

Portland, Maine Age Friendly Community Work Plan

August 2016

(Revised for AARP Jan 2017)

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BACKGROUND

Americans are living longer than ever. The increase in the number of older adults in the United States stems from the large number of children born between 1946 and 1964 – commonly known as the Baby Boomers. One in three Americans is currently aged 50 or older. By 2030 one out of every five people will be 65-plus. Portland, ME has seen its share in this increase with a larger elderly population calling the city home. In Maine, over 41 percent of the population is over 50 years old and over 17 percent is more than 65 years old. As a result of these changing demographics, our nation is grappling with many age-related issues and causing many to look for ways to support this population in their own homes and communities.

The changes in Maine will be even more dramatic. By 2030, it is estimated that one out every four Mainers will be over 65. At the same time, the Census Bureau projects Mainers working age population will increase only one percent compared to a national growth of 18.3 percent. To better understand the needs of this segment of the population in Portland and to identify ways to create a more livable community for citizens of all ages, the City of Portland has committed to joining the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

The development of a well-designed, accessible community that sustains economic growth will benefit residents of all ages. The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities is an affiliate of the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program which is an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. This program encourages adoption of features like safe, walkable streets, viable housing and transportation options, access to key services, and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities. (Livability Resources - Great Places for All Ages, 2015)

The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations representing more than 1,000 communities. In the U.S., more than three dozen communities representing more than a dozen states are enrolled in the network. Portland was the first in Maine to sign-on in August of 2014 and was later followed by Ellsworth.

The City of Portland has committed to supporting this effort and has continued to expand related efforts. The Mayoral Challenge for Safe Streets, a program by the US Department of Transportation is an initiative to raise the bar for pedestrian and bicycle rider safety. Portland's Mayor Michael Brennan accepted the challenge in early 2016.

Years one and two of program participation focus on assessing community needs and developing an action plan for improvements and conclude with this work plan. The AARP has defined eight focus areas called domains for evaluation of the age-friendliness of a community.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMIC DATA

Portland, Maine is a vibrant city known for its tourist attractions, restaurant scene and as a hub for craft breweries. While the population swells during the summer months with visitors by land and sea, the year round population is over 65,000 of which approximately 12 percent is 65 years of age or older.

The population pyramid based on 2010 Census Data for the City of Portland is presented below. (US Census Data, 2015) Two features are apparent. First, the cohorts of the 20 to 24 years, 25 to 29 years, and 30 to 34 years are the largest for both males and females. This population of young adults can be

typical of an urban area which attracts young people including new college graduates looking for employment. Second, the pyramid has a narrow base of school age children and is rather columnar in shape for the middle-age cohorts. This indicates that an increasing percentage of the overall City population is approaching or in retirement and that the school systems are likely seeing shrinking enrollments.¹

