Atlanta spend an average of **51% of their income on housing and transportation combined**, significantly higher than the national standard of around 45%.⁸ The gap worsens when affordable housing is located far from transit—forcing many lower-income and older residents into car dependence and rising transportation costs. Addressing this spatial mismatch is essential to ensuring older adults have real choices in how they travel.

ARC’s role as the AAA ensures that individuals receive transportation services information from the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) and its [Empowerline](#) website and resource directory. Additionally, the AAA funds transportation services to support individuals with the greatest access essential trips for social connection, groceries, healthcare, and errands. ARC’s plans emphasize the need for alternative booking arrangements for older adults or those without smartphones, as well as ensuring vehicles with lifts are matched with wheelchair users for these services. According to the 2024 Metro Atlanta Speaks survey, nearly nine in ten older adults believe improved transit is important to the region’s future, affirming strong public demand for Age-Friendly mobility.

ARC and its partners will continue building a transportation system that supports active and engaged aging. Investments that improve first- and last-mile access to transit, expand trail and sidewalk networks, and reduce cost burdens for older adults will be key to helping residents age well in the communities they call home.

⁸ H+T Affordability Index. 2025 Update. https://htaindex.cnt.org/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.



Housing

Stable, affordable housing is one of the strongest foundations for healthy aging. Results from the 2025 Metro Atlanta Speaks show affordable housing is the number one concern for residents of the Atlanta region. The survey indicates that most older adults in the Atlanta region want to remain in the communities they know, yet rising housing costs and limited accessible options make that increasingly difficult. Both residents who own and who rent their homes face challenges related to housing affordability and maintenance. By supporting county-based and non-profit providers, ARC helps ensure residents receive support in their homes and close to home. Through Empowerline, ARC helps residents stay in the communities where they want to live. These services include home modifications, community housing transition for individuals living in nursing homes, and preventing the loss of existing housing.

Home ownership

Nationwide, people over the age of 65 are far more likely to own their homes outright than younger groups; 54% of the nation's 35 million mortgage-free homeowners are age 65 or older.⁹ While more than half of the region's adults aged 65+ live in homes without a mortgage, many still face significant financial pressures due to escalating property taxes, insurance, and maintenance costs, shown in Figure 4.¹⁰ In the Atlanta region, almost 30,000 owners who do not have a mortgage are cost burdened, spending more than 30% of household income on housing costs.¹¹ The sharp rise in median home sale price shown in Figure 4, more than 58% between 2018 and 2023, is a major factor behind this challenge, making it difficult for many older adults to downsize or relocate within their

⁹ Malas, Meghan. (2024). *The share of mortgage-free U.S. homeowners just hit a new high—Here's why.* <https://www.resiclubanalytics.com/p/share-mortgagefree-us-homeowners-just-hit-new-alltime-highheres>

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2022), Table DP04; Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. *Housing America's Older Adults 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu>

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Homeownership rate for Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>

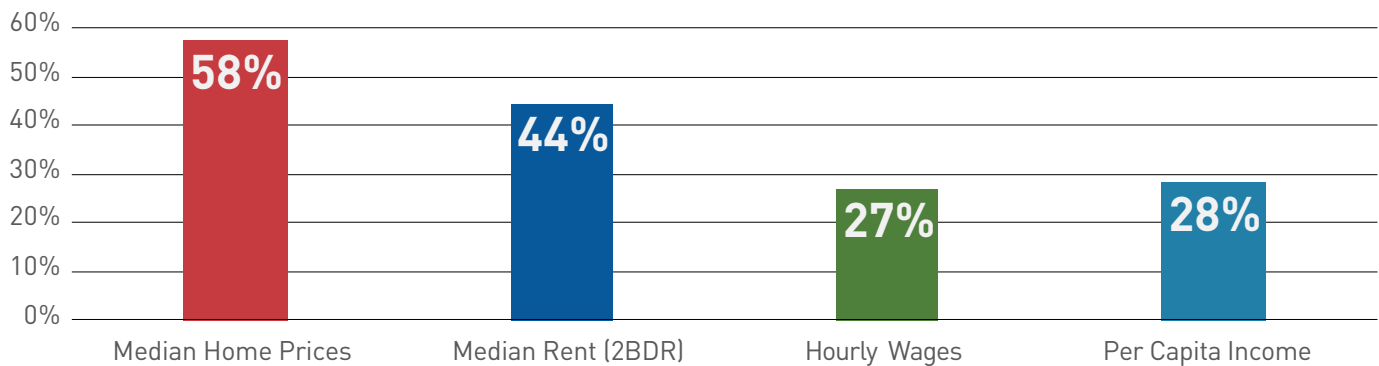
neighborhoods.¹² The national upward shift in the median age of repeat home buyers, from around 42 in 1991 to 61 in 2024, further underscores how **housing dynamics are changing for aging households**.

While owning a home includes economic advantages, it also comes with increased responsibilities. The region continues to see an increase in homes built, but there is also a significant aging housing stock in the metro. According to the 2023 Census (5-year ACS) almost one quarter (24.4%) of owner-occupied homes were built prior to 1980. Such housing requires maintenance and sometimes repairs. As the Area Agency on Aging, ARC funds home repairs and modifications through [Empowerline](#). This support can be critical for residents who experience changing accessibility needs.

Home rental

Residents who rent their homes also face cost burdens. From 2018 to 2023, metro Atlanta lost over 178,000 rental units priced between \$1,000 and \$1,499 and more than 54,000 units under \$800, reducing the availability of homes older adults on fixed incomes can afford. As the Area Agency on Aging, ARC provides direct assistance to older adults experiencing housing instability through its [Empowerline](#) resources. These resources support residents maintaining their homes both directly, such as supporting home modifications, or indirectly, by providing resources that decrease household economic burden. ARC also partners with affordable housing communities to deliver coaching to individuals with unmanaged behavioral health needs to prevent evictions.

Figure 4. Rising Housing Costs vs. Income Growth (2018-2023).



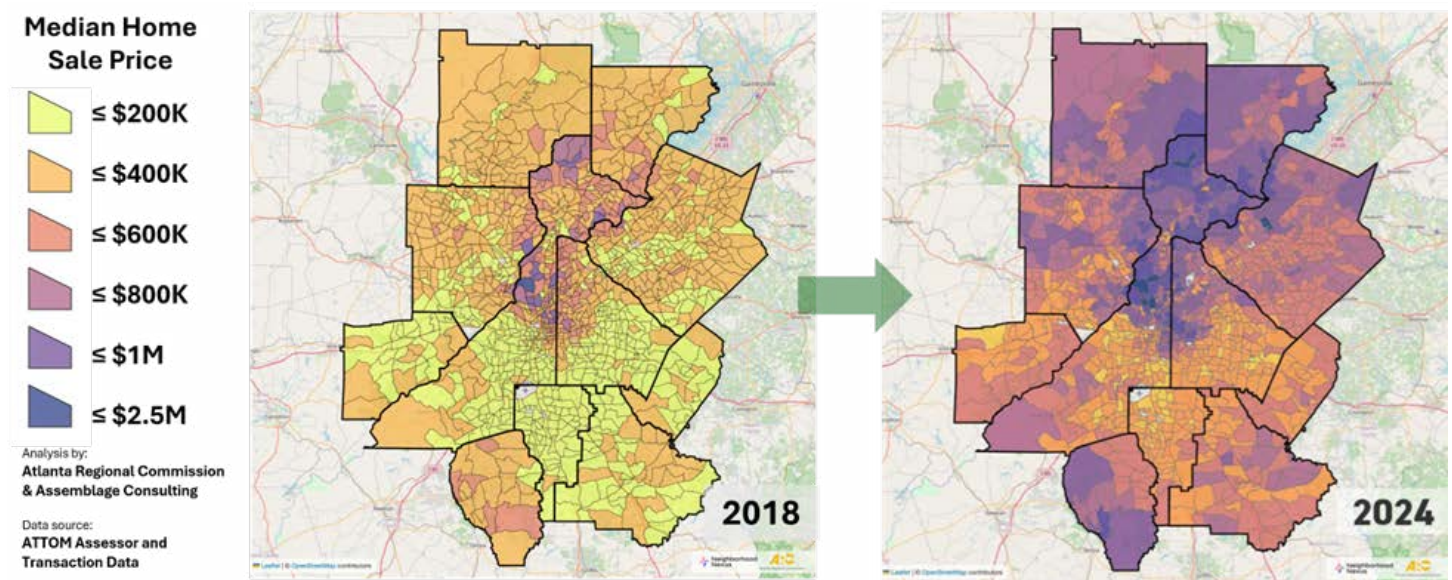
Source: Atlanta Regional Commission analysis of U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2023), Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (2023), and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (SCF 2019 & 2022)

