

West St. Paul Age-Friendly Action Plan, 2022 - 2027

by Living Longer & Stronger West St. Paul

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Acknowledgements



Communities for a Lifetime Initiative



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Demographics

Demographic changes are taking place across the state, county, and city of West St. Paul:

- **Around 2020, Minnesota's 65+ population eclipsed K-12 population (age 5-17) for the first time in history.**
- **According to projections, the total number of older adults (65+) is anticipated to double between 2010 and 2030. By then, more than 1 in 5 Minnesotans will be an older adult, including all the Baby Boomers.**

In Dakota County:

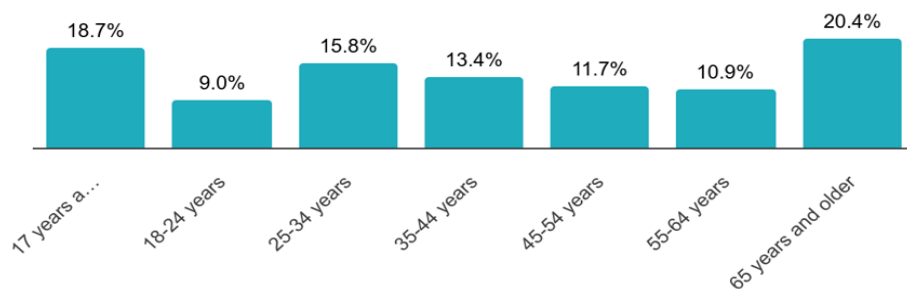
- **The number of older adults in Dakota County is projected by the Minnesota Department of Human Services to more than triple from 39,816 in 2010 to 115,074 in 2030.¹**

In West St. Paul:

- **Older adults (65+) made up more than 20% of the city's population in 2022.²**

West St. Paul, population by age group

2018-2022



West St. Paul community profile

“West St. Paul (WSP) is a first ring suburb adjacent to St. Paul which offers diverse amenities from green fields, lakes, and wildlife to minutes from a vast array of stores, restaurants, theaters, and educational institutions. WSP is a full-service city that offers a high quality of life and is rich with opportunities for enjoyment, growth, and development.

West St. Paul has 15 parks, an indoor ice arena, the Regional Athletics Center dome, and a community swimming pool. The city is also home to Dodge Nature Center, Southview Country Club, and Thompson County Park. WSP boasts a superior public educational system, along with some great private schools. [WSP] has a diverse, well-maintained housing stock available with an established housing program to maintain the housing quality. There are over 600 businesses in West St. Paul, including a light industrial park. South Robert Street is a busy thoroughfare that has approximately 30,000 cars travel it per day.”³

According to the 2023 U.S. Census estimate, the population of West St. Paul was 21,722.⁴

The City of West St. Paul has many advantages that make it a great place for people of all ages to live. Particularly, West St. Paul offers a **significant number of housing options** for older adults. These include affordable County owned buildings, affordable independent and assisted living options, along with cooperative housing and facilities offering dementia care, and a transitional health care center.

There is an **extensive transportation network** connecting West St. Paul to other parts of the metro area, including paratransit services. DARTS, a local nonprofit, operates The LOOP circulator bus, connecting residents to groceries and shopping.

There are **many resources available** to older adults in the community. For the past few years, an **ACT on Alzheimer’s group** has been active in West St. Paul, educating residents and businesses about dementia. **Thompson Park Activity Center is an active community center** with great programming for older adults. The **Wentworth Library** provides free and equitable access to a variety of resources and services, including physical resources: large print materials, audiovisual materials, memory care visit kits, and technology such as Chromebook and Wi-Fi hotspot kits.

Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul, a nonprofit coalition, has been working for over a decade to make the West St. Paul community more aware of the resources available to older adults and advocating for the issues facing older adults and their families.

