

# **Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec**

Arrowsic, Bath, Georgetown,  
Phippsburg, West Bath &  
Woolwich

**ACTION PLAN Spring 2021**

**Everyone is respected.  
Everyone is included.  
Everyone belongs.**

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## Executive Summary

**Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec** (AFCLK) is a regional grassroots volunteer coalition in Maine's mid coast region serving the municipalities of Arrowsic, Bath, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich with a fast growing population over the age of 65 years.

Our five-year Action Plan offers a path forward to achieve the group's mission: *to help our communities become the best possible home for people of all ages, by ensuring that public spaces, homes, programs, civic events, and social gatherings are set up to meet people's changing needs and wants across the lifespan.*

This plan was built on community listening sessions and stakeholder interviews, by learning from other Age-Friendly communities and AARP's framework of eight "domains" of work needed for success, and a survey of area residents' wants and needs, which garnered an incredible 1000 responses and many profound realizations. These include:

- **48%** said they expected they will have to move to another home as they grow older
- **16%** replied "No" to "Is your home warm enough in the winter?"
- **38%** said it's not easy to find a ride when it's needed
- **31%** (pre-pandemic) said they see family, friends, or neighbors only once every few weeks, occasionally, or rarely

Analyzing all this information, Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec created goals and strategies in four focus areas: Homes, Mobility, Social Connections, and Communications.

### **Homes. Encourage options to allow older adults to age where they choose safely, warmly, and comfortably.**

- \*Promote Bath Housing's "Comfortably Home" Aging in Place program and similar resources
- \*Research, communicate about, and explore expansion of heating resources
- \*Promote safety programs such as "Sand Bucket" and smoke detector installations
- \*Investigate a "knock box" program for emergency responder home access
- \*Research potential volunteer snow shovel and "handy helper" volunteer brigades
- \*Research and advocate for more small, single-level housing development

### **Mobility. Increase transportation resources for people to participate in community and social opportunities, attend to personal needs, work, and volunteer.**

- \*Include information on walkability, parking, restrooms, and building access in community event invitations and maps
- \*Advocate for increased "courtesy parking spaces", promote disability license plates/cards, and work with City of Bath to assess/improve walkability with a walker within ¼ mile of City Hall
- \*Work to create "Age-Friendly Business" certification including access issues
- \*Gather and disperse information on delivery of food and prescription drugs
- \*Increase safe walking with classes, walking at the YMCA, walking with a Doc, and identifying and marking ¼ and ½ mile walks with benches in three communities
- \*Develop People Plus's Volunteer Transportation Network in our area

**Social Connections. Increase the health and well-being of residents by increasing social engagement.**

- \*Increase participation in SEARCH, Meals on Wheels, and Good Morning call-in programs
- \*Produce Volunteer Opportunities list for age-friendly activities
- \*Hold social events such as community dinners
- \*Create opportunities for elders to share reading, storytelling, and skills with younger people
- \*Develop “Together Tuesdays” model with volunteers regularly driving a small group of seniors to a downtown, library, coffee shop, or group volunteer or social activity
- \*Explore models for outdoor socializing such as Friendship Benches and mixed-age playgrounds

**Communications. Provide reliable information that ensures access across the community.**

- \*Develop an Age-Friendly website, expand Facebook engagement, and develop consistent communications with Bath Area Senior Citizens, town offices, and other partners
- \*Develop an Emergency Responder Resource Card
- \*Develop a Resource Inventory list
- \*Research a plan for using assistive technology and computer training

We recognize that while progress has already begun, completing these actions will need the combined efforts of many more citizens, town officials, store owners, service groups, and others. We welcome everyone to look at what strategies they would like to pursue and add their unique contributions. We can be reached at [agefriendlylowerkennebec@gmail.com](mailto:agefriendlylowerkennebec@gmail.com)

**Together**, we believe we can make the communities of Arrowsic, Bath, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath, and Woolwich more livable for a lifetime, and a place where **everyone is respected, everyone is included, and everyone belongs.**

# 1 Strategic Framework

## *Vision*

In our communities, people of all ages are able to live safely and comfortably in their homes, get easily to where they want to go, enjoy social connections that nourish their souls, make a contribution to our communities, help others in multiple generations and receive the support they need to thrive. Everyone is respected, everyone is included, everyone belongs.

## *Mission*

To help our communities become the best possible home for people of all ages, by ensuring that public spaces, homes, programs, civic events, and social gatherings are set up to meet people's changing wants and needs across the lifespan.

## *Strategy*

In order to accomplish its mission AFCLK provides information, promotes initiatives, engages volunteers, creates connections and enhances collaboration among all residents, caregivers and other organizations.

