

Age-Friendly Baltimore County

Final Report 2021-2024



**AGE FRIENDLY
BALTIMORE COUNTY**
A Livable Community For All Ages



Baltimore County Executive John A. Olszewski, Jr.
and the County Council

**“Our goal is for
Baltimore County to
be a place where all
residents feel welcome
and can take comfort in
knowing their needs
are being met.”**

**– John Olszewski, Jr.,
Baltimore County Executive**

Message from the County Executive



Dear Baltimore County,

We know that our aging population continues to comprise an increasing percent of the county's total population. We have made it a priority to ensure that our county is able to meet the needs of every resident because when communities are designed to thrive, we all benefit. We want residents of all ages to remain active in their neighborhoods, have the opportunity to live independently, and share access to the services, amenities and opportunities they need to age with dignity.

At the start of our administration, Baltimore County embarked on a County-wide initiative to ensure that every resident can take comfort in knowing their needs are being met. This mission led us to sign and join the World Health Organization and AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities, a partnership with over 500 other Age-Friendly municipalities in the United States. Then, we drew input from nearly 2,000 of our residents as well as our Age-Friendly Baltimore County workgroups to set goals and develop strategies to help us achieve our mission.

As a result of these committed efforts and strong partnerships, we have developed and implemented our action plan to guide us towards an Age-Friendly Baltimore County where innovation, collaboration, and forward-thinking policies enhance every resident's quality of life. This action plan identified significant steps that will improve our county operations across agencies like Housing, Transportation, Health Services, and much more – ensuring that residents have access to affordable housing, accessible transit, and parks and green spaces in their communities.

This Final Report is the result of countless partners who offered their expertise, energy, and enthusiasm to make Baltimore County a place where residents of all ages and abilities can work, play, and enjoy a good quality of life. While we know that the steps we've taken over the past five years are an incredible start, we also recognize that we can continue to go further and do more for our communities. Together, we can truly build an Age-Friendly Baltimore County that benefits everyone.

Thank you to all our Age-Friendly Baltimore County partners for contributing to this plan and report. We welcome you to join us in continuing this important work that will make Baltimore County a community that welcomes and cherishes residents of all ages, abilities, cultures and backgrounds.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Olszewski, Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

*John "Johnny O" Olszewski, Jr.
County Executive*

Message from the Acting Director, Baltimore County Department of Aging



Dear Baltimore County,

On behalf of the County Executive and all of our many partners and contributors, it is my pleasure to share this Age-Friendly Baltimore County Final Report with you. This report is the culmination of the dedication and expertise of many County agencies, community organization and businesses and volunteers.

The Baltimore County Department of Aging has been proud to lead the Age-Friendly Baltimore County initiative and jointly commit with the County Executive in ensuring our County is one that is livable for all ages, cultures and backgrounds, and where people can live their best lives.

The report outlines the various steps that have been implemented throughout our five year action plan as we prepare for the increase in our older adult population in ways that will also benefit those persons with disabilities, families, care partners and other individuals who are seeking such things as affordable housing, access to parks and green spaces, accessible buildings, enhance communication and reliable public transit.

The Age-Friendly Baltimore County work has been an inclusive planning process, and I am pleased this work has opened the door to new partnerships and enhanced existing ones. We have made great plans for future collaboration in making our County the best livable and Age-Friendly County in Maryland.

Thank you to so many individuals and partners who put in countless hours of their time and shared expertise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elisabeth A. Sachs'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elisabeth A. Sachs
Acting Director

Contents

Letter from the County Executive	3
Message from the Acting Director, Baltimore County Department of Aging	4
Introduction	6
Becoming Age Friendly in Baltimore County Snapshot of Baltimore County	
Our Process	10
Joining the Network	
Establishing a Committee	
Conducting the Baseline Assessment	
Writing the Action Plan	
Moving Forward	
Housing	14
Transportation	20
Community and Health Services and Supports	26
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	32
Communication and Information	38
Appendices	42
Appendix A: Acknowledgments	
Appendix B: References	



Acknowledgments

The Project Leader for the Age-Friendly Baltimore County initiative was the Baltimore County Department of Aging. The Age-Friendly Baltimore County planning process was and will continue to be an inclusive process that engaged people throughout the community to contribute to this action plan, and develop and implement our goals. We would like to thank the many organizations, individuals and volunteers who have worked over the past five years and will continue to work on this initiative for their contributions. For a full list of contributors, please see Appendix B.

Introduction

The goal of the Age-Friendly Baltimore County initiative was to make Baltimore County one of the most livable communities in our state.

The lead agency for the Age-Friendly Baltimore County initiative was the Baltimore County Department of Aging(BCDA) who, in collaboration with the County Executive, launched the initiative in August 2019.

Becoming Age Friendly in Baltimore County

In an era characterized by profound demographic shifts, the imperative to create age-friendly communities has emerged as a cornerstone of societal progress. Baltimore County stands as a testament to the transformative power of intentional, community-driven initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for residents across all stages of aging. As a proud participant in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, Baltimore County has embarked on a journey of innovation, collaboration, and forward-thinking policy development to cultivate an environment where every individual, regardless of age, can thrive.

This report delves into the action plan crafted for 2021 to 2024, guiding Baltimore County's efforts towards Age-Friendly Livable Community initiatives. With a steadfast commitment to inclusivity, equity, and the principles outlined by the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities framework, Baltimore County has undertaken a multifaceted approach to address the evolving needs of its aging population.

This document outlines Baltimore County's strategic efforts to improve key aspects of livability, such as, housing, transportation, community health, outdoor spaces and communication. By harnessing the collective wisdom of stakeholders, leveraging innovative solutions, and fostering robust partnerships, Baltimore County aims to not only meet the needs of its current residents but also lay the groundwork for a vibrant, sustainable future where aging is celebrated as a natural part of life. It highlights the dedication, resilience, and vision of the individuals and organizations that comprise the fabric of Baltimore County, embodying the belief that by working together, we can build communities that honor the dignity, autonomy, and well-being of every member, regardless of age or background. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, Baltimore County stands as a beacon of hope, a model for age-friendly innovation, and a powerful example of collective action in shaping a brighter tomorrow.



25%

of County Residents are 60+



847,000

County residents

3rd

largest jurisdiction in Maryland

100,000

foreign-born residents

29

communities

20,000

businesses

The County's population has increased by nearly **100,000**.



2000

2010

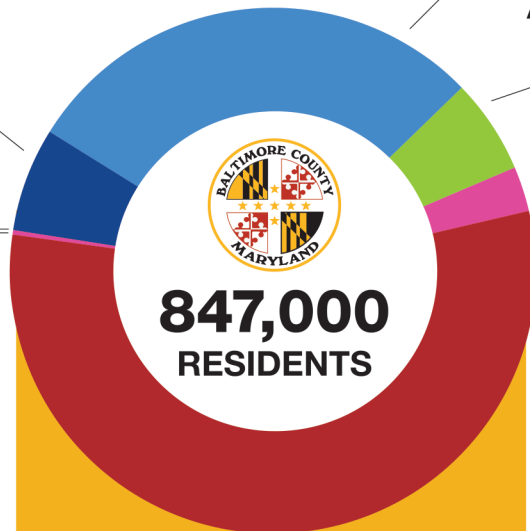
2020

Baltimore County ranks **4th** highest per capita income in Maryland

6.3%
Asian

0.1%
Native American

0.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native



29.7%
African American

5.7%
Hispanic/Latino

2.6%
Two or more races

56.6%
Caucasian

Source: Census Bureau

Snapshot of Baltimore County

In the past decade, population growth in Baltimore County was largely attributable to increases in the minority populations, with a decrease in the total White population of the County. Among minorities, the Black or African American population increased by approximately 50,000 people, and now represents nearly one third of the County's total population. The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations grew by approximately 12,000, accounting for 6.31% of the County's total population. The Hispanic/Latino population grew by 15,225 people.

Foreign-born populations have continued to increase in the County, as the State and nation continue to attract immigrants from all over the world. Based on U.S. Census data, the number of foreign-born County residents grew from more than 82,000 in 2010 to close to 105,000 in 2019.

Based on 2019 Census data, the largest proportion of the County's population with a disability are individuals age 75 or over (46.8%), an increase from 2010, when that age group represented 30.93% of the County's population who reported having a disability.

According to the U.S. Administration for Community Living, in 2019 there were 54.1 million people age 65 and older, an increase from 39.6 million in 2010. This segment of the U.S. population is projected to reach 80.8 million by 2040. In Baltimore County, we will see similar rapid growth of the 65 and older population. Based on the 2010 U.S. Census, County residents age 65 and older comprised approximately 15% of the County's population. By 2025, almost 1 in 5 County residents (19.9%) will be age 65 and older.

Maryland legalized same-sex marriage in 2012. In its 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment requires all states to grant same-sex marriages and recognize same-sex marriages granted in other states. Despite these significant changes in state and U.S. law, there has been no data collected on same-sex married couples. It is worth noting, however, that the 2020 Census asked respondents about their relationship to the person with whom they share their home, and included "opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse," "same-sex husband/wife/spouse," "opposite-sex unmarried partner" and "same-sex unmarried partner" as options, while in previous Census surveys, the options were "husband", "wife" or "unmarried partner". Data on same-sex cohabiting couples when made available from the 2020 Census, however, will only provide a partial snapshot of the country's LGBTQ community, as many individuals do not live with a same-sex partner.

