Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC)
Safe | Well | Engaged

Action Plan (2026 – 2030)













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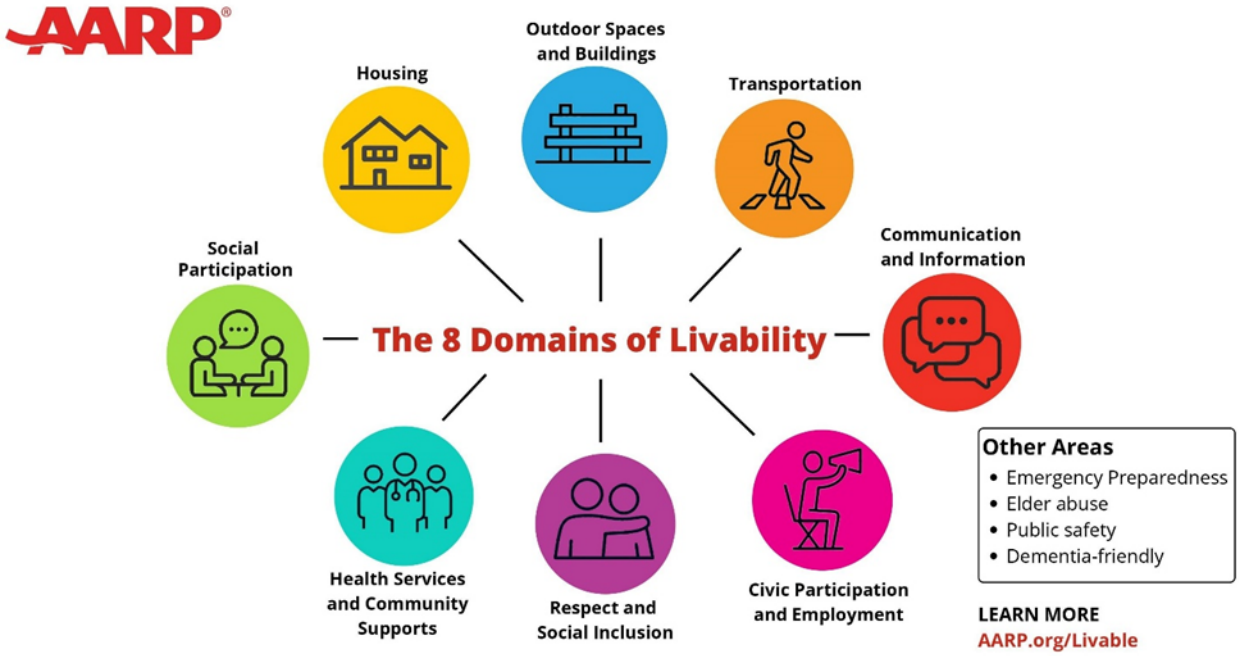
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Background Information

Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) is a collaboration of over 100 non-profit organizations, businesses, work groups, community members, volunteers, and Buncombe County Government working with the mission: **Older Adults in Buncombe County are Safe, Well, and Engaged in their Community**. Our mission supports the vision that older adults should have the ability to age in place and age in community.

The mission and vision of Age-Friendly Buncombe County were defined in the Buncombe County Age-Friendly Action Plan (2021 - 2024). Development of these guiding statements was informed by a comprehensive collaborative process involving County staff, aging services providers, and community members supported by community surveys, listening sessions, ongoing meetings, and community input sessions. The Age-Friendly Action Plan (2021-2024) was Buncombe County's first aging plan that was wholly affiliated with the WHO/AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.



Age-Friendly Buncombe County focuses on the eight domains of livability and other areas that communities should address to improve the lives of older adults (and people of all ages) so that our communities will be more livable. The eight domains of livability were defined by the World Health Organization and adopted by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Buncombe County joined the World Health Organization (WHO)/AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in May 2017. The Buncombe County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to join the WHO/AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and called for the establishment of a steering team to lead the Age-Friendly Buncombe County Initiative.

The Commissioners' resolution called upon "*all our citizens, business leaders, elected and staff government officials, philanthropists, educators, civic groups, advocacy and service organizations,*

1) *to recognize that older adults constitute a valuable human resource; and,*
2) *to engage older adults in all aspects of community and civic life*."