## *Organizational Structure*

AFCLK is a grassroots coalition open to anyone in our region who wishes to participate. The members of the Steering Committee meet in person or via online conference services. Following the survey and data analysis three subcommittees were formed: homes, mobility, social connections. In addition, communications were identified as important in each of the focus areas. A Leadership Team was formed with currently five members to strengthen our effectiveness. While we do not have an official role in our municipalities' infrastructure, we are in regular contact with the five town offices and representatives from the City of Bath. The City of Bath is our fiscal sponsor. Within our group we have a representative from the Age-Friendly Georgetown initiative, which started activities in 2017.

## *People and Processes*

There is an existing culture in our municipalities of caring for our neighbors and we are working to provide additional support and resources to those efforts. Our group currently has twenty-one members. We do not operate with bylaws or an overly formalized structure to date. Members are preparing upcoming meetings and grant applications, are sending out newsletters to over 300 recipients, are engaged in organizing learning opportunities and presentations, and are initiating partnerships with local organizations.

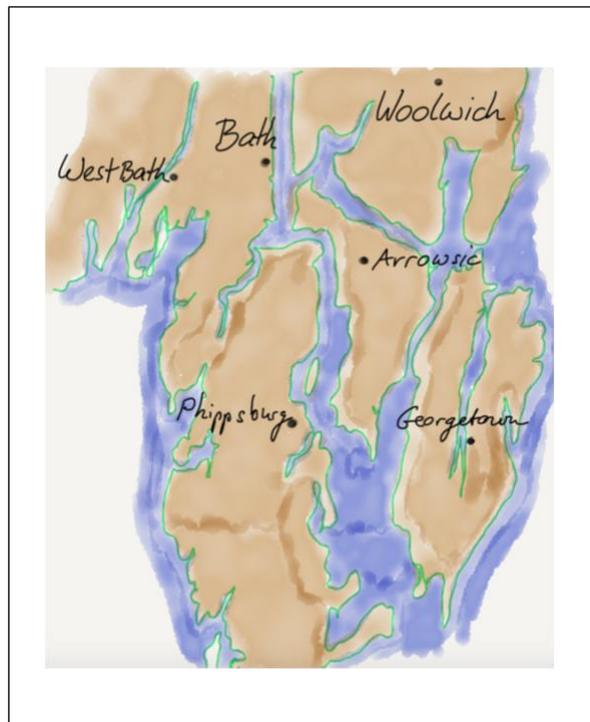
Members Steering Committee Age Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec, \*Leadership Team

Name	Town	Occupation	
Bob	Kalish	Arrowsic	Retired media reporter/columnist
Ben	Averill	Bath	Director of Planning, City of Bath
Phyllis*	Bailey	Bath	Bath City Council, led national program to promote well-being of older adults as they aged in their homes, Retired
Cindi	Compton	Georgetown	Retired local representative
Marla	Davis	Woolwich	Retired, Cofounder Sagadahoc County Board of Health. Director of Health and Community Education, MidCoast Hospital
Paul	Dumdey	Woolwich	Retired physician. Municipal Health Officer
Janet	Eich	Woolwich	Student, Occupational Therapy, University of New England
Allison	Hepler	Woolwich	Woolwich Selectwoman; State Representative District #53; Professor, History Department, University of Maine at Farmington
Jess	Irish	Bath	Director of Housing, Bath Housing
Kathy	Lavallee	West Bath	West Bath Town Council; Mental Health Program Manager, State of Maine
Ruth*	Lawson-Stopps	Bath	Retired, Health Policy and Management
Joel	Merry	West Bath	Sheriff, Sagadahoc County
Deirdra*	Murphy	West Bath	Physical Therapist, Adjunct Faculty member at University New England, Retired Associate Dean University Massachusetts Lowell
Terry	Nordmann	Bath	Bath City Council
Jim	Peavey	Georgetown	Retired, Associate Director of Community Impact, United Way of Mid Coast Maine; Chair, Age-Friendly Georgetown
Barbara*	Reinertsen	Bath	Executive Director, United Way of Mid Coast Maine
Randee	Reynolds	MidCoast Hosp	Vice President, MidCoast Hospital
Karin*	Sadtler	Arrowsic	Resident
Polly	Shaw	Bath	Retired resident
Chris	Szalay	Newcastle	Program Coordinator, SEARCH Greater Bath & Lincoln County
Deb	Young	Woolwich	Chief Operating Officer, Bath Area Family YMCA

## 2 History and Community Profile

The Age-Friendly Communities of the Lower Kennebec are on the land of Mawooshen, which had been populated by the Wawenoc people prior to the arrival of Europeans. The land provided seasonal fishing in the tidal rivers of the Androscoggin, Kennebec, Sasanoa, and New Meadows, as well as Merrymeeting Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. In the winter, the people moved inland.