Our Process

“The Baltimore County Age-Friendly initiative progress was made possible through the tireless efforts of our workgroup members in producing meaningful accomplishments in our County from the original action plan. We could not have asked for a more committed and passionate group of community leaders to work with in planning to make our County an Age-Friendly, Livable Community.”

**– Mary Wontrop,
Age-Friendly Baltimore County Coordinator**

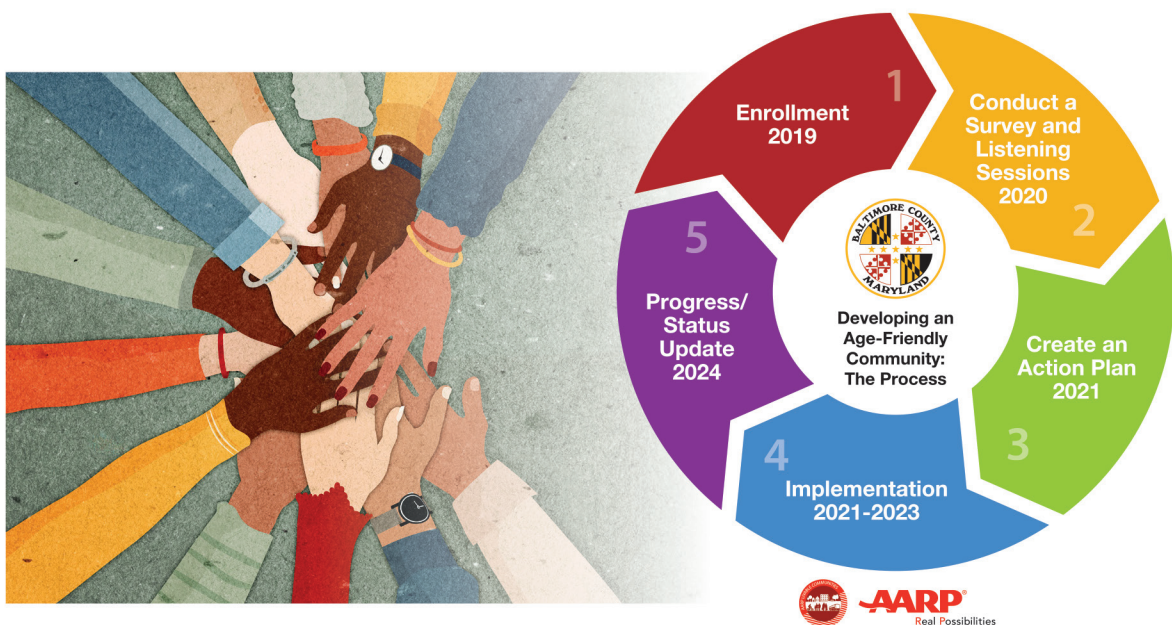
Joining the Network

Five years ago, Baltimore County was perfectly poised to initiate the Age Friendly process as a new Director took the helm of Baltimore County Department of Aging and a new County Executive was sworn into office. With the County's aging population increasing and the need to consider how to best serve all of the county residents, County Executive Johnny Olszewski, Jr. embraced the idea of making Baltimore County a welcoming community for people of all ages. He formalized this commitment in a letter expressing the county's intention to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This letter of commitment served as the county's application, which was submitted to the AARP state office director. The state office then recommended Baltimore County to the AARP national office, leading to its inclusion in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. The Baltimore County Department of Aging was designated as the lead agency for this initiative, underscoring a concerted effort to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for residents of all ages.

Establishing an Advisory Committee

To advance Baltimore County's vision of becoming a more livable community for everyone, an advisory committee was established to engage key stakeholders, utilizing existing data from various sources, including AARP's Livable Community resource. This committee comprised of key individuals and organizations is vital to the initiative's success. The committee included Directors from the following Baltimore County departments: Aging, Budget and Finance, Economic and Workforce Development, Environmental Protection and Sustainability, Fire, Health and Human Services, Permits, Approvals and Inspections, Planning, Police, Public Works/Transportation, and Recreation and Parks. Additionally, representatives from the county's Commission on Aging, Commission on Disabilities, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Public Libraries, Chamber of Commerce, Public Schools, and the County Council participated.

The advisory committee also included local nonprofit agencies serving older adults and people with disabilities, medical facilities, universities, and AARP Maryland. This diverse representation ensured a comprehensive approach to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all Baltimore County residents.



CONDUCTING THE BASELINE ASSESSMENT

The next step in the Age-Friendly process was to establish a baseline by collecting primary and secondary data. The assessment team analyzed existing local data from city, county, and regional governments to gain an initial understanding of factors such as the number and location of green spaces and affordable housing units. National data from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and National Household Transportation Survey, specific to Baltimore County, were also reviewed to identify the county's demographic characteristics and transportation use patterns. Feedback was solicited from Baltimore County residents through surveys, public listening sessions, roundtable discussions, and presentations targeted to specific groups such as Latinx communities and veterans.

An Age-Friendly comment board was made available for public comments at events like the Power of Age Expo, County Executive Town Halls, and other events hosted by the Baltimore County Department of Aging.

The information gathered from this research and community responses was used to identify areas for improvement within the eight domains suggested by the WHO: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services. The results were compiled and presented to the Advisory Committee. The committee's analysis highlighted a strong need for Baltimore County to focus on three specific WHO domains: transportation, housing, and community support and health services. This conclusion formed the foundation for developing Baltimore County's Age-Friendly Action Plan.



Workgroups for each of these three domains were established, each chaired by a member of the Advisory Committee with a co-chair from a partner organization.



These groups consisted of representatives from county departments, partner agencies, and older adult volunteers.



WRITING THE ACTION PLAN

Over eight months, three workgroups convened multiple times to develop strategies to enhance Baltimore County as an age-friendly community. The baseline assessment results guided the formulation of each workgroup's goals. The expertise and vision of the workgroup members were also incorporated into the plan.

The workgroups presented their recommendations to the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee, which decided on the final elements for the Age-Friendly Action Plan. Input from partner agencies and the Advisory Committee was gathered to finalize the plan, which was submitted to AARP in July 2021 and approved in December 2021. This approval officially included Baltimore County in the AARP Livable Communities Age-Friendly Network.

The Action Plan outlined strategies and action items for three primary domains: Housing, Transportation, and Community Support and Health Services (CSHS). It also highlighted the importance of expanding efforts into the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, as well as Communication and Information domains. Additional work groups for these domains formulated specific goals, and their recommendations led to supplemental strategies and actions added to the original plan in 2022.

The strategies across the five domains are interconnected. For example, traffic calming measures in the Transportation domain contribute to creating safe walking paths in the Outdoor Spaces domain.

MOVING FORWARD

Over the past five years, Baltimore County has made significant progress in becoming an age-friendly County. This report marks the completion of the initial phase of our action plan, reflecting the county's commitment to improving the quality of life for older adults. We extend our gratitude to the county government and our community partners for their collaborative efforts, which have been instrumental in achieving these key milestones.

Our commitment to inclusivity and innovation has driven substantial progress in advancing age-friendly initiatives across Baltimore County. This collective dedication is reflected in our improved AARP Livability Index score, rising from 50 to 55, placing us among the top half of U.S. communities.

The integration of an age-friendly perspective into the 2030 Baltimore County Masterplan exemplifies our forward-thinking approach. By involving leaders from county departments, we ensure future planning meets the needs of residents of all ages. Together, we continue striving to create a community where everyone can thrive, fostering dignity, independence, and an enhanced quality of life for all.



Housing

The Baltimore County Age-Friendly Housing Workgroup recognized the importance of support and advocacy for aging in place through diverse housing options.

These options include independent and assisted living communities, affordable homes for purchase and rent, multi-generational, and mixed-use neighborhoods where residents can walk, bike, live, shop, work, learn, worship, and play. Providing well-designed housing options and services that enable individuals to remain in their homes and communities is crucial for enhancing the quality of life across all ages.

SNAPSHOT OF HOUSING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

STRATEGY I - CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE COUNTY'S HOUSING STOCK AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS SO THEY ARE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Legislation created County's first dedicated Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).
- Creation of the Baltimore County Age-Friendly Upgrades for Seniors with BCAUSE program.
- Inclusion of Uniform Accessible Federal Standard Designs (UAFS) into new housing development projects.

STRATEGY II - ENHANCE AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES THAT PROMOTE INTERACTION BETWEEN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

- Creation of zoning regulations to permit university-based retirement communities.
- Establishment of multi-generational initiatives within neighborhoods.
- Revision to Zoning Regulation-Accessory Apartments Bill 7-23 to align with contemporary family definitions.
- Establishment of a Task Force to examine and enhance the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CXMP).
- Development of multi-generational events at County senior centers, public libraries and other community groups.

