

Livable Communities Workshop Generates Ideas for an Age-Friendly Larimer County

On February 20, 2014 approximately 40 representatives from city governments, academia, health providers, transportation and housing interests, private and non-profit service providers, senior centers, along with Foundation on Aging (FOA) and Office on Aging(OOA) staff and board members, attended a stakeholder workshop to identify and recommend goals and actions that could address the challenges of housing, mobility, wellness, and the local culture of aging. The strategy was to highlight critical private and public initiatives that are currently planned or in progress and identify specific short-term actions that could move those initiatives forward to improve age-livability. The next step is to bring together smaller groups of these stakeholders to help select, plan and organize those activities. This experience with cross-sector collaboration to achieve short-term goals will ultimately guide the design of more effective long-term collaborative projects.

The contribution of seniors themselves will be critical to the success of these proposed projects. Larimer County has a wealth of energy, knowledge, skills and experience among its retirees and this livability project intends to tap that resource. By volunteering their time and talents to the completion of these efforts, participating seniors will have opportunities to significantly impact the future livability of our community.

The program began early last summer when FOA helped create a coalition of organizations interested in promoting livability for seniors in Larimer County. They adopted the name Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities and committed to a mission to “ create an environment that supports age-friendly community”.

In July the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) awarded FOA, along with five other community grantees across the country, a technical assistance grant to participate in their Livable Communities Collaborative. The Partnership coalition accepted the grant’s assignment to develop a process that would encourage collaborative community-based projects to promote aging well. This stakeholder workshop was the first major step in that process.

The workshop explored issues that local public forums and county surveys have most often identified as needing attention:

- mobility and access to supportive services
- wellness programs that support healthy, active lifestyles
- Affordable and appropriate housing choices
- a culture that acknowledges and welcomes all ages

