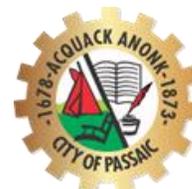


# City of Passaic

## Aging-Friendly Land Use Plan



Prepared by New Jersey Future  
May 2023



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# OVERVIEW

## About the Project

To incorporate livability for older adults into its ongoing redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization planning efforts, the City of Passaic commenced an aging-friendly land use assessment, receiving technical assistance from New Jersey Future and with funding provided through an aging-friendly communities initiative grant program. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the extent to which Passaic City's land use plans, policies, regulations, and physical characteristics meet the needs of older adults throughout the community. The assessment provides an analysis of Passaic City's demographic characteristics and its built environment, and examines suitability for meeting the needs of an aging population across six categories: administration, planning, mixed-use/center-based development, housing options, transportation and mobility, and availability of public amenities and open space.

A steering committee was formed to oversee the assessment process. It included municipal administration, community development, and engineering departments, as well as local residents, and the community organization Habitat for Humanity. The steering committee met in early 2022 to review baseline data, identify short- and long-term goals, and outline a community engagement process. Community participation in the assessment included a facilitated discussion at the Passaic Senior Center, interviews with community groups and advocates, and two focus group sessions. Participants in engagement sessions were asked to inform the assessment by sharing their experiences, perceptions, and knowledge regarding the land use topics evaluated.

Based on existing ordinances and planning goals, and a community-driven prioritization process, this assessment identifies a number of land-use actions for Passaic City to improve its aging-friendliness. The assessment report aims to inform decision-makers and community members and outline potential improvements to Passaic City's community design to meet the needs of its older population, as well as to build the foundation for a broader, long-term aging-friendly initiative to develop in the city.

## About the Community

The City of Passaic is a 3.24-square-mile municipality located in the southwest corner of Passaic County, which is in northeastern New Jersey. It is surrounded on the north, south, and west by the City of Clifton, and bordered on the east by the Passaic River. Several Bergen County municipalities are situated along the eastern banks of the river across from Passaic City—Garfield City, Wallington Borough, East Rutherford Borough, and Rutherford Borough.

Passaic City is located 10 miles from Manhattan, and commuters using the NJ Transit Passaic train station can access several cities via train, including New York City and Hoboken City. Passaic City is additionally connected to surrounding communities by State Highway 21 and NJ Transit bus service.

Although small in area, the city is densely populated and has several neighborhoods, each with distinct demographic and community features. Several enclaves are supported by smaller commercial centers, but Main Avenue forms the city's primary commercial corridor, concentrated in the vicinity of the intersection of Main Avenue and Broadway.

The city contains a range of housing types consisting primarily of multi-unit buildings and including single-family attached and detached units in considerably fewer amounts.

The community is characterized by ethnic diversity, with nearly 75% of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino, predominantly Mexicans, Cubans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and others.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>CGI Communications, Inc. Video Tour of Passaic: Diversity. Retrieved from the City of Passaic website on 1/30/23.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

## Population and Economic Demographics

The city has a smaller proportion of older residents than the state overall<sup>2</sup>—24.3% of residents are age 50 or older, compared with 37.3% for the state, and a smaller percentage of the workforce in Passaic City is aged 55 or over compared with the state. The biggest difference is in the 55 to 59 age group (6.4% compared to 10.4%), followed by the group aged 65 and older (4.0% compared to 6.9%). Fewer Passaic City residents in these groups are in the workforce compared to the state. There is not much of a difference in the 60–64 age group between Passaic City and the state. More than 6,000 Passaic City residents aged 55 years and older participate in the workforce.

Passaic City has a population of approximately 69,637 people. The city has a high proportion of community members identifying as Hispanic or Latino (73.4% compared to 20.8% for the state). Individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino are the most represented group in all census tracts except two tracts that are dominated by residents identifying as white only (Figure 1). Residents identifying as white only are the second most represented group in the city, making up 15.71% of the population, and appear to be highly clustered in census tract 1756.01, to some extent in tract 1757.04, and to a lesser extent in tracts 1757.03 and 1757.01. These tracts are located in the predominantly single-family residential areas in the southern portion of the city (Figure 2), nearest the train station and surrounding Third Ward Park—the community’s largest park—which offers amenities including ball fields, a boathouse cafe, and winter ice skating.

The population of people in the city who identify as Black is relatively small and appears to be distributed across all census tracts with the exception of the predominantly white tract in the southwestern portion of the city surrounding Third Ward Park (tract 1756.01). Community members identifying as Asian appear to be clustered in four tracts, particularly in the area encompassing the Main Avenue commercial corridor (tract 1758.01).

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<sup>2</sup> Demographic data for this section were acquired from the U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2021 5-year data sets, unless otherwise noted. Census data were retrieved from <https://censusreporter.org/>.

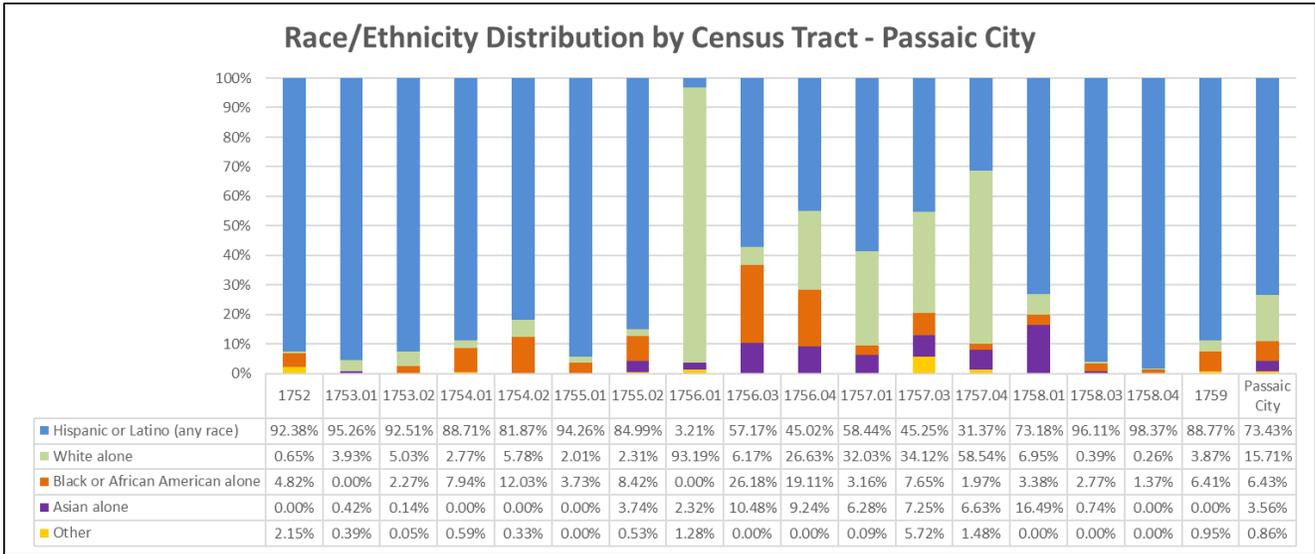


Figure 1. Race/ethnicity distribution by census tract in Passaic City

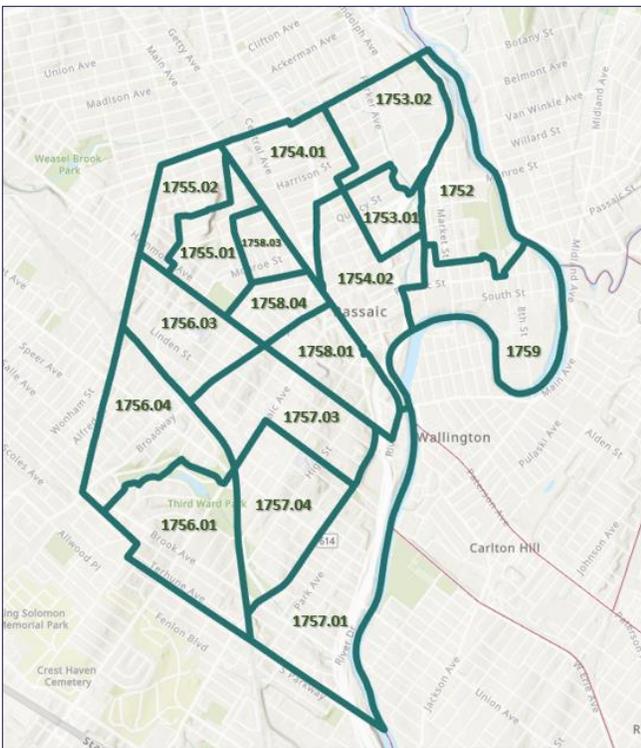


Figure 2. Census tract boundaries in Passaic City

The city is generally lower-income compared to other communities in New Jersey. Nearly half of households in the city (48.2%) report earning less than \$50,000 in annual income, compared with 29.2% for the state. The poverty rate in Passaic City is more than double the rate in New Jersey (21.2% compared to 9.2%), and for those aged 65 and over, the rate is two and half times greater in Passaic City than in the state overall (22.8% compared to 8.8%).

## Mixed-Use Center

A higher percentage of commercial properties within a municipality's borders generally indicates a more mixed-use environment that will allow community members to accomplish more of their needs locally, reducing the need to travel out of town. The rate of Passaic City's property tax base that is residential is similar to that of the county, although slightly lower (72.2% compared to 76.4%),<sup>3</sup> indicating that commercial uses are more prevalent in the city compared to the county as a whole. With over 21,000 people per square mile, Passaic City is a compact, urban environment. It includes distinct commercial districts that contain a mix of retail stores, restaurants, and other businesses.

## Housing

Passaic City offers a wide range of housing types. Most of the housing in the community is multi-family, with most being in buildings with five or more units (43.2%). "Missing middle" housing—which is sized in-between single-family detached homes and mid-rise apartment buildings—is much more prevalent in Passaic City compared to the state, and Passaic City appears to have a moderately high amount of it, with 52.0% of the housing supply consisting of buildings with two to nine units. This is beneficial in that missing middle housing tends to provide a supply of more affordable housing options that have similar streetscape appearance to single-family housing. Missing middle housing includes duplexes, triplexes, quads, and other middle-sized units.

Relative to the state, more of Passaic City's housing stock appears to be of a more modest size, with 82.0% of housing units containing less than six rooms (compared to 46.3% for the state). Passaic City homes tend to have fewer rooms compared to the state average, which is expected given its urban typology. The percentage of single-family homes in Passaic City is significantly lower compared to the state, with 19.2% of the housing in Passaic City being single-family compared to 62.8% for the state. Since 2010, Passaic City has added 672 new rental housing units.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. (2021). *Property Tax Data*. [Excel data file]. Retrieved from [https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/property\\_tax.html](https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/property_tax.html).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Tenure by Year Structure Built American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from <<https://censusreporter.org>>

The community is largely a city of renters. Home ownership in Passaic City is less than a third the rate for New Jersey overall (20.1% owner-occupied compared to 63.4%). There are also fewer vacant units in Passaic City relative to the state (3.2% vacancy compared to 9.8%).

The median value of housing in Passaic City is nearly the same as that for the state, while a large portion of the city's population, particularly older adults, earn less in income and contribute to a higher poverty rate. The cost of renting in Passaic City, however, is less than that for the state. The lower renting cost is reflected in data showing that proportionally less of the city's renters are housing cost-burdened (i.e. paying at least 30% of their gross income on housing costs) compared to the state. However, while Passaic City's rental housing cost burden for the general population is 48.7% compared to 54.9% for the state, it is higher for Passaic City residents aged 65 or older compared to the state (10.2% compared to 8.2%). The largest renter population paying at least 30% of their income on rent in Passaic City is householders aged 35 to 64 years old, paying 35% or more.

The housing cost burden rate is greater in Passaic City compared to the state for all homeowner households (50.7% compared to 31.7%) and for homeowner households headed by someone aged 65 or older (16.5% compared to 12.0%). Over half of the homeowners in the community are housing cost burdened.

Fewer Passaic City residents aged 65 or older live alone compared to the state (3.5% compared to 5.7%), and less than half the statewide rate live with a spouse or partner (4.1% compared to 11.5%). Passaic City residents aged 65 or older are more likely to live with a child or other relative (5.1%) compared to either living alone (3.5%) or with a spouse/partner (4.1%) compared to the state (3.5%, 5.7%, and 11.5%). None reportedly live with non-relatives (0.0%). Multi-generational living arrangements are more common in Passaic City.