STRATEGY III - ENHANCE AND EXPAND A VARIETY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

- Initiation of biannual meeting with developers to disseminate information about financial incentives for constructing affordable housing units.
- Inclusion of new affordable housing in existing communities under construction and renovations.
- Revisions of legislative and zoning regulations to allow for more affordable housing in the County.

Further details on the previously listed accomplishment can be found on pages 16 - 19.



Action Summary for Housing



STRATEGY I - CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE COUNTY'S HOUSING STOCK AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS SO THEY ARE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- In May of 2021, the Baltimore County Executive signed legislation creating the County's first dedicated Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This Department was developed to help ensure access to affordable housing and provide housing stability support. DHCD is also tasked with providing community revitalization supports to develop stronger age-friendly neighborhoods. Residents of all abilities and ages will be taken into consideration in

DHCD's future planning. The Director of the Baltimore County DHCD attends the Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities monthly meetings. The Commission provides valuable insight to what is needed by people with disabilities for housing. There are plans to form a Housing Subcommittee within the Commission to gather Housing Study/Needs Assessment documents pertaining to people with disabilities to learn, find examples of good documents, and identify success stories and best practices to share with DHCD.

- In 2021, the Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) announced the Baltimore County Age-Friendly Upgrades for Seniors (BCAUSE) program. This initiative offers homeowners over 65 home repairs or safety modifications to help them age safely in place. A collaboration between BCDA, Civic Works, Rebuilding Together Baltimore, CHAI, and Dundalk Renaissance, BCAUSE provides up to \$4,500 for eligible repairs. Homeowners must be 65 or older, own a home in Baltimore County, and have an income at or below 50 percent of the area median income. The BCDA Community Outreach Specialists conduct home screenings and needs assessments for additional services like home-delivered meals, SNAP benefits, and Medicaid. Repairs are carried out by partner agencies or approved contractors. As needed a referral is also made to the BCDA's Occupational Therapist for home safety assessments. The program is funded from The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, with additional support from BCDA's APRA funds. Since its inception, this program has served over 300 individuals from 2021 to 2023 and is projected to assist 150 individuals in 2024.



- Baltimore County is promoting the inclusion of Uniform Accessible Federal Standard Designs (UAFS) into new housing development projects. The Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards ensure that buildings and facilities designed, built, altered or leased with federal funds are safe, accessible and usable by people of all ages and abilities. A new housing development in Rosedale, Ridgedale, includes 8 units that meet UFAS requirements.

STRATEGY II - ENHANCE AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES THAT PROMOTE INTERACTION BETWEEN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

- Zoning Regulations have been created in order to permit university-based retirement communities. These communities cater to individuals aged 62 or older and are situated, at least in part, on an institution of higher learning. In Towson, Goucher College and Edenwald Senior Living Community are exploring the expansion of the existing Edenwald community across three acres on the college campus. This expansion aims to create a connection between the two institutions.
- BCDA is actively exploring and advocating for established multi-generational initiatives within neighborhoods. For instance, in the Larchmont neighborhood of Gwynn Oak, the Nana Next Door program facilitates connections between older adults in the community and younger residents at school bus stops.
- The Zoning Regulations - Accessory Apartments Bill No. 7-23 has been revised to align with contemporary family definitions, broadening the eligibility for family-member use of accessory apartments (also known as accessory dwelling units or “ADUs”). This update includes individuals related by blood, adoption, or marriage to the occupants of the main dwelling structure. Furthermore, the bill eliminates the restriction on residents from collecting rent from individuals residing in an accessory apartment. These adjustments aim to increase opportunities for residents to age in place with the assistance of multi-generational family members.
- The County’s 2030 Master Plan includes the establishment of a task force to examine and enhance the Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP), aiming to streamline it and facilitate the retrofitting of communities outlined in the Growth Framework Plan. A mixed-use development integrates various functions, such as residential, commercial, cultural, and institutional, to foster lively, interactive, and pedestrian-friendly communities enriched with amenities and new economic prospects. These projects have the potential to advance equity by facilitating non-vehicular access to destinations, enhancing economic opportunities, diversifying housing options, and establishing residential environments supported by a range of services.
- Multigenerational events have been planned at Senior Centers, Public Libraries and other community groups. Some examples are listed below
 - BCDA collaborated with the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy to host a tree planting event, encouraging volunteers to bring their grandchildren and engage in an intergenerational activity supporting the environment.
 - The Y of Central Maryland and BCDA organized a Grandparents Day event, fostering shared experiences to strengthen bonds and understanding between generations. Activities such as crafts, fitness, and scavenger hunts were offered at varying paces and suited for all ages and abilities.
 - BCDA partnered with students from the Towson University Occupational Therapy



program to organize Forest Meet Ups at Cromwell Valley Park Willow Grove Nature Center. These outings were tailored to accommodate individuals seeking outdoor experiences at a relaxed pace, attracting participants of diverse ages and abilities.

- Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) in Reisterstown hosts Karaoke nights, providing a safe and supportive environment for adults and teens to come together and sing their favorite songs.
- Mt. Olive Church partnered with homeschool programs to teach Pickleball and collaborated with BC Rec and Parks in Randallstown to develop a Pickleball program.
- Ateaze Senior Center organized “Celebrations Do Not Age: A Day of Strength, Art & the Stars,” featuring activities like Tai Chi, painting, and a journey to the stars, welcoming both members and their grandchildren.

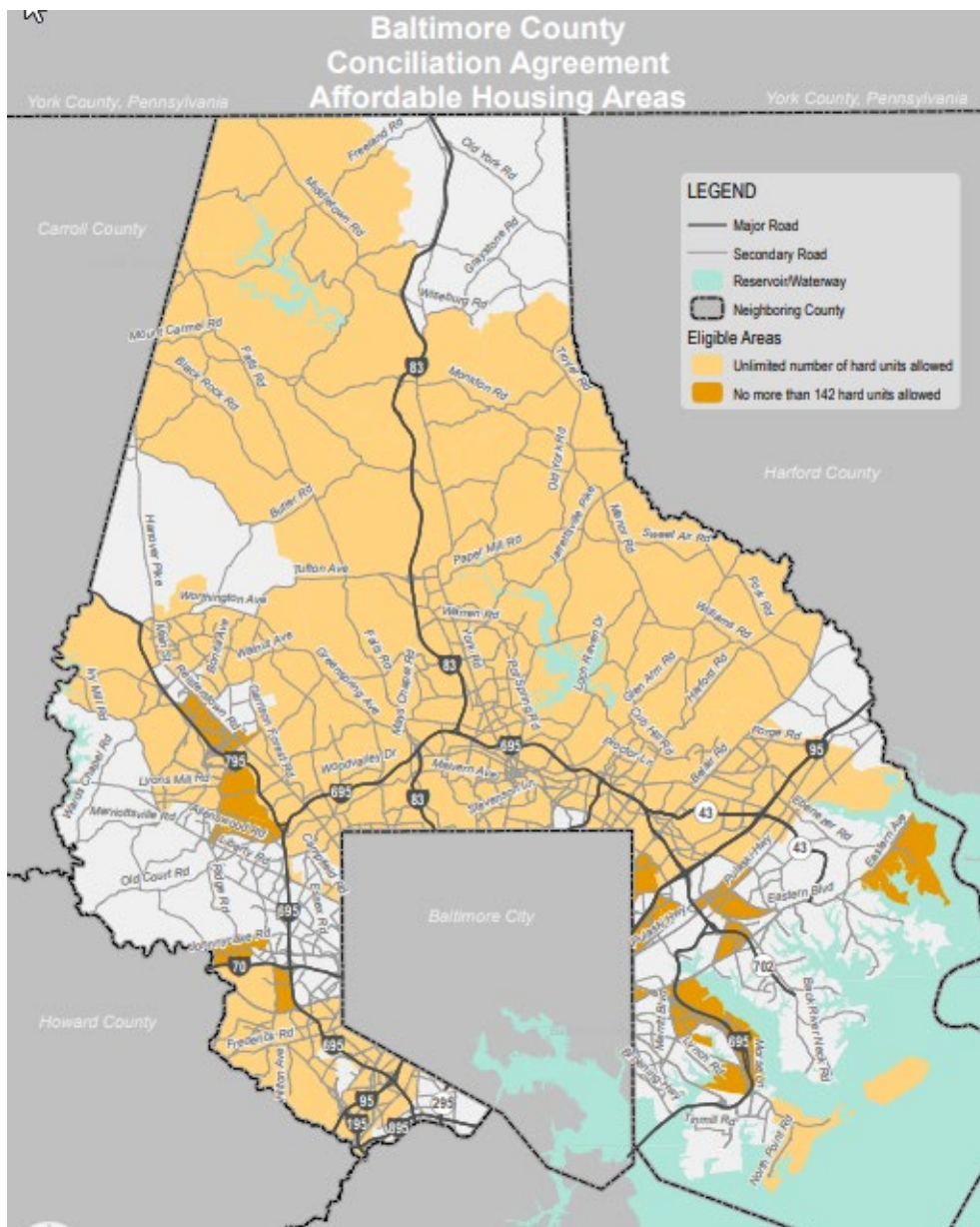


STRATEGY III - ENHANCE AND EXPAND A VARIETY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

- The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has initiated biannual meetings with developers to disseminate information about financial incentives for constructing affordable housing units. Feedback from these sessions and surveys conducted with community developers has enabled the county to establish programs such as property tax reliefs and gap funding, fostering partnerships between housing developers and the county.
 - The largest attainable housing deal in Baltimore County history was made with MCB Real Estate and the Urban Investment Group within Goldman Sachs Asset Management. MCB will preserve over half of the 918 total units in three multi-family communities in Nottingham, Parkville and Sparrows Point at affordable rates for up to 40 years, helping provide safe and modern units for working families while also protecting residents for decades.
- New affordable housing developments currently under construction and renovations to existing communities in Baltimore County include Ridgedale, a 120-unit family and senior housing complex restricted to 80% or lower of the Area Median Income, and Marriott Station II, offering affordable rental units exclusively for individuals aged 62 and over, with 1–2-bedroom options.
- Legislative and Zoning changes have occurred that will allow for more affordable housing.
 - The Vacant Structures Bill 5-23 designated vacant properties, allowing the county to implement initiatives such as financial investments from the Housing Opportunities Fund to convert blighted and abandoned properties into rental housing or homeownership opportunities.