Introduction to the action plan

The action plan outlines the key priorities identified by the community through the recent surveying process in West St. Paul. LLS partnered with AARP on the Age-Friendly Community Survey. AARP Livable Communities supports the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages. The survey was distributed from October 2022 to January 2023, and 201 surveys were taken – about 100 paper surveys were completed and 100 online surveys were completed.

The top priorities include **1. Housing, Independence & Safety, 2. Transportation, 3. Community Building, 4. Home and Community-based Services/Resources**. Each priority reflects the insights gathered from residents, emphasizing the need for services and programs that promote independence, accessible transportation options, and greater social engagement opportunities for older adults.

The 2022/2023 Age-Friendly Community Survey conducted in West St. Paul highlights several pressing issues and needs that require attention. In the area of **Housing, Independence & Safety**, for example, the survey revealed that 42% of respondents live with a disability, chronic disease, or other challenges that necessitate more accessible homes and support from care professionals. To address this, recommendations include updating and widely distributing the LLS Resource Directory, promoting the Aging in Community Resource from CFL, and supporting LLS partners through grants and volunteer initiatives. In terms of aging in community, survey participants expressed the importance of promoting personal safety and security. Initiatives could involve increasing social interaction opportunities and collaborating with local authorities, such as the West St. Paul Police, to enhance public safety messages. **Housing** emerged as a top concern, with respondents emphasizing the need for programs that promote independence and provide affordable assistance for home maintenance.

Transportation also ranked high on the list of needs, with many respondents requesting more education on public transportation options. Suggestions include promoting resources like the GoDakota initiative and providing one-on-one travel training to assist those unfamiliar with available services. Concerning **Community-based Services/Resources**, there is a significant demand for education regarding homecare services, including costs and availability. With many agencies facing challenges with Medicaid reimbursement, participants highlighted the need for clearer information about community services and supports, from entities such as the Senior LinkAge Line and DARTS, locally. The survey also revealed a desire for enhanced work and civic engagement, particularly in terms of **volunteer and job opportunities for older adults**.

Lastly, **communication and information** emerged as a critical area for improvement, with clear and accessible information being essential for engaging older adults. Suggestions include partnering with

healthcare providers to distribute resources that support older adults, ensuring they have access to vital information. Overall, the survey underscores the need for coordinated efforts among community organizations, local government, and residents to address these key issues and foster a more age-friendly environment in West St. Paul and Dakota County.

This action plan serves as a roadmap for collaboration among local organizations, government, and residents to create a more age-friendly environment that fosters safety, connectivity, and overall well-being for all community members.

How the plan was developed

Older adults have been engaged as participants in Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul's coalition since its inception in 2009 and have continued to be a part of the coalition's age-friendly planning efforts.

From October 2022 to January 2023, Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul reached out to older adults with the AARP assessment survey by mailing a post card to all West St. Paul households with a family member who is age sixty or older with a link to the survey and highlighting locations where a hard copy of the survey can be picked up and dropped off. Additionally, Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul delivered paper-based surveys to where older adults are known to live (County CDA buildings, independent senior living and assisted living buildings). Two hundred surveys were completed, and the survey data was compiled and analyzed by the Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul coalition and Dakota County.

In addition to surveying older adults, we shared the survey results with the community and have encouraged participation in the action plan. We have used the survey results to help determine the focus of our efforts to become more age-friendly and have sought out focus groups (CLUES Spanish-speaking group) of older adults to evaluate potential strategies. Older adults' perspective and participation is critical to understanding the gaps in the community and identifying approaches that will create a more age-friendly environment.

Throughout the entire process, older adults have been an important and valued voice in creating an age-friendly community; their experiences in the community and understanding of the needs of their peers will help us to create a better community for all.

Who was involved in developing the action plan

Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul (LLS) wanted to become an AARP/World Health Organization Age-Friendly community, so it reached out to the city of West St. Paul for its support in the AARP application process. The Dakota County Communities for a Lifetime Initiative has been supporting age-friendly efforts and activities since 2012 and has been a supporter of LLS. AmeriCorps members have been working in the Public Health departments since 2022 and have played a strong role in crafting the action report.