About the same proportion of older residents live in group quarters in Passaic City compared to the state, although at a slightly lower rate (2.0% compared to 3.0%).

## Mobility and Transportation

Passaic City is well connected to surrounding communities and metropolitan centers via regional public bus, rail, and road networks. State Route 21 provides primary highway access, and several roadway bridges across the Passaic River connect Passaic City with neighboring communities to the east in Bergen County. NJ Transit commuter rail serves Passaic City via Passaic Station on the Main Line, connecting travelers to Hoboken and Secaucus Junction to the South and Suffern and Port Jervis to the North. Travel within the city occurs via NJ Transit buses, private jitneys, private automobiles, cycling, and walking.

The three census tracts identified as low vehicle access using the USDA Food Access Research Atlas cover the southeastern, southwestern, and central portions of the town. Within these areas, there are between 6% and 11% of households that have no vehicle and live more than a half-mile from a grocery store, which means that individuals in those households may have difficulty obtaining meals.

More Passaic City residents commute to work by public transportation compared to the state overall (16.7% compared to 11.6%), although there is almost no difference for residents age 55 and over. Few of these residents are commuting by public transportation in both Passaic and throughout the state.

The rate of commuters who walk, bike, or use other non-vehicle means to get to work is nearly three times greater for Passaic City compared to the state (14.3% compared to 4.7%), although the rate is low for residents aged 55 and over in both cases. The rate of residents aged 55 to 64 commuting to work in this way in Passaic City is twice that of the state for this age group (2.1% compared to 0.6%). Compared to the state population, the oldest age group is much less likely to commute in this way, and not likely at all to do so (0.0% compared to 0.3%).

Although most commuters in Passaic City drive alone to work, the rate is much lower than that for the state, both overall (46.3% compared to 71.0%) and for older age groups specifically (12.1% compared to 19.6%). The rate for carpooling is much higher in Passaic City compared to the state for the general population (17.9% compared to 7.9%).

Carpooling among Passaic’s older population at a rate of 1.9% is similar to the statewide rate of 1.5%.

The proportion of Passaic City’s population that works from home is nearly identical to the state, however, the age group of 55 to 59 exhibits a relatively lower rate (0.2% in Passaic City compared to 0.6% in the state overall). The rate of households without cars in Passaic City is nearly three times that of the state (32.7% compared to 11.6%). The rate is nearly double for households that include an older adult aged 65 or over (7.6% compared to 4.1%).

## Amenities and Open Spaces

The Passaic municipal complex, centrally located at the corner of Passaic and State Streets, houses the Anabelle Shimkowitz Senior Center—typically referred to as the Passaic Senior Center—and a health clinic, in addition to public-facing municipal offices. The Senior Center offers programming five days per week for registered participants,<sup>5</sup> and the Jewish Family Service Clifton-Passaic’s Club SEQUOIA offers programming four days per week for registered participants.<sup>6</sup> Both of these senior centers offer transportation for registered participants who need it. The Passaic Public Library, located at the Corner of Passaic Avenue and Gregory Avenue, is open six days per week and offers community programming and meeting space. The library has not fully relaunched all of its programming since reopening after closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has been broadcasting a virtual concert series via Facebook. The Reid Memorial Branch is an additional library facility located on 3rd Street in the eastern portion of the city, one block away from Market Street. The Reid Branch is open five days per week.

Private clubs and ethnic and religious organizations offer opportunities for social interaction, pursuing interests, and engaging in activities throughout Passaic City. These institutions include Mi Casa es Puebla, Jewish Family Service of Clifton-Passaic, Lajas Civic Club, City Green, YMCA of Passaic-Clifton, Club de Puerto Rico, Polish Cultural Center, Ukrainian Center, and the Veterans Association. Mi Casa es Puebla is a consular office of

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<sup>5</sup> Derived from the registration information and program offerings at the Anabelle Shimkowitz Senior Center listed at <https://www.cityofpassaic.com/211/Senior-Affairs>

<sup>6</sup> Derived from the program description at <https://jfsclifton.org/project/sequoia/>.

the city of Puebla, Mexico, which serves social service functions for Passaic City's large Poblano population. The city also has many houses of worship, including a large concentration of Orthodox Jewish synagogues and related facilities in the southern portion of the city.

Passaic has 13 public parks totaling 92.23 acres. The largest of these is Third Ward Park which encompasses 55.16 acres in the southern portion of the city near the train station. This park accounts for nearly two-thirds of the city's open space and includes a large pond called Hughes Lake, a boat house cafe, a roller-skating rink, and several ball fields, among other amenities. Another larger set of park facilities exists on the east side of Passaic, consisting of Dundee Island Park—located along the Passaic Riverfront—and Pulaski Park, which is incorporated into the schoolyard for Casimir Pulaski School Number 8. The two parks were joined after the City's purchase of a train track right-of-way, and together they offer amenities including ball fields, a skate park, and boat launch. The city's smallest park is Wall Street Pocket Park, encompassing 0.04 acres at a busy intersection in the Eastside neighborhood.



There is no substantial park or open space located within the downtown core. The closest substantial park spaces in the vicinity of the town center include Christopher Columbus Park—which is incorporated into the schoolyard of Memorial Elementary School Number 11 and includes ball fields—and Armory Park, which is located near the YMCA at the intersection of Main Avenue and Prospect Street and includes a dog park.

Passaic City contains significant impervious surface cover (nearly 67% of the city is covered by impervious surface<sup>7</sup>), and the city is bounded by the Passaic River along its eastern border, resulting in significant exposure to flood hazards. More than 9.3% of residents aged 65 or older live within a flood risk area.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the Eastside neighborhood has extensive flood exposure.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND RESULTS**

Information gathered through various community engagement strategies is incorporated into this assessment. Community input is essential for the city to prioritize specific improvements to benefit the older population as well as the entire community. Three main approaches were implemented to engage with community members, including a public information session conducted through the city's senior programming, direct outreach to relevant stakeholder groups and potential partners through one-on-one interviews and presentations at meetings conducted by community groups, and facilitated focus group meetings.

### **Passaic Senior Center Public Engagement Session**

On January 24, 2023, the Passaic City aging-friendly project community engagement session was held at the Passaic Senior Center during a time of typical programming for which community members register in advance. The engagement session was facilitated by New Jersey Future and open to the public, although all of the approximately 30 participants were registered Passaic Senior Center members. The program was fully bilingual, presented in both English and Spanish, with reliance on a professional interpreter-facilitator who engaged with approximately 20% of participants who were Spanish speakers. The program provided all participants with a general introduction to

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<sup>7</sup> Derived from the Municipal Forestry Snapshot tool at <https://njforestadapt.rutgers.edu/#/splash>

<sup>8</sup> Passaic City "Vulnerable Populations Report" retrieved from Rutgers University Climate Snapshots website, February 15, 2022.

aging-friendly land use concepts and solicited broad insights about livability for older adults in Passaic City.

Throughout the program, participants were invited to mark on a map where they live, which demonstrated to both facilitators and participants the wide geographic distribution of participants across Passaic City, fulfilling an intention for the project that diverse geographic representation be included in the engagement process.

The program began by orienting participants with a brief presentation about aging-friendly land use and the goals of Passaic City for the project. Following the presentation, participants convened for three activities. The first activity was designed much like a conventional game of bingo—a popular program often offered at the Senior Center—using aging-friendly land use principles rather than letters and numbers, with “winners” receiving \$50 gift cards. The activity was designed as a fun way to familiarize participants with language typically used in land use planning and provided an opportunity to engage participants in discussion about the relevance of the terms in relation to the livability of Passaic City for older adults.



The second activity was also a bingo activity, in which each table of 4–6 participants was given a bingo card with various descriptions of different ways to be active and engaged, such as taking the train to New York City or maintaining a vegetable or herb garden. It entailed that each group of participants at a table write the names for each participant at the table in each of the squares that applied to them, and the participants at the first table to get the names of everyone at their table into three squares in a row would each win a prize. The activity was designed to prompt informal conversation about how participants interact with their built environments.



The final activity entailed participants identifying and discussing assets and obstacles for older adults in relation to specific instances of the built environment of Passaic City. Participants used double-sided paddles, where one side had a green thumbs-up symbol and the other side had a red thumbs-down symbol, to react to a series of photos of public spaces in Passaic City. Participants held up the red side of their paddles if they saw an obstacle in the image, and they held up the green side of their paddles if they saw an asset in the image. Participants were asked to share the assets and obstacles they observed, and responses were noted on a flipchart for the group to see. The images shown for the activity were of the following locations, which all participants appeared to recognize:

- 1.** Passaic Ave 200 Block bus stop
- 2.** Main Avenue and Madison Street
- 3.** Entrance to Passaic train station
- 4.** Intersection of Broadway and Van Houten
- 5.** Hughes Lake at Third Ward Park



Following the assets and obstacles activity, participants were invited to speak more broadly about challenges and opportunities for livability in Passaic City. The broad-ranging conversation centered primarily on transportation and mobility. Many participants talked about challenges they face getting around town because of the transportation network and pedestrian safety issues, such as insufficient crosswalk infrastructure at appropriate locations and inadequate lighting at night.

Participants were asked how they traveled to the engagement session. At least 10 participants reported driving themselves to the senior center. At least five reported walking to the event, because they live within a 15-minute walk. Approximately eight participants accessed the engagement session by taking the transportation shuttle, which is only available to registered Passaic Senior Center participants and only while the senior center is open. Some participants noted public transit gets them to most of the places they want to go, but they are highly limited by the transit schedules, especially on Sundays. Another concern raised regarding transit and in response to seeing the image of the Passaic Avenue bus stop, was the reported recent removal of many of the benches at bus stops. Participants said the lack of seating at bus shelters deters people from using the bus. They also noted challenges getting to amenities and other locations outside of the existing public transit network and affirmed that not having “last-mile” transportation to make it the rest of the way to their destination after they are dropped off at transit stops limits their activity.

One participant offered the idea of a trolley for seniors to get around town during times when the Passaic Senior Center transit is unavailable. It was noted that the transportation service EZ Ride has approached the City about providing shuttle services to the community. Aside from transportation concerns, participants noted a handful of other concerns. At least three participants who self-identified as living in or near downtown noted a lack of open spaces and amenities near their homes, explaining that they need to travel to reach these types of destinations. On the topic of intergenerational housing, the participants who reported living with children or grandchildren appeared to be the only participants who spoke Spanish as their primary language. The topic sparked a brief conversation about the various challenges and advantages of intergenerational living. Several participants echoed the notion that they believe many older people in their community are living with family because they do not have the option to live

independently due to the cost of housing. Housing prices were briefly discussed, including the issue of prospectors purchasing homes, renovating them, then raising housing prices, leading to existing residents being priced out of neighborhoods. The conversation ended on a positive sentiment, with participants noting the strong sense of community they feel in Passaic City, and that they are able to rely on neighbors. One participant offered the suggestion of offering more programs for new residents to introduce them to the community's network of neighbors.

## Key Takeaways from the Public Engagement Session

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- **Pedestrian safety** was voiced as a major concern, including the need for improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting. Participants noted that people may traverse the park when traveling by foot.
- Participants noted it is challenging to rely on **public transportation** in the city because of limited headways and operating hours on weekends, and many bus stops are not equipped with adequate shelter or seating.
- One solution to intracity transit limitations proposed, and generally supported at the session, is to implement a **trolley or shuttle service**, such as EZ Ride.
- Some participants reported needing to travel to access **open space and amenities** because there are none located within walking distance of their homes, particularly in the downtown area.
- Rising **housing costs** for both owners and renters were voiced as an impediment to living independently later in life because higher costs necessitate living with family or in a group setting, or moving outside the community.
- Participants reported a **strong sense of community** and the ability to rely on neighbors as an asset for livability in the city.

At the close of the engagement session, interested community members were invited to provide their contact information if they were interested in participating in a focus group. Community members were additionally recruited to participate in a focus group using the city's website and social media pages, flyers posted in community spaces, outreach to local organizations that serve older adults, and in-person communication at events throughout the city.

