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Princeton's looking a little more age-friendly

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Feb 2, 2023



The City of Princeton is making moves to create a more age-friendly city with the city council's approval of the Age-Friendly Princeton Action Plan presented to it during its meeting on Thursday, Jan. 26.

The Age-Friendly Princeton Action Plan has been in the works between the city and the Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism since 2020 when Princeton became one of the eight cities in Minnesota's Age-Friendly Communities through AARP.

The goal of the plan, as stated, is to make the Princeton area a better place to live for residents of all ages, in all stages of life.

The action plan begins by looking at the demographics of the city of Princeton which states that of the 4,843 people who lived in the city in 2020, the majority of them were adults with 958 of which were seniors.

According to AARP and stated in the action plan, it is estimated that the number of adults over the age of 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18, with one quarter of all Americans age 65 or older living in small towns and rural communities.

The work of the plan began in 2021 when a survey was conducted within the city to gain perspective on how the community can offer support to all age groups.

From the results of the survey, the Age-Friendly Princeton leadership team discovered three out of the eight identified domains of livability in the survey in which community members wished to see improvements.

The first domain was communication and information, the second was social participation and respect, and the third was transportation.

In identifying these three areas of improvement, the action plan states that the city wants to improve communications by improving knowledge of technology and spreading information through that avenue, focus on the development of a

“Community Center without Walls” to provide more community gathering spaces, and improve the knowledge of the city’s current transportation system.

The other domains of livability identified in the survey were outdoor spaces and buildings, housing, civic participation and employment, community support and health services, and public safety and preparedness.

The survey went through all eight domains to find the strengths and weaknesses of Princeton, as well as what people would like to see for the community.

Lastly, the Age-Friendly Action Plan included specific objectives for the three weakest domains starting with the communication and information domain.

The vision of this domain as stated is to make Princeton “a city that enables residents to gain the information they want and need in a variety of formats that provides accessibility to all.”

Some of the objectives listed to achieve this goal are to continue the promotion of the city’s “This is Princeton” website as a hub of information, create a space for centralized information at community gathering spots, and offer technology classes and support.

The second domain with specific objectives listed in the action plan is social participation and respect with a vision of “a city that offers opportunities for residents to be included in activities in a meaningful way, by offering accessible, affordable, and intergenerational activities.”

The objectives listed under this domain are to develop a “Community Center without Walls,” continue discussions with the Princeton School District and other important groups within the community about building a community center, encourage businesses and nonprofits to host community events, and encourage volunteer re-engagement.

The last domain listed with specific objectives was transportation. The vision of the transportation domain in Princeton is “A city where everyone has access to safe and sustainable transportation services that are affordable and provide a full range of mobility options to connect

residents to critical services and each other.”

The transportation domain was identified in the survey as the one in most need of improvement, and also has the most objectives compared to the other domains identified.

A few of the identified objectives under transportation are to improve the Public Bus Transportation Service design to include accessibility of hours and geographic areas, offer Lyft or Uber transportation services, offer more trails for biking, and develop a marketing plan to promote the public transportation system.

With the Princeton City Council’s approval of the Age-Friendly Princeton Action Plan, the council also approved the plan to be sent to AARP for review as the age-friendly communities are identified through AARP.

For more information about the Age-Friendly Princeton Action Plan, visit the City of Princeton's website at https://www.princetonmn.org/community_info/seniors.php.

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