- The Housing Opportunities Fund Bill No. 4-23 allocated \$16 million in federal American Rescue Plan funds, along with future county funds, to support the development of new units, land and existing unit acquisition, preservation of existing units, and conversion of market rate units into affordable units.
- The Zoning Regulations – Minimum Width (Modernizing Townhome Construction Act) Bill No 6-23 adjusted the minimum width allowance for townhome construction from 20 feet to 16 feet. Townhomes narrower than 20 feet must meet certain conditions, including a component of guaranteed affordability and no reduction or alteration of environmental areas, thus enabling the construction of more affordable units within communities.



Transportation

A review of the Age-Friendly baseline assessment revealed a significant need to enhance transportation options in Baltimore County. To address this issue, a workgroup was formed, comprising representatives from various levels of government and community partners. During the workgroup meetings, key transportation challenges in the county were identified. The high costs associated with operating a transportation system limit the availability of public transportation. Additionally, the lack of safe walking and biking routes discourages non-motorized commuting. The geographic positioning of Baltimore County necessitates the development of regional transportation systems that integrate Baltimore City and the surrounding counties. Recommendations to address these issues were presented to the Advisory Committee, resulting in the formulation of the following strategic items.

SNAPSHOT OF TRANSPORTATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

STRATEGY I - INCREASE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN THE COUNTY

- Promotion of traffic calming projects with online reporting tools.
- Establishment of Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC) to oversee a comprehensive program for improving the County's roads for pedestrian and bicycle use.

STRATEGY II - EXPAND EXISTING PARATRANSIT TO MEET THE DEMAND AND IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS BEYOND COUNTYRIDE FOR RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES.

- Eliminated fees involved for users of the CountyRide paratransit service.
- Creation of a partnership with Uber to optimize CountyRide's ability to serve constituents.
- Launched an electronic scheduling software for CountyRide.
- Development of Saturday Shopping Shuttles with senior living facilities.
- Purchase of four smaller buses to compliment current fleet.
- Introduction of new driver position without CDL license for the CountyRide team.
- Creation of the LOOP, a complimentary public transportation service operating as a circulator system in Towson.
- Pilot of free grocery shuttle service in the Turner Station community of Southeast Baltimore County.

STRATEGY III - INCREASE CONNECTIVITY TRANSIT OPTIONS BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST PARTS OF THE COUNTY

- Development of collaboration with Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Howard County, initiated the East-West Corridor Study to develop a significant transit investment.
- Introduction of a new Express Bus service, Quick Link 40.

STRATEGY IV. CREATE MATERIALS AND A PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO RIDE PUBLIC TRANSIT

- Creation of a new marketing pamphlet with Age Friendly guidelines for CountyRide.
- Partnership between the Baltimore Metropolitan County and the Baltimore County Department of Aging.

Further details on the previously listed accomplishment can be found on pages 22 - 25.



Action Summary for Transportation

STRATEGY I - INCREASE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN THE COUNTY



- The Baltimore County Department of Public Works (DPWT) has taken steps to promote traffic calming projects. The website application process for citizens to request traffic calming devices for their neighborhoods has been simplified. An online report can be filed via the Baltimore County website or a new mobile app called Baltcogo can be downloaded onto a personal device to report non-emergency problems or request services.
- The county has established a Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC) to oversee a comprehensive program for improving the County's roads for pedestrian and bicycle use. Community meetings and surveys were conducted to gather information from county residents that was used to create the

first-ever county-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. This visionary document updates and builds upon the Eastern Pedestrian and Bicycle Access Plan (2006) and the Western Pedestrian and Bicycle Access Plan (2012). The plan identifies existing policies and physical barriers, introducing new policies aimed at fostering complete streets and enhancing active transportation across the county. Recommendations in the plan aim to advance pedestrian safety and sidewalk programs, addressing missing sidewalks, maintaining, and improving existing sidewalks, and incorporating pedestrian facilities in new developments. Examples of completed projects include:

- Relocating LOOP bus stops away from busy intersections.
- Adding speed humps and curb extensions in front of senior living facilities to enable safer street crossings to bus stops.
- Installing solar lights at bus stops in areas with dense vegetation.

STRATEGY II - EXPAND EXISTING PARATRANSIT TO MEET THE DEMAND AND IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS BEYOND COUNTYRIDE FOR RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES.

- Baltimore County's specialized transportation service, CountyRide, offers general purpose trips to county residents who are over the age of 60, between the ages of 18 and 59 with a disability, or residing in rural areas. After many years of charging a fee for this service, CountyRide is now providing transportation at no cost to riders.
- To enhance access for individuals requiring accessible transit, CountyRide has partnered with Uber. This collaboration has enabled CountyRide to provide nearly 250 additional rides per month. By



allocating Uber cars to individuals who do not need accessible services, vehicles equipped with lifts are reserved for those who require this accommodation.

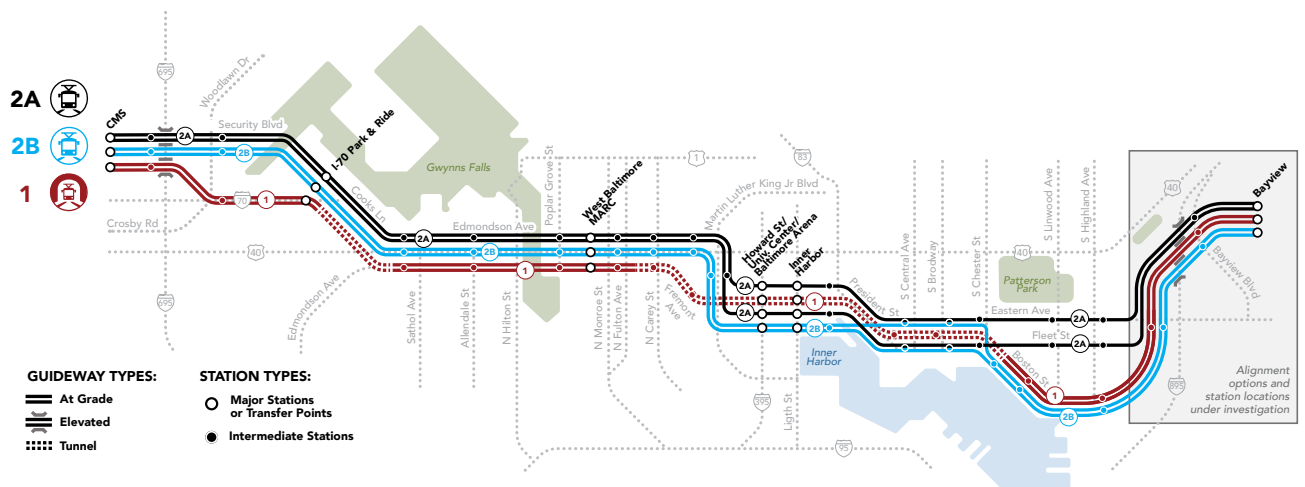
- To create a more efficient ride scheduling process, CountyRide launched an electronic scheduling software that provides drivers with tablets that alert them of scheduling changes and allow for communication with riders as to their arrival.
- In May 2023, a new Saturday Shopping Shuttle was launched. CountyRide buses are scheduled with senior living facilities to provide transportation services for registered CountyRide participants to destinations like grocery stores, malls, or individual stores.
- CountyRide purchased four new buses, smaller in size compared to the current fleet, to enhance service in communities with narrow streets. These buses have a seating capacity of four people and are equipped with a lift and tie-down for one wheelchair.
- After conducting extensive research on best practices to address the widespread shortage of bus drivers affecting numerous communities nationwide, CountyRide has introduced a new driver position that does not require a CDL license. These drivers will be duly qualified to operate vehicles capable of accommodating up to eight passengers.
- A new addition to Baltimore County's transit options is the LOOP, a complimentary public transportation service operating as a circulator system in Towson. Each of the 12 LOOP buses is equipped with a wheelchair lift and designated spaces for bicycles and strollers. Since its launch in the fall of 2021, the LOOP has served over 150,000 passengers. In response to community feedback, the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) plans to install new bus stops at Bykota Senior Center and Edenwald Senior Living. Feasibility studies have also been completed to explore the potential expansion of LOOP services to the Owings Mills and/or Catonsville areas.
- A free grocery shuttle service was piloted in the Turner Station community in Southeast Baltimore County. Although the initial project saw limited success with fewer than five trips, the initiative evolved through targeted outreach to senior housing buildings. This generated interest in a Saturday Shopping Shuttle, which has since become successful, serving 830 shoppers. Drivers volunteer and receive overtime pay to provide this valuable service, ensuring its ongoing availability and positive impact on the community.