## Direct Outreach

In parallel with the engagement session, support for an aging-friendly initiative in Passaic City was fostered by direct outreach to individual community leaders. Outreach was conducted in both Spanish and English languages. In conducting the outreach, a roster of relevant community organizations, groups, leaders, and community members with a direct or indirect interest in advancing aging-friendly land use was developed. The roster includes community affiliations such as, cultural groups, senior centers, veterans clubs, senior clubs, organizations relating to immigration and related services, and social media groups. The roster was used to identify potential aging-friendly leaders and partners within the community and is not limited to entities with a mission to serve older adults. The purpose of the roster is to facilitate advancement of a community-wide initiative including participants from diverse perspectives. Identification of potential partners and leaders is valuable to ongoing efforts to form and sustain an aging-friendly initiative in Passaic City. Many communities in the state, particularly in northeastern NJ, are engaged in aging-friendly planning, with several completing action plans and forming aging-friendly initiatives through frameworks such as the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, or other approaches. There are various and extensive resources available for the community to engage in aging-friendly community-building.

### Direct Outreach at Community Group Meetings

Outreach efforts included presentations and discussions at meetings conducted by active community organizations: one with Jewish Family Services and one with the United Puerto Rican Council. Community groups with different cultural backgrounds and based in different areas of the city were solicited for this outreach effort. Discussions at these meetings were intentionally broad to allow participants to spontaneously raise the specific areas of concerns relevant to them, and some specific questions were presented

as needed to prompt aging-friendly topic exploration. The Jewish Family Services meeting was conducted in English, and the United Puerto Rican Council meeting was conducted in Spanish. Members from both groups were invited to sign up for focus group sessions, which are described in the next section.

## Key Takeaways from Community Group Meetings:

### Mobility and Transportation

- Older adults often cannot attend events and activities due to **lack of transportation**. Participants noted that this contributes to **isolation and loneliness** and that poor social relationships can be associated with poor health conditions such as depression.
- **Pedestrian crossings on Main Avenue** were of particular concern for participants, especially due to the speed of vehicles traveling on Main Avenue. It was described how older adults may underestimate the speed of an approaching vehicle because of its distance away, while overestimating their own walking speed, resulting in dangerous conditions. It was suggested that **speed enforcement is needed**, along with additional safety measures, especially during peak hours.
- Participants also expressed the need to **improve the city's overall walkability**. Some spoke of unsafe environments they encounter regularly, including within their neighborhoods and in shopping areas. For example, it was noted that the City of Passaic has many uneven **sidewalks**, which can be life-threatening for older people. One participant suggested that the City inspect sidewalks throughout the community to confirm that they are safe.
- **Accessibility** was also raised as a concern, as some buildings reportedly do not have operating elevators and taking the stairs is out of the question for many older adults. According to participants, a more robust assessment is needed to evaluate accessibility comprehensively throughout the City of Passaic.

## Key Takeaways from Community Group Meetings:

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### Amenities and Open Spaces

- There was mention of a need for police presence. One participant suggested older adults become afraid to leave their homes and withdraw from friends, family, and activities due to fear of becoming a target of crime.
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### Housing

- Participants acknowledged that familial care may demonstrate respect for elders in Hispanic culture, but that this sense of duty can come with steep financial and lifestyle repercussions. It was suggested that affordable housing options may be a need for older adults currently living with family members.
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### Public Engagement

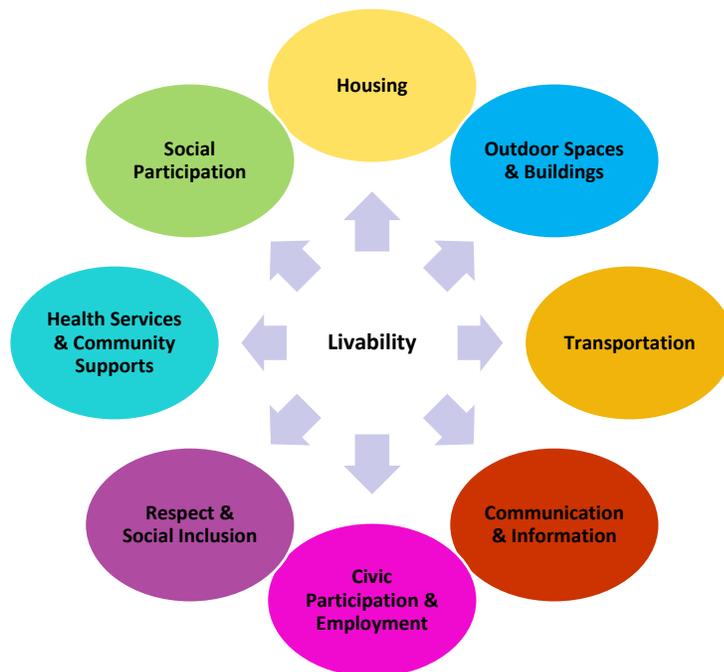
- Participants shared a desire to include younger generations in the conversation about aging-friendliness. Many reported they are part of a three-generation household, noting that linking older adults with the youth can provide advantages for both groups, including: improving knowledge of younger generations about the older population and helping them understand and later accept their own aging, bringing a different perspective from the younger generations to older generations, and keeping family stories and history alive. The digital divide was also addressed, with participants noting that the younger generation can help introduce technology into the life of a senior.
- Participants discussed the need to keep any aging-friendly initiative completely widely inclusive to enable community groups to partner with the initiative. They expressed desire that the effort proceed with a city-wide focus and involve the senior center.

## Direct Outreach Interviews with Community Leaders

Twelve individuals listed as points of contact on the direct outreach roster of potential partner organizations were selected for one-on-one interviews, with the goal of recruiting community leaders to participate in an aging-friendly initiative in the city. The recruitment was designed to encourage participation that is not limited to, but has a particular emphasis on, individuals approximately aged 55 or older and organizations and local groups serving older adults. Nine of the twelve interview participants expressed interest in becoming active members of an aging-friendly advisory group or task force within Passaic City.

Interviews with each participant were conducted in-person or via telephone. All participants received preparatory material on principles of aging-friendly communities, primarily described based on the AARP 8 Domains of Livability Framework<sup>9</sup>, ahead of the conversation.

Figure 3. AARP's framework describes includes features of the physical and social environments that can impact quality of life and health outcomes.



<sup>9</sup> The 8 Domains of Livability framework is used in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>

Although conversations varied depending on the participant's specific experience, interests, and sensitivity to the subject matter, each interviewee was asked the following questions:

- 1.** Did you have prior knowledge of the AARP 8 Domains of Livability framework? Please describe the work of your organization or program and how you think it relates to the 8 domains of livability.
- 2.** Are you currently engaged in an initiative or group specifically focused on aging-friendly work or on older adults?
- 3.** What are the ways you currently engage with leadership in Passaic City to deliver services, programs, or resources to community members? Do you have suggestions for improving communication or actions between your organization and the City to improve efficiency or effectiveness?
- 4.** Would you have sufficient capacity (staff, expertise, time, etc.) to collaborate with the City to meet mutual goals that are in the aging-friendly action plan? Would you be open to regular meetings to establish an ongoing relationship and partnership, such as being a member of an aging-friendly committee?
- 5.** What do you think are the most important focus areas for addressing livability for older adults in Passaic City?
- 6.** Does your organization serve a specific demographic of the population? Do you have any specific mechanisms in place for intentionally and proactively practicing equity, justice, and inclusion in your work or programs?
- 7.** Is there anything else you want to share?

Responses from the interviews showed the following similarities and expressed challenges:

- ▶ None of the twelve participants had previous knowledge of AARP's 8 Domains of Livability framework or any other framework of aging-friendly environments.
- ▶ All participants expressed the importance of aging-friendly environments in their community.

- ▶ Although all eight domains of aging-friendliness were addressed during the one-on-one interviews, the primary focus of the conversations was on transportation, housing, activities/events, and green spaces. These were consistently mentioned by participants as the most important domains.

## Challenges Expressed by Community Leaders

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- A need for improved sources and methods for **disseminating information** to the community, including addressing the **language barriers** for community members with low English proficiency.
- Computer illiteracy and the challenge of crossing the “**digital divide.**”
- A need for **additional social services** for older adults, including addressing illiteracy and providing assistance in filling out government documentation.
- Lack of opportunities that promote **companionship and social interaction** for older adults in the community.
- Support from the **business community**, such as offering senior discounts.

## Focus Group Sessions

Two focus group sessions took place on February 16, 2023, in the meeting space at the Passaic Public Library Julius Forstmann – Main Library. The library was selected for its central location within Passaic City and familiarity for several participants. One focus group session was conducted in English between 10:00 AM and 11:30 AM, and a separate focus group session was conducted in Spanish between 12:30 PM and 2:00 PM with reliance on a professional facilitator with native fluency. The events were designed to foster more detailed conversation about some of the information learned through the land use assessment research and through feedback at the January 24 engagement

session. Participants included community members solicited through community-wide announcements and direct outreach efforts described in the above section.

### **Focus Group Session Topics**

**Topic 1 - Mobility and Transportation**

**Topic 2 - Amenities and Open Spaces**

**Topic 3 - Housing**

Nine participants attended the English-speaking focus group session, and seven participants attended the Spanish-speaking focus group session. Participants were notified that the sessions would be recorded and that no names would be associated with any comments made. Both conversations followed a similar format with similar conversation prompts. At the end of each session, participants were provided \$50 gift cards for offering their time and insights.

The program began with introductions and icebreakers that included questions such as, the area of the city where focus group participants live, how long they've lived in the city, and their favorite thing about living in Passaic City. Most participants have spent all or most of their lives living in Passaic City, and the group collectively reported currently living in a variety of neighborhoods throughout the city. One participant lives on the Clifton side of the Passaic-Clifton border and regularly seeks services and amenities in Passaic City, such as those provided by Jewish Family Service. Several participants are active in community groups and programs, including the Passaic Senior Center, the Jewish Family Service's SEQUOIA senior group, which is a social program for active adults age 60 or older, the United Puerto Rican Council, Passaic Community College's satellite campus in Passaic City, and United Passaic Organization.

The icebreaker conversation in both groups yielded a variety of answers regarding favorite things about living in Passaic City. A common answer was Third Ward Park, which many participants called “Passaic Park.” The library was also mentioned as a valuable public amenity, as well as the newly renovated Dundee Island Park. Other participants shared that they like the opportunities to meet people of different cultures, and appreciate the wide range of retail stores of different cultures. Several participants shared that they are actively involved in social and community service groups, and one participant noted she likes how responsive the City is to the needs of community members. One participant lamented the closure of the Ginsburg’s department store on the Main Avenue commercial corridor, with the sentiment resoundingly shared by many of the other participants in the session. During the focus group conversations, session group participants were in general agreement with points and suggestions raised by individual participants.

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*A primary point of conversation in both focus group sessions was safety concerns for pedestrians, especially at road crossings.*

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## **Focus Group Topic I: Mobility and Transportation**

On the first topic of mobility and transportation, participants shared a range of insights. Public transportation wait times and other limitations for getting around on public transit were one theme. One participant noted the bus takes too long to arrive and is delayed by traffic. They typically wait a half hour to one hour for the bus, and often opt to walk instead. Reliable taxi service is also reportedly limited in the city. One suggestion offered by a participant was to implement a downtown shuttle loop specifically for seniors to access grocery stores, get to appointments, and access other services. Another concern raised was the limited hours during which the senior discount is offered on NJ Transit. The bus service provided by Passaic City Community College for its students to travel between campuses is also limited, making it challenging for older adults in Passaic City to access educational opportunities. Participants noted the transportation provided by Passaic City specifically for seniors is good.

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*In and around Third Ward Park, safety concerns were raised regarding the lack of separation between vehicle circulation and pedestrian spaces, benches, and children's play areas.*

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A primary point of conversation in both focus group sessions was safety concerns for pedestrians, especially at road crossings. Among the worst areas for pedestrian safety noted were the Main Avenue and Passaic Avenue commercial corridors. Highland Avenue was also mentioned as a dangerous road. Suggestions for improving pedestrian safety included physical traffic calming measures and speeding ticket cameras. One participant noted there is no signage for pedestrian right-of-way at crossings, and several participants noted that the traffic lights do not provide sufficient time to cross safely, adding that when cars approach the yellow light, they often speed up to get through the intersection.