Currently, Age-Friendly Buncombe County is one of 23 age-friendly communities across North Carolina and North Carolina became the 10th age-friendly state in 2023 with Executive Order 280. According to the latest NC Department of Health and Human Services county aging profile, older adults, age 60 and over, *comprise 29% of our population in Buncombe County*, that is *82,160 older adults*.

Age-Friendly Buncombe County is housed within Buncombe County Aging and Adult Services, a department of Buncombe County Health and Human Services. An Age-Friendly Coordinator directs and oversees Age-Friendly work. Age-Friendly Buncombe County supports older adults in making Buncombe County a place to age well, be safe, and stay connected in our community. All of us are aging. By making Buncombe County more age-friendly and improving the quality of lives for older adults, residents of all ages benefit allowing all of us to age in place and age in community.

Update: Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Action Plan

The Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Action Plan (2026 – 2030) is an updated version of the Age-Friendly Action Plan (2021 – 2024). There are minor changes to the aging plan. The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee decided to keep the same mission and vision of the Age-Friendly Action Plan (2021 – 2024) and ensure that the indicators for the seven goals are tracked to measure progress from year to year. Progress has not been measured in any of the Buncombe County aging plans. With this Age-Friendly Buncombe County Action Plan (2026 – 2030), a baseline will be established, and indicators will be tracked to measure progress from year to year. Initially, data will be collected for the baseline starting with funded providers who receive Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Funding, Buncombe County Supplemental Aging Funding (BCSAF) and Buncombe County Government providers. Progress will be measured against the baseline to determine impact and whether older adults and unpaid caregivers are better off. After 3 years, data will be collected not only from funded providers, but community providers across the County. Information about the various activities that took place to inform the Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Action Plan (2026 – 2030) are detailed below.

The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee met four times throughout 2025 to discuss updates to the aging plan. There were three different community surveys sent out to Buncombe County residents in 2024. Much information was gathered from these surveys and the committee decided not to send out another community survey in 2025. Instead, the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee looked at the common themes from the surveys and updated the aging plan to tie in with the themes.

Community Surveys sent out in 2024 included:

1. Deerfield Episcopal Retirement Community and Deerfield Charitable Foundation commissioned Holleran Consulting to do a Community Engagement Needs Assessment (CENA) to assess the health and social needs of older adults in Buncombe County. The survey was sent out online in January and February 2024 to 344 key informants. Key informants included those with expert knowledge about the needs of older adults, such as those who worked in social services, aging services, long-term care, healthcare, education, and other community providers. There was a 26.2 % response rate with 90 individuals responding to the CENA survey. For information on the Deerfield Community Needs Assessment (CENA) Report and the Executive Summary, please click on this link: https://deerfieldwnc.org/cena/

2. Land of Sky Area Agency on Aging sent out the Area Aging Plan Survey 2024-2028 seeking community input about the needs of older adults, caregivers, and aging service providers for Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties. The survey was filled out by 447 individuals: 38% from Madison

County, 33% from Buncombe County, 24% from Henderson County, and 5% from Transylvania County.

3. Buncombe County Government partnered with ETC Institute and sent out a six-page survey, 2024 Buncombe County Community Survey, to a random sample of households. ETC Institute followed up 10 days after the first mailing to increase participation. There were 511 responses received: 41% were from the city of Asheville residents and 59% were from County residents. This survey was conducted to inform and complete the Buncombe County Strategic Plan 2030.

Information from the community surveys and input sessions included common themes as listed below:

- Affordable housing and housing services as well as providing equitable access to housing were identified as needs.
- Lack of in-home and community-based services to support aging in place were identified as issues for older adults. Additionally, many older residents do not know where to find services and resources.
- Accessing and navigating quality healthcare services and other community-based services were identified as issues.
- Social isolation was identified as a problem for older adults.
- More general and specialized transportation is needed as well as improved walkability.
- More caregiver and dementia support are needed.
- Limited income and inability to make ends meet were identified as issues for older adults.

Lastly, the Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Action Plan aligns with the Buncombe County Strategic Plan 2030, specifically the focus areas of growth and development, and community health. Continued collaboration between Buncombe County Government and over 100 community partners and members is vital to ensure that older adults in Buncombe County are **SAFE**, **WELL**, and **ENGAGED**.