STRATEGY III - INCREASE CONNECTIVITY TRANSIT OPTIONS BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST PARTS OF THE COUNTY

- In 2020, MDOT and MTA, in collaboration with Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Howard County, initiated the East-West Corridor Study to develop a significant transit investment. Seven alternative proposals were formulated based on market analysis and project goals, including Bus Rapid Transit, Light Rail Transit, Heavy Rail Transit, and alternative East-West routes. Feedback from online surveys, community meetings, and stakeholder input is being gathered to identify preferred alternatives.

The study's findings informed the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Plan, which includes the MDOT MTA Red Line project aimed at creating a high-frequency transit line for better access to jobs and education. The Red Line project, revived by Governor Wes Moore in 2023 after being on hold, recently received approval from the Maryland State Board of Public Works for a Program Management Consulting Service Contract, allowing the project to proceed with design, scheduling, and environmental reviews.

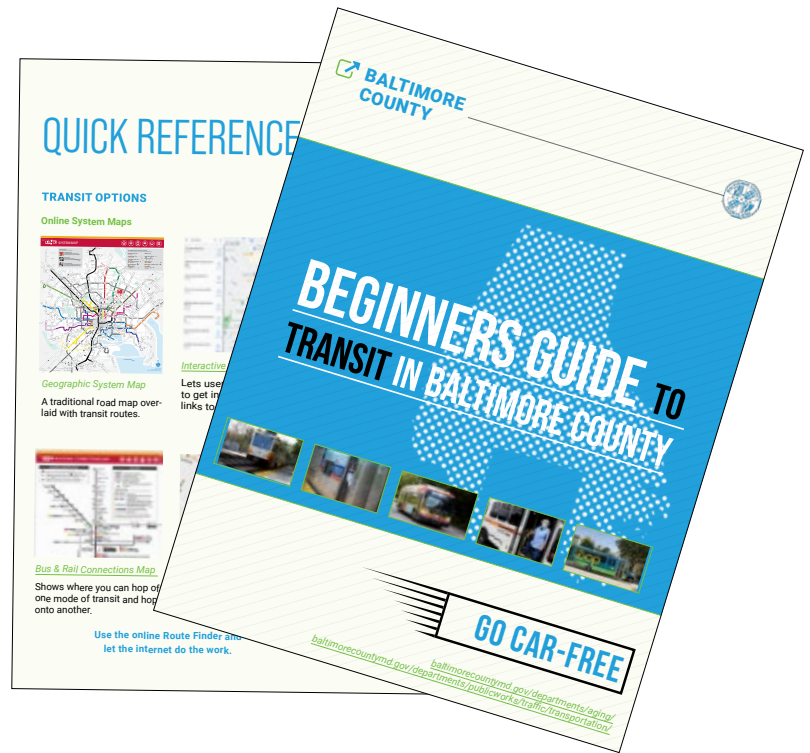


- As a result of the East-West Corridor Study, a new Express Bus service, Quick Link 40, has been introduced. This limited-stop quick bus route from Essex to Westgate is currently in the pilot phase, enhancing transit options along the East-West corridor.



STRATEGY IV - CREATE MATERIALS AND A PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO RIDE PUBLIC TRANSIT

- CountyRide has created a new marketing pamphlet, with Age-Friendly literature guidelines, that provides clear information on the services they offer.
- Baltimore Metropolitan Council has partnered with BCDA to create a transportation guide. The completed guide will be available online and in print at Senior Centers and Baltimore County Libraries by the fall of 2024.



"Whether you have your own car, or rely on public buses and trains, having a reliable source of transportation is a major part of independent living. It's especially important for older adults who may find it harder to drive safely as they age due to vision or mobility issues. But having access to transportation services isn't just about independence—it's essential to maintaining your overall health and well-being."

-National Council on Aging

Community and Health Services and Supports (CHSS)

The Community Health and Support Services (CHSS) workgroup, composed of representatives from area hospitals, universities, Baltimore County government agencies, and community partners, prioritized community support. The first step was identifying available community services, followed by determining areas needing improvement for optimal wellness. Providing equitable and inclusive services, along with addressing mental health issues, was deemed crucial. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the workgroup addressed obstacles faced by residents due to halted in-person medical care and socialization. The recommendations put forth by the CHSS workgroup highlight the significant attention given to these issues, shaping the subsequent strategies.

SNAPSHOT OF COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (CHSS) ACCOMPLISHMENTS

STRATEGY I - ENCOURAGE INCLUSION AND EQUITY PRINCIPLES AMONG HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN THE COUNTY

- Advancement of innovative approaches to enhance health and wellness among older adults.
- Utilization of the 4M model in facilities in the Baltimore area.

STRATEGY II - INCREASE COORDINATION OF SERVICES ACROSS THE HEALTH SETTING CONTINUUM

- Development of the Public Health Pathways Program to improve care in underserved communities.
- Initiation of the Chronic Disease Prevention Program through the Department of Health.
- Launch of the Health Heart Ambassadors (HHA) program, a 12-week self-management initiative.
- Proclamation of Baltimore County being a Stroke Smart County.
- Pilot of volunteer transportation program through the Home Team Program.
- Introduction of new transportation services called CHAlway.

STRATEGY III - IMPROVE UTILIZATION AND ACCESS TO CARE THROUGH TELEHEALTH

- Adoption of digital health to optimize the healthcare experience.
- Completion of Senior Planet technology training program throughout the County.

STRATEGY IV - IDENTIFY GAPS IN SERVICES AND INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL, TRAUMA-RELATED, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

- Addition of the Department of Aging on the County's Opioid Response Working Group.
- Development of Dementia Friendly Baltimore County initiative.
- Revitalization of Seniors Peer Support program through the Mental Health Association of Maryland.

STRATEGY V - EXPAND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES THAT ADDRESS ISOLATION, PREVENTATIVE HEALTH AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR CARE PARTNERS

- Expansion of online tools for older adults to participate like OPAL and GetSetUp.
- Continuation of events to facilitate socialization opportunities for older adults.
- Utilization of the Creative Placemaking Program in partnership with Iris Music Project (IMP).
- Expansion of the No Senior Eats Alone Day initiative to raise awareness to risks of social isolation.
- Creation of the Villages initiative to effectively support and empower older adult underserved groups in County.

STRATEGY VI - INCREASE CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE ON LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND DISABILITY PLANNING

- Launch of Mobile Library Law Center through the Baltimore County Public Library.
- Promotion of Law Day to encourage older adults to draft necessary legal documents.
- Development of legal resource book in partnership with the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.

Further details on the previously listed accomplishment can be found on pages 28 - 33.

Action Summary for Community and Health Services and Supports (CHSS)

STRATEGY I - ENCOURAGE INCLUSION AND EQUITY PRINCIPLES AMONG HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN THE COUNTY

- The Community and Health Services and Support domain promotes the advancement of innovative approaches to enhance health and wellness among older adults through enhanced educational, clinical, and public health initiatives. An innovative development within this domain is the introduction of the concept of Age-Friendly Health Systems. Ascension and Kaiser Permanente health systems have been part of the Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative since its inception in 2017. Both health systems piloted the Creating Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative, using the 4M model to guide care for older adults. This model focuses on What Matters, Medicine, Mentation, and Mobility for older adults. Promotion of Age-Friendly Health Systems has resulted in the 4M model now being used in all of their facilities and others in the Baltimore area including:

- Ascension St. Agnes Hospital
- Kaiser Permanente Medical Center Lutherville
- Medstar Good Samaritan Hospital
- University of Maryland Medical Center ICU, Medicine and Oncology



What Matters

Know and align care with each older adult's specific health outcome goals and care preferences including, but not limited to, end-of-life care, and across settings of care.

Medication

If medication is necessary, use Age-Friendly medication that does not interfere with What Matters to the older adult, Mobility, or Mentation across settings of care.

Mentation

Prevent, identify, treat, and manage dementia, depression, and delirium across settings of care.

Mobility

Ensure that older adults move safely every day in order to maintain function and do What Matters.

STRATEGY II - INCREASE COORDINATION OF SERVICES ACROSS THE HEALTH SETTING CONTINUUM

- Baltimore County, University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center (UM SJMC) and the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) have collaborated to create the Public Health Pathways Program, an innovative workforce development partnership that aims to connect residents in historically underserved communities with high-demand nursing positions through customized educational programming and community wraparound supports.
- The Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH) initiated a Chronic Disease Prevention Program, encompassing Diabetes and Cancer Prevention efforts. This program targets populations facing health disparities, particularly African American, Latinx, and LGBTQ communities, who are disproportionately affected by conditions such as Diabetes, Stroke, Hypertension, and obesity. Staff members deliver complimentary nutrition education, focusing on exercise and culturally relevant healthy food preparation and choices. These sessions take place at various accessible venues across the county, including libraries, senior centers, and other public locations.