Another participant shared that they fell into a hole in a sidewalk near Passaic Park and broke their shoulder. The groups noted uneven and cracked sidewalks pose significant dangers to seniors walking on the sidewalks, and some participants reported being injured from falling on poorly maintained sidewalks in Passaic City. Other maintenance concerns include ADA access ramps such as the ramp to the library building, which was reportedly damaged by a car and not repaired for three months. Participants noted that some street signs appear to be missing after being damaged or stolen. In and around Third Ward Park, safety concerns were raised regarding the lack of separation between vehicle circulation and pedestrian spaces, benches, and children's play areas. There is reportedly no bike lane and no traffic calming measure at the park entrance. One notable suggestion by a participant to address these issues was for the City to partner with AAA, NJ Transit, and/or AARP to implement pedestrian programming for safe routes and to apply for grants to repair and maintain sidewalks. Participants concurred with the sentiment that there is a need to assess walkability and invest in safe pedestrian routes. Another suggestion was to enforce a no-turn-on-red policy at intersections for the safety

of pedestrians. Participants noted that turns on red were previously not allowed in Passaic City.

Most participants reported getting around town primarily by car, and concerns over parking were shared by all. There is reportedly not enough parking near businesses. Limited parking for caregivers, particularly after 6:00 PM, was noted as a challenge for many participants. For participants living near the border with other cities, there is an issue with people from other towns parking inside Passaic City's borders and severely limiting parking availability for Passaic residents. One participant noted that if they did not have a handicapped parking designation, they would not find a spot near their home. One suggestion offered by a participant was to implement permit parking in appropriate areas. Other proposed solutions were to expand availability of handicapped parking permits for seniors and to expand handicapped parking spaces in areas frequented by seniors. Parking facility design also reportedly poses safety concerns, such as handicapped street parking where the driver exits the car into a traffic lane.

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*Participants shared the need for better transportation options outside of Passaic Senior Center operating hours, as older adults may have difficulty driving at night, but the senior center transportation service does not operate at that time.*

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Participants shared the need for better transportation options outside of Passaic Senior Center operating hours, as older adults may have difficulty driving at night, but the senior center transportation service does not operate at that time. One participant commented that they drive their personal vehicle to every destination as a preference. Participants reiterated the notion that the bus takes too long, and that not everyone has the ability to walk.

## **Focus Group Topic 2: Amenities and Open Spaces**

The conversation about amenities and open spaces included discussion of broader community concerns such as neighborhood quality of life and engagement between older and younger generations.

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*The idea of older and younger generations engaging in activities was brought up on multiple occasions during one of the sessions. One suggestion by a participant was to have mentoring programs where seniors can work with and teach children.*

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One point of conversation was community gardens. One participant noted Clifton has a community garden and expressed that a community garden in Passaic City would be an opportunity for kids and older people to participate together. Four participants in the focus group that discussed community gardens reported they would participate in a community garden if there were one accessible to them. It was noted by some participants that a community garden exists in Dundee Island Park, but that no one is taking care of it. Participants noted the City could better advertise community gardening opportunities and better coordinate donation of supplies and services related to community gardens from local hardware stores. The idea of older and younger generations engaging in activities was brought up on multiple occasions during one of the sessions. One suggestion by a participant was to have mentoring programs where seniors can work with and teach children.

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*Participants in the Spanish-speaking group noted the City could implement better methods of communication specifically with the Hispanic population and offer more information in different languages, for example by providing interpreters at public meetings. Coordination of communications was also identified as a major need.*

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A handful of participants noted communication and programming occurs in silos because multiple organizations that may be doing similar activities and programs, or even promoting the same programming, are advertising in disjointed ways and implementing their programs independently. One suggestion was to establish a central communication

resource for senior programs and other programs that are available city-wide. Some participants noted that programming for older adults should not be limited only to those who are registered for the senior center program, but that programming should be offered outside and beyond the senior centers. Participants in the Spanish-speaking group noted the City could implement better methods of communication specifically with the Hispanic population and offer more information in different languages, for example by providing interpreters at public meetings. Coordination of communications was also identified as a major need. Participants also expressed interest in the idea of a municipal committee specific to older adults. One participant noted Passaic City has a youth council, but no representation for older adults.

Another point regarding amenities and programming was the lack of indoor programming in the summertime, when it is too hot for some older adults to be outside. One suggestion was to use air-conditioned school facilities in the summer when there are fewer (or no) students. A participant offered the example of a summer concert event that is held outdoors, but they are unable to attend due to the heat. Participants noted that city parks can be adapted to better accommodate programming for older adults. Programming such as Zumba classes can be developed and marketed to older adults. Parks could be better designed to incorporate space for games such as chess, checkers, bingo, and cards.

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*Participants noted the pick-up time for garbage is in the early morning hours (pre-dawn), but people cannot put their garbage out the night before because pests come and eat it and make a mess.*

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Individual participants shared a variety of concerns related to neighborhood quality of life in the immediate vicinity of their homes, including trash pick-up, loud music, and marijuana smoke. Participants noted the pick-up time for garbage is in the early morning hours (pre-dawn), but people cannot put their garbage out the night before because pests come and eat it and make a mess. There were suggestions to change the timing of garbage pick-up. To address the general welfare of older adults who live alone, participants suggested implementing a program for regular check-ins and making a Life Alert type of product accessible to older adults throughout Passaic City.

Another topic of conversation was technology and the internet. The library has devices available for use at the library or to be checked out on loan from the library. Some participants noted they struggle to use new technological devices. The library has offered training programs in the past but does not offer them currently. Participants noted some volunteer programs teach people how to use technology and expressed the need to better connect individuals to the services that are available.

### **Focus Group Topic 3: Housing**

On the topic of housing, the initial question posed to participants was whether they want to stay in their current homes as they age, or if they would prefer to move. Several participants in both sessions expressed a desire to stay in their homes as they age. Housing affordability was discussed in general terms. One participant noted that if their house is paid off, they cannot afford to move into a more suitable space because it would cost more than staying in their current home. Another participant shared that they would like to stay in their current home if their two-story home could be modified for them to remain on the first floor, and the rest of the home could be rented or shared. The participant currently lives with an adult child, which she says provides multiple benefits. Siting of senior housing was discussed, and participants suggested that future housing for older adults should be planned to provide access to open space without the need to travel. Other participants noted that plans for future housing should also consider access to nearby amenities such as stores, parks, and hospitals.

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*One participant noted that if their house is paid off, they cannot afford to move into a more suitable space because it would cost more than staying in their current home. Another participant shared that they would like to stay in their current home if their two-story home could be modified for them to remain on the first floor, and the rest of the home could be rented or shared.*

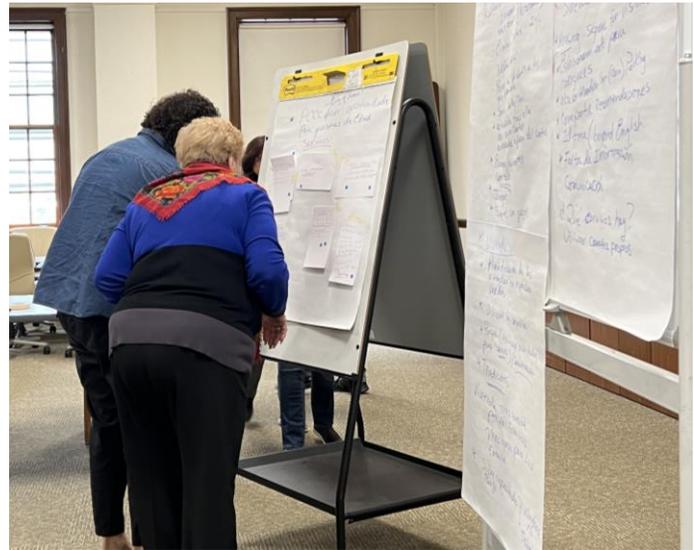
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Physical accessibility barriers and maintenance concerns were reported as major hindrances to participants remaining in their homes. One participant reported the need

to walk up a long flight of stairs to access their apartment building, noting that most people their age would not physically be able to do this. The need for assistance with snow removal and home maintenance was raised. A participant proposed a program for people to help install things, such as a smoke alarm or a bar in the shower, in homes of older adults. Another participant noted there is a book at the Passaic Senior Center containing a list of people who will provide this type of service. Other participants noted that not everyone knows about the senior center or is a member, and there is limited access and proficiency with the internet, which limits the ability of community members to find the resource.

### Focus Group Sessions Action Prioritization

At the conclusion of each session, each participant was asked to identify and prioritize potential actions the City of Passaic can take to become more aging-friendly, based on the insights from their focus group conversation. Participants wrote their suggested actions on index cards, which were then taped onto a board at the front of the room. Cards with similar actions were grouped together, and the group reviewed and discussed everyone's contributions. Participants were then encouraged to



engage in a dot voting exercise to prioritize the actions. Each participant was given two dot stickers and asked to place one sticker on each of their top choices for actions the City of Passaic should make a top priority. In the second session of the day, the voting results were even, and participants were asked to choose a second-choice priority as well. The results of the activity from each session are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Focus group prioritization of aging-friendly actions.

Actions Identified by Participants in the English-speaking Focus Group Session	Number of Votes
Technology (training and access to) - 2 cards	2
School programs for youth and seniors together	2
Highland Avenue speedway (traffic calming)	2
Community gardens	1
Transportation problem - buses racing down the avenue to beat the fare	1
Lighting	1
Communication and community partnerships	1
Actions Identified by Participants in the Spanish-speaking Focus Group Session	Number of Votes
Life-Alert available to everyone	4
Transportation for seniors - 3 cards	3
Education on aging-friendly concepts and available resources	3
Housing with green areas nearby	3
Parking for caregivers near senior housing	1

# AGING-FRIENDLY LAND USE ANALYSIS

The land use analysis evaluates municipal plans, policies, regulations, and existing physical features to identify potential changes that will improve livability for older adults in the community. The improvements should promote concentrated development in mixed-use centers; support housing that is affordable and meets the needs of all ages; increase access to open spaces, facilities, amenities and services; and improve multi-modal transportation options. Such outcomes would help make the city more livable for older adults by improving conditions that contribute to social determinants of health and encouraging participation and autonomy in the community by its older population.

## Passaic City's Ongoing Efforts That Support Livability

Among the many things the City does to enhance the community, below is a subset of actions already underway that can be integrated with an aging-friendly community initiative.

- Regular meetings between the City and NJ Transit regarding issues related to bus service.
- Design of a new bus terminal for the corner of Main Avenue and Passaic Street.
- Partnership with Together North Jersey to explore a municipally managed transit program funded by the City's UEZ program to connect residents to key destinations in the city, including shopping areas and parks.
- Promotion of affordable housing by offering federally funded subsidies to developers for creating more affordable housing in the city.
- A comprehensive inspection of sidewalks underway by the City, with considerations for repairing and replacing those in poor condition.
- Grant submission to the NJ Department of Community Affairs for a sidewalk repair and replacement program in the heavily traveled central business district.
- Plan submission to the federal government by the City, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, and the County of Passaic, to make the central business district of Main Avenue more pedestrian friendly. If accepted funding will become available for traffic calming and other measures to enhance safety.

## Administration

Municipalities can support the wellbeing of community members of all ages through a variety of actions across multiple program areas. Actions may include adherence to policies, procedures, and programs that provide supports and services directly to older adults, or they may include consideration of livability and aging-friendly principles in the planning, design, and implementation of other municipal actions not directly targeted at benefiting the older population.

An administrative action that municipalities can take to ensure that aging-friendly land use principles are being implemented in the community is to incorporate actions into the municipal capital budget that have been identified as beneficial to the older population. There is a line item in the Passaic City 2021 capital budget for expenses associated with “senior citizens” in the category of “parks and recreation functions,” however no projects for implementing specific aging-friendly actions are accounted for in the budget. With this assessment, the City will have identified aging-friendly actions it may incorporate into its capital improvement budget. Additionally, the City may consider establishing an aging-friendly committee by ordinance to advance ongoing outreach, research, and implementation of an aging-friendly initiative in the municipality.

Programs a municipality may administer that are particularly relevant to older community members include public services such as snow removal, sidewalk repair, maintenance of bikeways and walkways in public areas, and assistance programs for maintaining the properties where older residents reside. The Passaic City code of ordinances states that maintenance and repairs of sidewalks and curbs are the responsibility of the owner or occupant, and the code requires the property owner to remove snow within 24 hours and other impediments within three days of notice. By ordinance, Passaic City Department of Public Works will remove snow or other sidewalk impediments at the owner’s expense in the form of a tax levied on the property if the owner does not maintain a safe passageway of at least 28 inches wide in residential areas or the entire sidewalk width in business districts.