Goals of the Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Action Plan

FOCUS AREAS		
Older Adult Safety	Older Adult Wellbeing	Older Adult Engagement
Vision: A community where older adults are safe, including from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.	Vision: A community where older adults and caregivers experience physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing.	Vision: A community where older adults are engaged in their community in meaningful ways.
GOALS		
1. **Increase** community awareness of physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse, neglect, and exploitation. 2. **Increase** community awareness about safe, affordable housing options and services for aging in place.	3. **Support** older adults' health and wellbeing. 4. **Support** older adults' financial wellbeing. 5. **Support** caregiver wellbeing.	6. **Encourage** older adult engagement (including volunteerism, employment, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and use of cultural and recreational assets). 7. **Enhance** services and supports for older adults.

Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Action Plan

SAFE

Goal 1. Increase community awareness of physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Action 1.1 Provide community awareness-raising programs and events.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
1.1.a. Offer fraud and elder abuse awareness education.	# of participants who attend educational sessions	• Buncombe County (BC) Aging and Adult Services • Buncombe County Elder Justice Coalition (EJC) • Buncombe County Sheriff's Office - Friends Against Fraud • Land of Sky Area Agency on Aging (LOSAAA) Ombudsmen

Goal 2. Increase community awareness about safe, affordable, accessible housing options and services for aging in place.

Action 2.1 Increase awareness about housing options and services for aging in place for residents of all income levels.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
2.1.a. Educate older adults about housing options and services for aging in place and home safety modifications.	# of participants reached through events (HOAP) # of participants enrolled in services to age in place (i.e., Special Assistance In-Home and In-Home Aide) # of participants in adult day care programs	• AARP Mountain Region • BC Aging and Adult Services • DayStay Social Club • Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Advisory Committee • Housing Options for Aging in Place (HOAP) workgroup • Jewish Family Services • Mountain Aging Partners

WELL

Goal 3. Support older adults' health and wellbeing.

Action 3.1 Provide health and wellbeing programs and services for older adults.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
3.1.a. Increase older adult participation in evidence-based health programs and social and recreational activities.	# of participants involved in Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) and Buncombe County Supplemental Aging Funding (BCSAF) funded programs # of participants in fall prevention programs	• LOS AAA Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Programs • Council on Aging of Buncombe County • Jewish Family Services • Mountain Aging Partners • Asheville/Buncombe Elders • Blue Ridge Pride

Goal 4. Support older adults' financial wellbeing.

Action 4.1 Provide benefits enrollment education and services.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
4.1.a. Assist older adults enrolling in economic support programs for which they are eligible.	# of participants enrolled	• BC Economic Services • Council on Aging of Buncombe County • Eblen Charities • OnTrack Financial Education & Counseling • Pisgah Legal Services

WELL (cont'd.)

Goal 5. Support caregiver wellbeing.

Action 5.1 Provide access to caregiver services and supports.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
5.1.a. Encourage caregivers to participate in group and individual respite services, including adult day services, and caregiver support groups.	# of participants in respite programs and support groups	• Council on Aging of Buncombe County • DayStay Social Club • Jewish Family Services • MemoryCare • Mountain Aging Partners

ENGAGED

Goal 6. Encourage older adult engagement (including volunteerism, employment, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and use of cultural and recreational assets).

Action 6.1 Provide networking and skill-building opportunities for older adults seeking employment and volunteer work.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
6.1.a. Offer educational and skill-building opportunities to older adults.	# of participants at events	• AARP Mountain Region • Experienced Workforce Initiative
Action 6.2 Provide lifelong learning and other engagement opportunities for older adults and people living with cognitive impairments.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
6.2.a. Provide engagement opportunities for older adults and people living with cognitive impairments and encourage participation in civic, cultural, and recreational opportunities.	# of participants	• Buncombe County Parks and Recreation • HCCBG Advisory Committee • HCCBG and BCSAF funded providers

ENGAGED (cont'd.)