English people began to settle permanently in the lower Kennebec in 1649, with the purchase of land from Chief Mowhotiwormet by John Parker, although European fishermen had been in the area prior to this time. This land became known as Georgetown, which then encompassed all of the communities represented by AFCLK. Settlers farmed a little, fished, and set up mills along the suitable rivers and streams, such as Nequasset in Woolwich, and tide mills in Phippsburg and Arrowsic.



Near continuous conflict between indigenous peoples and European settlers, which began with King Philip's War in 1676 ensured that these communities were not permanent until the fall of the French in 1759. At this time, parts of Georgetown petitioned the Massachusetts government to form independent communities, which was permitted if the community had sufficient population and a church. Woolwich was incorporated in 1759, Bath in 1781, and Phippsburg in 1814. Arrowsic separated from Georgetown in 1841. And West Bath, which had been part of Bath since 1781, became a separate community in 1844.

Shipbuilding along the Kennebec constituted the major industry following independence from Great Britain and has continued until today. Bath Iron Works is Maine's largest private employer, and has workers from every county in the state, although most hail from the region covered by AFCLK.

Our age-friendly efforts evolved within the framework of our deeply connected communities. They differ in size and geographic location, access to local services and resources, population size, population density, and residents' ages. Each municipality has a fire department with all but Bath a volunteer department, who work together in a mutual aid emergency system. Some communities have general stores, amenities like eating places, community centers, libraries and walking trails, supermarkets, medical services or schools, and others just have a town hall as their only meeting place.

The City of Bath on the Kennebec River is in the center of our region providing many of the resources and services that especially older adults so heavily rely on like medical services, Bath EMS, the Patten Free Library, Bath Area Senior Citizens Activity Center, Bath Area Family YMCA to name a few.

It is not surprising that in a beautiful old ship-building region more than half of all homes were built before 1940. As a result, the housing supply is often not very energy efficient, has bedrooms on the 2nd floor, and requires significant maintenance expenditures. Many residents are in housing that is too big - 54% of housing units have three or more bedrooms. Both young and older residents often find

themselves cost-burdened as rents, utilities and repair costs outstrip their incomes. Older adults looking to downsize from larger homes find a limited selection of potential rental units in a landscape dominated by single family homes. We believe collaboration through AFCLK may help our region generate some new options to maximize the housing resources that exist here.

A total year-round population of about 17222 (census 2010) cover a land area of 111 square miles. In 2016 twenty percent of our residents were over the age of 65 years. *(Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Censusdata <https://factfinder.census.gov>)* Two bridged islands and long peninsulas challenge individual transportation, and access to essential services as well as daily needs. The six towns encompass many acres of wooded areas, with storms frequently resulting in power outages, and lack of high-speed Internet challenging residents' ability to access services.

<b>Who Lives Here - Over 65 years old?</b>			
	2016 population	# over 65 years old	% over 65 years old
Arrowsic	397	137	35%
Bath	8334	1422	17%
Georgetown	1018	321	32%
Phippsburg	2029	533	26%
West Bath	2157	448	21%
Woolwich	3069	542	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,004</b>	<b>3403</b>	<b>20%</b>
Sagadahoc County	35,134	6,394	19.40%
Maine	1,329,923	242,046	18.20%

**Source:** American Community Survey, U.S. Census Data.  
<https://factfinder.census.gov>

**Note:** This represents the most recent population data.  
 Forecasts suggest that the 2020 census will indicate  
 a higher percentage of > 65 years olds in our region.

### 3 Process for Developing the Plan

The plan outlined in this document is the result of a detailed process that started with the creation of a community wide survey, input from five listening sessions, the collection of responses and data assessment. During a public presentation of survey results at the Patten Free Library in Bath community members contributed their thoughts, concerns and ideas. Based on these findings the AFCLK Steering Committee developed a work plan that provided the basis for this Action Plan.

AARP offers a framework, the eight domains of livability, to age-friendly communities to organize and prioritize their work. In our conversations we realized the interconnections and overlap of domains. Just as an example, the connections between Respect and Social Inclusion, Transportation, and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, became apparent as survey participants described the difficulty of attending social gatherings when a resident cannot drive or is concerned about access to an event venue due to a chronic illness or disability.