There are some municipal programs that provide support and services to the older population. Passaic City’s Department of Senior Affairs administers the Passaic Silver

Seniors program, which facilitates transportation services and the Passaic Senior Center activities provided by the City of Passaic, as well as access to Passaic County Division of Nutrition Services.

## Planning

When communities include aging-friendly principles and specific attention to the older population in their planning efforts, transformative changes to improve livability are inspired. In aging-friendly communities, the master plan should evaluate the demographics and vulnerabilities of the existing and projected older populations and address issues related to housing availability, cost of living, access to transportation and mobility options, access to healthy food options, vulnerability to hazards such as flood risk, and employment and engagement opportunities. Other plans should include consideration of goals, outcomes, project designs, and strategies that will advance livability for all ages. Table 2 shows a summary of planning goals found in Passaic City planning documents.

The 2013 City of Passaic Master Plan recognizes that the proportion of the population age 65 or older is lower in Passaic City compared to the county but points out that healthcare or housing options for the older population are not necessarily adequate in the city. It suggests addressing the needs of the older population through mixed-use and mixed-income projects and providing assisted living needs through a planning process incorporating the city's healthcare providers. It does not, however, provide the data or framework for undergoing these assessments or implementations, and it does not consider the prevalence of multi-generational or extended family living in the city, even though it does note that Passaic City has more persons per household compared to nearby communities. According to the most recent census data, the rate of the older population in Passaic City is still less than that of the county, and, with 24.2% of the population age 50 or older, it appears that the recommendation of the 2013 master plan to conduct planning to meet the needs of the older population is still relevant today.

Although the 2013 master plan does not identify strategies particularly targeted at enabling older residents to continue living in the community in an engaged and independent manner, it does consider several aging-friendly issues in the form of

generalized goals and objectives. For example, the 2013 master plan calls for increasing housing availability for lower income households, providing supportive housing, and improving the safety and livability of all neighborhoods.

In addition to housing, access to healthy food can affect health outcomes in older individuals. The city's master plan proposes that the urban farm concept can better connect city residents with healthy food options, however, older adults are not explicitly included in the identification of populations vulnerable to food insecurity. The master plan does not address food access in detail, but it recommends "promoting a 'buy local' movement in the City of Passaic," while indicating that "economically disadvantaged, racial, and minority populations statistically have environmental challenges that make it difficult to become physically active and obtain a healthy diet." Furthermore, although food security is highly correlated with access to transportation options and pedestrian infrastructure, the plan does not reference mobility or walkability to support wellness.

The 2013 master plan also does not address flood risk or other potential environmental hazards that pose elevated risks to older adults. The master plan does include various goals and objectives related to downtown infill, economic development, and pedestrian improvements, which all support aging-friendliness. Table 2 lists goals and objectives in the master plan and other plans that are relevant to aging-friendly land use.

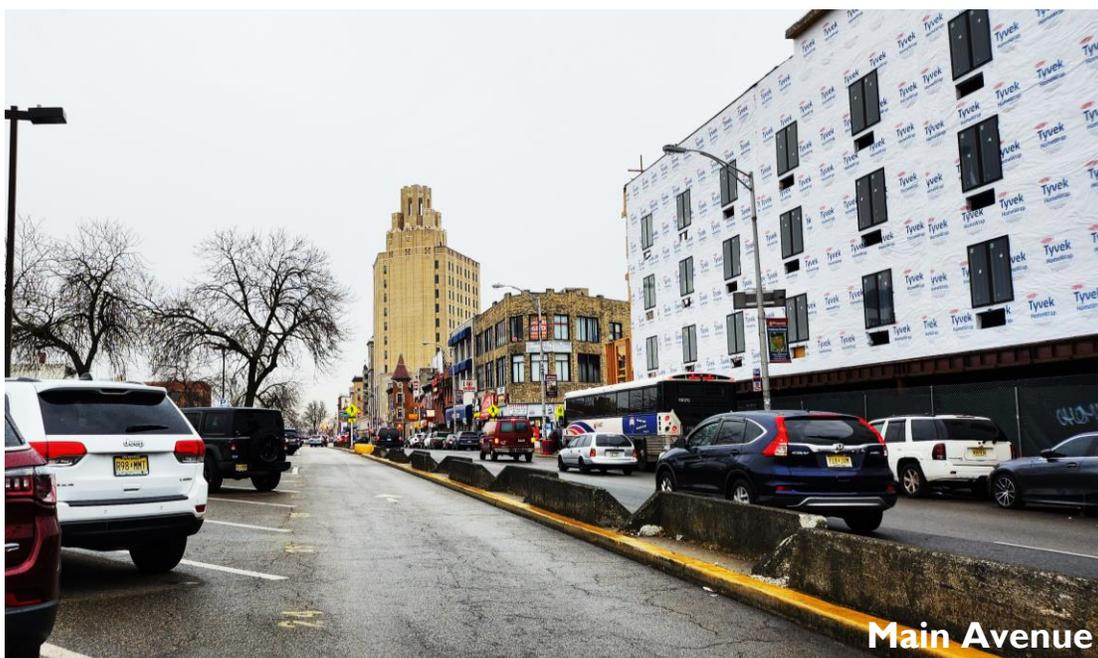


Table 2. Passaic City planning goals and objectives relevant to aging-friendly land use.

<b>2013 Master Plan</b>
<p><b>Planning Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Strategically replace or reuse obsolete industrial buildings with other uses.</li> <li>▶ Assess utilizing the Passaic River frontage as an attraction rather than a nuisance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mixed-Use Center Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Change the requirements of the C-commercial and C-R (commercial/residential) district so that only in-line retailing is allowed along the major commercial corridors.</li> <li>▶ Change and/or alter the zoning around the train station to allow and encourage high-density residential or mixed-use development.</li> <li>▶ Increase the number of jobs within the city so that the number of jobs more closely matches the number of residents employed.</li> <li>▶ Infill all vacant lots in the commercial corridors with in line stores.</li> <li>▶ Improve the appearance of the business districts through streetscape improvements, façade improvement, and enforcement of property maintenance standards.</li> <li>▶ Encourage occupancy of upper story commercial space in the C-Commercial district.</li> <li>▶ Assess the feasibility of creating ethnic &amp; culturally based shopping districts that would be a destination point drawing customers from afar.</li> <li>▶ Restore and preserve properties of special historic, architectural, or aesthetic value.</li> <li>▶ Conserve energy resources.</li> <li>▶ Expand economic opportunities through job creation and retention.</li> <li>▶ Establish, stabilize and expand businesses and neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Housing Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Encourage private rehabilitation of housing units and utilize available public funds to rehabilitate substandard units.</li> <li>▶ Encourage new (middle and upper income) housing.</li> </ul>

- ▶ Use redevelopment powers to demolish substandard housing and construct new housing.
- ▶ Increase the number of housing units to at least match the increase in population.
- ▶ Allow and encourage significantly higher density housing in the immediate area around the train station.
- ▶ Retain housing and preserve neighborhoods by increasing the supply of standard housing affordable to lower income households.
- ▶ Increase the supply of affordable housing through new construction.
- ▶ Help low-income families avoid becoming homeless.
- ▶ Develop a resource inventory and complete a needs assessment regarding supportive housing for residents.

### ***Mobility and Transportation Goals***

- ▶ Seek improvements in the convenience, frequency, safety, speed, and aesthetics of mass transit systems.
- ▶ Upgrade the pedestrian system through the systematic replacement, and where needed, widening of sidewalks.
- ▶ Work with Passaic County on ways to upgrade the County Roads including the curbs and sidewalks.
- ▶ Proactively plan for increased traffic with capacity upgrades at key sites such as Monroe Street and Main Avenue.

### ***Amenities and Open Spaces Goals***

- ▶ Catalog existing and plan for new recreational facilities within existing municipal properties, and encourage private and non-profit recreational facilities and programs.
- ▶ Improve the safety and livability of neighborhoods.
- ▶ Increase access to quality public facilities and services.

## 2015 Master Plan Economic Development Element

- ▶ Foster a business- and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.
- ▶ Foster cohesive commercial communities within the City.
- ▶ Identify, embrace, and promote the unique identity of each of the major commercial corridors and districts.
- ▶ Plan efficient traffic circulation through industrial and redevelopment areas while ensuring pedestrian safety.

## 2021 Main Ave Redevelopment Plan

- ▶ Promote economic development.
- ▶ Create new housing opportunities.
- ▶ Design quality public areas.
- ▶ Preserve and enhance downtown architecture.
- ▶ Reduce the impact of car circulation and traffic issues.
- ▶ Upgrade infrastructure and streetscapes.

## 2019-2-23 Five-Year Consolidated Plan (use of Community Development Block Grant program and Home Investment Partnerships program federal funds)

- ▶ Enhance the quality of life for area residents.
- ▶ Create programs to address the needs of residents, with particular emphasis on...seniors.
- ▶ Lower the level of unemployment and underemployment among all segments of the Passaic labor force.
- ▶ Increase the number of new businesses in Passaic, and strengthen and expand existing businesses.
- ▶ Increase the City's tax base through rehabilitation and construction of residential, commercial, and industrial structures.

- ▶ Increase the supply of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households.
- ▶ Retain existing affordable housing and preserve viable neighborhoods.
- ▶ Increase the housing and support services available to homeless and special needs groups.

### **2021 Passaic Eastside Neighborhood Plan**

- ▶ Create a vibrant local economy where local residents and businesses can succeed.
- ▶ Create opportunities for all people to pursue self-improvement and enjoyment.
- ▶ Create an accessible community where people feel safe, protected, and healthy.

### **2004 Eastside Redevelopment Plan**

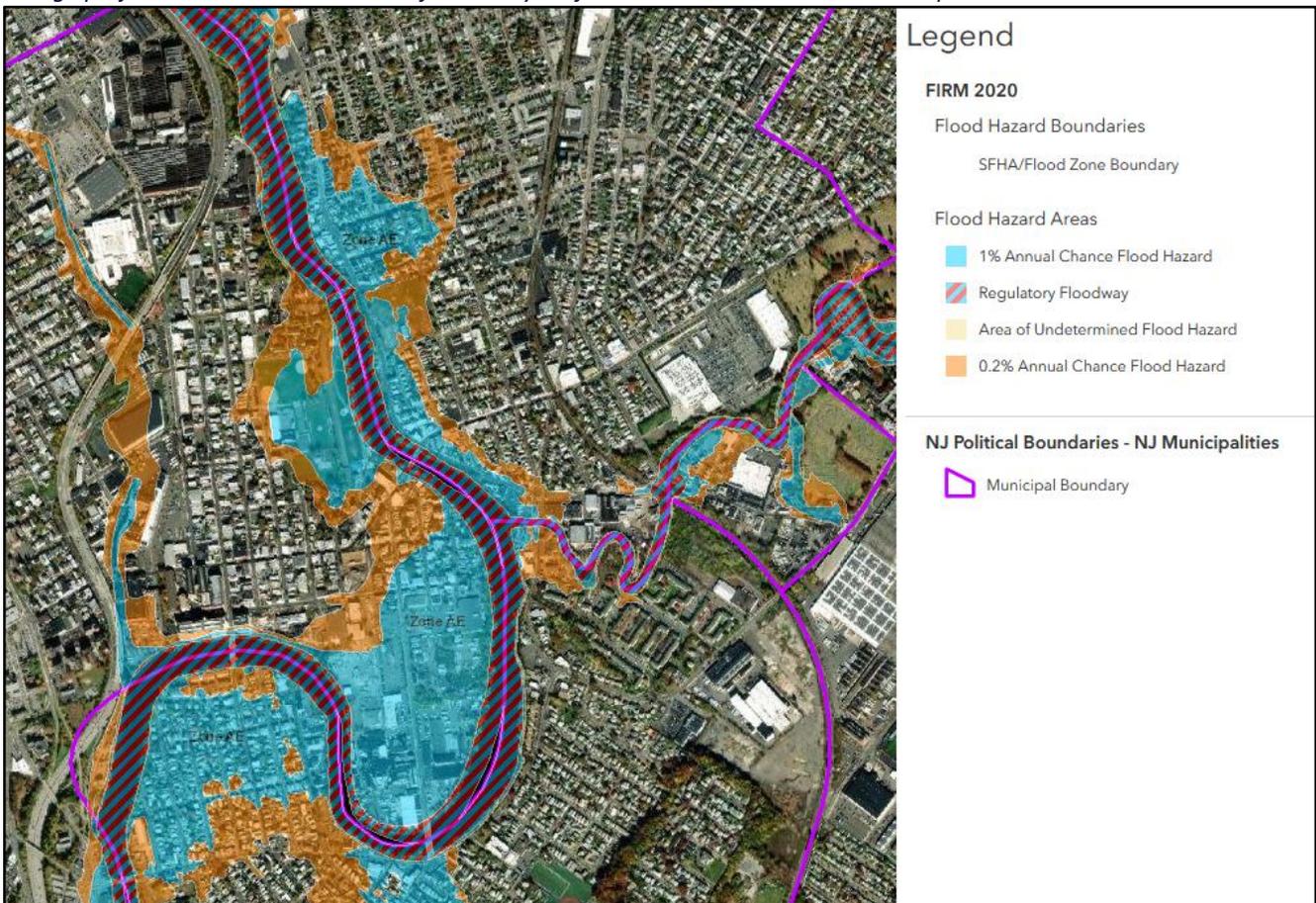
- ▶ Develop a safe and attractive pedestrian connection between the existing downtown, the regional retail activities, and the waterfront.