Living Longer & Stronger in West St. Paul

Living Longer & Stronger West St. Paul is a nonprofit coalition of organizations, businesses, government, and individuals that plans and prepares for the needs of an aging population in our community. It is driven by volunteer members who live and work in the community. LLS connects residents with resources to help them remain active and engaged in the community. Our vision is for West St. Paul residents 50+ to have the opportunities they seek to live well, work, serve, learn, and lead in their community.

LLS implemented the following outreach activities:

- LLS Resource Directory for Older Adults and Their Families
- The LOOP, Circular Bus
- Boomer Projects
- Community meetings/presentations/events

Communities for a Lifetime Initiative

Dakota County Public Health, Communities for a Lifetime Initiative brings together residents, local businesses, community organizations, cities, and county staff to create networks of age-friendly, healthy, and accessible communities. Engaging community members, leaders in the private and public sectors to create accessible, supportive Communities for a Lifetime that enable people to lead active vital lives.

City of West St. Paul

The city of West St. Paul has been an active partner in the designation process by sending letters of support, helping to advertise the community survey, and having city staff members present and discuss topics over a 6-month period. In previous years, the city would regularly send staff members to monthly LLS meetings.

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a membership-based program focused on improving community health, especially for vulnerable populations. Through volunteers, it offers health education, resource coordination, and supports initiatives like the Dakota County Living Longer and Stronger West St. Paul Action Plan. By addressing health disparities and fostering collaboration, the program promotes healthier lifestyles for older adults and strengthens public health efforts.

Who will manage the implementation of the action plan

The Living Longer and Stronger in WSP (LLS) coalition has been managing the development and implementation of the action plan with assistance from the Dakota County Communities for a Lifetime Initiative. LLS will look to the City of WSP for guidance, input, and help with larger aspects of the plan that require a broader lens and longer-term participation on projects.

Other information that is important to the action plan

West St. Paul's age-friendly action plan

In the coming three years, Age-Friendly West St. Paul will work to implement the top four priorities determined by the surveying process:

- **Housing, Independence & Safety**
- **Transportation**
- **Community Building**
- **Home and Community-based Services/Resources**

Housing, Independence, & Safety

Objective: Promote programs that enhance independence and provide affordable assistance for residents to stay in and maintain their homes, particularly for those living with disabilities, chronic diseases, or other challenges.

Current Need: According to survey data, 42% of respondents reported that they or their partners live with a disability, highlighting the urgent need for more accessible housing options and the availability of programs and services to help adapt or modify existing homes.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Resource Updates and Distribution:

- Update and widely distribute the **Living Longer & Stronger (LLS) Resource Directory** to ensure residents are aware and have access to essential services.
- Promote and distribute the **CFL's Aging in Community Resource** to provide additional support.

2. Collaboration with Partners:

- Support the ongoing work of LLS partners through **networking, promotion, potential grants, and volunteer opportunities** to enhance overall community resources.
- Engage with the City of West St. Paul to explore how LLS could further support Aging in Place by promoting the city's housing rehabilitation efforts and programs. The city receives federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which are used for housing rehabilitation in West St. Paul.

3. Community Engagement:

- **Assess the role of Dakota County's West St. Paul CDA buildings** in facilitating housing assistance and resources. (How could CDA buildings be further supported by other programming, similar to DARTS' work in CDA buildings?)
- **Update the presentation on housing options in West St. Paul**, initially delivered in 2023, to further educate the community about available resources.
- **Highlight home-sharing programs** as a viable option for increasing housing accessibility and support.
- **Educate older adults about adapting their homes to meet the challenges of changing climate**, which can put pressure on their finances and safety in their home.
 - Resource: Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)
<https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org>

By implementing these strategies, Age-Friendly West St. Paul aims to create a safer, more inclusive environment that empowers residents to live independently in their homes.