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After analyzing the results of the survey, the Steering Committee organized three subcommittees for each of the focus areas: homes, mobility, and social connections. Communications is an overarching task for all three groups but will be a fourth subcommittee in the future. Subcommittees with two to four members met to brainstorm and share ideas on how to mitigate the concerns that were brought to our attention by survey respondents. Action items were developed for each of the focus areas based on feasibility as well as impact. We identified potential community partners, required resources and communication strategies.

## 4 Community Assessment, Focus Areas, Goals, Strategies

We developed the Community Assessment Survey containing 20 questions asking residents about strengths, barriers and challenges to aging well in this region.

Between October of 2018 and February of 2019, the group conducted the survey among residents to learn what is working in our area to support healthy, active, and engaged aging and identify areas for improvement. Identical surveys were distributed electronically and in print, available at libraries, town offices, polling stations, the Bath Area Family YMCA, beauty salons, churches and some special events with collections boxes in place for completed questionnaires. Several municipalities linked the online questionnaire to their websites. In Woolwich and Arrowsic, surveys were mailed with tax bills to ensure that every household could participate. We received 1000 responses.

We did not ask about income or ethnicity. Many respondents chose not to answer questions about age and gender. Responses that referred to the size of the household and shared personal comments led us to believe that our survey reached residents from all walks of life and from a wide range of incomes.

### *Community Meetings/Listening Sessions*

As part of our community assessment, we conducted five listening sessions in different communities and with local emergency responders. These round table conversations invited participants to share personal challenges. Residents described and identified future needs to live safely in their homes and to be engaged in their communities as they age.

The final data report includes a cover page, and a one-page summary for each community and the entire region. It will be used to inform residents, local organizations, stakeholders, and municipalities in future conversations.

Patricia Oh, Ph.D., LMSW, our age-friendly consultant of AARP of Maine, provided consultation throughout data collection and analysis. The AARP graciously funded the printing of our data report.

### *Key Findings and Action Items*

From the quantitative and qualitative data three themes emerged:

- homes
- mobility
- social connections

We also learned about common ways used to seek and share information. This will help us identify efficient tools for communications. The most important regional results are summarized here followed by goals and strategies that will guide our future work.

## 4.1 Homes

One key finding was that the homes\* people are living in may not fit their future. (\*Homes refers to all types of places people live like condos, houses and apartments.) People want both, more choices and more information on resources that will help them stay in their homes.

- Almost half of respondents (48%) expected they will have to move to another home as they grow older, 30% to a different home in the area and 18% to a home outside the area.
- The statement, “I will need to modify my home to continue living here”, prompted 60% to say yes.
- 91% said that a resource list of home repair and chore resources was important to them, but that information was lacking.
- In response to the question, “Is your home warm enough in the winter?” 84% said yes; but an alarming 16% said no. Reasons cited were, the home not being well insulated for 62%, difficulty paying for fuel for 45% and the challenge of moving wood/pellets for 6%.
- People also commented about the need for more choices: housing at a variety of price points including the middle class, in smaller one-level configurations, with a mix of ages, within walking distance of places they would like or need to go and provisions for accessory dwelling units.

Personal comments indicate that it is challenging to find affordable housing, and professional help for small house repairs, especially for home-owners with moderate or low incomes. “Need someone to call if the smoke alarm goes off and I can’t reach it to stop it and change the battery. Who to call?” “Its....becoming too much to maintain.....House repair, grounds....a tank of oil has gone from \$162 to \$940”. “I’d like to move out of my larger home and into an area where I can walk to the library.”

**Goal: Encourage options to allow older adults to age where they choose safely, warmly and comfortably.**

**Partner with Bath Housing (BH) to increase awareness of the “Comfortably Home” Aging in Place Program and resources like AARP “HomeFit” guide.**

Activities: Program information distributed to all Steering committee members/organizations, to print and electronic media. Incorporate “Comfortably Home” program into AFLCK events, brainstorm other ways to support their outreach.

Metrics/Outcomes: Program materials distributed in Steering Committee pre-pandemic, Bath Area Senior Center (BASC) newsletter articles 11/2019 & 11/2020, on-line info distribution, program staff participated in AFLCK event. Give support in other ways as identified. Support BHA research/exploration of how to expand to other income groups beyond those of moderate means.

Timeline: 2019 to 2024 (Program suspended periodically during pandemic)

**Research and communicate about heating needs and resources. Explore expansion of heating resources with lower barriers to access.**

Activities: Communicate survey findings on need, research existing heating resources and communicate about availability. Research “Wood Bank” program.

Metrics/Outcomes: Research & conversations with organizations/municipalities on heating assistance resources. (Interviews with Kennebec Valley Community Action Program and other organizations began Fall 2019). Educate public in print and on-line including BASC article on need August 2019; and on resources in January 2020. Ongoing research for additional heating resources including potential “Wood Bank” prototype. Volunteer recruitment and partnership development.