ARC supports communities across the region in expanding and preserving a variety of housing options that enable aging in place. Through the [Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy Toolkit](#), the Housing Leadership Academy, and the Community Planning Academy, the agency equips local leaders with data tools and policy strategies to address **affordability, displacement, and equity**. These efforts reflect a regional environment where housing consistently ranks among residents' top three concerns, not only on the [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) survey across recent years, but also in community engagement events such as those conducted as part of [Live Beyond Expectations](#).¹³

¹² National Association of Realtors: 2024 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers

¹³ Live Beyond Expectations Regional Strategic Plan Wrap Up Report. (2025). Atlanta Regional Commission. <https://cdn.atlantaregional.org/wp-content/uploads/live-beyond-expectations-120925-final.pdf?>

Figure 5. Shift in median home sale prices in metro Atlanta from 2018 to 2024



ARC's [Livable Centers Initiative \(LCI\)](#) and [Community Development Assistance Program \(CDAP\)](#) help communities plan for age-inclusive growth by integrating housing into broader mobility and land use strategies. These programs support housing assessments, neighborhood revitalization, and mixed-income development, elements critical to ensuring older residents can live near services, transit, and social opportunities. [ARC's Community-Centered Design](#) program also partners with community-based organizations and local artists to bring resident voices into decisions shaping neighborhood identity and housing access. The Regional Development Plan, [Growing Together for 2050](#), recognizes regional issues like housing and aims to offer supports to local leaders through an overarching regional strategy.

Ensuring that housing remains attainable and accessible for older adults is central to ARC's long-term mission. As the region continues to grow, maintaining affordability, expanding Age-Friendly housing design, and preserving connections to transit and services remains essential for helping people remain rooted in the communities they value.

Social Participation

Social connection is essential to healthy aging.¹⁴ Opportunities to gather with others, such as for meals, recreation, or community events, help reduce isolation, maintain physical and cognitive health, and strengthen neighborhood ties.¹⁵ In engagement across the region, older residents consistently express a desire for more places to participate in community life, especially close to home and without needing to drive long distances.

¹⁴ Social isolation, loneliness in older people pose health risks. 2019. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>.

¹⁵ Skufca, Laura, and AARP Research. July 10, 2024. "Social Connections Are a Key to Happiness." <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/social-leisure/relationships/happiness-drivers-older-adults/>.



CobbLinc #45 Bus on Vaughn Road in Town Center

ARC supports social participation both through community-based planning and direct services. The [Livable Centers Initiative \(LCI\)](#) and [Community Development Assistance Program \(CDAP\)](#) help communities design walkable, mixed-use environments where people of all ages can live, work, and socialize. Each planning effort emphasizes equitable engagement, including hosting events where older adults already gather and ensuring that residents aging in place are represented in decision-making. Projects such as the [Town Center CID Sidewalk Network and Walkability Assessment](#), the [Cascade Heights Greenway Network Feasibility Study](#), and the [City of South Fulton Housing Assessment](#) exemplify how **improved mobility and public spaces expand opportunities for social interaction**.

As the Area Agency on Aging, ARC directly invests in reducing isolation and expanding access to community life. Senior centers provide congregate meals, outings, and regular programming for older adults. [Empowerline](#), the region's centralized information and referral hub, connects residents and caregivers with social programs, volunteer opportunities, and community events. ARC and its partners also offer virtual and telephone-based outreach for those experiencing limited mobility or living alone, ensuring they remain engaged and supported.

Looking ahead, ARC will continue strengthening environments where older adults can build relationships and stay active in community life. This includes expanding walkable destinations, investing in places where people naturally gather, and continuing to center the experiences of aging residents in local planning efforts.

Respect and Social Inclusion

A respectful and inclusive community enables people to feel valued and to participate fully as they age. **By 2050, nearly 62% of residents of the Atlanta region are projected to identify with racial or ethnic minority groups.**¹⁶ The diversity in culture, language, age, and lived experience in the region presents both a responsibility and an opportunity: planning and engagement must reflect the voices and needs of all residents, including those who have historically been excluded.

¹⁶ ARC Series 17 Forecast. 2024. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/arcresearchanalytics/viz/ARCSeries17Forecast/Introduction>.



ARC Staff at a Community Engagement Event

ARC strengthens respect and inclusion by embedding these values into everyday planning practice. Programs like [Community-Centered Design](#) empower community-based organizations to shape arts and cultural projects that reflect local identity. The [2025 Public Participation Plan](#) provides guidance for outreach that centers lived experience and ensures that older adults, caregivers, and people with disabilities can meaningfully influence decisions.

ARC also leverages its regional role to expand organizational capacity and foster collaboration. Through gatherings such as the [Community Planning Academy](#), Transportation Forum, [Land Use Coordinating Committee \(LUCC\)](#), [Transportation Coordinating Committee \(TCC\)](#), and the State of the Region, ARC brings together leaders from across jurisdictions and disciplines to learn from community voices and one another. These efforts help shift engagement from a transactional “check-the-box” activity to a more relational, trust-based, and accountable approach.

As the Area Agency on Aging, ARC prioritizes connection to communities with the greatest need. [Empowerline](#), the region’s information and resource hub, ensures that culturally and linguistically relevant resources reach older adults and caregivers. For example, ARC partners with the Latin American Association (LAA) to provide culturally appropriate information and referral/assistance, strengthening the capacity to serve older adults and people with disabilities who may otherwise have difficulty accessing services due to language and cultural barriers. Outreach at Pride events, multilingual health fairs, and dementia-friendly workshops strengthens access to services while celebrating the full spectrum of identities and experiences within the region.

ARC will continue deepening relationships across sectors to ensure residents of every background are welcomed and represented in the region’s future. Respect and inclusion are cornerstones of healthy aging and key to building One Great Region that values every stage of life.

Work and Civic Engagement

Older adults contribute meaningfully to the economic strength and social fabric of the Atlanta region. Many continue working full-time or part-time, while others engage through volunteering, caregiving, and community leadership. AARP emphasizes that opportunities for both employment and civic participation support individual well-being, strengthen communities, and enhance regional resilience.

ARC plays a key role in ensuring that work opportunities remain accessible as residents age. As the regional workforce development convener, ARC supports local workforce areas in delivering training and career pathways aligned with employer needs, including for workers who are aging or living with a disability. These efforts help address labor shortages and support regional competitiveness. Rising labor force participation among older adults in the metro Atlanta region underscores this importance: since 2010, the labor force participation of people 65 and older has increased so that as of 2023, **nearly one in four older adults still actively participated in the labor force.**¹⁷ Older workers today are healthier, many jobs are less physically demanding than in past generations, and a longer lifespan often necessitates extended income. Employers are also increasingly recognizing the value of retaining experienced workers.¹⁸

Volunteerism and civic involvement represent additional pathways for engagement. ARC supports programs in which older adults serve as volunteers who provide outreach and support, not just as recipients of services. These roles build community connections and expand the reach of social support systems. In its AAA role, ARC coordinates with local stakeholders to understand and support transportation, nutrition, and Senior Services programming and needs, including convening a Regional Senior Hunger Coalition. ARC boosts connection between its provider/grantee agencies, publishing a weekly newsletter, hosting bimonthly meetings, and organizing training retreats. [Empowerline](#) also connects residents and caregivers with volunteer positions and civic opportunities that align with their interests and availability.

ARC will continue supporting initiatives that help aging residents remain active contributors to civic and economic life. Expanding employment supports, enhancing age-inclusive workplace practices, and growing volunteer and mentorship opportunities are essential to ensuring that older adults can continue to use their skills, experience, and voices to strengthen their communities.