Goal 7. Enhance services and supports for older adults

Action 7.1 Promote safe and accessible transportation options for older adults.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
7.1.a. Encourage older adults and people living with disabilities to use available public transportation options.	# of participants served through HCCBG/BCSAF funded transportation programs	• Better Together Transportation • Council on Aging of Buncombe County • HCCBG Advisory Committee • Mountain Aging Partners • Mountain Mobility
7.1.b. Encourage older adults and people living with disabilities to participate in policy making and planning for safe and accessible transportation options.	# of participants serving on relevant boards	• Community Transportation Advisory Board (CTAB)
Action 7.2 Promote coordination and collaboration among aging services providers.		
Activities	Indicators	Responsible Partners
7.2.a. Encourage aging services providers to participate in Age-Friendly Buncombe County (AFBC) Meetings, and Funded Provider Meetings.	# of participants per meeting	• Age-Friendly Buncombe County
7.2.b. Allocate Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) and Buncombe County Supplemental Aging Funds (BCSAF) for maximum benefit.	# of unduplicated participants	• Age-Friendly Buncombe County • HCCBG Advisory Committee

Age-Friendly Buncombe County Initiatives

Asheville/Buncombe Elders Engagement (ABE) Project - A partnership between Age-Friendly Buncombe County, Buncombe County Communication and Public Engagement (CAPE), Buncombe County Access and Human Affairs Office, Asheville Communication & Public Engagement, Council on Aging of Buncombe County, and community members to promote wellness and prevent social isolation primarily in the Black communities. Quarterly lunch meetings are held for the Elders with education, socialization and wellness opportunities, and resources provided.

Age-Friendly Advisory Committee (AFAC) - The role of the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee (AFAC) is to serve in an advisory capacity to make recommendations and to share perspectives and knowledge of needs of older adults across Buncombe County. The Age-Friendly Advisory Committee was formed in 2021. Major responsibilities include:

- Promote Age-Friendly Buncombe County's mission and related activities;
- Assist in developing a new aging plan as needed;
- Support the work on the Age-Friendly Action Plan's goals and activities;
- Connect Age-Friendly Buncombe County with relevant work in the community; and
- Evaluate available data and stay informed of emerging trends and data trends, as well as changing needs and opportunities for an Age-Friendly Buncombe community.

Age-Friendly Summit Conference - A ***local*** aging conference launched by Age-Friendly Buncombe County in May 2024 to promote and highlight all of the work being done in Buncombe County and across the state to support older adults and unpaid caregivers. The Age-Friendly Summit provides information to professionals, older adults, and unpaid caregivers AND promotes a positive view of aging.

Anti-Ageism and Reframing Aging Training - Training about ageism such as where ageism shows up in institutions (healthcare, workplace, government, etc.), interpersonally, and personally, the harmful effects of ageism and ways to reduce ageism, and how to reframe aging. The training is provided by the Age-Friendly Coordinator who has trained staff at non-profit organizations and Buncombe County Government, and students at Warren Wilson College.

Community Transportation Advisory Board (CTAB) - The Community Transportation Advisory Board assists in the implementation of Buncombe County Community Transportation Program.

Dementia Friendly WNC - A grass roots organization dedicated to the well-being of people living with dementia and their families. The steering committee is comprised of community members who are committed to making the community more welcoming and inclusive for those living with cognitive impairments and decreasing the negative stigma of dementia. The steering committee also includes people living with dementia as

members of the committee and include their voices in the awareness sessions presented in the community.

Elder Justice Coalition (EJC) - Buncombe Elder Justice Coalition is a community-wide collaboration and includes professionals from various disciplines including social work and human services, elder law, law enforcement, criminal justice, healthcare, care/case management, aging services, and many others. The mission of Buncombe Elder Justice Coalition is to strengthen our community's capacity to prevent and address elder abuse, neglect and exploitation quickly, effectively, and with respect.

Experienced Workforce Initiative (EWI) - A partnership between NC Career Works, Land of Sky Regional Council - Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, AARP Mountain Region, Age-Friendly Buncombe County, and community members which supports and promotes the engagement of experienced workers, age 50+, across the workforce continuum including full and part-time employment, entrepreneurship, stipend-based training, and volunteer work.