Timeline: 2019-2024

**Educate about safety focused programs - Increase awareness & use of free “Sand Bucket” program. Research local availability of programs for smoke detector installation.**

Activities: Communicate how to access free program for buckets of sand to reduce falls on outdoor steps. Research on free smoke detector programs in other places, costs and implementation targets. Education about what smoke detector installation programs may be available.

Metrics/Outcome: Bucket program article in senior center newsletter Nov. 2020, city website, other on-line listings. Increase of calls to Police and Sheriff’s departments for buckets. Summary of findings on smoke detector program options with recommendations. Partnership development and volunteer recruitment to move forward locally.

Timeline: 2020-2022

**Investigate development of “knox box” program for emergency responders to gain easy access to home via key in coded, locked exterior box.**

Activities: research and briefing on program elements, viability for this region, discussions with fire, police and emergency responders, costs and implementation strategies. Volunteer recruitment, fundraising.

Metrics/Outcome: Information about what program entails, decision about whether to proceed with program design and implementation.

Timeline: 2021-2024

**Research volunteer at home supports like “snow shovel” and “handy helper” brigades, evaluate viability.**

Activities: Outreach to schools and existing programs. Research best practices, supervision and volunteers needed. Recommend options.

Metrics/Outcome: Assess best practices in nearby programs, create summary. Evaluate resources needed and potential utilization. Recommend options and potential implementation strategy. Recruit resources and volunteers.

Timeline: 2021-2024

**Goal: Explore/promote development of more varied housing options which leverage existing resources and future opportunities, across the economic spectrum.**

**Research potential revenue generating options for owners of homes with extra space. Explore Short Term Rentals, Accessory Dwelling Units, etc and related regulatory issues. Advocate for more small single level housing unit development.**

Activities: Research Airbnb, Nesterly, Housematching program of Vermont, etc. Explore with local leaders the creation of additional small unit single floor housing, (especially for the middle class) and its inclusion in upcoming community projects. Advocate for regulatory and permitting changes needed.

Metrics/Outcome: Research brief prepared on revenue generating options in existing homes. Communication plan for findings/recommendations/next steps. Promote inclusion of single level unit housing in community projects under consideration for a variety of income levels. Advocacy for ordinance/zoning changes needed.

Timeline: 2021-2024

## 4.2 Mobility

The inability to get around safely greatly limits people's lives and opportunities. The fear of losing the ability to drive and therefore losing independence is a common concern in Listening Sessions and survey comments.

- To get around 91% of survey respondents said they drive themselves. Other modes of transportation included walking (16%) and riding with a spouse/partner (14%) or with family and friends (7%).
- 38% said, "It would not be easy to find a ride if an older person needed one for medical appointments, etc."
- When asked, "If it is hard to get to the places you need to go, why?" 15% answered the question. 44% of these participants chose as the reason lack of transportation, 35% said lack of money, 32% replied that they can't walk well, 22% said they disliked asking for a ride, 12% cited poor vision or hearing, and 11% said they don't like going out alone. For those 60+ in the region, not being able to walk well was the largest barrier (41%).
- 35% were concerned about falling but only 4% have participated in a fall reduction class.
- Mobility-related comments focused on community infrastructure: having enough benches, handicapped parking, public restrooms and winter snow clearance on sidewalks.
- Affordable and convenient transportation options, well-lit safe roads for walkers, bikers and drivers, and sidewalks or wide shoulders that encourage walking were important to 91-94% of survey participants.

The lack of sufficient transportation opportunities is another challenge, especially for older adults who may not have family nearby. "If I can't drive, I have no options." The City of Bath has a year-round bus service and a Trolley in the summer months but there is no regional public transportation system in place that connects residents to locations within our immediate area. Eligible MaineCare members have access to the Mid Coast Connector bus service for non-emergency medical appointments.

**Goal: Increase transportation resources for people to participate in community and social opportunities, attend to personal needs, work and volunteer.**

**Work to reduce transportation barriers.**

Activities: Invitations to community events will include information about walkability, parking, restroom availability and building access.

Metrics/Outcome: Starting immediately AFCLK announcements will include this information to encourage participation of residents with impaired mobility. Three community organizations will be contacted every year.

Timeline: 2021-2023

Activities: Define and advocate towards "Courtesy Parking Space".

Metrics/Outcome: Residents with limited mobility park closer to building in designated areas.

Timeline: 2020-2023

Activities: Education Campaign on access to disability placards and handicapped plates.