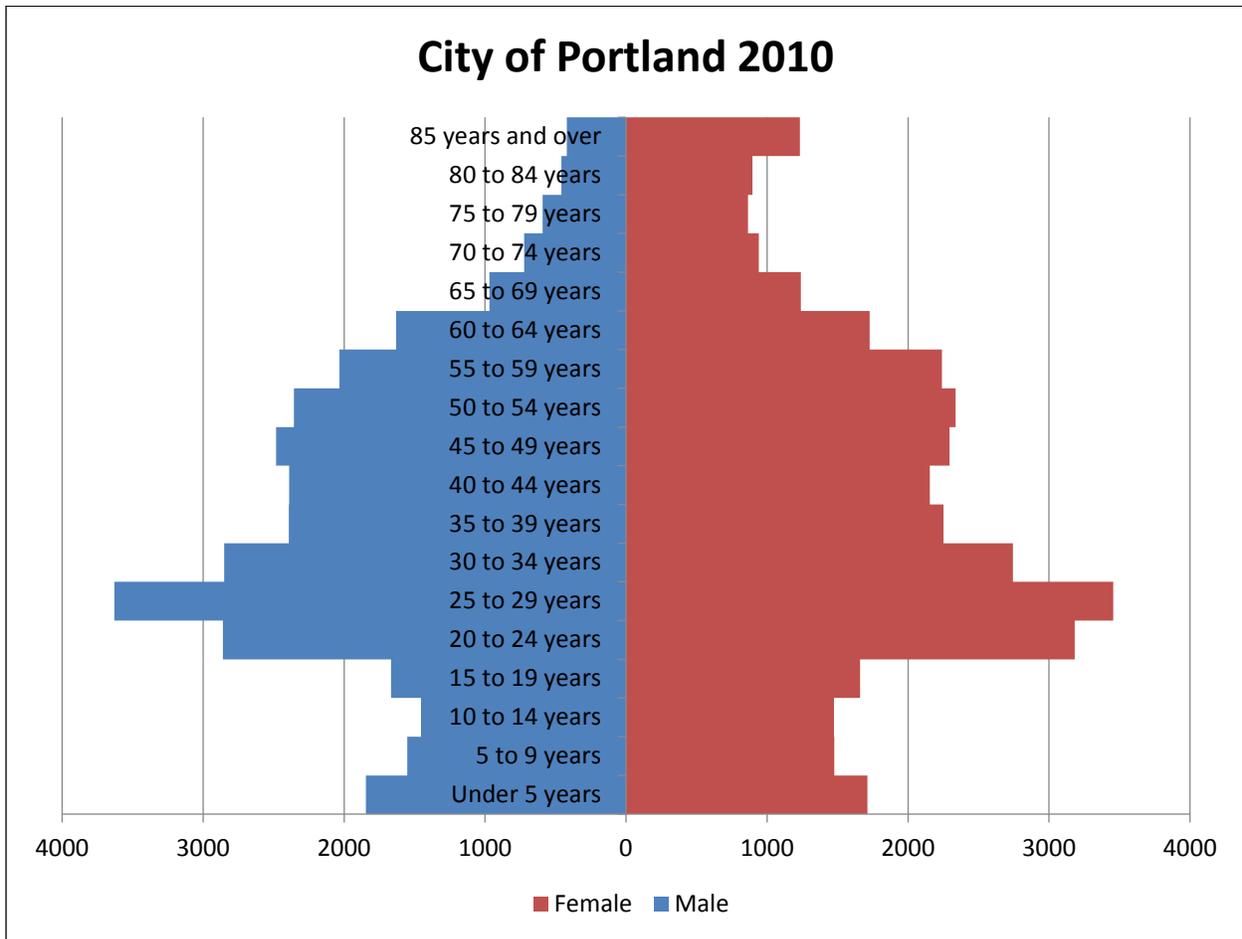


Figure 1

The older adult population (defined by the US Census data to be aged 65 years or older) primarily identifies as white (94.9 percent). Almost 9 percent of this group is foreign born. Portland’s Refugee and Resettlement Program has welcomed large numbers of asylum seekers during the past 10-20 years from war torn regions of Central Africa, Somalia and Sudan. Earlier waves of migrants from Russia and Vietnam have also settled in Portland. The marital status is shown in Figure 2, below. This data shows that almost 60 percent are not in traditional relationships and there may be additional care and housing needs to be considered. Figure 3 shows the large percentage of this segment of the population in rental housing. Figure 4 shows educational attainment levels.

¹ Population pyramids for the State of Maine and the United States are included in the Bissonnette reference report. The Maine pyramid is similar in shape to Portland whereas the US pyramid is more reflective of a stable and growing population.

The housing tenure of the over 65 population in Portland is primarily owner occupied housing units (58.7 percent) with an average household size of 1.75. The median value of these homes is \$230,800 (slightly lower than the median for the total population). City wide, the median rent is \$903, but the over 65 group has a median of only \$613. More than half of these renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing which is the established limit of affordability by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