- The Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH) launched the Health Heart Ambassadors (HHA) program. This 12-week self-management initiative adopts the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) approach. Baltimore County Public Health nurses deliver education sessions at various public venues highlighting the influence of diet and exercise in reducing blood pressure levels.



- County Executive Johnny Olszewski, Jr. issued a Proclamation declaring Baltimore County as a Stroke Smart County. Given that stroke is the leading cause of disability and the third leading cause of death in Maryland, the Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH) has launched a stroke awareness and outreach campaign titled “Stroke Prevention through BE FAST” (Balance, Eyes, Facial Arms, Speech, Time - 911). The Department of Aging is a partner, distributing materials and hosting education events at the Senior Centers.

- The Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA)’s Home Team is piloting a volunteer transportation program aimed at providing rides to medical appointments for Home Team clients. This initiative addresses the needs of older adults who lack social support and face the risk of social isolation. The Home Team volunteers are stepping up to provide this transportation service. Additionally, these volunteers offer friendly in-home and telephone visits to eligible older adults, contributing further to the fight against social isolation.

- The Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) community partner Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. (CHAI) has introduced a new transportation service, CHAlway. This initiative offers individual transportation to older clients through subsidized Uber/Lyft rides and volunteer drivers.



STRATEGY III - IMPROVE UTILIZATION AND ACCESS TO CARE THROUGH TELEHEALTH

- The use of technology in healthcare, known as digital health, has proliferated in many forms including mobile health, health information technology, wearable devices, telehealth, and personalized medicine. Having the skills to use technology for doctor appointments, management of chronic conditions and prevention of social isolation is essential. Recognizing a knowledge gap among older adult residents in the County, the Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) has taken proactive steps to address this issue:

- BCDA has collaborated with Senior Planet/AARP and the Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development (BCDEWD) to offer complimentary technology training programs. Utilizing the Baltimore County Mobile Career Center, BCDA and BCDEWD staff travel to senior centers, congregate meal sites, and senior housing throughout the county, providing onsite training on computer usage and internet



navigation. Advanced classes are also available, enabling older adults to learn Zoom, safeguard personal information, and maximize the utilization of their iPads and cell phones.

- BCDA also assisted individuals with signing up for Affordable Connectivity Programs (ACP) benefits.
- In partnership with the University of Maryland Extension, BCDA has offered technology training through Cyber Seniors Technology Mentors. These young students are trained to provide one- on-one tech support and teach older adults various aspects of technology usage.



STRATEGY IV - IDENTIFY GAPS IN SERVICES AND INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL, TRAUMA-RELATED, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

- The Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) has representation on the County’s Opioid Response Working Group. As a result, the Ombudsmen team partnered with the Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH) Peer Specialist to provide information kits that include Narcan and instructions on use. These kits are distributed to Assisted Living Facilities along with offers to provide free drug abuse training to the staff and residents.
- According to the Journals of Gerontology, over 73 million people in the United States will have dementia by the year 2030. Recognizing the significance of this statistic and the pressing need to provide support for individuals with dementia and their caregivers, the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee has launched the Dementia Friendly Baltimore County initiative, in collaboration with Dementia Friendly America/USAgings. The following strategies have been implemented:

- A Dementia Friendly Initiative Coordinator was hired



- A leadership committee for Dementia Friendly was established, comprising representatives from diverse sectors of the community. This committee assists in identifying and guiding the initiative’s priorities and implementation.
- Dementia information sessions have been conducted across the county at various venues including senior centers, faith communities, and libraries, reaching over 420 individuals.
- Dementia presentations have been delivered to numerous audiences at local, regional, and national conferences.
- The Dementia Friendly Coordinator provides

approximately four phone counseling sessions and resources per month to caregivers of individuals with dementia.

- Memory Cafes and Creative Engagement initiatives have been implemented with the support of four mini-grantees: Jewish Community Services, TALMAR Horticultural Center, Islamic Society of Baltimore, and The Well for the Journey. These initiatives cater to varying numbers of participants, ranging from four to 38, and are held monthly. County Public Libraries have started a new free and virtual monthly program called Dementia Dialogues. This is an open discussion welcoming all to simply chat and share about dementia.



- The Mental Health Association of Maryland has revitalized a Seniors Peer Support program that was previously inactive. In 2020, it was relaunched as the Connections Project, aimed at providing peer support to older adults.

STRATEGY V - EXPAND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES THAT ADDRESS ISOLATION, PREVENTATIVE HEALTH AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR CARE PARTNERS



- In response to the needs of homebound older adults vulnerable to the negative impacts of isolation, the Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) has launched a new virtual senior center called OPAL - Online Programs for Older Adults. Through a partnership with GetSetUp, a global online community for older adults, participants from Baltimore County Senior Centers can engage in live classes taught by peer experts, social hours facilitated by community members, and special events featuring speakers addressing topics of interest to older adults. The OPAL center also offers programs and classes led by local instructors and older adults themselves.
- In addition to the ongoing programs available at BCDA's 21 Senior Centers, such as the Annual Power of Age Expo and Concert in the Park, a new annual event has been created to facilitate socialization among older adults. The "Changing the Rhythm of Aging" event provides older adults with the opportunity to participate in a drum circle and other meditative activities.
- Through a Creative Placemaking Program in partnership with Iris Music Project (IMP), CHAI's Weinberg Village campus in Owings Mills hosted a three-musician ensemble. These musicians were integrated into the Weinberg Village community to enrich residents' lives through creative engagement, including concerts, rehearsals, and collaborative songwriting sessions, including composing lullabies for residents' grandchildren.
- Efforts have been made to expand the reach of BCDA's "No Senior Eats Alone Day," an annual event aimed at raising awareness of social isolation among Baltimore County's older adult population. Baltimore County Police and Fire Departments collaborate with BCDA to deliver



meals to homebound seniors and spend quality time with them. Senior Centers also organize lunch gatherings to promote socialization, while local restaurants offer specials to individuals accompanying a senior to their establishment on that day.



- BCDA has actively engaged with underserved communities to understand their needs and has recognized the Village model as an effective approach to support and empower these communities. Villages are grassroots and volunteer-driven, operating as community-based organizations formed by compassionate neighbors seeking to redefine the aging paradigm.



Villages
of Baltimore County

Villages leverage meaningful volunteering and community engagement to connect members with a spectrum of practical non-medical support services, including assistance with household tasks, services, programs, and transportation. BCDA is awarding grants to six community organizations to develop Villages tailored

to their specific needs, with culturally and linguistically appropriate programming. The program is started in September 2024.

STRATEGY VI - INCREASE CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE ON LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND DISABILITY PLANNING

- The Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) has launched the Mobile Library Law Center (MLLC), a vehicle that travels to underserved areas on the east and west sides of Baltimore County. It functions as a mobile legal office where attorneys provide free civil legal advice to community members in need.
- Baltimore County Senior Centers commemorate the American Bar Association Annual Law Day by hosting educational sessions on topics such as the significance of Estate Planning for older adults in the community, regardless of economic status. Additionally, throughout the year, the centers offer workshops to assist individuals with drafting wills and power of attorney forms.
- In collaboration with the Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA), the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service has developed “Securing and Planning for your Future,” an Older Adult Resource Guide. This resource booklet is accessible at all BCDA Senior Centers, Baltimore County Libraries, and Senior Living complexes.





"Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and social determinants of health — and to eliminate disparities in health and health care."

*-Healthy People 2030 Initiative,
United States Department of Health and Human Services*



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

A clean county with well-maintained recreational areas, ample rest areas, well-developed and safe pedestrian and building infrastructure provides an ideal living environment for older adults to age in place. In the Spring of 2022, an Outdoor Spaces and Buildings workgroup was formed to address this domain. They identified steps to enhance county parks and recreational areas to ensure safe and accessible environments for people of all abilities.

The group also recommended that the county prioritize equitable access to green spaces within the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL). Another focal point was the need for safe walking paths. In terms of buildings, the consensus was that Baltimore County should prioritize mobility, audio, and visual accessibility in all its structures. The following strategies were formulated based on these recommendations.

SNAPSHOT OF OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

STRATEGY I: EXPAND NON-MOTOR VEHICLE CONNECTIVITY ACROSS THE COUNTY AND REGION

- Representation of Recreation and Parks in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee.
- Integration of safe walking paths in future Mixed-Use Development projects.
- Crafting a County vision for a comprehensive regional bicycle network with Baltimore Metropolitan Council.
- Development of 40 mile shared-use trail traversing the Patapsco Valley.
- Identification of small green spaces and parks to create paths for connectivity.

STRATEGY II: IMPROVE SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC SPACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

- Launch of Park Finder to enhance park accessibility.
- Creation of Memory Café at TALMAR Horticultural Center for persons living with dementia and their care partners.
- Commitment by Department of Recreation and Parks to make all parks accessible.

