Summary of Brevard's Age-Friendly projects, 2024-2025

Introduction:
Brevard, NC, population 7850, located in Transylvania County in the western part of the state, applied to the AARP network of age-friendly, livable communities in February 2024 and was accepted February 27, 2024, the 18th municipality in the state to join. Mayor Maureen Copelof established an Age-Friendly Task Force and appointed gerontologist and psychologist, Dr. Paula Hartman-Stein, as the volunteer coordinator. During April to July 2024 the Task Force conducted a community wide survey obtaining 647 completed surveys. Mayor Copelof and Dr. Hartman-Stein also led four in-person listening sessions with several hundred citizens in attendance, resulting in 201 specific suggestions. Based on the data from the survey and listening sessions the Task Force created an action plan that met the criteria established by AARP, certifying Brevard to be part of the network of Age-Friendly States and Communities until January 10, 2028.

The plan focused on five domains of livability including: Housing; Transportation; Outdoor spaces and buildings; health services and community support; and communication and information.

Several policies and plans to improve livability for all ages of citizens in Brevard had been underway prior to February 2024. The following highlight initiatives, projects, and educational seminars developed through an age-friendly lens.

Housing

1. Brevard gave a $1.169M bridge loan to Fairhaven Meadows for the development of 42 LMI units. These are income based units and will be open to all ages.
2. Purchased four acres off Old Hendersonville Hwy with the intention of donating it to a developer of LMI units in the future.
3. Donated surplus city property to the Housing Assistance Corporation for the creation of up to 15 single-family LMI units. These units will be distinct from the projects mentioned above because the homes will be for sale rather than for rent. The property is wooded with steep slopes so they are unsuitable for multi-family buildings but can accommodate smaller single-family homes.
4. Amended the zoning code to ease red tape on housing creation across all types and price points.
5. A continuing care retirement community in an adjoining county is looking for a partner in Transylvania County to build housing for the older adult demographic. Additional discussion with this CCRC is planned for 2026.
6. An Age-friendly task force member who is an architect and member of City Council, Mr. Lauren Wise, has agreed to promote universal design concepts with the local building community.
7. Held an Aging in Place seminar to increase awareness of resources available to help residents continue to age in place.

Outdoor spaces, buildings, and parking

1. City allocated an additional $30K toward downtown sidewalk/street repair in FY24/25
2. In an effort to keep spaces in circulation (i.e., to deter people from camping out in spaces) the City increased the citation fine to $50 and changed the code to allow police to tow cars with three or more unpaid tickets.
3. Added back four on-street spaces in downtown that had been lost due to the recent streetscape and repaving.
4. Created a new parking space striping plan that created three new spaces
5. A parking study is underway in 2025.
6. A current plan is in progress to conduct an assessment of sidewalks and ADA accessibility across the city.

Transportation

1. An assessment of the efficiency/effectiveness of fixed route vans has been done in 2025 to ensure they align with areas where older residents live.
2. The Safety committee of the city is looking at traffic calming measures.
3. An AARP volunteer and member of the Age-Friendly Task Force, Sara Knapp, became a recent member of the Transylvania County Transportation Advisory Board.

Health services and community support:

Two intergenerational life-long learning community programs were offered prior to being accepted in the Age-Friendly network:

1. January 27, 2024: *Multi-cultural perspectives on aging* with Brevard College students and faculty and a community leader from nearby Cherokee Nation presenting. **91 in attendance, ranging in age 11 to 97.**
2. February 17, 2024: *Nature's Positive Powers*, with retired Brevard College faculty, two Brevard College students and two community members, with **45 in attendance, age 11 to 81.**

After acceptance to the AARP network, the following programs were offered, based on topics of interest from community input that included end of life care, strategies for health and mental health, aging in place, and technology for the non-digital native.

3. March 2, 2024: *Courageous Conversations for End-of-Life Preparation* with two local death doulas and one student from Brevard College, with **60 attendees**, **age 35-87**
4. April 13, 2024: Cybersecurity and technology for the non-digital native. Presenter from Blue Ridge Community College, with **28 attendees**, age 20-83
5. June 1, 2024: *Tech Lab for the non-digital native* with instructor from Brevard College and tech squad from a local nonprofit, Through the Trees; **41 attendees,** age 18-84

6. August 3, 2024: *Digital Health Literacy and Tech Lab* with local nurse advocate and tech squad from nonprofit, Through the Trees; **25 attendees**, age 23-84
7. August 26, 2024: *Age-Well Across the Life-Span* with 6 RN students from the local Community College Nursing Class and 23 community members**, 29 attendees,** age 30-93
8. September 16, 2024: *Age-Well Across the Life-Span* with 6 RN students & 10 community members, **16 attendees, age 21-85**.

In late September 2024, a devastating weather crisis occurred in our area, Hurricane Helene. Taking a public health perspective, Dr. Karen Cochran, faculty member from Blue Ridge Community College and Dr. Hartman-Stein pivoted to offering community support groups to help reduce anxiety and recover from the emotional impact of the hurricane.