Transportation

Objective: Enhance education and accessibility regarding public transportation options to ensure residents can navigate their community effectively.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Education and Awareness:

- **Promote and distribute information on available public transportation resources**, making it easier for residents to understand their options and how to use them.
- **Collaborate with the GoDakota initiative** to provide tailored transportation education and resources.

2. Training Programs:

- **Encourage one-on-one travel training sessions**, as promoted through the GoDakota initiative, to assist residents in learning how to navigate public transport systems confidently. More information can be found at [GoDakota](#).

3. Community Engagement:

- **Host events that promote transportation awareness**, such as the recent **rideshare training** held on August 7, 2024, in partnership with CFL, GoDakota, and Augustana Church in West St. Paul, which attracted 50 participants.
- **Promote the use of volunteer driver programs**; encourage older adults to use and volunteer as drivers. Encourage funding and support of volunteer driver programs.

By implementing these strategies, Age-Friendly West St. Paul aims to create a more connected community where residents are empowered to utilize public transportation confidently, enhancing their mobility and overall quality of life.

Community Building

Objective: Enhance community engagement by promoting volunteer, work, and social interaction opportunities, particularly for older adults, while fostering intergenerational activities.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Community Engagement Programs:

- Develop and promote programs with **volunteer and paid opportunities** within the community, encouraging participation from older adults and fostering intergenerational connections.
 - Promote classes, activities, and volunteer opportunities at **Thompson Park Activity Center (TPAC)** in West St. Paul.
 - Promote activities, events and opportunities for volunteering through **WSP's faith-based organizations**.
 - Promote Dakota County Volunteers opportunities more broadly.
- **Encourage the formation of various social gatherings** that bring together residents of all ages to strengthen community bonds and enhance social interaction.

- Promote classes, activities, and engagements in programs within various local community-based organizations such as: activity centers, libraries, faith-based orgs, and social service organizations.

2. Safety and Security Initiatives:

- **Collaborate with the West St. Paul Police** to identify areas where Age-Friendly West St. Paul/LLS can support public safety initiatives and community messaging.
- Explore opportunities to support existing programs, such as the **Neighborhood Watch**, by providing resources and volunteer support. Contact Nicole Murphy at: nmurphy@WestStPaulmn.gov

3. Digital Community Building:

- **Utilize and educate on platforms like Nextdoor and Facebook**, to join or create online groups that facilitate communication, share local events, and promote community safety trainings.

By implementing these strategies, Age-Friendly West St. Paul aims to create a culturally rich and inclusive community that encourages active participation and fosters connections among residents of all ages.

Home and Community-based Services/Resources

Objective: Increase awareness and understanding of home and community-based services among older adults and their families to ensure they have access to necessary resources in their homes and communities.

Implementation Strategies:

- **Educational Initiatives:**
 - Provide or develop **educational resources and opportunities focused on in-home care services and support**, addressing common questions such as: "What are home care services?" and "What is the cost?" or increasing awareness around family caregiving and finding the balance between what the family can take on (when available) vs. needing to bring in formal/professional help. This will help demystify available options for older adults and their families.

- **Highlight the challenges faced by home care agencies** regarding Medicaid reimbursement, emphasizing the gap between reimbursement rates and actual costs (as noted by Brianna Beltran from Synergy Homecare, an LLS partner).
- **Resource Promotion:**
 - **Promote reliable resources** such as the **Senior LinkAge Line** and local nonprofits like **DARTS** and **Neighbors Inc.** to provide accurate information on home and community-based services/resources.
 - **Distribute informative materials** that outline how these resources work, making it easier for residents to navigate the available services.
 - **Promote Title III services in the community** (funded by the Older Americans Act), which are available to all at a sliding fee scale based on income. In 2023, Trellis awarded \$10.7 million in Older Americans Act and emergency funding for nutrition services, grocery and prescription drug delivery, chore and homemaker services, caregiver services and more. <https://trellisconnects.org/funding/#>
- **Community Outreach:**
 - **Conduct outreach efforts** to gather feedback on additional educational needs regarding home and community-based services/resources. Engage with experts to identify specific areas for further education and support.
 - **Organize community workshops or informational sessions** that connect residents with service providers and health professionals to facilitate better understanding and access.