Communication and Information

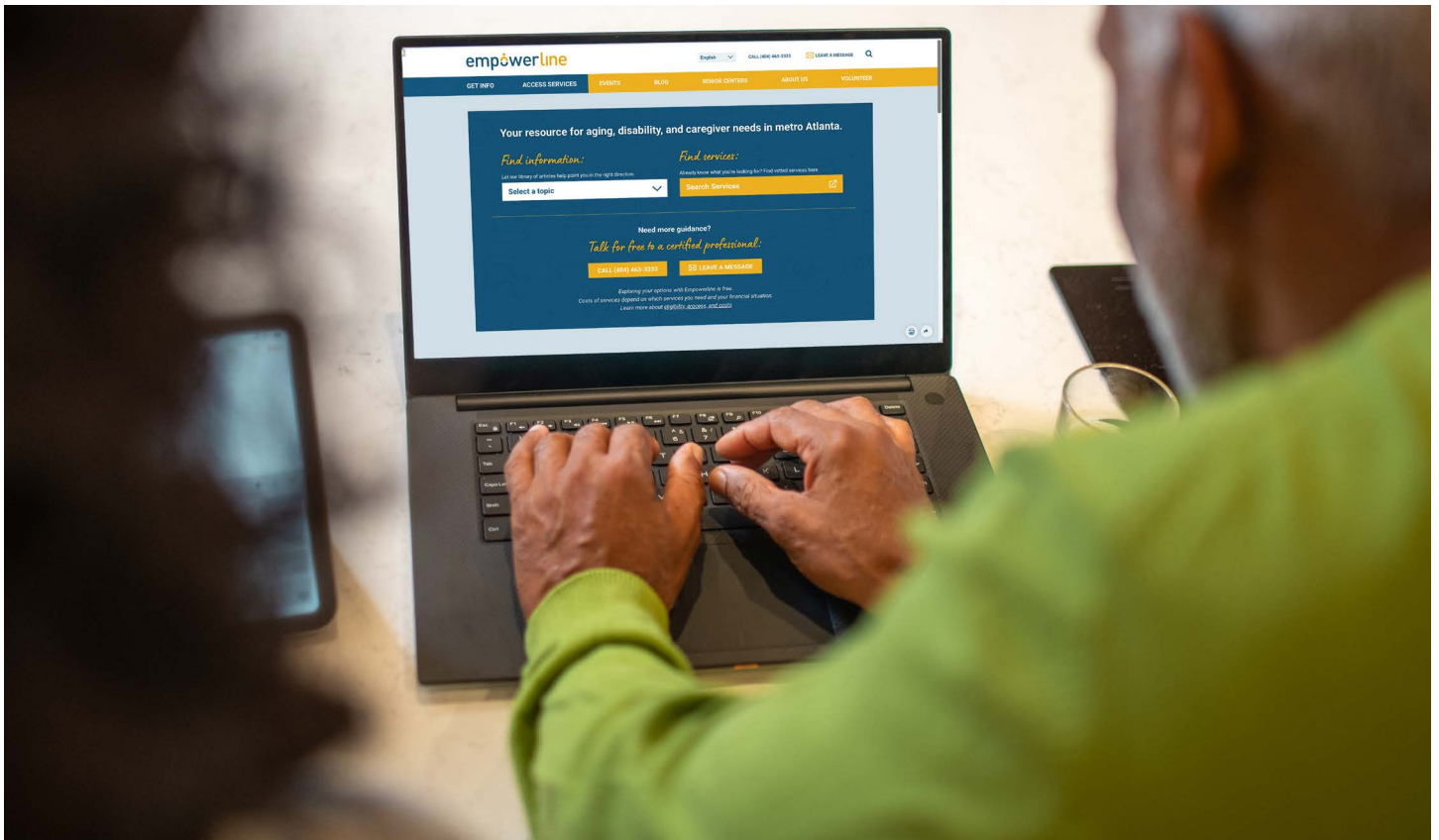
Clear, accessible information is essential to helping older adults make informed decisions about their health, mobility, and community life. As communication channels evolve, becoming increasingly digital, yet still reliant on traditional media for many residents, agencies must ensure that information reaches people in formats they trust and can easily use. [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) data illustrates this well: **65% of adults aged 65+ rely on television for local news**, while only **29% regularly use social media**. Just **57% feel well-informed about services available to them, revealing a significant gap in awareness**.

¹⁷ In 2010, the rate was 18%. Source: Sotnikova, Maria. 2025. "Regional Snapshot: Flipping the Script on Aging with Data and Statistics." <https://33n.atlantaregional.com/regional-snapshot/regional-snapshot-flipping-the-script-on-aging-with-data-and-statistics>.

¹⁸ Choi-Allum, Lona, and AARP Research. 2022. "Workers Learning New Skills to Meet Demand for Skilled Workers." <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/work-finances-retirement/employers-workforce/reskilling-workforce-trends-older-adults/>.

ARC works to close this information gap by using a broad mix of communication strategies throughout the organization. The Office of External Affairs develops messaging for digital and print channels, public meetings, and community events. Functional tools such as brochures, mailed flyers, and large-print educational materials remain critical for reaching residents who lack reliable internet access. Data from ARC’s research and analytics tools, such as [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#), as well as its robust community engagement strategy with targeted frameworks such as [Live Beyond Expectations](#), helps the agency target outreach in neighborhoods where residents are most disconnected from available resources.

As the Area Agency on Aging, ARC maintains [Empowerline](#), the region’s centralized information and referral hub for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. Empowerline connects thousands of residents each year with services that support independent living, including in-home services, home modifications, caregiving supports, and transportation assistance. ARC also works across departments to ensure that Age-Friendly priorities are consistently reflected in messaging and outreach, from housing and transportation initiatives to workforce and engagement opportunities.



Empowerline is the region’s centralized information hub for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers

Accessibility remains a core value woven into ARC’s communication practices. Staff prioritize the use of plain language, closed captioning, alt text, high-contrast design, and multilingual translation to meet the needs of visually, cognitively, and linguistically diverse populations. Outreach through trusted community partners like libraries, faith communities, and Senior Centers ensures that information reaches residents in familiar and convenient locations.

ARC will continue adapting to evolving communication preferences while maintaining inclusive, human-centered outreach practices. By meeting residents where they are – both geographically and in how they receive information – ARC ensures that people of all ages have equitable access to the knowledge and resources they need to thrive.

Community and Health Services

Access to reliable health and social supports is critical to aging well in place. Community services can have a tremendous impact on health: according to the County Health Rankings model, clinical care accounts for 20% of health outcomes, compared with 30% for health behaviors, 40% for social and economic factors, and 10% for the physical environment.¹⁹ This model demonstrates that health outcomes are shaped more by social and environmental conditions than by clinical care alone. Many older adults want to remain in their homes and communities as they age, but doing so may require help with daily tasks, nutrition, chronic disease management, and navigating a complex network of care providers. Ensuring that these supports are coordinated and accessible – particularly for those with the greatest need – is central to maintaining dignity, independence, and quality of life.

As the Area Agency on Aging for the region, ARC is federally mandated under the Older Americans Act to prioritize services for older adults with the greatest social and economic need.²⁰ ARC provides and coordinates a wide variety of offerings, including falls prevention education, **chronic illness management workshops, dementia-friendly programming, and nutrition supports** such as congregate meals, farmers market access, and in-home services. Volunteers play a key role in addressing isolation by regularly connecting with residents who live alone or have limited mobility.

[Empowerline](#), ARC's information and referral platform, serves as the primary gateway to these services. By helping residents and caregivers understand eligibility, costs, and available options, Empowerline ensures that people can make informed decisions about their care and supports overall access to independent living.

At the systems level, ARC strengthens partnerships among Senior Services, community-based organizations, health providers, and other stakeholder organizations. Quality monitoring and compliance processes help ensure services are delivered safely, consistently, and with respect. Initiatives like [Live Beyond Expectations](#) and collaboration with [ARCHI](#) (ARC was a founder and serves on the ARCHI Steering Committee) reinforce a broader commitment to **addressing the social conditions that influence health, especially in communities facing inequities**.

ARC and its partners will continue expanding programs that promote health, connection, and independence for older adults across the region. Increased integration between clinical care and community supports combined with targeted investment in underserved areas will remain key to advancing a more equitable and Age-Friendly health system.