Housing Options for Aging in Place (HOAP) - HOAP is a collaboration of professionals and community members dedicated to providing safe, affordable, and accessible housing for older adults. Members include occupational therapists, housing advocates, builders, AARP Mountain Region, Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity, RL Mace Universal Design Institute, Asheville Buncombe Institute of Parity Achievement (ABIPA), Asheville Realty Group, Buncombe County Planning and Community Development and Communications & Public Engagement, Givens Communities, Age-Friendly Buncombe County, Land of Sky Regional Council, and community members. The vision of HOAP is that all older adults living in Buncombe County have the ability and choice to age in place in order to remain safe, well, and engaged in their communities. HOAP developed an Aging In Place Planning Guide (PDF) to prepare for aging in place and thriving in the community.

Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Advisory Committee - The Home and Community Care Block Grant Advisory Committee makes grant recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding allocations of Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) funding and Buncombe County Supplemental Aging Services funding (BCSAF). The committee is comprised of interested community members appointed by the Buncombe County Board of County Commissioners. The HCCBG Advisory Committee meets monthly to review monthly reports regarding delivery of services from funded agencies, review monitoring reports, advocate for aging services funding, and discuss ways to improve and/or expand aging services.

Intergenerational Connections - The Intergenerational Connections Committee was formed in 2025. The purpose of this committee is to bring different generations together to learn from each other, support people of all ages, promote positive aging, and reduce ageism. Intergenerational sessions are held for community members of all ages to learn and support each other in a fun environment. Members include Age-Friendly Buncombe County, Buncombe County Communications & Public Engagement,

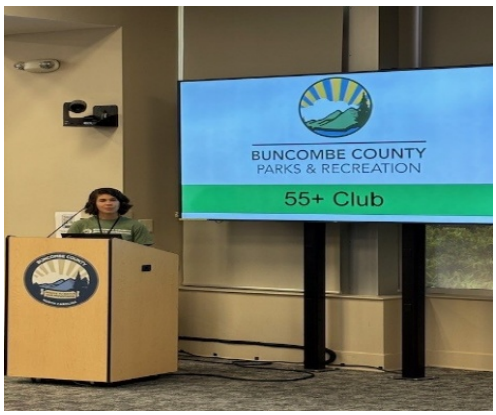
Buncombe County Aging and Adult Services, Council on Aging of Buncombe County, Land of Sky Area Agency on Aging, Givens Highland Farms, and YMCA.

Strategic Aging Leadership Team (SALT) - The SALT team is comprised of leadership in aging services who spearheaded the Active Aging Center Project. The committee continues to meet monthly and discusses ways to highlight and support aging services. Members include Buncombe County Aging and Adult Services, Mountain Aging Partners, Land of Sky Regional Council Area Agency on Aging, Council on Aging of Buncombe County, Givens Communities, and Age-Friendly Buncombe County.

Active Aging Center - The Active Aging Center Project was initiated in May 2019. The proposed project envisioned a centralized hub offering comprehensive, coordinated services and programming for older adults, caregivers, and others in the Buncombe County addressing the social determinants of health. Although the Active Aging Center Project was well received by the Buncombe County Board of County Commissioners during the briefing session on October 18, 2022, the project did not move forward.

Results from the Deerfield Community Engagement and Needs Assessment (CENA) showed that more than three-quarters of key informants (77.5%) said that a one-stop-shop for aging services was needed. It is hopeful that the Active Aging Center Project will be revitalized and support older adults in being **safe**, **well**, and **engaged**. Thus, the Active Aging Center remains an initiative of Age-Friendly Buncombe County.













Thank You!

Thank you to the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee (AFAC) who assisted in updating the Age-Friendly Action Plan:

Alison Banzhoff, Aging and Adult Services Program Manager, Buncombe County Health and Human Services
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Charlie Lee, Mountain Mobility (MM) Transportation Specialist, Land of Sky Regional Council
Elizabeth Williams, Executive Director, Mountain Aging Partners
Joey Abel, Director of Community Impact, Givens Communities
Judith Long, Interim Executive Director, Council on Aging of Buncombe County
Kevin Morgan, Clinical Director, Primary Care and Behavioral Health, AdventHealth Hendersonville
LeeAnne Tucker, Area Agency on Aging Director, Land of Sky Regional Council
Michael Barnett, Executive Director, Jewish Family Services of WNC
Richard Duncan, Executive Director, RL Mace Universal Design Institute
Robert Fillhaber, Volunteer, SERV-19, Buncombe County Sheriff's Office
Taryn Tindall, Director, Givens Longevity and Brain Health Program, Givens Communities