Metrics/Outcome: Information reduces barriers for eligible residents.

Timeline: 2020-2022

Activities: Assess condition of sidewalk for walking with a walker within 1/4 mile of Bath City Hall.  
Metrics/Outcome: Advocate towards improved walkability in partnership with Bath Pedestrian & Bike Committee.  
Timeline: 2021-2023

### **Add public restroom information to Bath City maps.**

Activities: Work with City of Bath to include this information in new maps printed in the coming years.  
Metrics/Outcome: Maps including this information will be available by 12-31-2022 It will be easier for residents and tourists alike to find public bathrooms in downtown Bath.  
Timeline: 2021-2022

### **Certification for age-friendly businesses.**

Activities: Research and identify which parameters influence the shopping experiences for all ages in respect to building access, store based shopping helpers and transportation of goods to vehicles in the parking area. Develop a partnership with Main Street Bath and store owners to raise awareness for the needs of customers with impaired mobility with the goal of expanding specific services.  
Metrics/Outcome: Research finished by 12-31-2021, parameters developed by 6-2022, store specific certification process started by 12-2022.  
Timeline: 2021-2023

### **Gather and disperse information on delivery of food and prescription drugs**

Activities: Publicize information on existing delivery programs and service offered by VTN twice a year.  
Metrics/Outcome: Increased knowledge about these services.  
Timeline: 2021-2022

### **Support and promote opportunities to increase individual physical strength, and balance**

Activities: Promote and organize classes and public events in partnership with community organizations, Spectrum Generations -the Area Agency on Aging- and the Bath Area Family YMCA.  
Metrics: Organize and promote two classes or events every year.  
Timeline: 2021-2023

Activities: Walking at the YMCA during cold season for non-members.  
Metrics/Outcome: Track numbers of participants.  
Timeline: Program was active in winter of 2019/2020, restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities: Walking with a Doc.  
Metrics/Outcome: Walking opportunity for residents together with a member of MidCoast Medical Group once a week.  
Timeline: 2022-2023

Activities: Identify and mark 1/2 mile walk in Bath and two other communities.

Metrics/Outcome: Residents exercise and meet.

Timeline: 2021-2024

Activities: Promote 1/4 mile walk routes with multiple benches in Bath and two other municipalities.

Metrics/Outcome: Residents with restricted mobility receive additional outdoor walking opportunity.

Timeline: 2021-2023

### **Work towards improving transportation opportunities in our area**

Activities: Link information about public transportation resources to municipal websites.

Metrics/Outcome: Increased number of riders.

Timeline: 2021-2022

Activities: Develop relationship with People Plus Volunteer Transportation Network to offer this program in our municipalities.

Metrics/Outcome: Rides will be available in the Bath area and extend to surrounding communities.

Timeline: 2021-2023

Activities: Research potential for wheel-chair accessible transportation service in partnership with community organizations and engage public support.

Metrics/Outcome: A volunteer based transportation network will operate a wheel-chair accessible vehicle for personal non-medical appointments.

Timeline: 2022-2025

Activities: Explore and identify potential transportation opportunities that may be provided by Western Maine CAP and Waldo CAP.

Metrics/Outcome: Additional transportation opportunities will improve connectivity to other Maine towns.

Timeline: 2022-2025

### 4.3 Social Connections

The lack of social connections and loneliness pose a great risk for physical illness, decline, depression and death. Feeling “isolated” is a common theme in survey comments.

- 25% of survey respondents said they live alone.
- 31% of respondents – almost 1 in 3 – said they see family, friends, or neighbors in their community only “occasionally”, “rarely” or “once every few weeks.”
- When asked, “Do you have family, friends, or neighbors nearby, whom you could ask for help?” 20% said no.
- 29% said that a disability or chronic illness kept them and/or their spouse or partner from being as active in the community as they wanted to be.
- 85-89% said the following aspects of community were important or very important to them: Social and volunteer opportunities, accessible and inclusive community activities and events and opportunities to interact with people of all ages. Yet only 9-13% said they participated in these activities; many were not sure they existed. 27% reported using the library – the most of any service listed.

Despite a great sense of community that many respondents describe, others experience loneliness or social isolation, “Summer has music events in the park which is wonderful, but I feel isolated in the winter and due to disability cannot be out in cold much.”

**Goal: Increase the health and well-being of residents living in the lower Kennebec towns by increasing social engagement.**

**Increase enrollment in SEARCH and Meals on Wheels, valuable existing person-to-person services geared toward isolated elders.**

Activities: Work with SEARCH and Spectrum Generations to promote participation and recruit more volunteers.