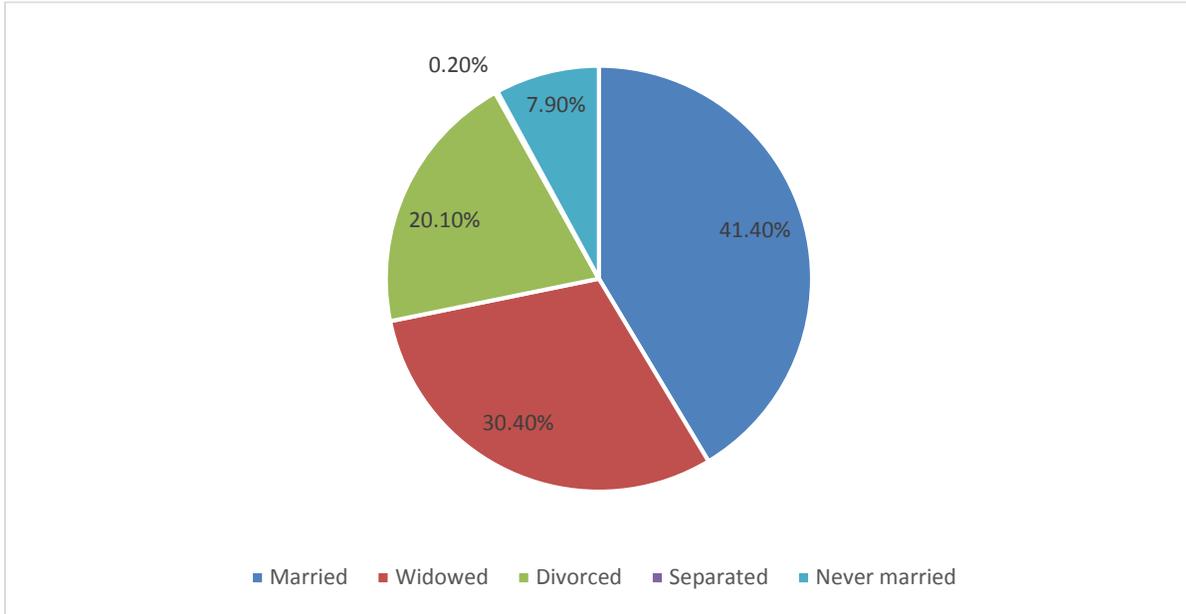


Figure 2

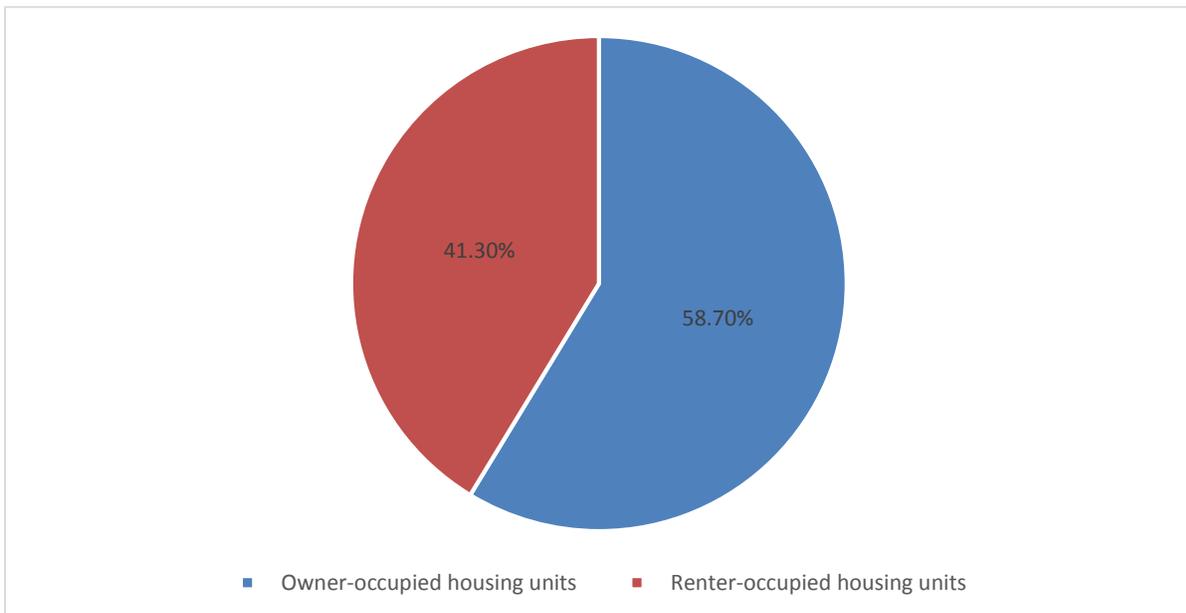


Figure 3

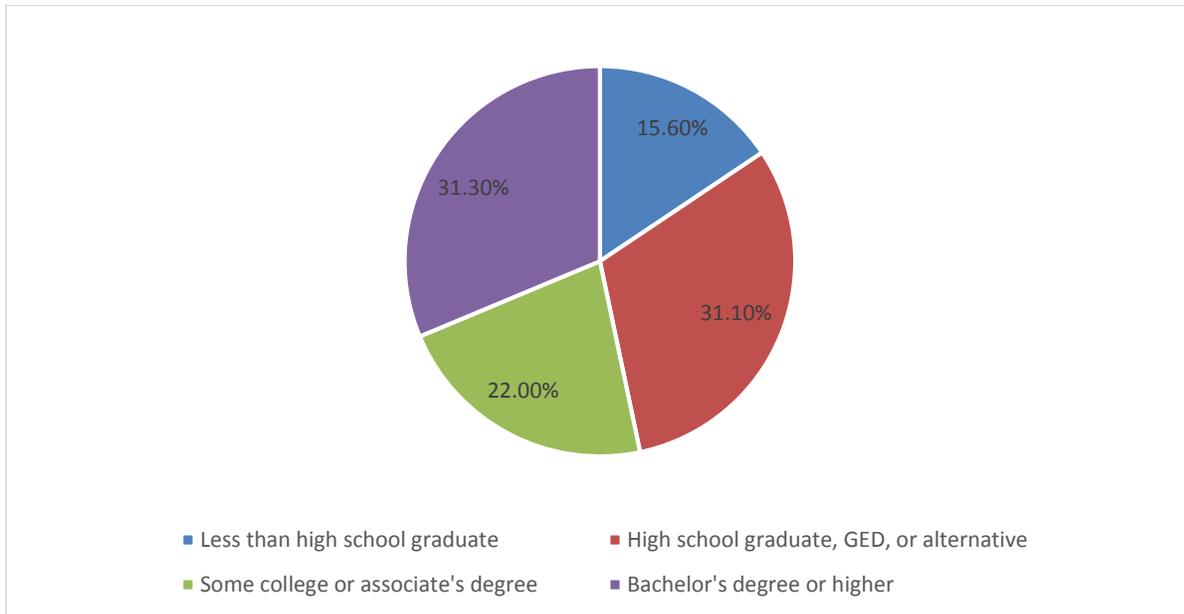


Figure 4

Lifestyle in retirement has changed in recent decades and many people continue to work beyond age 65, either by choice or need. In Portland, about 32 percent of this group is in the labor force. Household earnings from this employment and other sources are described below. One quarter of the group is below 150 percent of the poverty level compared to 30 percent of the total population.

Households with Income in the Past 12 Months		
	Over Age 65	Mean Amount (Over 65)
With earnings	31.3%	\$41,206
With Social Security income	89%	\$16,314
With Supplemental Security income	6.3%	\$8,503
With cash public assistance income	4.9%	\$2,994
With retirement income	43.8%	\$18,952
With Food Stamp/SNAP benefits	14.8%	N/A

Figure 5

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Work in Portland began with an assessment of the built environment including accessibility and current practices regarding involvement of this targeted population in civic policy making and community planning. The document was compiled by Liz Bissonnette as part of a University of Southern Maine (USM) Muskie School Master's of Community Planning and Development degree capstone project. The

paper focused on this assessment specific to four AARP domains of livability: civic participation, housing, transportation, and outdoor spaces and buildings. (Bissonnette capstone report; Appendix A-1)

Four other areas were targeted for study by Emily Lavine as part of a USM Muskie School Master's of Public Health degree capstone project. These domains included respect and social inclusion, communication and information, community and health services, and social participation. Information was gathered via the use a survey tool (Survey; Appendix A-3) and focus group discussion with older Portland residents. (Lavine Capstone; Appendix A-2)

Both studies identified positive community attributes and areas for further study for targeted improvements.

The assessment study found that the City of Portland considers older adults in many of its departments, planning activities, and service offerings. It found that as this segment of the population continues to increase there are plentiful opportunities to build on this foundation and become known as an age-friendly community in the region. And Portland's deliberate consideration of older adults when making these improvements will benefit this segment of the population, but perhaps more importantly, improve the quality of life for all residents.

The outreach work identified the need to assess the discovered data gaps and further discussions with the older adult community through activities such as additional survey efforts and focus groups. This work should target a representative cross section of the community.

These findings were presented at a City-wide summit in June 2015. Interested City staff and community stakeholders formed a Steering Committee to continue the Age-Friendly Community focused efforts.

