

AARP WHO Network of Age-Friendly Communities and World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

Village of Ridgewood, NJ Progress Report

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YOUR RESOURCE FOR 55 & OLDER LIVING IN RIDGEWOOD.



AGE FRIENDLY
RIDGEWOOD



Enhancing our Village's Age Friendliness through collaboration, idea sharing, and advocacy.

Summary

Over the past five years and through changes in municipal governing groups Ridgewood has continued to work to be a more age-friendly and livable community. Notable achievements have been a new Senior Bus, pedestrian safety improvements, Health Department hires and a thoughtfully written new Master Plan.

Please find below progress organized by the AARP/WHO Priority Domains.

Priority Domain One: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Ridgewood Goal: Improve pedestrian safety and the quality

Progress

- Completed second Sidewalk Audit and submitted to Engineering Department
- Crossing on Maple Ave at library upgraded with street improvements and lighted crossing signage
- Advocacy continues between Village government, County officials and Age Friendly Ridgewood concerning problem crossings along Franklin Ave and from the Ridgewood train station to Ridgecrest senior housing.
- Ridgewood was one of five New Jersey towns recently awarded \$1.8 million in state grant funds to be used towards safer sidewalks, widening sidewalks, pedestrian signals and bridges.

Priority Domain Two: Transportation

Ridgewood Goal: Provide more flexible and point to point transportation and convince Village or other entity to support/fund. This will enable adults to be more active.

Progress

- Village of Ridgewood purchased a new Senior bus and provides bus service on an additional day, totaling three days per week.
- Age Friendly Ridgewood created a video encouraging use of Ridgewood Senior Bus highlighting protocols instituted during the pandemic.
- Age Friendly Ridgewood and Ridgewood Parks and Recreation hosted special guided bus trips in town to acquaint older adults with the benefits of using the Village transportation system. Village Manager, President of the Chamber of Commerce and many other leaders participated.

- Age Friendly Ridgewood created and updated a transportation brochure to distribute to make residents aware of local options.
- It has been highlighted that the bus terminal in downtown Ridgewood is in need of repair and unsafe. Historic preservation rules apply. Ridgewood has listed this renovation as a priority goal for 2024.

Priority Domain Three: Housing

Ridgewood Goal: Advocate with builders and local and regional government to express citizen needs plus educate the public on new area housing and financial relief measures. Assure responsible oversight and communication about new affordable housing. Influence Ridgewood’s Mast Plan re-write.

Progress

- Ridgewood’s new Master Plan was completed during this period. It can be viewed here <https://www.ridgewoodnj.net/DocumentCenter/View/693/Ridgewood-Master-Plan-Final-October-5-2022-PDF> Older residents participated in focus groups and surveys to voice their priorities. Land Use Analysis reports created with NJ Future were submitted as input. The final plan includes many mentions of the status and needs of older adults. Under Recommended Actions these items important for older adults were listed and Age Friendly Ridgewood is included as a participant
 - LU-5.1 Plan for Senior Housing Options
 - LU-5.3 Establish Standards for Visit-ability and Universal Design
 - LU-8.1 Study Accessibility and Equity of Village Facilities
 - LU-8.2 Expand programming and education about Aging in Place
- Via speaker events and newsletter items residents are educated periodically on property tax relief and freeze programs and financial assistance for housing and utility costs. Age Friendly Ridgewood continues to advocate for this information being included in multiple places including property tax bills.

- Age Friendly Ridgewood hosted an event along with our public library and including County officials about Reverse Mortgages and Shared housing.
- News about area affordable housing wait lists, published by Bergen County officials, is communicated regularly to residents via the Age Friendly Ridgewood newsletter
- The Ridgewood Fire Department, Ridgewood Police, Village Manager’s office and Age Friendly Ridgewood worked together to launch a lockbox program whereby older residents living alone or disabled can obtain a free lockbox that fire or police personnel can use to safely enter their homes in an emergency.

Priority Domain Four: Social Participation

Ridgewood Goal: Encourage older adult participation by hosting events and facilitating residents attending events. Get information to homebound or isolated adults.

