

AGE FRIENDLY OLMSTED COUNTY UPDATE August 2024

Here is a summary of Age-Friendly Olmsted County (AFOC) activities implementing the Age Friendly Olmsted County 2022-2025 Action Plan since our annual report in February 2024.

1. Housing

AFOC continues to be engaged with housing issues, participating in the Rochester Area Housing Alliance.

We are an active member of the Rochester Area Housing Coalition Senior Housing Transition Work Group. The work group recently concluded several months of work preparing recommendation for a pilot program to provide guidance and support to interested older adults navigating housing transition to identify the right home for them and potentially increase the number of affordable larger homes available for families. The expectation is this pilot might launch early in 2025.

This pilot project addresses Action Area II: Aging in Place Readiness Planning.

2. Transportation

Since the success of our Slatterly Park walk audit, AFOC continues to grow our partnership with the city of Rochester. We are supporting their Active Transportation Walk/Bike Summit to identify issues and opportunities along three primary corridors connecting to the Link Rapid Transit Corridor along 2nd Street SW: 11th Ave SW/NW, 3rd Ave SE, and 4th St SE. One of these corridors will be selected for a quick build demonstration project to take place next spring.

We are meeting with Washington Neighborhood Association regarding conducting walk audits as part of our initiative to have walk audits incorporated into the City of Rochester Sidewalk Improvement Districts.

AFOC was recently invited to be part of Rochester - Olmsted Council of Governments (ROCOG) Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan group. This plan will address transportation safety concerns throughout Olmsted County.

These projects support Action Area III: Age-Friendly Community Engagement specifically that built environments in Olmsted County communities are safe and accessible.

3. Age Friendly Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (TAP) Grant 2024-2026

We were successful in our application for Age Friendly Minnesota TAP funding. This grant will be funding several Action Plan projects over the next two years.

- a. AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITIES: AFOC will host an event to promote membership in the Age-Friendly University Global Network to include the University of Minnesota Rochester, Winona State University – Rochester, and Rochester Community and Technical College. Working with champions on each campus, the event will invite administration, faculty, and student leaders to learn about the network and encourage applications.

The AFOC Action Plan identifies among its goal extending age-friendly network participation to other communities, sectors, and institutions in Olmsted County and includes the objective of local colleges and universities joining this network.

- b. SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WHO ARE CAREGIVERS: AFOC/FSR will conduct 5 information/education/training events regarding work/care balance; types of caregiving-related support employers can offer employees; and creating workplace cultures that are more responsive to caregiving employee needs. The events will occur in Rochester, Stewartville, Byron, Northridge, and Faribault.

The project addresses thematic concerns raised in the AFOC Community Assessment regarding caregiving/caregivers and an Action Plan goal to encourage and promote employer support for caregiving employees.

- c. WALK AUDITS: Over the course the grant period the project will conduct 10 neighborhood walk audits in conjunction with the city Public Works Sidewalk Improvement District scheduled sidewalk maintenance and upgrade program and other opportunities to make use of walk audits to inform active transportation planning and projects in Olmsted County.

The project addresses key findings of AFOC Community Assessment related to transportation and safety and an Action Plan goal to employ walk audits to inform public works planning and pedestrian improvements.

- d. PARK AUDITS: AFOC will conduct 6 park audits in conjunction with Parks and Recreation Departments community engagement for scheduled parks review and upgrades in Olmsted County. The park audits will also serve as illustrative case studies of incorporating age-friendly assessments to inform park planning and improvements. The findings of the case studies will be shared by AFMN Council / FSR with other park and recs areas around the state, the Met Council and other organizations.

The project addresses a key finding of AFOC Community Assessment on accessible public spaces and an Action Plan goal to employ park audits to inform park planning and improvements.

4. Rolling Hills Park Age Friendly Updates

This fall the city will make a first phase of updates we are seeking to Rolling Hills Park in response to park input to the Park and Rec planned updates. The city incorporated the park audit input into updates that were already funded, but also offered plans for additional improvements based on that park audit.

We did seek, but did not receive, AARP Community Challenge Grant funds for a portion of these additional improvements. Walt Rothwell, a local AARP volunteer has been pursuing Park and Rec Community Engaged Funds for this work. In general, we are exploring funding opportunities for updates that will showcase the kind of age friendly improvements – in partnership with the city - possible throughout our park system.

The project addresses a key finding of AFOC Community Assessment on accessible public spaces and an Action Plan goal to employ park audits to inform park planning and improvements.

5. Digital Opportunity

We are still awaiting news from the state (and they are waiting to hear from the feds) on approval of the state plan for federal Digital Equity Capacity Grant dollars.

6. AFMN Community Grant

We are also awaiting news regarding the particulars of Age-Friendly Minnesota Community Grant. Once we know more about the grant priorities and scope, we will submit our application.