One pivotal planning tool the City of Passaic can use to improve the aging-friendliness of its built environment is to leverage redevelopment. The Eastside Redevelopment Area was declared an “area in need of redevelopment” by the City in three different phases. Properties were designated within the area by resolutions adopted in May 2002, October 2002, and February 2004. In 2004 the City also adopted the Eastside Redevelopment Plan, which includes objectives to transform the designated area in need of redevelopment from an industrial area to include a mix of commercial, retail, and residential uses with “24-hour community presence” and to improve the pedestrian environment and appearance of streets within the neighborhood. The Eastside Redevelopment Area, however, is situated along the Passaic River and is within the FEMA 100-year flood hazard area.

The subsequent 2021 Passaic Eastside Neighborhood Plan also calls for development of a mixed-use neighborhood, although it includes a larger area of the Eastside neighborhood and acknowledges that significant portions of the neighborhood lie within the flood hazard area. The 2019 Passaic River Basin Climate Resilience Planning Study, conducted by North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority to evaluate the impacts of climate

change on transportation infrastructure in the region, identified limiting or prohibiting development in floodplains to protect life, property, and floodplain function among adaptation strategies for community development. Redevelopment in the Eastside neighborhood area should proceed cautiously considering the existing flood exposure and the likely high potential for increasing climate-related flood risk of the neighborhood (Figure 4). Indeed, redevelopment in the Eastside neighborhood conforms to the current regulations of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection related to flood risks. These regulations have limited residential development in the flood-prone areas.

Figure 4. Map showing FEMA 100- and 500-year flood hazard areas (i.e. 1% and 0.2% annual chance flood hazard. Climate change projects include consideration of the 500-year flood hazard area in risk to development.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Map Source: NJFloodmapper

Similar to the Eastside Redevelopment Plan, the Main Avenue Redevelopment Plan adopted by the city in 2021, includes goals aimed at development that is more mixed-use and center-based (See Table 2). It was part of a concerted effort to strengthen the Main Avenue commercial district to attract new investment and activate the area. As per Resolution 20-07-208, adopted on July 21, 2020, the plan study area was designated as an Area in Need of Rehabilitation. The rehabilitation area overlaps with the commercial, commercial-residential, and multi-family residential zoning districts. It is also within a federal Opportunity Zone and a New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Neighborhood Preservation Program area.

The goals and objectives of the Main Avenue Redevelopment Plan include residential use of upper stories in the downtown, infill along commercial corridors, balancing parking with pedestrian environments, and infrastructure and streetscape improvements to improve the pedestrian experience—including the redesign of Main Avenue as a complete street. The plan rezones parcels in the rehabilitation area as MX-1 or MX-2, with permitted uses and bulk provisions to activate the area. It also sets parking parameters and recommendations for bicycle parking, traffic impact studies, and building and site designs. The plan aims to outline permitted development in the study area to be complementary to the Main Avenue Local Concept Development Study, in which the City—with input from stakeholders and technical assistance from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority—will provide a complete street vision for Main Avenue.

To ensure planning efforts align with community needs, inclusive and extensive community engagement is needed. Many communities in New Jersey and across the country are conducting surveys of older adults to identify the needs and preferences that older adults in the community have and to assess whether their needs are being met. Survey topics include the types of housing units sought, gaps in pedestrian infrastructure and transportation services, employment needs, volunteer and program interests, health and wellbeing, and others related to livability.

## Mixed-Use Center

A pedestrian-oriented, compact town center enables people of all ages to accomplish everyday tasks more efficiently and offers opportunities to work close to home. Downtown areas are places where chance encounters with neighbors are possible, there is opportunity for social interaction, and it is easier to move around independently. These types of neighborhoods can help to reduce the risk of social isolation in older adults.

Passaic City has a clearly delineated downtown with a mix of commercial uses in its C zone, which includes a segment of the Main Avenue corridor. There are also several other less dense commercial areas or corridors throughout the city, which serve local neighborhoods but make the Main Avenue downtown area less prominent as a town center. The goals identified in the Main Avenue Redevelopment Plan aim to reestablish the Main Avenue corridor's prominence as a commercial and civic center for the city. The City's master plan also outlines goals to improve the appearance, safety, and vitality of the Main Avenue corridor and to "expand economic opportunities through job creation and retention" and "establish, stabilize, and expand businesses."

Because the main commercial district along Main Avenue did not previously permit residential development, it is currently more dependent on vehicle access and infrastructure. Consequently, walkability and pedestrian mobility is highly impacted by vehicle traffic, despite the dense, interconnected street pattern and concentration of commercial establishments, community facilities, and other destinations. Redevelopment plans call for the addition of residential units above commercial uses, and new units have already been developed. This change, combined with City's efforts to improve walkability in the area, is expected to be highly beneficial for the pedestrian environment along Main Avenue.

The main commercial district (C zone) generally runs along Main Avenue for about a half mile between Passaic and Monroe Streets and extends to the east up to two blocks and the west up to one block. It has a compact form and includes a mix of retail shops; personal service salons and fitness facilities; pharmacy, bank, and grocery uses; offices; churches; and some food, liquor, and restaurant businesses—as permitted uses by the zoning code. A goal identified in the City's 2013 master plan is "to encourage occupancy

of upper story commercial space” in the C zone. The plan does not include goals to promote a mix of commercial and residential uses in the Main Avenue downtown area.

Four commercial residential districts (C-R) extend out from the central commercial district in the form of radial spokes along Main Avenue, Monroe Street, and Broadway—each permitting retail, service, business, arts, food and drink, and parking uses in addition to compatible residential uses (as permitted in R-3 zone). The development form is less compact and walkable in these areas than in the commercial core, where the destinations are in closer proximity to each other, and not all permitted uses that are allowed in the C zone are permitted in the C-R zone.

Pockets of commercial or commercial residential zones also exist in neighborhoods at the north and west borders of the municipality. In the commercial (C and C-R) districts in the west portion of the city, there are scattered businesses including auto services, a large Shop-Rite grocery store, and strip malls or stand-alone businesses. In the commercial residential high-density (CR-HD) district along the city’s northern boundary, businesses are concentrated along Daytona Avenue in a compact form. The district consists of two blocks and also includes various types of residential uses from single- to multi-family. The CR-HD district permits all uses permitted in the C zone. The adjacent light industrial zone contains a Home Depot plaza and a Walgreens pharmacy.

In the south and east portions of the municipality, linear commercial residential districts contain a variety of commercial uses. The southern commercial-residential (C-R) district runs along Main Avenue for approximately 10 blocks and only exhibits a compact pattern of commercial businesses intermittently mixed with various forms of residential and strip mall development along the corridor until the intersection of Van Houten Avenue, where the commercial district begins to exhibit compact, contiguous commercial development along Main Avenue for about a block and then becomes less compact and more intermittent for the remainder of the district. The commercial district on the east side of town is a commercial residential high-density district (CR-HD) that runs from the Wall Street bridge, then going west along Passaic Street and turning north onto Market Street. Businesses along Passaic and Market Streets are contiguous and compact.

Several of the commercial areas in Passaic City benefit from some type of improvement district or state grant assistance. The industrial areas and retail corridors of the city are in an Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) administered by the Passaic Enterprise Zone Development Corporation. Passaic currently receives about \$1.2 million per year in zone revenues to implement programs and services such as graffiti removal, litter cleanup, streetscape improvements, or redevelopment projects. A city administered Redevelopment Agency was established to facilitate designation of areas in need of redevelopment. Businesses in the UEZ additionally receive tax benefits.

Four low-income tracts within the UEZ have been designated Opportunity Zones (tracts 1752, 1753.01, 1754.02, and 1759) so they can be marketed for long-term big capital investment by offering tax deferral or exemption benefits. The city has also adopted an environmental opportunity zone tax exemption program to address remediation of contaminated property for its return to productive use.

Passaic City does not participate in the New Jersey Main Street program, but the city did receive a grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs to promote rehabilitation and support businesses in the Central Business District covering Main Avenue from Monroe Street to Pennington Avenue. The goals of the newly formed Neighborhood Preservation Program developed out of the grant are to promote a dining corridor, create murals, improve retail storefronts, and complete an area-wide planning effort to facilitate rehabilitation of structures. Along this corridor, in the parking island between Washington Place and Jefferson Street, an outdoor dining area was established to activate the area and encourage restaurant visibility.

The city enforces design standards per a local ordinance. Zoning regulations require exterior lighting to be provided for safety “in an aesthetic manner.” Landscaping and open space are required in an amount that “should correspond with the land use proposed.” The city should consider updating this language with a more exact measure, although the regulation states that “some developments may require more landscaping if the proposed use is not compatible or is of a higher intensity than surrounding development.” Street tree plantings are required along property frontage, and shade trees are required to be the primary landscaping material in parking lots and are recommended in all areas of high pedestrian traffic. Aesthetic and lighting features of awnings are also regulated in

the design standards code. The city does not have a land use regulation that explicitly promotes universal design for accommodating all abilities in all land use zones.

Additional design elements regulated in Passaic City include signs, fences, walls, sidewalks, driveways, curb cuts, and gutters. As per ordinance, aesthetic and lighting features of signs are regulated in all zones. The municipal code also regulates heights of fences and walls in all zones. All paved yards shall have a physical barrier, with the intent to prevent motor vehicle access beyond the space, although it may also pose a barrier for pedestrians. Minimum sidewalk width is also specified by ordinance, with a provision indicating that “Sidewalks shall be a minimum of five feet wide, unless specifically approved by the City Engineer.” The city permits daytime and early evening outdoor dining on private property and sidewalks adjacent to local restaurants under the direction and approval of the City of Passaic Engineering Department. Parklets are a permitted use for property owners fronting on Market Street in the Passaic Bistro District and fronting on Broadway in the Eateries on Broadway District, with license application and receipt.

Although the local zoning code and master plan aim to influence the form of development in a particular pattern and style, Passaic City does not have a form-based code. The 2013 master plan suggests “the current [2013] development patterns within the City of Passaic can benefit from integrating some sort of form-based codes,” and recommends an analysis regarding the feasibility of implementation and to highlight which areas may benefit from implementation of a form-based code. The city would benefit from completing this analysis and considering adopting a form-based code.

The city would additionally benefit from reviewing existing zoning regulations which may not support livability. For example, drive-ins are permitted as a conditional use in all commercial zones, although they may not be compatible with walkable, mixed-use centers. Similarly, zoning changes should be considered which enable easier access to the main commercial district and promote economic activation of the downtown by permitting residential uses. The main commercial district (C zone) does not permit residential development. Although there is no height restriction for the zone, residential units are not permitted, even on floors above commercial uses. Minimum parking requirements may be the hindrance to residential development in the Main Avenue commercial district.

The commercial residential and the commercial residential high-density districts (C-R and CR-HD zones) do permit both residential and commercial uses, as well as mixed commercial-residential structures. Multi-family apartments of four stories or more are permitted as a conditional use in the R1-A residential zone (single- and multi-family); R-3 residential zone (one-, two-, and multi-family dwellings, as well as garden apartments and townhouses); O-R office residential zone (R-3 uses, business/professional/government offices, banks, and mixed office-residential structures), C-R commercial residential zone (R-3 zone uses, certain commercial uses, public assembly, and mixed commercial-residential structures); and the M-1 & M-2 light and general industrial zones. Although not listed on Article VI: Table of Conditional Uses of the zoning code, multifamily apartments of four stories or more are listed as a conditional use for the CR-HD commercial residential high-density zone on the zoning schedule of regulations.