Metrics/Outcomes: Increase SEARCH matches by an additional five by 12/22; increase Meals on Wheels by 5% (compared to pre-pandemic) by 12/22.

Timeline: 2021-2023

**Partner with Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Office and Bath Police Department to boost participation in Good Morning call-in safety programs as well as outreach efforts such as “Coffee with a Cop.”**

Activities: Work with Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Office and Bath P.D. to promote participation in call-in programs.

Metrics/Outcomes: Increase number of seniors in call-in programs by 10% by 12/22.

Timeline: 2021-2023

**Produce Volunteer Opportunities list and promote volunteering for age-friendly activities.**

Increasing the number of engaged volunteers will make possible many of the strategies in this plan and increase personal interactions for some seniors. Opportunities for seniors themselves to volunteer, particularly with others, will be sought and promoted, as volunteering is an excellent way to boost connection to community and well-being.

Activities: Define volunteer needs in Age-Friendly plan. Work with existing agencies to capture existing and ideal volunteer needs and explore potential of group volunteer activities including

seniors. Work with United Way's VolunteerME existing matching site. Produce a list that can be widely publicized and used as a tool in group presentations or personal asks.

Metrics/Outcomes: A Volunteer Opportunities list will be produced by December 2021. The # of volunteers engaged in age-friendly activities will increase by 25 by December 2023.

Timeline: 2021-2023

### **Hold social events such as community dinners, potlucks, and “on tap” gatherings.**

Activities: Identify lead person for at least three towns as well as for AFCLK, organize or partner to hold dinners, conduct outreach to elders, provide transportation as needed.

Metrics/Outcomes: Three towns and lead persons identified by 11/21. Dinners held by 12/22.

Timeline: 2021-2023

### **Sharing Reading & Storytelling**

Activities: Explore a feasible coordinated system for reading online for child cares, schools, and libraries, and recruit senior volunteers. Work with Midcoast Literacy to increase “My Life Story” matches of elders with young adults. Engage students and older adults to share stories or send cards. Explore oral storytelling possibilities.

Metrics/Outcomes: Report delivered to Steering Committee on online reading and next steps by 12/21. Meeting with Midcoast Literacy and goal for matches established by 7/21. Small group established to pursue Reading & Storytelling activities by 10/21.

Timeline: 2021-2025

### **Create a Skill Sharing plan for elders to share with children/youth.**

Seniors have much to offer, and sharing skills such as using tools, knitting/crocheting, woodworking, clothes repair, gardening, etc. can boost not only social interaction with another generation but also respect for their abilities. Relationships and experience gained in the Reading/Storytelling strategy can help inform this strategy.

Activities: Meet with youth groups, schools, library to gauge interest and possible partners for sustainability. Identify desired skills. Develop outreach, perhaps through informal networks, to find elders willing to share these skills. Learn lessons from or possibly work alongside the Reading/Storytelling strategy.

Metrics/Outcomes: Report given to Steering Committee by 7/22 on possible interested parties, system for Skill Sharing. Demonstration project with at least one school, library, youth group begun by 12/22.

Timeline: 2022-2025

### **Develop “Together Tuesdays” or similar model with volunteers regularly driving a small group of seniors to a downtown, library, coffee shop, or group activity.**

Activities: Discuss idea with groups serving elders, faith communities, for feedback and suggestions on how participants and volunteers could be recruited (post-COVID-19 pandemic). Identify at least one anchor location, such as a library, for a starting suggested destination. Consider ties to Age-Friendly businesses, possible deals for participating groups. Research any screening, liability issues.

Metrics/Outcomes: Report given to Steering Committee by 7/22. If practicable, at least two small groups established and running by 12/22. Potential pre and post-survey of participants on

feelings of social connection or loneliness. Steering Committee review of pilot, potential for growth and how to make sustainable in 2023.

Timeline: 2022-2025

**Explore creating infrastructure for outdoor social activities.**

In addition to the accessible walking paths and benches envisioned in the Mobility section and the social benefit they make possible, there are several successful models of community improvements that foster outdoor socialization that we plan to explore. These include:

- “Friendship” Benches
- Mixed-Age Playgrounds
- Bicycle Volunteer Corps giving rides

Activities: Research models elsewhere, including benefits and cost. Create synopses, including video/visual when possible, and share ideas with local towns, aligned groups, and seniors to gauge interest and feasibility. Identify potential partners and funding.

Metrics/Outcomes: Report given to Age-Friendly Communities Steering Committee on potential of the above ideas and any similar ones found especially promising and next steps in 2022. Small group formed for one or more ideas, if practicable, in 2022.

