

AARP Livable Communities Application

Section 1: Community Details

State: North Carolina

Community Name: City of Hendersonville

Total Population: 15,321

Percentage of Residents Age 65 or Older: 31%

Median Age: 51.9

Community Governance Structure: Council / Manager

Community Type: City

*Elected Official contact: Mayor Barbara Volk (bvolk@hvlnc.gov \ 828-693-5692)

*Community Contact: Matthew Manley, AICP | Special Projects Manager

Matthew is the Special Projects Manager in the Community Development Dept for the City of Hendersonville. He serves as a liaison to the Henderson County Aging Coalition Steering Committee. He oversees planning and assist with the implementation of various long-range projects such as Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans and Facilities, development of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map and implementation of zoning strategies.

Section 2: Community Activities, Engagements and Collaborations

Briefly describe your existing community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people. Please identify how your community plans to become more age-friendly. (250-300 words required)

The City of Hendersonville aims to build upon efforts to be age-friendly through the approval and implementation of its long-term plans. The City's Pedestrian Plan, called "*Walk Hendo*", was adopted on December 7th, 2023. It will help make the community pedestrian-friendly by providing safer sidewalks and walkable connections - like those funded by the AARP Community Challenge Grant that was awarded to the Friends of Downtown Hendersonville in 2021. Through these initiatives, seniors will have greater mobility throughout the city.

The City's "*Gen H*" 2045 Comprehensive Plan, due to be adopted in summer 2024, will outline the way our city will develop and spend funds in the future. This plan has largely been informed by the city's Senior Population due to targeted outreach and tailored efforts to give a voice to our aging residents. As such, the goals of *Gen H* are to establish a long-term vision for an age-friendly community through sustainable growth in areas such as public infrastructure, community character, natural resources, parks/recreation, economic development, etc.

Other local service providers include WNCSource - a local organization that focuses on healthier living, transportation, and paths to independence. They facilitate free/low-cost public transportation and ADA-Paratransit through Apple Country Transit - which runs throughout Henderson County transporting residents to appointments, shopping, activity programs,

employment, etc. They also provide meals and housing aid to elder adults. The Council on Aging is another local organization which provides and connects seniors to services. They organize Meals on Wheels, a Senior Companion program, Congregate Dining, and are the hub for seniors to find information and aid. True Ridge is a local nonprofit that provides bilingual and culturally appropriate services and resources for the Hispanic community - providing assistance with food, transportation, and legal aid. The City has dedicated \$50,000 in funding to this organization.

How will older adults be involved in the community's efforts to become more age-friendly? (250-300 words required)

The Henderson County Aging Coalition is a group of local stakeholders which aims “to create an inclusive age friendly community”. This advocacy group has been very involved in supporting the City’s long-term planning efforts. They’ve been supporters of the City’s recently-adopted *Walk Hendo* Pedestrian Plan, as they see these efforts as essential to creating an age-friendly community. The goals of the plan were identified through community engagement activities (public meetings, surveys, etc.) The elderly community was able to speak out about their mobility needs throughout the city. The City and NCDOT are using the plan’s guidance to direct how projects are constructed, make policy choices, and apply for new types of funding. *Walk Hendo* will build pedestrian connections throughout the city; offering safer walking routes, connections to resources, and the framework for a more engaged community. Once implemented, all residents, especially seniors, will benefit from the positive impacts made to transportation, public health, social networks, and the natural and built environments.

The City’s 2045 *Gen H* Comprehensive Plan, is also founded on community engagement. City staff and their consultants have utilized a number of techniques, in collaboration with the Aging Coalition, to engage seniors. These include: a focus group interview held with Senior Population stakeholders; participation at the Council on Aging’s Congregate Lunch; staff-led mapping exercise conducted for the Aging Coalition; and visiting local retirement village to promote the Gen-H survey. Ultimately the results of the City-wide survey show that 32% of survey respondents were 65+. While this aligns with the current distribution of our population, it should be noted that an additional 21% of respondents were between the ages of 56-65. The voice of the aging population is being heard and will continue to inform the development and implementation of the *Gen H* Comprehensive Plan.