¹⁹ "Is the County Health Rankings Model Right or Wrong?" *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/findings-and-insights/blog/is-the-county-health-rankings-model-right-or-wrong>

²⁰ Older Americans Act | ACL Administration for Community Living. <http://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>.



Above And Beyond: Two Additional Domains for the Atlanta Region

Economic Security

In addition to the Eight Domains of Livability recognized in AARP's Lifelong Communities, the Administration for Community Living recognizes the importance of economic stability as a goal for thriving throughout the life course.²¹ Economic security allows people to make choices about their lives and age with dignity. Justice in Aging states that almost half of the aging adults in the country who live alone struggle to pay rent, buy food and medicine, and pay for their utilities.²² On the 2025 [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) survey, **43% of respondents 65 and older indicated they did not have cash on hand to manage a \$400 emergency.**²³ Poverty rates are decreasing for people throughout the region, but this varies widely by geography and social group. Racial wealth gaps, for example, are closing, but remain, and the percentage of older people living in poverty has declined less quickly than that of the general population.²⁴

ARC addresses these challenges through programs and partnerships that strengthen the region's economic foundation. As a regional planning agency, ARC works with local governments, community development organizations, and business leaders to promote equitable growth and opportunity. Initiatives such as [Live Beyond Expectations](#) and the [Community Development Assistance Program](#) help communities identify and address economic barriers at the neighborhood level. These efforts align with ARC's broader goal of supporting regional prosperity while ensuring that all residents share in that progress. As the Area Agency on Aging, ARC focuses on individuals in greatest social and economic need. Through [Empowerline](#), older adults and caregivers can access information and resources to support economic stability.

ARC aims to deepen its collaboration across planning, housing, and aging services to advance long-term economic mobility for families and stability for older adults. Expanding access to financial education, increasing participation in assistance programs, and integrating economic indicators into regional planning decisions will help ensure that aging Atlantans can thrive in their home communities.

Climate Resilience

Finally, ARC recognizes the need to prepare for climate uncertainties. A resilient region supports residents in withstanding and adapting to changing conditions, including extreme heat, flooding, and more frequent severe weather. For older adults, who may have limited mobility, health vulnerabilities, or reliance on home-based services, the effects of climate change can pose disproportionate risks. Building resilience is therefore both an environmental and an age-friendly imperative.

²¹ Administration for Community Living. 2024. *Aging in the United States: A Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging*. <https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/ICC-Aging/StrategicFramework-NationalPlanOnAging-2024.pdf>.

²² Goldberg, Jennifer, and Denny Chan. 2024. *Aging with Dignity and Justice: Opportunities to Meet the Needs of All of Us through a National Plan on Aging Justice in Aging*. <https://justiceinaging.org/aging-with-dignity-and-justice/>.

²³ Metro Atlanta Speaks Demographic Breakdown Dashboard. 2025. https://mas2025dashboard.streamlit.app/Demographic_Breakdown.

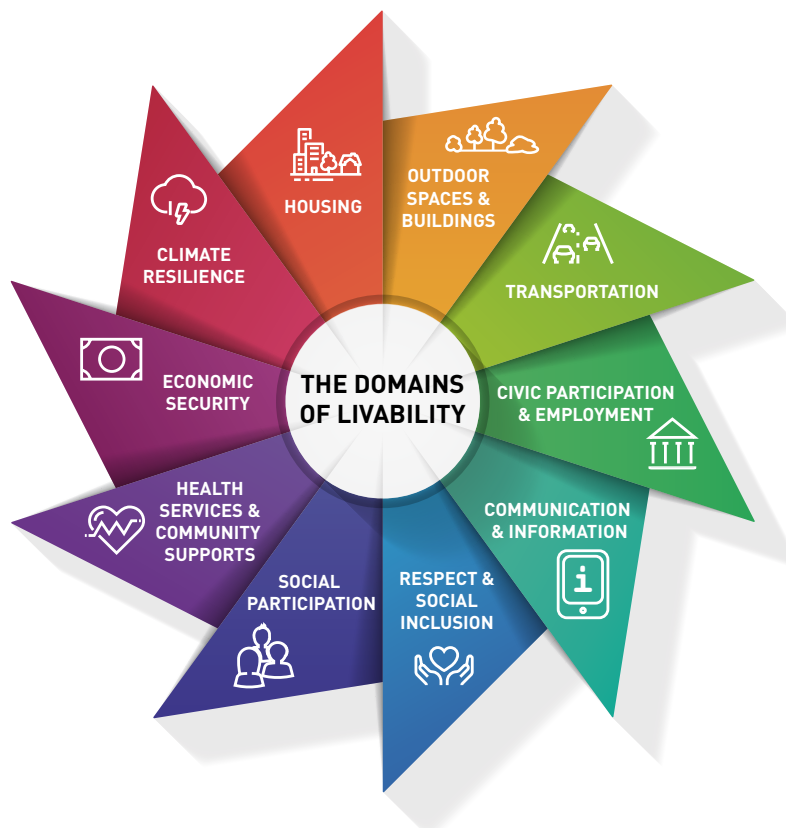
²⁴ Skinner, Jim. 2023. "Poverty and Wealth." <https://33n.atlantaregional.com/economy/poverty-and-wealth-a-look-at-the-landscape-of-inequality> and U.S. Census Bureau. [2010 and 2023]. *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0102: Population 60 Years and Over in the United States*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>.

ARC integrates climate preparedness into many aspects of its regional planning work. Through transportation, housing, and natural resource programs, the agency supports policies and infrastructure that reduce emissions, manage stormwater, and protect green spaces. ARC’s role as the Metropolitan Planning Organization ensures that regional transportation projects also account for emergency response, heat mitigation, and community safety during disruptions. Innovations such as the Smart City Digital Twin Pilot Project, a cutting-edge initiative to improve data models and provide real-time information to residents, exemplify ARC’s commitment to resilience. These strategies link directly to Age-Friendly principles: walkable, shaded streets, energy-efficient housing, and accessible public buildings all contribute to safer environments for aging residents.

The Area Agency on Aging complements these planning efforts by helping individuals prepare for and respond to environmental risks. [Empowerline](#) connects residents and caregivers with information on emergency preparedness, cooling centers, and health supports during extreme weather. Aging services providers/grantees and volunteer networks also check in with vulnerable residents during storms or power outages, ensuring their safety and access to resources.

ARC aims to further align climate resilience and Age-Friendly aims to strengthen community preparedness and adaptability. Expanding tree canopy coverage, improving neighborhood drainage, and investing in energy-efficient retrofits are strategies that will benefit residents across all ages while safeguarding those most at risk. Explicitly integrating climate resilience and Age-Friendly aims will help ARC create more complete and robust plans for all residents to thrive and age in the region.²⁵

10 Domains of Livability



²⁵ Dabelko-Schoeny, Holly, Geoffrey D. Dabelko, Smitha Rao, Melissa Damico, Fiona C. Doherty, Anthony C. Traver, and Marisa Sheldon. 2024. "Age-Friendly and Climate Resilient Communities: A Grey-Green Alliance." *The Gerontologist* 64(3):gnad137. doi:[10.1093/geront/gnad137](https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnad137).