Progress

- Each year many Village government officials and community organizations host social events aimed at older adults including the Thanksgiving Elder dinner, Graydon Pool Welcomes Seniors, Older American Month special events and Access Ridgewood (Disability Awareness) yearly conference. The Thanksgiving Elder dinner was given the Daniel M. Gasalberti Excellence in Recreation Program Award in 2024.
- Ridgewood Parks and Recreation Community Center programs and events have expanded in volume and participation over the past five years.
- Ridgewood Public Library programs aimed at older adults are numerous and well attended.

Priority Domain Five: Respect and Social Inclusion

Ridgewood Goal: Encourage intergenerational activity whenever possible.

Progress

- Ridgewood Public Library has twice celebrated Older Americans Month with a photo exhibit highlighting older adults.
- High School students working with the Community Center Advisory Board have hosted intergenerational events such as ping pong tournaments and board game fairs.

Priority Domain Six: Work and Civic Engagement

Ridgewood Goal: Integrate older adults into the community by encouraging volunteer work and participation in Village business life.

Progress

- Via Age Friendly Ridgewood's newsletter and with the support of Ridgewood's Community Center the Bergen Volunteer Center Redefining Retirement Program is publicized and hosted.
- Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly practices for businesses were published and communicated to Village businesses. Village representatives are currently participating in a County endeavor to encourage sensitivity of those affected by dementia,

Priority Domain Seven: Communication and Information

Ridgewood Goal: Increase access to information for older adults and their families and caregivers.

Progress

- Age Friendly Ridgewood and the Village of Ridgewood websites include resources and events for older adults and are updated frequently.

- Age Friendly Ridgewood publishes a newsletter every 2-4 weeks and their Facebook page communicates new information.
- Speaker events at the Ridgewood Public Library include topics such as Medicare orientation, Medicare Part D, Property Tax Relief, Housing options, Elder Law and Decluttering.
- A ten year old Emergency Planning Guide was updated including information about Covid-19 by the Village of Ridgewood Office of Emergency Management and Age Friendly Ridgewood.
- Age Friendly Ridgewood continues to remind Village employees and organizations that all residents are not computer savvy.

Priority Domain Eight: Community and Health Services

Ridgewood Goal: Encourage activities that improve health and quality of life, assist those having financial challenges or trouble maintaining their homes.

Progress

- During Covid two grant-funded roles were added to the Health Department and funding has been secured each year since to continue with these positions: Infectious Disease Preparedness Generalist (IDPG) and [Local Health Outreach Coordinator](#). [The Health Department has added the role of](#) Registered Environmental Health Specialist and contracted with a Social Worker part time.
- Ridgewood's Health Department hosts annual information fairs at the Community Center and pop-up health fairs at summer concerts in the park.
- During Covid an ad-hoc committee was established to coordinate services among many entities and avoid duplication. Vaccine information was distributed and social workers, health department staff and hospital officials worked to make vaccine appointments for hundreds of residents.

- Ridgewood has a vibrant Stigma Free committee working to raise awareness of mental health needs and services. Age Friendly co-chairs are on this committee.
- Valley Hospital hosts numerous health education events.
- Social Services of Ridgewood provides a food pantry and assists residents having trouble paying for utilities.
- A brochure was created by Age Friendly Ridgewood to publicize local organizations that assist with home chores.
- Age Friendly Ridgewood attempts to match residents in need of assistance with tasks such as snow shoveling, with willing volunteers. It is hoped this can be developed into a formal program.
- The Emergency Planning Guide listed under Domain Seven contains information on how residents can be safe during an emergency.

Conclusion/Looking Forward

Great progress has been made in the past five years in Ridgewood in raising awareness of the need of older adults and enhancing the Village's age friendliness. Municipal leaders increasingly acknowledge the presence and needs of older adults, evidenced by aspects of the new Master Plan, a new senior bus, pedestrian safety improvements and Health Department staffing. Through work with partners age-friendly programs have become imbedded in community life. Our work focused on the well-being of those age 55 and over has made our community better for all residents. We look forward to continuing progress with our eight domain area goals. We also plan to focus on making sure an age-friendly lens is present in all municipal departments, on all advisory boards and in as many community organizations as possible. We can confidently say that Ridgewood is a great community in which to live as one ages.