How will the efforts to become more age-friendly increase collaboration and coordination among relevant community agencies and departments? (250-300 words required)

The Henderson County Aging Coalition’s efforts have already resulted in a number of community partners working in collaboration. The Coalition has had great success in bringing both the City and the County to the same table to discuss issues related to creating an age-friendly community. Their efforts have also helped to inform the development of the City’s *Walk Hendo* Plan and *Gen H* Comprehensive Plan.

The *Walk Hendo* Plan aims to make mobility in Hendersonville safer and easier. *Walk Hendo* was made possible with a grant from the NCDOT and a financial match from the Blue Ridge

Bicycle Club. The plan will facilitate direction for NCDOT and guide local government investments toward active transportation facilities. Implementation of the *Walk Hendo* Plan is more likely to occur with the ongoing collaboration and coordination that is occurring between community partners. This will result in safer areas for pedestrians, more sidewalks, supportive policies, and a culture that supports a more friendly and walkable community. As a result of these efforts, community agencies and departments will be much more connected. By addressing the “last mile” senior populations will have easier access to Apple Country transit and thus the resources and programs they need, such as True Ridge and the Council on Aging, will be more accessible.

Through the community engagement process for both *Walk Hendo* and *Gen H*, the local government has been successful in fostering better relationships with residents and community partners. These relationships will continue to flourish and provide new opportunities for cooperation as we shift to the implementation phase. Ultimately, the collaboration and coordination associated with these planning efforts will enhance personal independence, improve public health, and provide many more opportunities for the elderly population to engage in civic, economic, and social life as they age.

Section 3: Network Membership

Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your community's membership in the age-friendly network and enable AARP to better understand how to support the network.

1-a. What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. (100 words minimum)

Hendersonville's Population has a Median Age of 51.9 - 20+ years older than the rest of the nation. The percentage of seniors living in our community (30.8%) is 13.5% higher than the rest of North Carolina (17.4%) and the country (17.3%). While some existing resources are in place, continued learning and adapting is imperative. Joining the AARP Network would allow Hendersonville to further connect to a hub of resources - bringing fresh, innovative, and proven approaches to our efforts. As a member community, we can also help other member communities learn from our successes/failures.

1-b. If you have consulted with an AARP State office or the national AARP Livable Communities team to discuss enrollment, please provide that person's name, title and e-mail address or phone number.

2. What aspect of your community's current or intended age-friendly work could be useful to other communities in the network? (100 words minimum)

In addition to the efforts/structure of the Aging Coalition, the aspects of both the *Walk Hendo* and *Gen H* plans could be offered as resources for other communities looking to implement long-range planning for age-friendly communities. *Walk Hendo* combined research and expertise with community input to propose transportation projects designed for all users. *Gen H* developed/used an innovative mapping exercise to solicit input from residents related to where various elements of the city should be placed as the city continues to grow in the future.

Communities with similar demographics could adapt these models and apply them to their own initiatives.

Section 4: Required Materials

1-a. Letter of Commitment

Provide a digital file (PDF preferred) of the signed document.

the following items must be addressed in a Letter of Commitment that is signed by the community's highest elected leader.

- 1. Establishing mechanisms to involve older people*
- 2. A baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the community*
- 3. The development of a community-wide action plan based on the findings of the assessment*
- 4. Identification of indicators so progress can be monitored against the action plan*

1-b. Resolution or Proclamation (optional)

If your community issued either document in addition to the commitment letter, provide a digital file (PDF preferred) here.

LETTER OF COMMITMENT: See Attached of Draft Letter

2. Logo or Image

Provide a digital file (JPG preferred) and/or a link to a downloadable logo or other image that represents your community and for which you have reprint rights and permission to provide for use by AARP and the World Health Organization.

Please email attachments of items 1-a, 1-b and your community's logo or image to AARPAge-FriendlyNetwork@aarp.org

Website URL - [CityOfHendo Logo 2022.jpg](#)

Section 5: Social Media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HVLNC/>

Twitter: N/A

Section 6: Agreement