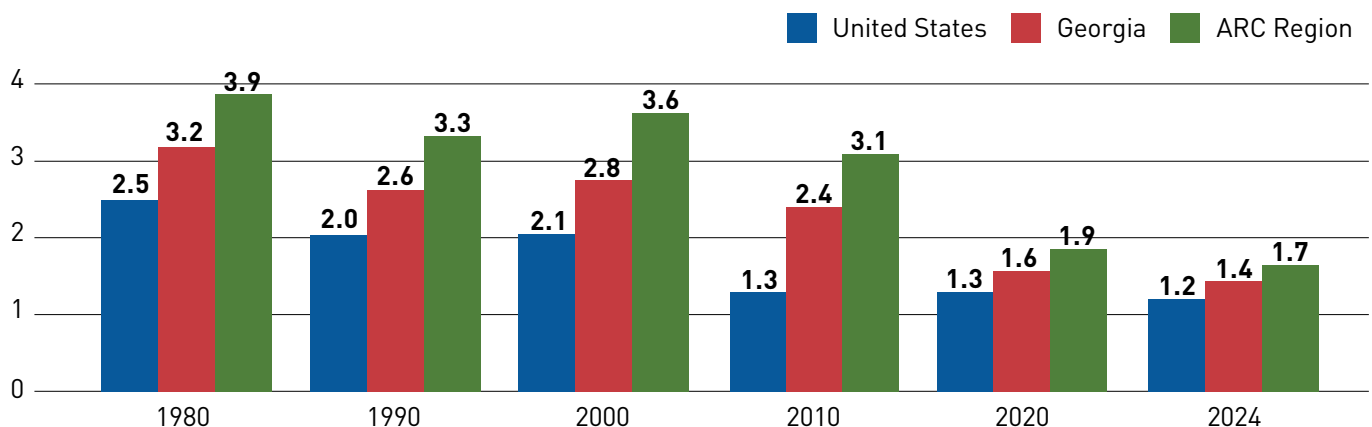
Key Challenges

ARC anticipates future challenges both global and specific to the region and aims to address these challenges with the Age-Friendly initiatives outlined in this plan. Stakeholder engagement aligns with 2025 [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) results to validate the key challenges residents expect to face in the next several years.²⁶

Population Change

Like urban centers globally, the Atlanta Region anticipates an aging population. By 2050, ARC predicts the region will be home to more than 1.3 million people aged 65 or older, an increase of 122 percent from 2020 population estimates.²⁷ People 65 and older are predicted to continue to be the fastest growing cohort in the region. At the same time, the growth in the population of children in the region is slowing, indicating an increased ratio of aging residents to younger cohorts, shown in Figure 6.²⁸ This shift in population also coincides with the region's ongoing growth trajectory: metropolitan Atlanta continues to grow overall.²⁹ Thus, ARC recognizes the urgent necessity of implementing Age-Friendly programs and plans, embracing the intergenerational social, economic, and environmental structures to support long, thriving lives for the region's residents.

Figure 6. Number of Children per Resident 65+, 1980-2024



Data Source: Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1980-2020 and Annual Estimates, 2024 Vintage

Economic Shifts

While ARC continues to predict strong job growth for the region, the agency also recognizes the concerns residents have regarding economic stability.³⁰ Recent research suggests the metropolitan area has limited opportunities for economic mobility, and that this trend has worsened throughout the last decade.³¹ The 2025 [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) survey showed that increasingly, large numbers of people living in the region feel pessimistic about the

²⁶ Huang, Bill. 2025. "Metro Atlanta Speaks 2025 Survey Results Released!" <https://33n.atlantaregional.com/metro-atlanta-speaks/metro-atlanta-speaks-2025-survey-results-released>.

²⁷ ARC. National Aging Trends and the Atlanta region. May 2024. <https://33n.atlantaregional.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/RS-Aging-Snapshot-May-2024.pdf>

²⁸ Haspel, Moshe. 2025. "Georgia's Generational Shift: Where Seniors Surpass Youth." <https://33n.atlantaregional.com/data-diversions/seniors-surpass-youth>.

²⁹ Skinner, Jim. 2025. "Regional Snapshot: Population Estimates for 2025: Gradual Growth." <https://33n.atlantaregional.com/regional-snapshot/population-estimates-2025>

³⁰ ARC Series 17 Forecast. 2024. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/arcsearchanalytics/viz/ARCSeries17Forecast/Introduction>.

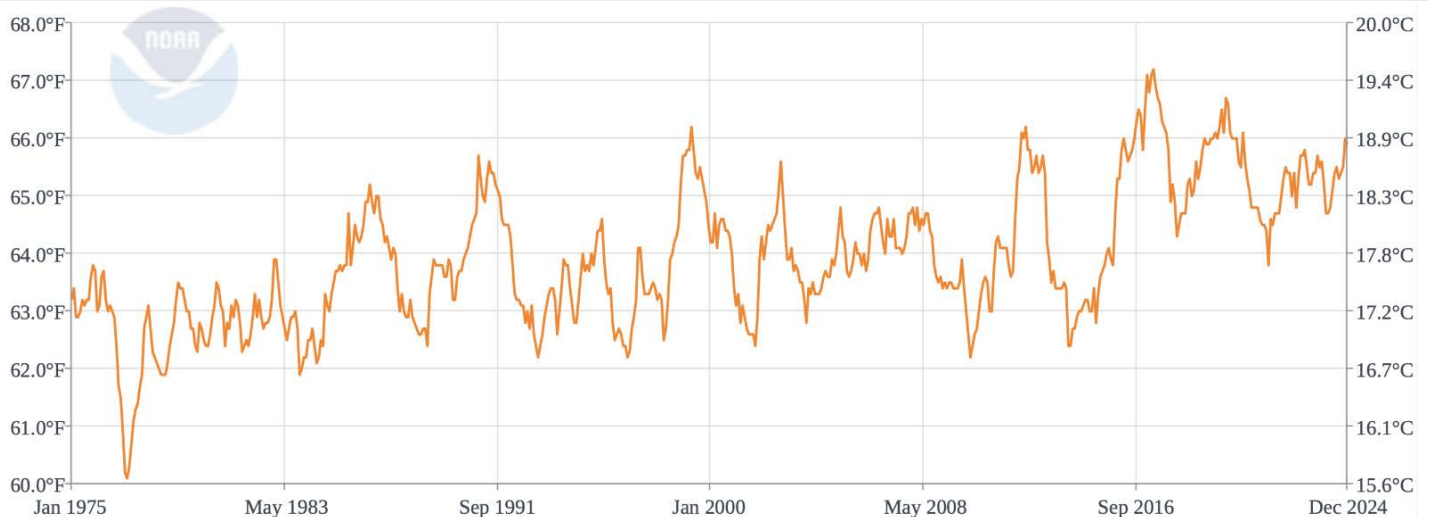
³¹ Chetty, R., Dobbie, W., Goldman, B., Porter, S. R., & Yang, C. S. (2026). "Changing Opportunity: Sociological Mechanisms Underlying Growing Class Gaps and Shrinking Race Gaps in Economic Mobility." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjaf057>

future, with many indicating they would like to move outside of the region. Attainable housing has long been recognized as a need for residents of the region and continues to be the primary concern of respondents in community engagement sessions and the [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) survey. Economic needs for seniors may present differently, as many are retired from work, and also may complicate challenges like housing, where affordability becomes less accessible due to design choices that may make it difficult to safely age in place. ARC seeks to promote plans and programs that anticipate aging Atlantan's economic needs, allowing people of all ages and abilities to thrive throughout the region.

Climate Events

Finally, increasing climate events pose challenges specific to the region's growing and aging population. The World Meteorological Organization confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record,³² and the state of Georgia has experienced increasing numbers of climate-related disasters in recent years – more in the last five years than in the previous two decades.³³ Figure 7 shows the increase in average temperatures in the state in the last fifty years. Emergency and social supports for residents of the region who are aging or living with a disability are critical to prepare for and respond to such events, and ARC supports efforts to plan for regional disasters. Finally, ARC has long been recognized for its cutting-edge approach to transportation issues, an area deeply tied to climate resilience. For example, this year, the ARC launched the Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan, an initiative designed to evaluate vulnerabilities to present and future extreme weather events (including severe storms and extreme temperatures) with the aim of identifying short-and long-range planning activities and investments for surface transportation infrastructure resilience, such as nature-based solutions. The 2025 [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#) survey shows that people living in the region continue to seek transit options to address increasingly challenging traffic; doing so will also improve climate outcomes.

Figure 7. Average temperatures in Georgia, January 1975–December 2024³⁴



³² WMO confirms 2024 as warmest year on record at about 1.55°C above pre-industrial level. 2025. <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2024-warmest-year-record-about-155degc-above-pre-industrial-level>.

³³ University of Georgia Institute for Resilient Infrastructure Systems. 2025. *Georgia Statewide Resilience Assessment: Hazards, Challenges, and Opportunities*. Athens, GA. <https://nowhabersham.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/GAResilienceAssessment-compressed.pdf>.