STRATEGY III: INCREASE BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY BEYOND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- Commitment of the Department of Police to assist small businesses with security assessments.
- Completion of County projects to make buildings and grounds more accessible.

STRATEGY IV: IDENTIFY GAPS AND INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND SPACES

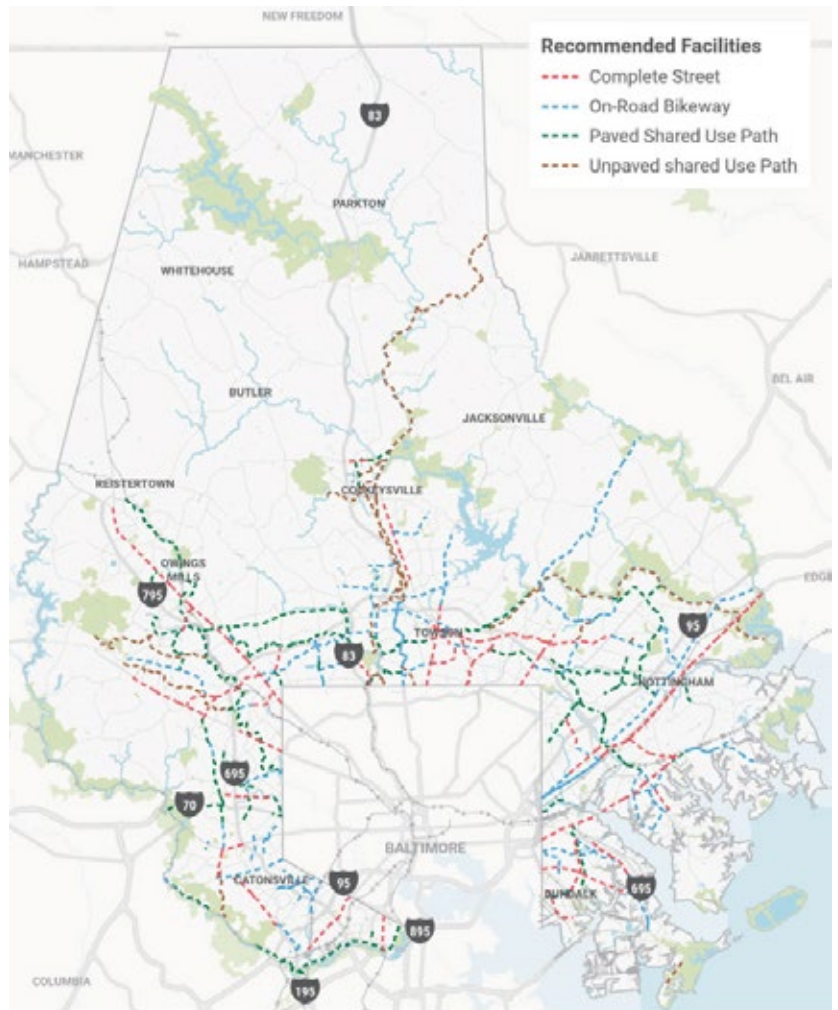
- Development of Neighbor Space, a partner agency for the Age-Friendly initiative, for equitable distribution of green spaces.
- Expansion of Electric vehicle Charging Station infrastructure.
- Implementation of Operation ReTree and Urban Street Trees Programs.
- Creation of Stretch and Stride program at Lake Roland for wellness.
- Development of the Nature Engagement Program series for persons living with dementia and their care partners.

Further details on the previously listed accomplishment can be found on pages 36 - 39.

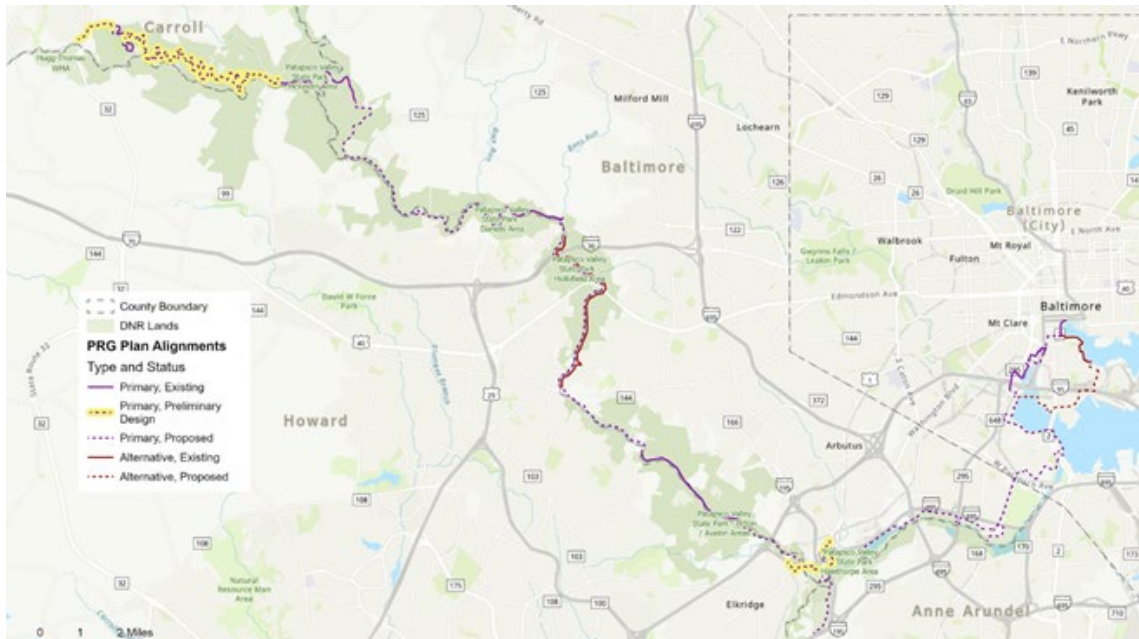
Action Summary for Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

STRATEGY I - EXPAND NON-MOTOR VEHICLE CONNECTIVITY ACROSS THE COUNTY AND REGION

- Recreation and Parks representatives participated in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee meetings, providing input in the creation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The plan aims to improve walking and biking by expanding the on-road and trail networks, updating policies, and implementing new programs.
- Future Mixed-Use Development projects will include safe walking paths to connect residences to commercial and recreational activities.
- Baltimore Metropolitan Council, in partnership with regional stakeholders, is working on crafting a vision for a comprehensive regional bicycle network. This initiative aims to establish a connected and equitable cycling infrastructure that accommodates people of all ages and abilities. By enhancing access to housing, employment opportunities, public transit, essential services, and recreational facilities, this network promises to enrich the region's livability and accessibility for all residents.



- The Patapsco Regional Greenway (PRG) Plan envisions a 40-mile shared-use trail traversing the picturesque Patapsco Valley, stretching from the Baltimore Inner Harbor to Sykesville in Carroll County. This extensive trail system will integrate existing trails, linking communities from downtown Baltimore City to Sykesville. Once completed, it will facilitate both transportation and recreational activities while safeguarding the natural splendor of the Patapsco Valley. Notably, the Grist Mill Trail in Baltimore County will be incorporated into this greenway.



- Baltimore County Recreation and Parks is assessing small green spaces and parks within neighborhoods to identify areas where access paths are needed for connectivity. An illustrative example is the green space opposite Sudbrook Magnet Middle School on Bedford Road. Plans are in motion to establish access points, ensuring that individuals can access these spaces without having to navigate busy streets.

STRATEGY II - IMPROVE SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC SPACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

- The release of the Park Finder app in 2023 marks a significant milestone in enhancing park accessibility throughout the county. This innovative mobile application promises to revolutionize the way users find accessible parks. With its user-friendly interface, individuals can quickly locate nearby parks, streamlining their search process and ultimately improving overall efficiency.
- The TALMAR Horticultural Center at Cromwell Valley Park offers a nurturing environment through its Nature Memory Café, designed specifically for individuals living with dementia



and their care partners. Participants are invited to partake in various horticultural activities, including the creation of sensory gardens. This initiative provides a supportive space for individuals to connect with nature and each other, fostering meaningful experiences and memories.

- Baltimore County Recreation and Parks is committed to ensuring that its facilities and parks are accessible to everyone. Recognizing the unique settings and programs offered at each location, the department has implemented a phased plan to remove barriers within a specified timeframe. Progress has already begun on the following existing and new parks:
 - Sparrows Point Park is undergoing enhancements to include a universally accessible playground, fishing pier, and kayak launch. This park is poised to serve as a pilot/model for creating a fully accessible campus.
 - Northwest Regional Park will feature a fully accessible splash pad within its playground area, enhancing recreational opportunities for all visitors.
 - Efforts to improve accessibility at Rocky Point Park are underway, with a focus on exploring alternative materials for walking path surfaces to minimize falls, trip hazards, and slipping.
 - Rosedale Hamiltowne Park has undergone a complete playground equipment replacement, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for children of all ages. This inclusive environment fosters physical activity and imaginative play. Additionally, upgraded LED lighting promotes energy efficiency, contributing to the park's ecological sustainability.