Considering the proportion of lower-income households in the community, there may be financial limitations for older residents to participate in community programs, receive adequate care, or maintain suitable housing. Opportunities for employment should potentially be included in strategies for livability that aim to promote access to jobs. Considering that the working population of people age 55 and older in Passaic is relatively low—only 16.5% of people age 55 or older in Passaic City are in the workforce, compared to 30.7% for the state as a whole—it should be ascertained whether the rate of employment for older Passaic residents is lower than the state due to personal choice or lack of employment options.

## Housing

Diverse housing types in compact neighborhoods help to accommodate the preferences, needs, and budgets of all residents, particularly older adults, while providing pedestrian access to a variety of destinations. Additionally, mixed-income housing promotes social inclusion and can help to mitigate potential disparities in either negative impacts or positive outcomes resulting from environmental and land use conditions. Goals in the City's 2013 master plan pertaining to housing aim to encourage homeownership in the city and development of new housing, particularly for mid- and upper-income levels and

to meet population growth demands. The plan also pairs development of new housing in conjunction with demolition of “substandard housing.”

Many housing types are permitted in zones throughout Passaic City, but types other than single-family are not permitted in all zones and exhibit a disparate distribution. The 2013 master plan describes the R-3 multifamily residential zone, which is the largest residential zone in the city, as having smart growth attributes because it “has the smaller lot sizes, access to mass transit, pocket parks, community schools, and neighborhood shopping establishments scattered throughout. It is in the diversity of uses where this zone has thrived.” Most of the southern portion of the city, on the other hand, is zoned one-family or one- and two-family residential. Patterns of racial/ethnic distribution follow the pattern of housing type distribution in the city to some extent (see Figure 1). Disparities in access to resources or exposure to social determinants of health can exist in communities that are segregated, and having a variety of housing types can promote mixed-income, diverse residential areas.

All residential zones permit single-family dwellings, including the commercial residential districts. Areas surrounding the main commercial district and commercial residential corridors radiating from it are zoned mainly multi-family residential (R-3), which permits one-, two-, and multi-family dwellings, as well as garden apartments and townhouses. The eastside neighborhood is zoned commercial residential high density and R-3. The eastside redevelopment area is south and west of the eastside commercial and residential zones. Smaller housing units of less than six rooms is the dominant type of housing in the city. This may be preferable for older adults living alone or with a partner, although it may not be as comfortable for extended family living, which appears to be more common in Passaic.

Home occupations and home professions are permitted in all zones by local ordinance. In the C-R and C-R HD Zones, live/work lofts and work and live artist studios are permitted as conditional uses. The C Zone allows for live/work lofts, work and live artist studios, and residential lofts as conditional uses.

The largest renter population paying at least 30% of their income on rent in Passaic City is householders aged 35 to 64 years old, paying 35% or more. This may demonstrate a

transfer of housing cost burden from the older population to their children, in cases where older residents are residing within larger family units. Many alternative housing solutions can be introduced to better support intergenerational living, affordable and supportive housing options for older adults, and general housing affordability for communities.

Accessory dwelling units, or ADU's, are one such option. In the municipal code, dwelling units or buildings are considered "accessory buildings and uses" and are not a permitted accessory use in Passaic City. The zoning schedule further specifies that a lot in the R-1, R-2, and R-1A cannot exceed more than one residential dwelling unit structure.

The 2013 master plan points to a high number of lot coverage variance requests in the R-1 zone as an indication that there is a need for larger homes to accommodate a larger household size in this area of the city, although a study to indicate a higher prevalence of larger household sizes in this zone compared to other residential zones was not cited. This may be an area of the city where accessory dwelling units are an appropriate use.

The cost of renting in Passaic is lower relative to the state as a whole. When compared to the relative cost of homeownership, renting may be a better option for many residents, which makes landlord incentive and enforcement programs highly relevant for improving livability for the older population.

Home sharing is another common alternative housing solution which can benefit older adults because it can provide a source of income, companionship, or assistance with home maintenance and daily tasks. Presumably for addressing potential issues of overcrowding, home sharing is limited in Passaic City as described in the following ordinances:

- ▶ *Occupancy of single-family dwellings:* "A single-family dwelling shall be occupied by persons composing an immediate family and no more than two other persons."
- ▶ *Occupancy of dwelling unit:* "A dwelling unit, other than that constituting a single-family dwelling, shall be occupied by one or more persons related by blood or marriage or a group of not more than four persons, not necessarily related by blood or marriage, together as a single housekeeping unit."

- ▶ *Occupancy of independent rooming units:* “Independent rooming units shall be rented for occupancy or occupied by adults and emancipated minors only.”
- ▶ *Occupancy of one-room dwelling units or rooming units:* “Occupancy of dwelling units or rooming units having only one habitable room shall be limited to two persons.”

Group homes, assisted living, and nursing homes are other housing options for community members who need additional assistance as they age. Nursing homes are a conditional use in the R-3 residential zone. Nursing home is defined in the code as “a facility for medical or convalescent care of patients or the elderly with full supervision and meeting the state requirements for nursing homes.” In a community where intergenerational living is prevalent, such as it appears to be in Passaic City, consideration should also be given to housing that supports intergenerational living in relation to health and wellness supports and services. The need and demand for senior assisted living and other group facilities in the community should be evaluated. Additionally, with so much of the housing being rental units in apartment buildings, implementation of universal design standards in residential zones that consider mobility of older adults should be evaluated.

To promote mixed-income housing, the city should consider adopting inclusionary zoning. Although there are no ordinances addressing inclusionary affordable housing, there is an ordinance addressing increases in base rent. The ordinance states no annual increase shall exceed \$25 per month plus 100% of any municipal property tax increase amount to be passed on to the tenant, except in cases where one of two total occupants is 65 years or older and the total income of occupants age 65 or older does not exceed \$50,000. In that case, the total rent increase cannot exceed \$25 per month.

## Mobility and Transportation

Well-connected streets, sufficient public transportation options, and pedestrian-oriented development patterns enable people to remain mobile and have opportunities for personal interactions, access to employment, and carrying out independent living.

Passaic City's dense and well-connected street network is positioned to encourage pedestrian activity, and the rate of residents age 55 to 64 commuting to work by walking, biking, or other non-vehicular means in Passaic City is twice that of the state for this age group. Although it has not formally adopted a complete streets policy, the City is working with the NJ Department of Community Affairs Office of Local Planning Services on a Bicycle Master Plan and a Pedestrian Master Plan. Both of these plans are anticipated to be completed in the Fall of 2023. The 2013 master plan identifies the R-1 single family residential zone as being one of the most pedestrian friendly areas in the city. The city may want to consider focusing pedestrian and bicycle improvement studies and efforts in commercial and multi-family housing districts.

A pedestrian and bicycle audit can help identify specific locations or issues of concern related to pedestrian and bicycle mobility and could help inform the bicycle and pedestrian plans currently underway by the City. Features that could be assessed in a pedestrian audit are whether traffic light timing settings are long enough to accommodate pedestrians of various abilities, whether the pedestrian cues are clearly visible or audible for older residents, whether safe pedestrian spaces for resting exist in the medians or corners of larger or dangerous street crossings, and whether pedestrian routes to key destinations have sufficient public street furniture in and along the way, providing adequate seating, shade, and lighting. Goals in the master plan include any needed systemic replacement and widening of sidewalks to upgrade the pedestrian circulation system.

Sidewalks and public improvements along the frontage of public streets is an effective way to improve the pedestrian environment. Although there appears to be no requirement in the land use ordinance to install sidewalks, there are currently sidewalks along all streets in Passaic City. The 2013 master plan indicates that, "the design of the road network includes sidewalks throughout the entire system." Sidewalks and pedestrian circulation are considered during the City's site plan approval process. Regarding sidewalks, the code specifies that "no sidewalk, driveway, curb, gutter or pavement shall be laid, removed or changed unless authorized by a written permit issued by the City Engineer." Additionally, sidewalk installation or performance guarantee of installation for sidewalks is required for final plat approval of subdivisions. The ordinance also includes street lighting and shade trees as required improvements. The land use

board may waive the requirement provided it would not endanger public health, safety, and welfare.

Vehicular traffic can be a deterrent for pedestrian activity. The 2013 master plan indicates that the majority of the city's streets have on-street parking that provides a buffer from roadway traffic for pedestrians using sidewalks. It also notes that several of the avenues and boulevards have planted medians, which also help to calm traffic. According to the plan, most streets have a speed limit of 25 miles per hour or less, have high connectivity with only a few dead-end streets, and are part of a grid design. These features exhibit a form that can make the community highly conducive to pedestrian activity, which is evident in the high rate of residents who commute by walking, biking, or other non-vehicular means in Passaic City.

Parking space supply and layout are important considerations in downtown development, but vehicular traffic related to parking can pose a challenge to pedestrian activity. The city established a parking authority by ordinance in 2006 to manage all city-owned parking areas. The following ordinance provisions also govern parking rules:

- ▶ *Standards for parking spaces and parking areas.* Parking must be located on the same lot as the principal use unless authorized as a conditional use in the zoning code. In cases where parking is included as part of a rental, parking must be allocated to assign each tenant a space. For mixed commercial/residential properties, all dwelling units must receive at least one parking space before any spaces can be allocated to the commercial use.
- ▶ *C Zone.* As a conditional use in the C, M-1, and M-2 zones, and as described in the section of the code for conditional uses in the C zone, parking to meet the minimum requirements can be located on a lot other than the principal use lot, provided there is proof of ownership or a permanent lease and the site is within 500 feet of the principal use property, among other conditions.
- ▶ *Payment in Lieu of Parking:* To address the concern that “the city as a whole is in need of additional off-street parking,” a parking improvement program (PIP) collects fees to contribute to a parking trust fund as a condition of approval for applications in noncompliance with off-street parking regulations. All zones are eligible for participation in the PIP “to provide for: engineering and design; traffic

and other feasibility studies; acquisition through purchase or condemnation; erection, construction of or installation of off-street parking facilities, parking structures, or equipment; and other associated parking project development costs.”

The 2013 master plan cites a 10% vacancy rate for parking spaces based on a downtown business district meter count, suggesting that placement of parking may need to be addressed in addition to or more so than the quantity of parking. The plan further recommends an analysis of the parking requirements for the mixed-use zones of the city to approach lowering the parking requirements, and it does not appear that such an analysis has been undertaken. To address an unfriendly pedestrian environment along Main Avenue, it also recommends removing the center-street parking areas and creating head-in angled parking along a widened sidewalk, and notes that on-site parking requirements can be detrimental to downtown vitality. There does not appear to be a provision for joint-use/shared parking agreements in the municipal code, which can help to alleviate parking supply issues by maximizing the usage of available spaces over different peak usage hours. For example, dine-in restaurants tend to need parking in the evenings, while banks need parking earlier in the day.

A goal identified in the city’s 2013 master plan is “to seek improvements in the convenience, frequency, safety, speed, and aesthetics of mass transit systems.” Transportation options in Passaic City include a free shuttle service offered by the Passaic Senior Center to and from senior center programs for registered participants and local bus service traveling throughout the city. Local bus transportation in Passaic City is provided by NJ Transit, with service to Paterson, Rutherford, Newark, Clifton, Garfield, Wallington, and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. Most of these local and regional services connect through the Passaic Bus Terminal at Main Avenue and Madison Street, and all serve the downtown core. Bus lines generally extend from the downtown core into neighborhoods in a radial pattern along major thoroughfares Main Avenue, Passaic Avenue, Paulison Avenue, Van Houten Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Monroe Street, and Dayton Avenue. Bus stops are located at more than 130 locations throughout the city’s 3.24-square-mile area, although they are fewer and farther between in the single-family residential neighborhoods south of Paulison Avenue, including in the vicinity of Third Ward Park and the Passaic train station.