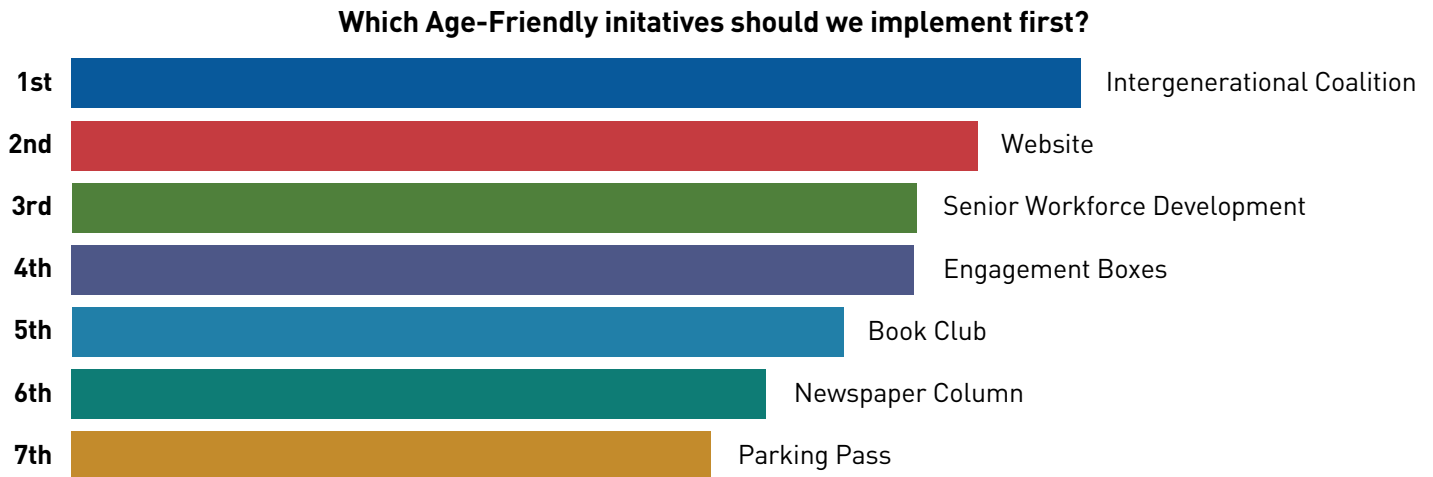
³⁴ National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), *Climate at a Glance*. from <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/climate-at-a-glance/statewide/time-series>

Current Age-Friendly Initiatives

In the time since ARC adopted AARP's Age-Friendly Communities program, the agency's work has expanded beyond the existing supports for the 8 Domains of Livability described above. Having long had a Steering Committee for the [Live Beyond Expectations](#) Plan, in 2025, ARC transitioned this committee, adding representatives from within the agency and outside participants, to create a broader Lifelong Communities Steering Committee. This group guides the region's community-level [Live Beyond Expectations](#) initiatives within the broader regional Age-Friendly context, supporting both the Strategic and Age-Friendly Action Plans. Figure 12 shows results from a feedback exercise conducted during a Steering Committee meeting. Members range from planners and engineers to gerontologists and public health scholars to community members and caregivers. ARC refreshed its commitment to lifelong communities, demonstrated in the [Lifelong Communities Toolkit](#), with the changes to the committee, and looks forward to expanding its Lifelong Communities work in the next few years.

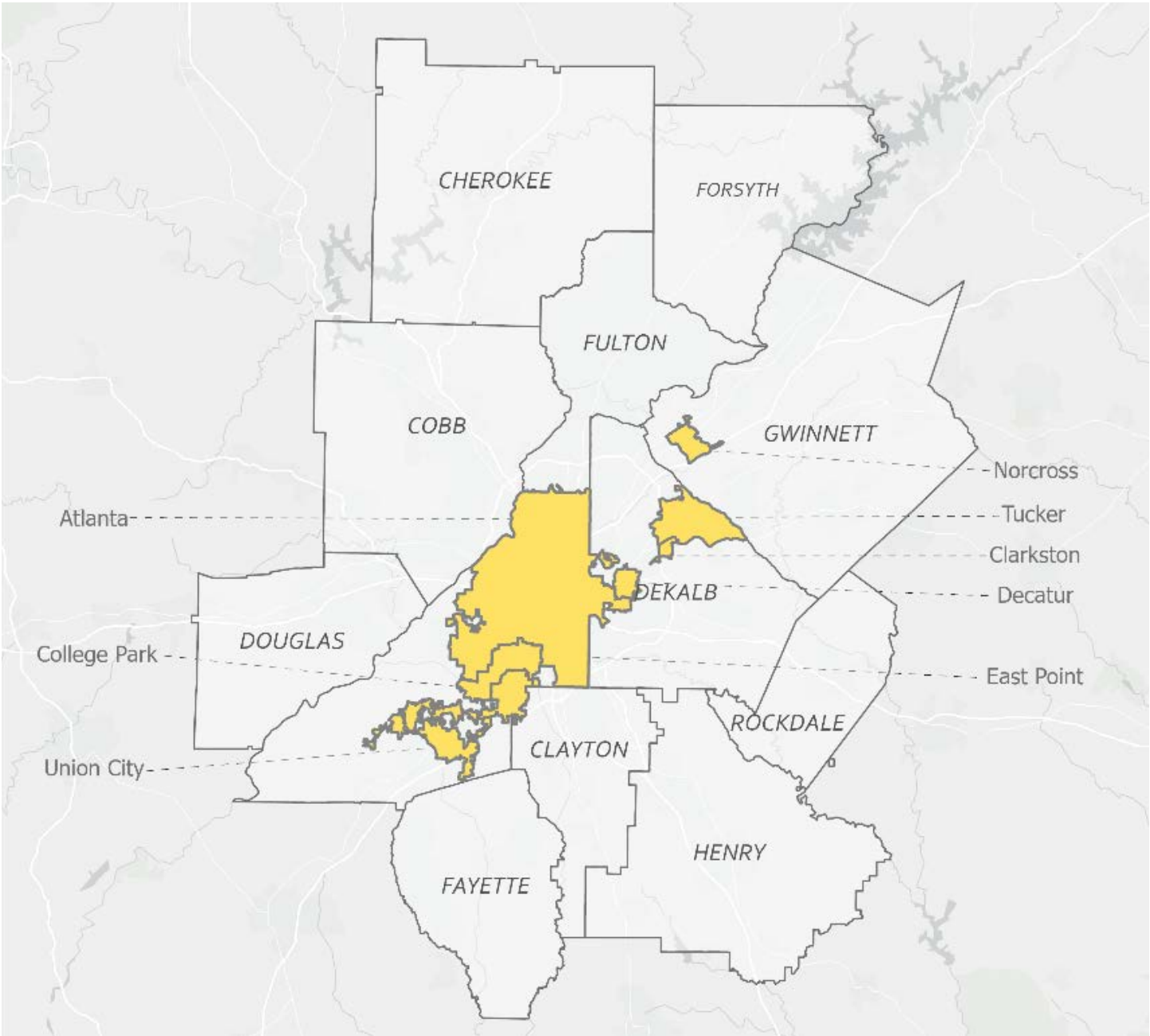
Drawing on expertise from this group supplemented by evidence from both publicly available and ARC-led sources like community research, ARC has identified two projects that will kick off in calendar year 2026: development of an Intergenerational Age-Friendly Coalition, and an Age-Friendly Atlanta Region webpage, to be housed within the existing ARC website. Additional initiatives will emerge as the agency continues its iterative research processes to determine the programs most appropriate and impactful for the communities we support.

Figure 8. Mentimeter Results taken during a Lifelong Communities Steering Committee meeting



In addition to these region-specific initiatives, ARC will also follow the guidelines established by the Age-Friendly Communities program, and engage in continued assessment of community needs throughout the region. ARC's primary objective is to understand the landscape of Age-Friendly philosophy by geography and social group throughout the region to inform development of ongoing specific aims. Relying on its strength as a regional convener, ARC will activate its relationships with stakeholders in Age-Friendly communities throughout the Atlanta region, highlighted in Figure 9. Their action plans served as resources in the development of this document.

Figure 9. Age-Friendly Communities in the 11-County Atlanta Region



Key Action Plan Initiatives

Given its role as a regional agency, ARC acts as a convener and supporter for constituents ranging from individuals to county governments, coordinating one regional vision in a variety of sectors. ARC offers resources, serves as a hub of communication, and works to meet a variety of legislated functions with its county and municipal partners. Finally, ARC operates at a micro level, delivering direct services to individuals and resources to support community-serving organizations throughout the region. This action plan includes 10 initiatives that support the mission to foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region.