STRATEGY III - INCREASE BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY BEYOND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- The Baltimore County Police Department offers Small Business Security Assessments for outside spaces around businesses providing tips on making these areas safer and discouraging crime.
- An elevator was installed at the Richards Building Residential Addiction Treatment Center making access easier for those with mobility limitations.
- The restrooms in the Historic Courthouse were renovated to make them accessible.
- Accessible water fountains have been installed at Hamiltowne Park and Cox's Point Park
- The New Courthouse received a new exterior ADA concrete ramp on the plaza.

STRATEGY IV - IDENTIFY GAPS AND INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND SPACES

- Neighbor Space, a partner agency for the Age-Friendly initiative has completed a mapping project focused on the equitable distribution of green spaces. These maps will help guide Baltimore County Planning in identifying areas where natural spaces need to be incorporated when retrofitting older communities. The following locations are slated for development into open green spaces:
 - Cherry Heights Woodland Garden located in Overlea, is proposed to be a charming neighborhood pocket park
 - Graystone Community Association in the Gwynn Oak area partnered with Neighbor Space to preserve a quarter-acre vacant lot as community open space.
- Baltimore County is expanding its Electric Vehicle Charging Station infrastructure to include ADA- compliant units.
- The Operation ReTree and Urban Street Trees programs have been implemented in Baltimore County. These initiatives ensure that historically underinvested communities have equitable access to greenery. To date, over 6,820 trees have been planted countywide under these programs.
- The Lake Roland Nature Council offers the Stretch & Stride program, where participants take a scenic $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walk on the accessible boardwalk. Led by an Occupational Therapist and a Naturalist, this program educates participants about the local ecosystems.
- A Nature Engagement Program Series for individuals with dementia and their care partners has been started at Well for the Journey.



Communication and Information

Community assessments revealed a significant lack of awareness among county residents regarding available services and programs provided by the government and community partners. To address this, the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee established a workgroup focused on the Communications and Information domain.

Representatives from county agencies and community partners were asked to provide recommendations for expanding access to vital community information—encompassing services, events, programs, and activities. This workgroup evaluated the current information distribution processes within the county and identified necessary improvements. The following strategies were developed to ensure that county communications are accessible to all residents through various channels, facilitating connections with friends, family, and the broader community.

SNAPSHOT OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

STRATEGY I. DECREASE THE “DIGITAL DIVIDE” IN BALTIMORE COUNTY.

- Expansion of broadband access in rural areas.
- Distribution of technology devices to individuals over 60 years of age
- Provision of assistance for those applying for the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- Distribution of home WiFi devices through the Baltimore County Public Library.
- Establishment of quarterly technology Senior Planet courses from the Department of Aging.

STRATEGY II. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION COORDINATION ACROSS BALTIMORE COUNTY DEPARTMENTS.

- Completion of an assessment of communication outlets in the County Government.
- Creation of communication framework to better engage with residents.

STRATEGY III. MAKE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT TO ALL CONSUMERS

- Creation of Baltimore County’s first Immigrant Affairs Outreach Coordinator position within the Office of Community and Engagement.
- Provision of Closed Captioning for all County Virtual Meetings.
- Development of strategic partnerships to disseminate information on programs and services, effectively broadening outreach to diverse communities and fostering greater community engagement.
- Expand resource fairs facilitated by BCDA to provide valuable information and support to diverse segments of the community.
- Utilization of Health Literacy guidelines for accessible communication.

Further details on the previously listed accomplishment can be found on pages 42 - 43.



Action Summary for Communication and Information

STRATEGY I - DECREASE THE “DIGITAL DIVIDE” IN BALTIMORE COUNTY.



- In partnership with Comcast, Baltimore County has expanded broadband access into rural areas, benefiting over 1,900 residents.
- The Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) secured Chromebooks, iPads, and tablets using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, distributing them to individuals aged 60 and over who demonstrated financial need. To date, 552 Chromebooks, 250 iPads, and 250 Samsung tablets have been distributed.
- The Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) assisted individuals in applying for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which helps many low-income households pay for broadband service and internet-connected devices. When ACP ended, BCDA staff contacted those enrolled to inform them of other available resources to help them stay connected.
- The Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) has initiated a program to lend home Wi-Fi devices (routers). This program is designed for adult library customers residing in Baltimore County who lack access to equipment or services necessary for internet access. The device can be borrowed for three months, with the option to renew for an additional three months.
- The Baltimore County Department of Aging (BCDA) has established technology training programs using ARPA funds. Recognizing the significant need for these programs, it is imperative to secure funding to sustain these services beyond the depletion of ARPA funds.
 - Partnering with the University of Maryland Extension, BCDA offers technology training through Cyber Seniors Technology Mentors. These mentors, young individuals trained to teach technology to older adults, provide free one-on-one tech support.
 - BCDA has collaborated with Senior Planet from AARP to assist older adults aged 60 and above in using technology. Through the Baltimore County Mobile Career Center, BCDA staff travel to senior centers and other locations across the county to deliver onsite training on computer usage and internet navigation. Additionally, advanced classes are available, enabling older adults to learn how to use Zoom, safeguard personal information, and maximize the utility of their iPads and cell phones.



STRATEGY II - IMPROVE COMMUNICATION COORDINATION ACROSS BALTIMORE COUNTY DEPARTMENTS.

- An assessment of communication outlets used by county government departments was completed, leading to the establishment of a county communications group tasked to enhance interdepartmental collaboration and streamline information dissemination to residents. This group, composed of communication officers from multiple departments, fosters regular communication and knowledge sharing. Meeting quarterly, the group discusses emerging communication strategies, coordinates messaging efforts, and ensures consistency in outreach initiatives. Through this collaborative framework, the county aims to optimize its communication channels, effectively engage with residents, and promote transparency and accessibility in government communications.

STRATEGY III - MAKE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT TO ALL CONSUMERS

- The Baltimore County Executive created Baltimore County's first Immigrant Affairs Outreach Coordinator position within the Office of Community and Engagement. This role collaborates with community stakeholders to enhance the well-being of immigrant communities throughout Baltimore County, acting as a liaison for their concerns and facilitating access to County services. This initiative significantly expands Baltimore County's capacity to address the needs of residents and support their integration into the community.



- Closed Captioning is now provided for all County Virtual Meetings, ensuring accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments and promoting inclusivity in civic engagement.
- Strategic partnerships have been forged with organizations such as the NAACP Baltimore County and the Islamic Society of Baltimore to disseminate information on programs and services, effectively broadening outreach to diverse communities and fostering greater community engagement.
- Efforts to expand resource fairs facilitated by BCDA have yielded a notable 25% increase in participation within a single year. These resource fairs, including events such as the New Americans Resource Fair, Recreation and Parks Pride Festival at Oregon Ridge, African American Cultural Festival, and Maryland School for the Blind, provide valuable information and support to diverse segments of the community.
- New publications are being developed with Health Literacy guidelines in mind, ensuring clear and accessible communication. For instance, the Community Resource Guide adheres to recommended font sizes and line spacing for Age-Friendly communication, promoting ease of readability for older adults.

Appendix A: Acknowledgments

AARP Maryland

Alzheimer's Association of Central Maryland

Baltimore County Budget and Finance Office

Baltimore County Commission on Aging

Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities

Baltimore County Commission on Veterans' Affairs

Baltimore County Council

Baltimore County Department of Aging

Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development

Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability

Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services,

Baltimore County Department of Housing and Community Development

Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approval and Inspections

Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation

Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks

Baltimore County Department of Planning

Baltimore County Executive Office

Baltimore County Fire Department

Baltimore County Homeless Roundtable

Baltimore County Interfaith Coalition

Baltimore County Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee

Baltimore County Police Department

Baltimore County Provider Council

Baltimore County Public Library

Baltimore County Public Schools

Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC), Transportation Division

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation Brotherhood

Caine Communications, LLC

CASA of Maryland

Catholic Charities of Baltimore

CHANA

Chase Brexton Health Services

Civic Works

Community Assistance Network, Inc

Community College of Baltimore County Maryland Government

Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc. (CHAI)
Diversified Housing Development
Dundalk Renaissance
Enterprise Community Partners
Erickson School of Aging Studies, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Fair Housing Action Center of Maryland
Greater Baltimore Medical Center
Harbel Housing Partnership
Independent Marylanders Achieving Growth Through Empowerment, Inc.(IMAGE)
Johns Hopkins
Kindred Strategies
League of People with Disabilities
Lifebridge Health
Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
Maryland Legal Aid
Maryland Public Television (MPT)
Maryland Transit Administration
Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland
Medstar/Franklin Square Medical Center
Mental Health Association of Maryland
Mount Olive Baptist Church
NAACP, Baltimore County, Towson
NeighborSpace of Baltimore County
Northeast Towson Improvement Association, Inc.
Notre Dame University
Novum Strategies
Rebuilding Together Baltimore
Sheppard Pratt Health Systems
St. Agnes Healthcare
St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center
The Arc Baltimore
The Associated, AgeWell Baltimore
The Valleys Planning Council
Towson University
University of Maryland, St. Joseph Medical Center
University School of Pharmacy, Lamy Center on Drug Therapy and Aging

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