STEERING COMMITTEE WORK FOR CITY

The Age Friendly Portland Steering Committee focused on advancing the planning of Age Friendly Community efforts in Portland and began meeting in the fall of 2015. Monthly meetings with attendance by stakeholders focused on narrowing the AARP domain areas on which to focus. The stakeholders represented municipal employees, non-profit organization staff, interested citizens, and community leaders. (Committee member list; Appendix A-4)

After painstaking discussion and an extensive review of the age friendly community assessments and relevant data previously collected by municipal departments regarding transportation and housing needs, the Steering Committee selected four AARP domains of livability as immediate priorities – Health and Community Services, Housing, Transportation, and Communication. Ultimately, the communication domain was combined with Health and Community Services, but relevant considerations for information sharing is contained in each of the remaining three. The committee feels that each chosen domain has great importance in the community and through focused development work and improvements in each, additional benefits will be seen in older adults' lives around social inclusion, respect, and engagement.

This group will continue to guide the implementation of this work plan. Its membership should continue to expand through the activity implementation. The inclusion of diverse opinions and experiences will increase the value of the goals, sustain momentum, and ensure that Portland continues to welcome, support, and engage the older adult community.

Work Plan Goals and Objectives

1.4.1 CITY WIDE VISION

The vision which captures the intent of this work plan reflects the impact of this initiative to residents beyond the older adult population. Achieving this vision will require concerted efforts by all stakeholders in the City.

Through community led efforts, the City of Portland supports and values residents of all ages in a livable environment that promotes health, safety, independence, active participation, and meaningful engagement in all aspects of community life.

1.4.2 HOUSING

Housing is essential for safety and well-being. (World Health Organization, 2007) Older adults benefit from affordable and accessible housing options near transportation and other services. Without affordable housing, quality of life and health can seriously suffer because of access difficulties and increased costs. Active planning processes with community involvement opportunities and City staff that are eager to address concerns have created an environment that is adaptable to the changing needs of its residents.

Housing Goal: Create, promote, and facilitate safe, affordable and practical housing solutions that meet the evolving needs of Portland's diverse population and allow all residents to successfully age in place.

Objective 1: Develop and support networks and programs that facilitate elders safely aging in place.

- Engage the many Neighborhood Associations and civic groups to promote and encourage development of aging in place communities.
- Build a partnership between the City of Portland and local aging in place organizations (e.g., Villages²) to increase awareness of and access to available aging in place resources.
- Explore developing a low-income housing rehab program similar to the model used by the Bath (Maine) Housing Community Aging in Place (CAP) program³.

Objective 2: Establish programs that support affordable housing for elders.

- Explore the creation of home-sharing options for older home owners burdened by high property expenses and insufficient income.
- Work with the City of Portland's Planning and Urban Development Department to incentivize the production of affordable units appropriately designed and located for older Portland residents
- Provide training for property managers of public and private housing to address the needs of aging residents.

² See: www.vtvnetwork.org

³ See: www.bathhousing.org/programs/community-aging-in-place-cap/

Objective 3: Maximize awareness of all essential resources for housing and aging in place through public outreach and communication.

- Develop a simple, easily accessible inventory and description of housing choices for Portland seniors.
- Advertise home modification programs available to Portland seniors and streamline the application processes.
- Distribute useful fact sheets about Federal and State compliance regulations (such as Tenant Rights in Maine, Fair Housing Act compliance, and ADA compliance) to increase awareness of housing rights
- Expand awareness of existing housing programs and encourage creation of new community-based housing programs.
- Ensure that older adults have input in developing new housing policies.

1.4.3 TRANSPORTATION

Integrating land use and transportation planning allows communities to comprehensively plan for housing, commercial uses, and public services in the context of multiple forms of transportation. This coordination can reduce congestion, increase environmental quality, and improve public health.

Transportation Goal: To ensure that the Portland community provides a variety of convenient and affordable modes of public and private transportation, that makes it easy for citizens and visitors of all ages to get around town with or without a car. Portland's streets, intersections, crosswalks and sidewalks will be well-designed and consistently maintained, creating safe and easy access for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages. Transportation systems and walkable areas in the city will continue to accommodate the needs of Portland residents as they age.

Objective 1: Increase awareness of transportation options currently available

- Facilitate wide distribution of the Greater Portland Transit District Rider's Guide to, with information about in-city and regional routes, location of covered bus stops, reduced fares for senior citizens, real time bus location, and connector routes between buses, trains and Casco Bay ferries.
- Develop a brochure providing information about senior transportation options such as Independent Transportation Network, Regional Transportation Programs, taxi service discounts, and availability of handicap parking. Distribute to senior housing sites, church bulletins, libraries, community centers, and local businesses.
- Ensure that information about specialized transportation services and discount fares are reflected in local tourist guides.