Age-Friendly Leadership

Provide coordination and leadership to support the Atlanta Region's participation in AARP's Age-Friendly Communities initiative.

Strategy

Strengthen organizational capacity and regional collaboration by formalizing leadership structures, embedding Age-Friendly priorities across ARC departments, and encouraging adoption among local county and municipal partners, learning from those who are already designated Age-Friendly communities.

Tactics

- ✦ Establish and convene the **Lifelong Communities Steering Committee** (quarterly) with ARC staff, partners, scholars, elected officials, and community champions to provide program oversight.
- ✦ Form a **cross-department ARC staff workgroup** to champion Age-Friendly approaches and integrate livability priorities into transportation, housing, workforce, safety, and regional planning.
- ✦ Increase awareness and participation among county and municipal leaders, supporting **new and existing AARP Age-Friendly communities** through outreach, technical assistance, and model resources.

Community Voice and Insight

Ensure Age-Friendly priorities reflect the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of older adults across the Atlanta region.

Strategy

Conduct iterative research and community engagement that centers residents' voices, particularly in Low Life-Expectancy census tracts, and share findings to guide planning and regional assistance.

Tactics

Conduct **annual surveys** to track experiences, priorities, and perceptions of aging across the region.

- ✦ Complete **thematic analysis of comprehensive plans and development documents** to identify shared priorities, policy gaps, and alignment opportunities.
- ✦ Implement **community-based research activities** such as focus groups, interviews, and engagement events, with intentional outreach to marginalized and underrepresented communities.

Economic Security and Mobility ---

Endorse the economic mobility of families, promoting the vital conditions that support thriving and offering caregiver supports to increase opportunities for wealth generation.

Strategy

Collaborate with employers and workforce boards to strengthen flexibility for caregivers and age-inclusive hiring and retention, support caregivers through [Empowerline](#), and increase access to income-building opportunities for people of all ages in the region.

Tactics

- ✦ Encourage **family caregiving supports**, offering access to nutrition programs, transportation assistance, and respite care, which help caregivers maintain well-being and income stability
- ✦ **Strengthen kinship care**, recognizing kinship caregivers as a priority population and offering connections to resources such as housing assistance, behavioral health supports, and emergency resources.
- ✦ Promote **incentives for accessibility upgrades**, such as those offered through the [Livable Centers Initiative](#) and [Community Development Assistance Program](#).

Intergenerational Learning and Research ---

Strengthen partnerships with higher education institutions to expand research, intergenerational learning, and Age-Friendly knowledge development.

Strategy

Develop collaborative university relationships that generate applied research, expand student involvement, and cultivate an Age-Friendly workforce through training, internships, and experiential learning programs.

Tactics

- ✦ Host **applied learning partnerships** with universities in the region.
- ✦ Expand **internship and volunteer pathways** connecting students with Age-Friendly programs.
- ✦ Partner with **technical schools and community colleges** to train an Age-Friendly regional workforce.

Mobility and Transportation Access

Improve transportation safety, access, and travel experience for aging residents and people living with disabilities across the Atlanta region.

Strategy

Advance multimodal solutions that prioritize safety, accessibility, and ease of use, including pedestrian improvements, paratransit coordination, driver safety efforts, and programs that elevate older adult travel experiences.

Tactics

- ◆ Promote the goals outlined in the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan: **mobility hubs, a regional trip planner and mobile application, and a regional fare instrument.**
- ◆ Support participation in Age-Friendly mobility events and programs such as **Biketober**,³⁵ **Atlanta's E-Bike Rebate Program**,³⁶ **Week Without Driving**,³⁷ and **Bus Buddies**³⁸ with a focus on older and disabled riders.
- ◆ Continue improving **pedestrian and transit access** through walk audits, safe driving courses, enhanced signal timing, wayfinding, curb ramp improvements, and rider-centered upgrades.

Housing Stability and Aging in Place

Expand access to safe, affordable, and age-inclusive housing options that support aging in place.

Strategy

Collaborate with housing partners to reduce regulatory barriers, support home modification, and promote diverse living arrangements that meet the needs of residents at all stages of life in alignment with the [Housing Strategy for the Atlanta region](#).

Tactics

- ◆ Promote **multigenerational housing models** such as co-housing, home-sharing, and eco-villages, supporting family economic mobility.
- ◆ Coordinate with housing agencies to **reduce affordability barriers**, encourage zoning reforms, and advocate for expanded subsidy pathways.
- ◆ Support **aging in place programming**, including in-home supports, home modifications, repairs, and behavioral health coaching, partnering with affordable housing providers to support tenants to sustain housing and avoid evictions.

³⁵ Merritt, S. (2025, October 22). "Georgia Commute Options Receives Biketober Proclamation from the City of Atlanta". ARC. <https://atlantaregional.org/news/atlanta-regional-commission/georgia-commute-options-receives-biketober-proclamation-from-the-city-of-atlanta/>

³⁶ Atlanta E-Bike Rebate Program. <https://atlantaregional.org/what-we-do/mobility-services/atlanta-e-bike-rebate-program/>

³⁷ Introducing the first-ever National Week Without Driving. Living Streets Alliance. <https://www.livingstreetsalliance.org/news/introducing-national-week-without-driving>

³⁸ Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh Action Plan 2022-2025. (2022). https://www.agefriendlypgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/AgeFriendlyPGH_ActionPlan22-25.pdf

Technology, Work, and Opportunity

Increase digital access, literacy, and comfort for older adults across the region, including skills training to support workplace inclusion for older adults, recognizing the value of experienced workers and age-diverse workforces, and digital safety and confidence for aging residents.

Strategy

Reduce digital and skills inequities by expanding training opportunities, creating supportive tech environments, and equipping trusted messengers to assist residents with technology use.

Tactics

- ✦ Offer **Age-Friendly workplace workshops and skills training** for older workers and employers.
- ✦ Explore development of **tech hubs and “how-to” guides** for everyday digital tasks, available in libraries and public spaces.
- ✦ Share models and case studies with partners, such as Houston’s **Gatekeeper Program** that trains frontline workers (mail carriers, utility staff, etc.) to check in on isolated residents and assist with basic technology skills.³⁹

Belonging and Communication

Focus on opportunities for engagement, strengthening social connection, intergenerational gathering, and accessible communication across the region.

Strategy

Promote environments that foster belonging, enhance public space accessibility, and ensure information is available in formats and languages useful to all residents.

Tactics

- ✦ Support **intergenerational gatherings and storytelling opportunities**, including **urban agriculture and gardening programs** to increase food access and social connection.
- ✦ Encourage partners to upgrade **public spaces** with benches, shade, restrooms, and lighting to promote sociability
- ✦ Collaborate with partners to **spread public information** through blogs, amenity maps, resource guides, and multilingual content, becoming fully trained on Department of Justice Americans with Disabilities Act Title II digital accessibility requirements to integrate the accessibility standards agency-wide

³⁹ Harris County Area Agency on Aging. 2016. *Aging Agenda: Progress Report for Houston and Harris County*. <https://www.houstonhealth.org/media/2701/download>.

Health, Wellness, and Caregiving

Advance community-based health, wellness, nutrition, and caregiving supports that enable families, including older adults and people living with dementia and other chronic conditions, to thrive.

Strategy

Strengthen community health capacity through care coordination, food access initiatives, inclusive preparedness planning, and partnerships that support well-being, independence, and family economic mobility.

Tactics

- ✦ Participate in the creation of a metro Atlanta **community care hub** to enable healthcare payers to support social care needs.
- ✦ Advance **community-based health, wellness, nutrition, and caregiving** supports that enable older adults to manage their chronic conditions and enable families to thrive.
- ✦ Encourage **inclusive emergency preparedness planning** incorporating older adults and people with disabilities.

Age-Friendly Neighborhoods

Activate neighborhoods as places where residents of all ages can access supportive infrastructure, social connection, and community resources close to home.

Strategy

Partner with local communities to seed grassroots projects, build leadership capacity, and scale neighborhood-level Age-Friendly improvements.