A. Five Hurricane recovery support groups with students and community members
   1. Oct. 14th, 16 students, 15 community members = 31 attendees, age 20-85
   2. Oct. 21st, 6 students, 6 community members =12 attendees, age 21-76
   3. Oct. 28th, 12 students, 10 community members = 22 attendees, age 20-79
   4. Nov 4th, 7 students, 9 community members = 16 attendees, age 20-80
   5. Nov. 18, 4 students, 8 community members= 12 attendees, age 20-80

B. Four hurricane Recovery Support Groups with community members only.
   6. November 25th, 7 community members, age 62-80
   7. December 2nd, 6 community members, age 68-80
   8. December 9th, 6 community members, age 68-76
   9. December 16, 9 community members, age 68-80

Under the auspices of Age-Friendly Brevard to provide community support and recovery efforts, **a total # of 9 support groups were offered, with 81 individual participants**, including 30 older adults and 51 students. Ages ranged from 20 to 85.

C. July 2024 Received national recognition by AARP Livable Communities for our technology classes for the non-digital native.
D. Mayor Copelof was chosen to represent Brevard on a national traffic safety committee
E. **In summary, the number of participants in the 17 life-long learning and support group sessions in 2024: 410 contacts (some people attended multiple programs). 21% were college students and two were pre-teens.**

2025:

1. February 2025, Brevard received state wide recognition by the NC Assoc on Aging. Dr. Hartman-Stein presented a workshop on hurricane support groups in Chapel Hill, NC.
2. Newspaper article published in January 2025 in *The National Psychologist newspaper* regarding age-friendly volunteer opportunities for psychologists.

3. March 20, 2025, Brevard was featured in a national AARP Age-Friendly In-action forum. Dr. Hartman-Stein presented *The Domino Effect, Year one, Brevard's Age-Friendly origin story.*

2025 community support programs, projects, and grants

1. February 2025, submitted AARP Mini grant for emergency to-go-bags, awarded **$1,000**
2. March 6, 2025 Summit on Safely Aging-in-Place, **92 attendees**
3. April 21, 2025, Assembled over 100 emergency- to- go bags; with **8** volunteers
4. April 23, 2025, Summit on Disaster Preparedness, in conjunction with county staff, the Emergency Management Director of Transylvania County; speakers from County Health Dept and EMS, **60 attendees**
5. May 28, 2025, Advanced Care planning seminar by presenters from the NC Serious Illness Coalition, **43 attendees**, **awarded $500**
6. June 2025, Awarded AARP community challenge grant on disaster preparedness and emotional recovery, **awarded $2500**. Grant entailed offering 4 community workshops and producing a 45- minute documentary
7. Attended Juneteenth church service and spoke with 3 Baptist ministers for purpose of increasing interest from African-American community in workshop on preparedness of weather crises
8. July 8, 2025, filmed, **13 individuals involved** in filming *Ready and Resilient: Lessons from Hurricane Helene.*
9. July 17, 2025, Presentation in morning on Age-Friendly projects at Brevard Roundtable for non-profits
10. July 17, workshop in afternoon on weather crisis preparedness; target audience of African-American community; **31 participants**, half were African-American
11. August 5, communications office of AARP filmed an ad about what was done in Asheville region after Hurricane Helene. Two Brevard AARP volunteers from the Age-Friendly task force participated.
12. September 27, Debut of documentary film, Ready and Resilient: Lessons from Hurricane Helene, Brevard Music Center, **25 attendees.**
13. October 14, workshop on weather crisis preparedness, target audience of caregivers of Parkinson's disease, part of area support group for PD caregivers, **25 attendees. In summary, the total # of community members who attended weather disaster workshops from the AARP community challenge grant: 94; an additional 60 community members attended the first Summit on Disaster Preparedness with county EMS staff, regional AARP staff and task force coordinator, i.e., 154 individuals participated in workshops on weather preparedness and recovery.**
14. December 4, 2025, Project completion event, a public showing of film and discussion afterward. Target audience members are elected officials, city planner, AARP volunteers, local business leaders and members of long-term recovery group.

From 2024-November 2025, **a total of 24 Age-Friendly community programs were conducted, resulting in 699 in-person contacts with community members (410 in 2024 and 289 in 2025,**

with some people attending multiple programs. 94 individuals attended at least one in-person disaster preparedness and recovery workshop.)

However, the community challenge grant enabled a larger reach in the region and beyond through funding the educational video. As of Nov 17th, the documentary film on disaster preparedness and recovery has had **147 views in its first month** hosted on the NC AARP youtube channel with a link on the City of Brevard's website.

15. The lack of a day care program for individuals living with dementia has been an ongoing problem in Transylvania County. Discussions have occurred between Mayor Copelof and the administration of the for-profit regional hospital, HCA but an exact date of the opening of the service has not yet been determined.

Communication and Information

1. Information sessions regarding the City's alert system have been conducted in areas with a high density of older residents.
2. As noted in the section on life-long learning programs, three Age-Friendly workshops have been offered in 2024 on digital literacy for older adults in conjunction with the nonprofit, Through the Trees. More sessions are scheduled in 2026.
3. Application for grant funding was made to create a community calendar so that all events are listed in one place and easily reviewed.
4. An Age-Friendly information resource guide has been created in 2025 on the city of Brevard website.

Age-Friendly Task force meetings have been held at the City Hall chambers on approximately a monthly basis in 2024 and quarterly in 2025.