Bus stops providing access to many important destinations in the city do not have seating, trash cans, lighting, or shelter. These include stops in the vicinity of the Municipal Complex which houses the Passaic Senior Center, the ShopRite grocery store on Paulison Avenue, the Jewish Family Service facility on Main Avenue, Passaic Public Library Main Branch downtown and Reid Branch Library in the Eastside neighborhood. Many bus stops on the Main Avenue commercial corridor do offer seating, shelter, and trash cans. The train station is accessible via bus route 190 with bus stops at the intersection of Van Houten Avenue and Barry Place and via bus route 702 with bus stops at the intersection of Passaic Avenue and Ascension Street, but none of these bus stops have features such as seating or shelter.

A potential challenge to transit use in Passaic City is that access to the train station is limited by it not being centrally located. Passaic Station is located in a single-family residential zone at Van Houten and Passaic Avenues, east of Third Ward Park, in the southern portion of the city. It is about a mile from the intersection at Passaic and Main Avenue at the southern extent of the main commercial district. The 2013 master plan indicates that, “the train station is the one area that is not centrally located or accessible by other forms of mass transit. A resident would need to walk from their home or nearest bus stop or drive their own car to the train station.” The plan notes, “this is not a major obstacle because the City is only 3.25 square miles and can be easily traversed and because the bus service takes you to the same destinations.” Easy access to the train station may present challenges to older adults who are commuting to work via the train and do not live within a comfortable walking distance. A goal of the master plan is to change zoning around the train station to allow for and encourage higher-density residential or mixed-use development.

The rate for carpooling is much higher in Passaic compared to the state for the general population. The older population in Passaic, however, is not very different from the state population in terms of carpooling rate. Opportunities to connect older residents to carpooling networks may be relevant to an aging-friendly initiative.

## Amenities and Open Spaces

Facilities such as parks and community centers foster engagement and provide opportunities for exercise and social interaction for all residents, particularly older adults who may no longer have opportunities to interact at a workplace or with immediate family members. All neighborhoods should have adequate access to amenities and open spaces that provide adequate and welcoming places for older adults to maintain meaningful connections in the communities where they live.

Commercial corridors, grocery stores, pharmacies, libraries, post offices and other amenities are centrally located within Passaic City, accessible from multiple neighborhoods via a dense street network. Private clubs and ethnic and religious organizations offer opportunities for social interaction, pursuing interests, and engaging in activities in neighborhoods throughout the community. Due to its urban environment, Passaic City generally lacks tracts containing natural areas. According to the 2013 master plan, “City parks consume one third of the entire municipality and are the social and recreational gathering places” for community members. Larger active recreation parks in the city include Third Ward Park in the southern portion of the city and the newly renovated Dundee Island Park on the Passaic River waterfront in the northeastern portion of the city.

The 2013 master plan identifies the R-1 single family residential zone as having a maximized availability of open space. It contains Veteran’s Memorial Park, also known as Third Ward Park, which is the largest park in the city.

The City of Passaic does not have a municipal plan or ordinance that prioritizes the installation of green infrastructure beyond the minimum requirements of the NJ stormwater rule (NJAC 7:8), although areas of the city are prone to flooding.

Although a set aside of open space or civic space is not a requirement for development projects in the zoning design standards, it is stipulated in the municipal code that open space in a development “should be meaningful, not of small, leftover pieces.”

## AGING-FRIENDLY LAND USE STRATEGIES

Aging-friendly land use strategies should guide land use decisions and actions by the municipality. These are high-level strategies that represent aging-friendly improvements identified in the land use analysis. They should be evaluated and adjusted based on municipal resources and additional stakeholder input, including a targeted effort to solicit inclusive input from Passaic City residents who are not typically involved in community planning and have not been adequately represented in past land use decisions.

### Administration Strategies

Strategy	Goal	Priority
Establish a municipal aging-friendly committee by ordinance.	Guide and achieve implementation of this plan and advance ongoing outreach, research, and development of an aging-friendly initiative in the municipality.	High
Create a central communication outlet for all community events and organizational information to be centrally located and accessed.	Improve access to community information and amenities.	High
Conduct outreach to improve awareness and use by older adults in the city of the senior center, which is a primary means by which information and services are provided to the senior citizen population by the City.	Improve access to community resources and services.	High

Incorporate aging-friendly actions into the capital improvement budget.	Provide a mechanism for public projects aimed at improving livability for all ages to be funded.	Moderate
Adopt a maintenance program that enhances pedestrian mobility for older adults.	Enhance public services such as snow removal, sidewalk repair, maintenance of bikeways and walkways in public areas.	Low
Support efforts that assist a program for maintaining the properties where older residents reside.	Assist residents who are unable to perform home and property maintenance due to health or physical ability.	Low



## Planning Strategies

Strategy	Goal	Priority
<p>Incorporate into the municipal comprehensive master plan a set of goals, objectives, and strategies particularly targeted at enabling older residents to continue living in the community in an engaged and independent manner and based on an evaluation of the demographics and vulnerabilities of the existing and projected older populations in terms of: housing availability, cost of living, access to transportation and mobility options, access to healthy food options, vulnerability to hazards such as flood risk, and employment and engagement opportunities</p>	<p>Embed aging-friendly principles into municipal policies, regulations, and practices.</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Conduct a community survey that targets older adults.</p>	<p>Determine the needs and preferences of the older population in terms of housing, transportation, employment, social engagement, and other determinants of wellbeing.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Advocate for consideration of employment opportunities for older adults in employment programs that are put forth from other entities.</p>	<p>Reduce poverty and lower income status for older adults.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

## Mixed-Use Center Strategies

Strategy	Goal	Priority
<p>Review development ordinances that may pose restrictions on pedestrian travel or negatively affect the pedestrian environment in the downtown. The following are examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All paved yards shall have a physical barrier, with the intent to prevent motor vehicle access beyond the space, although it may also pose a barrier for pedestrians.</li> <li>▪ Drive-ins are permitted as a conditional use in all commercial zones, although they may not be compatible with walkable, mixed-use centers by creating conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.</li> <li>▪ The city does not have a land use regulation that explicitly promotes universal design for accommodating all abilities in all land use zones.</li> </ul>	<p>Make new development and redevelopment inclusive of all abilities and modalities.</p>	<p>High</p>

Permit residential units above commercial uses in the main commercial district (C zone).	Activate the Main Avenue commercial district with more pedestrian activity and provide more housing in closer proximity to destinations, reducing reliance on automobile travel.	High
Update the design standards ordinance to specify exterior lighting, landscaping, and open space requirements more conducive to pedestrian activity in the downtown area.	Improve the pedestrian environment to encourage downtown foot traffic and provide welcoming spaces for social interactions.	High
Adopt a form-based code	Direct development patterns to create a compact, downtown core with a mix of uses and consistent form that promotes pedestrian mobility, stormwater management, and diverse housing options.	Moderate
Consider older adults in workforce development efforts put forth for recruiting and retaining employees of businesses in the city.	Increase employment opportunities for older adults.	Low
Partner with the business community to offer promotions to older adults, such as “senior discounts,” or promotional events that encourage older adults to engage socially.	Activate the local economy by marketing to the needs of older adults.	Low

## Housing Strategies

Strategy	Goal	Priority
Adopt inclusionary zoning regulations.	Promote mixed-income housing and increase affordable housing.	High
Permit accessory dwelling units (ADU's).	Support intergenerational living arrangements and allow for more affordable housing options.	High
Update the zoning code to permit senior assisted living and other group facilities in zones with proximity to commercial districts and other amenities.	Encourage senior housing for active and engaged older adults.	Moderate
Provide services and assist to match people seeking and offering home sharing, and permit it in the land use code.	Support home sharing for older adults to either secure housing that is affordable or to earn supplemental income to support their expenses of home ownership.	Moderate
Design housing projects to include access to parking for caregivers.	Improve health outcomes for older adults and their caregivers.	Low
Adopt universal design standards for residential zones and development projects.	Promote mobility and autonomy for older adults within their own homes and in public spaces.	Low

<p>Incorporate landlord awareness regarding the housing and livability needs of older adults into rental housing resources and programs.</p>	<p>Help make the cost, maintenance, and livability of rental units support independence and mobility for older adults in a housing market that is based on rentals and has a very low vacancy rate.</p>	<p>Low</p>
<p>Support development of strategies, including those such as lending and land trust programs, to support housing security.</p>	<p>Implement anti-displacement mechanisms.</p>	<p>Low</p>



Main Avenue

## Mobility and Transportation Strategies

Strategy	Goal	Priority
<p>Conduct a pedestrian and walkability audit that evaluates whether there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ traffic light timing settings that are long enough to accommodate pedestrians of various abilities</li> <li>▪ pedestrian cues that are clearly visible or audible for older residents</li> <li>▪ safe pedestrian spaces for resting in the medians or corners of larger or dangerous street crossings</li> <li>▪ sufficient public street furniture, such as adequate seating, shade, and lighting, in and along the way of pedestrian routes to key destinations</li> <li>▪ well maintained and appropriately located sidewalks and crosswalks</li> <li>▪ sufficient pedestrian improvements, such as seating and lighting, within large park areas for safe and efficient circulation through the parks while traveling on foot</li> <li>▪ needed traffic-calming measures</li> </ul>	<p>Improve safety and support mobility of older adults, particularly in commercial and multi-family housing districts, and specifically along Main, Passaic, and Highland Avenues.</p>	<p>High</p>

Adopt and implement a complete and green streets policy.	Improve the pedestrian streetscape environment and develop an interconnected multi-modal transportation network.	High
Redesign parking in the downtown through mechanisms that include the use of joint-parking agreements, reducing minimum parking requirements, and making better use of municipal parking areas.	Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles in the commercial districts.	High
Enhance and expand the shuttle service or partner with a transportation service for older adults.	Provide reliable transportation for older adults to access community destinations and events, assisting in them maintaining autonomy and reducing isolation.	High
Consider reducing speed limits in appropriate locations identified as high-speed problem areas by older adult community members.	Improve pedestrian safety.	High
Maintain road signage and enhance wayfinding to improve vehicle circulation.	Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles throughout the community.	Moderate
Advocate for regular transport services for older adults in areas of low food access by engaging in partnerships that integrate transportation services, such as EZ	Promote access to healthy food for older adults.	Moderate

<p>Ride, with identification of food insecure older adults and providing them with resources for access to healthy food.</p>		
<p>Increase access to employment opportunities for older adults by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ providing regular transport services for older adults to access the train station for employment.</li> <li>▪ supporting a program to connect older adults to commuter carpooling networks.</li> </ul>	<p>Support autonomy and livelihood of older adults.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>



## Amenities and Open Spaces Strategies

Strategy	Goal	Priority
Adopt design standards for public spaces that serve all ages.	Promote intergenerational engagement and cohesion.	High
Require minimum green and civic spaces in new development and redevelopment areas and projects, which articulate provisions for adequate shade, seating, lighting, and other amenities.	Create comfortable and welcoming places for social engagement.	High
Add parklets through infill development in the downtown area and surrounding residential areas, where there is a lack of green space.	Improve social determinants of health, including air quality, flood risk, and exposure to extreme heat.	High
<p>Conduct a flood risk analysis, using climate change projections, to identify measures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ limit or restrict development in flood-prone areas</li> <li>▪ require sufficient floodproofing</li> <li>▪ provide emergency plans with ingress and egress routes for residences and businesses in flood-prone areas</li> </ul>	Reduce exposure to hazards for the older population.	High
Develop and implement a plan to install green infrastructure that will reduce impervious surface and	Maintain safe conditions for multi-modal travel routes, residences, and businesses.	Moderate

stormwater runoff throughout the community.		
Provide transportation service to the city's two largest parks from other neighborhoods throughout the city.	Provide access to open spaces and outdoor spaces for exercise and socialization.	Moderate
Support bus stops and schedules enable older adults to safely and easily use public transit to move throughout the city.	Reduce social isolation among older adults.	Moderate
Initiate a volunteer program, perhaps pairing older and younger community members to work together, to coordinate and maintain community programs, such as a community garden, computer literacy program, indoor summer concert series, neighborhood cleanup, and home maintenance assistance.	Reduce social isolation among older adults and promote intergenerational engagement and cohesion.	Moderate

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## About New Jersey Future

NEW JERSEY FUTURE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible growth, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments to foster vibrant cities and towns, protect natural lands and waterways, enhance transportation choices, provide access to safe, affordable and aging-friendly neighborhoods, and fuel a strong economy. New Jersey Future does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on strategic assistance. Embracing differences and advancing fairness is central to New Jersey Future's mission and operations. To effectively advance its mission, New Jersey Future is firmly committed to pursue a culture of greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through its programs, internal operations, and external communications.