Timeline: 2021-2025

## 4.4 Communications

- 85% stated that information about community events was easy to find. 12% disagreed.
- 91% used the Internet. For communication 89% used the phone, 77% used email and 45% used Facebook.
- To find out what's happening residents checked the Internet (78%), read the newspaper (61%), talked with friends (58%) and listened to the radio (34%). Participants looked at flyers (27%), watched public access TV (24%) and heard about events at church (15%).
- The most popular places to look for information concerning services for older people were the Internet (68%), family and friends (59%), City Hall and Town Offices (53%), the Bath Senior Center (44%) and medical providers (36%), followed by newspapers (31%), Spectrum Generations (15%) and faith-based organizations (14%).

"Our 86-year old neighbor constantly has issues finding someone to do what she needs to have done. She doesn't have a computer, so finding information is very difficult for her." Many survey participants commented on the need for "high speed broadband internet connections".

### **Goal: Provide reliable information in a way that ensures access across the community.**

Activities: Develop an AFCLK website.

Metrics/Outcome: The website is operational.

Timeline: 2022- 2024

Activities: Expand the AFCLK Facebook engagement.

Metrics/Outcome: 10% yearly in the number of Facebook followers (Baseline #127 on 2.3.2021).

Timeline: 2021-2024

Activities: Develop consistent communications with town offices and Bath Area Senior Citizens Activity Center.

Metrics/Outcome: Monthly communication with town offices and Bath Area Senior Citizens Activity Center. (Baseline three consecutive months article in the Bath Area Senior Citizens Newsletter.)

Timeline: 2021-2024

Activities: Research a plan for using assistive technology, funding, and training.

Metrics/Outcome: A finalized assistive technology and computer training plan.

Timeline: 2022-2024

Activities: Create and distribute an Emergency Responder Resource Card.

Metrics/Outcome: A minimum of 400 older adults receive the Emergency Responder Resource Card.

Timeline: 2022-2024

Activities: Develop a one-page updatable Service Resource Inventory geared towards older adults.

Metrics/Outcome: Information available on website, distributed electronically to mailing list, service providers and towns by 12/22.

Timeline: 2021-2022

## 5 Community Strengths

We are writing this Action Plan during a time when the COVID-19 pandemic questions our usual ways of community interaction. It brought emotional and economic hardship to many in our communities and demonstrates the vulnerability of certain groups, defined by ethnicity, age, and preexisting health conditions. This health crisis also highlighted the communities' strength to support one another during difficult times. Mainers in congregate living settings and others who are more at risk due to their frontline occupancy have been more likely to contract the disease. In addition, individuals living alone struggle with social isolation and the feeling of loneliness. This emphasizes the need for strong community resources to support older adults in ageing safely.

Most respondents – 81% - agree that their community is a great place for older people to live. Residents feel safe in their neighborhoods and communities, in part due to the strength of emergency services. Many respondents value the beauty of the region's natural surroundings. Library Services especially are highly appreciated and frequently used.

- 78% note that they can ask family, friends and neighbors for help.
- 58% talk with their friends to find out what's happening.

Numerous local organizations are embedded in the communities and contribute through educational programs, social opportunities, health and community services, fundraising activities and outdoor experiences. These strong community organizations include among many others the Area Agency on Aging/Spectrum Generations, Bath Area Family YMCA, Bath Area Food Bank, Bath Area Senior Citizen Center, Bath Farmer's Market, Bath Housing, Catholic Charities SEARCH, faith communities, first responders, Kennebec Estuary Land Trust, Maine's First Ship, Maine Maritime Museum, Main Street Bath, Mid Coast-Parkview Health, Patten Free Library, People Plus, The Chocolate Church Arts Center, and United Way of Mid Coast Maine.

## 6 Future Processes for Implementation

The AFCLK Steering Committee has agreed to adhere to this Action Plan to secure progress, mitigate the potential for conflict and misunderstanding and ensure that everyone is moving in the same direction. We encourage committee members to take on tasks that are concise and manageable. We are building this initiative to be sustainable and will focus on the immediate tasks.

This Action Plan is a living document that will be refined or modified to respond to new situations or information as they arise. The following processes have been established to ensure on-going accountability to the Action Plan:

### On-going Action Reports

At AFCLK meetings committee members will have the opportunity to report on their activities, challenges and proposals for change in action items.

### Approval of Action Items/Objectives

Any substantive additions, withdrawals or changes to action items in the Action Plan will be approved by the Steering Committee.

### Timeline

AFCLK acknowledges the comprehensiveness of its five-year plan and the time constraint of its all-volunteer organization. Therefore, the timeline for the completion of the plan is flexible in nature.