- Provide up-to-date transportation information on the City of Portland website, neighborhood organization websites and newsletters, and in partner agency publications seen by older Portland residents. Ensure that written information is in large print and signs are clearly visible and well-lit.

Objective 2: Increase Pedestrian Safety

- The City of Portland Planning Department will continue the Complete Streets Project currently underway; implement changes to street design, traffic patterns, sidewalk and crosswalk to improve walkability. “Complete Streets” are designed to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- Expand the Volunteer Snow Shoveling for Seniors Program. Snow removal from steps, walkways, and sidewalks in front of the homes of Portland residents aged 60 and above.
- Inform older Portland residents about ways to access and use the Portland Public Works “Fix It” program which encourages citizen reporting of problems they encounter with specific intersections, sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic lights, signage, or other issues that impede safe travel.
- Conduct neighborhood “walk arounds” to identify areas that need improvement or repairs to become safer for pedestrians.
- Portland to conduct a City-wide ADA Compatibility Assessment 2017.
- Portland METRO will add 29 new bus stop shelters in 2016, improving safety and comfort for riders.

Objective 3: Improve Affordability and Accessibility of Transportation

- Expand the ITN Roads Scholarship Program to provide lower cost or free rides for Portland seniors who can’t afford to pay standard rates and mileage. This fund can be expanded by recruiting volunteer drivers from Portland and asking them to donate earned “miles” to the road Scholarship for Portland residents.
- Build in volunteer transportation services and partner with existing transportation providers when developing Portland’s various “Aging in Place” initiatives.
- Review the Portland Disability Advisory Committee 2014 report and results of a survey which asked Portland residents with disabilities to identify transportation barriers. Work to implement suggested changes where possible.

1.4.4 HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES/COMMUNICATION

Health and Community Services/Communication Goal:

Connect Portland's older residents with friends, services, and community as empowered participants in the creation of their age friendly community.

Objective 1: Provide education to help Portland become a more “Dementia –Friendly” city

- Offer dementia-friendly training to law enforcement, first responders, clergy, healthcare workers, businesses, and municipal staff.

Objective 2: Invite Portland residents to participate in age-friendly community/neighborhood forums.

- Educate. Provide information about Portland’s Age-Friendly Community initiative and introduce the general concept of a livable community for all ages.
- Ask. Gather feedback about proposed work plan goals and seek ideas for future goals from participants.
- Engage. Identify interested individuals from each neighborhood and encourage further involvement through volunteerism.

Objective 3: Identify preferred method(s) older adults presently receive information and ways they may wish to receive information in the future.

- Conduct focus groups to ask about communication preferences.
- Based on focus group results, improve and vary the ways in which key information is made available and actively shared with this population in Portland.

Objective 4:

Improve access to information about services, programs, and events that may be useful and/or of particular interest to Portland residents as they age.

- Update and widely promote the use of City of Portland web site’s elder services page. Use “news flash” feature on home page to direct consumers to Office of Elder Affairs. Improve and add to existing resource search with links to local senior service organizations.
- Create a simple postcard/brochure with a list of key agencies that help older adults and their families navigate healthcare, emergency response, and social service systems: Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Portland Office of Elder Affairs, Maine Bureau of Elder and Adult Services, Alzheimer’s Association, Police, Fire, and MEDCU, Legal Services for the Elderly, Partnership for Healthy Aging etc.

Objective 5:

Engage entrepreneurs and older adults in an effort to improve the age-friendliness of Portland's business environment.

- Offer Age Friendly training for local businesses
- Develop measurable standards and specific criteria that defines an "age-friendly" business
- Offer an "Age Friendly Business" designation for companies that implement significant changes.
- Evaluate progress by gaining feedback from older customers about changes
- Award participating businesses with "We're an Age Friendly Business!" window decal or framed certificate.

Detailed work sheets (Appendix A-5) were developed for each of the focus areas. These documents outline specific individuals and/or organizations responsible for implementation of each objective, a start date, desired outcomes, and a space to record ongoing progress.

CONCLUSIONS

This work plan is designed to form the groundwork for improvements in each targeted domain. It is intended to provide a vision and specific, attainable goals. As success is achieved or missed through efforts of the steering committee and other stakeholders, these objectives and tasks must be reviewed and revised based upon the lessons learned. Successes are intended to build upon previous work and spur other activities. Periodic and regular communication of the Age-Friendly Community efforts must be communicated to the City leadership and, most importantly, to the older adult community.