Tactics

- ✦ Update the [Live Beyond Expectations](#) strategic plan and implement related initiatives to support thriving communities for all in the Atlanta region.
- ✦ Support **resident-led projects** to identify and address local challenges and assets.
- ✦ Share neighborhood learnings through **presentations to the Advisory Committee on Aging and regional partners**, building a network of Age-Friendly practitioners.

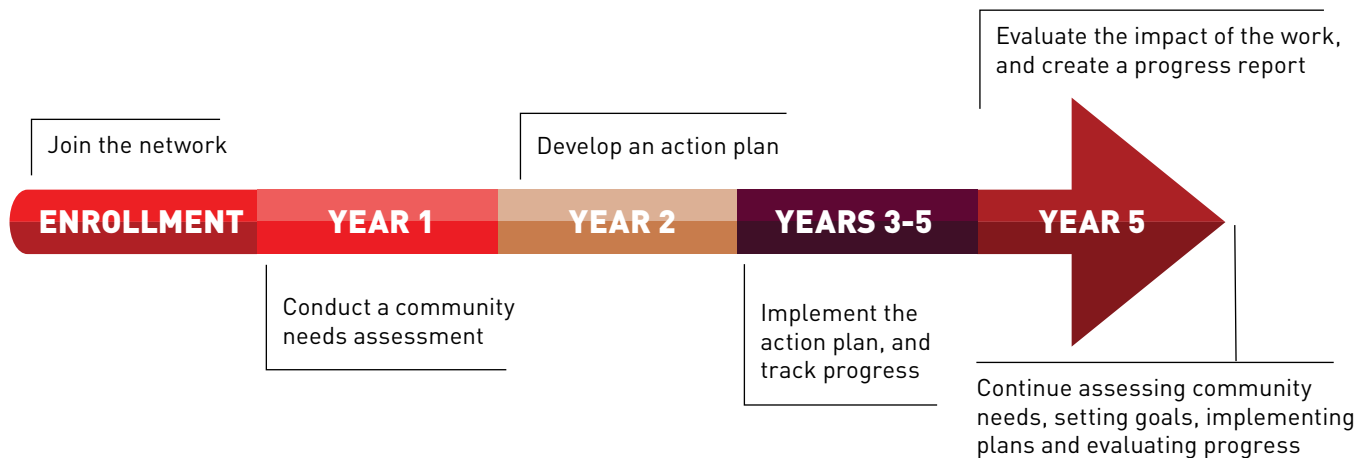


FIVE YEAR PLAN

Five-Year Plan

AARP describes a five-year Age-Friendly Program Process (see Figure 14). This section describes ARC's actions for each step of the process.

Figure 10. AARP's Age-Friendly Program Process



Enrollment

ARC has long been engaged in collaborative planning, governance, and community-building efforts that meet the AARP Age-Friendly criteria. The organization is structurally complex, and these efforts reflect that complexity. For example, the [Livable Centers Initiative](#) involves multiple departments within ARC, and the project reflects Age-Friendly objectives explicit throughout levels ranging from the overarching description (participating centers “must be accessible by people of all ages, abilities, and income levels”) to the individuals chosen to review applications (from departments, such as Housing, that parallel the 8 Domains of Livability) to the award recipients (who often plan community engagement sessions at youth and senior centers). ARC’s departments and units align closely with the 8 Domains of Livability, and each work group recognizes the importance of intergenerational considerations in all planning efforts. Its status as the Area Agency on Aging for the ten-county metropolitan Atlanta region further solidifies ARC’s philosophical commitment to promote lifelong communities. Thus, enrollment in AARP’s Age-Friendly Communities affirmed the agency’s existing culture and deepened its standing collective commitment.

During this ramp-up period, ARC identified members of the team responsible for the Age-Friendly program rollout, convened an internal workgroup who access Age-Friendly resources and implement Age-Friendly standards in their regular work, and nominated members to serve on a Steering Committee made up of internal stakeholders and community partners. The workgroup began to receive bimonthly updates, as well as ad-hoc relevant announcements. The Steering Committee met quarterly to provide feedback and advise ARC staff on programming. All these stakeholders, as well as members of ARC’s Provider Network (community partners) and Advisory Committee on Aging, were invited to create accounts on the AARP Age-Friendly portal, enabling them to access resources and participate in the discussion board and engage with other opportunities the program provides.

Years 1-2: Community Needs Assessment and Development of Action Plan

ARC regularly collects feedback from communities in the region, including annual public hearings and surveys conducted by the AAA and activities such as [Metro Atlanta Speaks](#). In this phase of the Plan, ARC staff continued to gather feedback from communities using focus groups, interviews, and informal conversations during community engagement sessions. In addition, the team embarked upon an ongoing project to use the multiple databases available to ARC, ranging from census data to deep community engagement, to investigate the landscape of conditions throughout the region, resulting in a robust regional guide outlined in the [Regional Development Plan](#). Finally, stakeholders continued to engage in critical reflexivity, a practice that will continue throughout every stage of the Age-Friendly process to ensure actions and plans are necessary, sufficient, and sustainable. Aligning Age-Friendly and [Live Beyond Expectations](#) research processes, the Lifelong Communities Team plans to use an annual cycle of engagement throughout the life of the Action Plan, shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11. ARC Lifelong Communities Annual Research Cycle



This cycle will continue annually throughout the life of the plan. Research aims include:

- ✦ Conducting Age-Friendly inventories throughout the Region, beginning in [Live Beyond Expectations](#) focus tracts
- ✦ Identify and plan Age-Friendly projects
- ✦ Illuminate existing tensions or obstacles to Age-Friendly planning and design

- ◆ Solicit each community's Best Age-Friendly Story
- ◆ Name each community's Biggest Age-Friendly Challenge

Research methods will remain exploratory and open. The loose framework will support broad understanding of Age-Friendly Action throughout the region, allowing for flexible tailoring to specific communities.

This Age-Friendly Regional Plan was written by ARC staff during this phase with support from the Lifelong Communities Steering Committee.

Years 3-5: Implementation and Tracking

Once ARC has delivered this Action Plan to AARP, the organization will work with partners throughout the region to implement plan initiatives. In addition, ARC will track and report on the efficacy of the actions undertaken. Because of quarterly Steering Committee meetings and regular Age-Friendly workgroup communications, opportunities for feedback in real time will abound, and the organization will have access to a robust system for improvement. ARC will provide annual Status Updates to AARP in addition to its ongoing performance indicators, resulting in timely response to critical metrics. Because the agency is experienced in responsiveness, ARC will rely on its expertise to pivot when necessary, enabling the organization to both remain focused on plan aims and respond with flexibility when changes need to occur.

Year 5: Evaluation and Reporting

During the final year of the Program, ARC will engage in a thorough review process, re-evaluating the progress of the first years of the Age-Friendly program. ARC will turn its investigative lens from its outward view on communities inward to focus on objectives and processes. Once data has been analyzed, ARC will revise its plan for the next 5-year Age-Friendly Program phase, continuing to expand and deepen the agency's work to promote thriving communities for all residents of the Atlanta metro.



Conclusion

ARC affirms its commitment to supporting lifelong thriving communities with this Age-Friendly Atlanta Region Action Plan. The Plan represents both a continuation and an evolution of ARC's long-standing commitment to creating thriving communities for all. ARC bridges planning and human services to address the needs of residents across the life course. The plan's framework, rooted in the Eight Domains of Livability and expanded to include Economic Security and Climate Resilience, reflects a holistic understanding that the conditions enabling older adults to thrive also create stronger, more equitable communities for everyone.

This first five-year phase marks the beginning of a sustained, collaborative effort. ARC will continue to listen deeply to community voices, align regional planning with lived experience, and invest in the systems that shape daily life—housing, transportation, health, and social connection. Through [Empowerline](#), direct services, and partnerships with local governments and organizations, the agency will ensure that programs reach those with the greatest need while inviting all residents to help shape an Age-Friendly future.

The work of becoming an Age-Friendly Region is not a single initiative but a shared commitment to dignity, connection, and opportunity at every age. By fostering collaboration across sectors, generations, and geographies, ARC aims to ensure that metro Atlanta remains not only a place where people can grow up, but also one where they can grow older safely, actively, and with purpose.



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