By implementing these strategies, Age-Friendly West St. Paul aims to empower older adults and their families with the knowledge they need to utilize available health services effectively, ultimately enhancing their well-being and quality of life.

Timeline of activities

- **Apr. 2007**, Dakota County released a report, “**Dakota County Aging Initiative: Navigating the Age Wave.**”
- **In 2008**, Dakota County launched “**Living Longer and Stronger in Dakota County,**” through a contract with DARTS, a non-profit agency. One of the teams, the Services Team, continued to meet and later become “**Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul**” focusing its work on a specific community.
- **Sep. 2016**, Living Longer and Stronger in West St. Paul become an official nonprofit corporation.

- **Oct. 2012**, members of the public and city/county officials participated in a community conversation on “**Creating a Community for a Lifetime in West St. Paul.**”
- **Jul. 2013**, LLS launched 1st edition of the: **Resource Directory for Older Adults and Their Families** (with a 4th edition in 2018).
- **Feb. 2015**, LLS partnered to launch a **Circulator Bus in WSP.**
- **Jun. 2015**, LLS distributed **Boomer Bags** with resources.
- **Apr. 2017**, LLS conducted: **Survey of West St. Paul Adults (50+).**
- **May 2017**, LLS began **West St. Paul ACT on Alzheimer's group**, to educate community/businesses about dementia.
- **In 2018**, WSP ACT on ALZ group held **Dementia Friends presentations** to educate the community about the basics of dementia.
- **In 2019**, West St. Paul ACT on Alzheimer's group won a **Dakota County Public Health Achievement Award** for its work to educate the community about dementia.
- **In 2020/21**, implemented the **We are Dementia Aware** project to educate employers/employees about how to interact with community members with dementia by sharing educational videos with employers.
- **Jan. 2022**, West St. Paul joined the **World Health Organization/AARP Age-Friendly Network.**
- **Oct. 2022 to Jan. 2023**, LLS established **West St. Paul Age-Friendly** and conducted an age-friendly survey with over 200 completed surveys:
 - LLS reached out with the AARP assessment survey by mailing a postcard to all West St. Paul households age 60+.
 - Included link to the survey and locations where a hard copy of the survey could be picked up/dropped off.
 - LLS delivered paper-based surveys to where older adults are known to live (County CDA buildings, independent living and assisted livings).
- **March to July 2024**, West St. Paul Age-Friendly **meet with city staff to get an overview on topic areas**: Parks System Plan, Police Department, and housing projects.
- **In 2024**, **City of West Paul was an AARP Community Challenge Grantee** – hosted intergenerational events (movie in the park, community meal, crosswalk painting) meant to revive an underused public park.
<https://livablemap.aarp.org/challenge-grantee/city-west-st-paul-2024>
- **In 2024/2025**, West St. Paul Age-Friendly worked on a strategic action plan and Story Map to highlight its work in the community.

Works Cited

¹ *Data by topic: Aging / MN State Demographic Center.* (n.d.). MN State Demographic Center.
<https://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/aging>

² “West St. Paul | MN Compass.” *Minnesota Compass*, 2024, www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/west-st-paul.

³ “About West St. Paul | West St. Paul, MN - Official Website.” *Wspmn.gov*, 2023,
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⁴ “QuickFacts: West St. Paul City, Minnesota.” *Census Bureau QuickFacts*, United States Census Bureau, 2024, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/weststpaulcityminnesota/PST045224.

Thank you!

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