

Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Availability of safe and accessible streets, sidewalks, parks and other outdoor spaces as well as accessible public buildings and businesses.

As we get older our physical environments play a different role in our lives. Details unnoticed at earlier stages of life can become critically important later on. From lighting in parks to uneven sidewalks and the types of doors on buildings, older adults tend to become very aware of how easy or difficult the design of such things makes their lives.

The 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that, among other things, requires that buildings used by the public accommodate individuals with disabilities. This landmark legislation resulted in important changes that make the built environment accessible to many more people.

Yet Maple Grove's retail and commercial areas are expansive. Minimum ADA requirements make accessibility possible but not necessarily easy or seamless. A more detailed knowledge of accessibility gaps, which Age-Friendly Maple Grove plans to gather, would help public officials and business owners understand what changes would help a disabled person of any age easily navigate Maple Grove's sidewalks, streets, businesses and other buildings.

The ease with which we can move about a particular environment—be it a park or a grocery store—can make or break whether we choose to return. Business owners can earn repeat business from older adults by making thoughtful transformations to their stores. The city can ensure that its extensive park system—a tremendous local resource—appeals to older residents by learning more about what features older people want and need. This goes beyond accessibility to simple understanding of how older adults of all ages and abilities are interested in taking advantage of the city's parks as places for fitness, socializing or quiet reflection.

What We Heard:

Parks and Public Space:

- Some parks in older neighborhoods don't get a lot of active use anymore and could be adapted for quieter use with more benches, tables and flowers. Central Park is beautiful but can be too sprawling for some older people.
- There is a need for an indoor space to walk during winter months.
- There is interest in public exercise equipment for adults.

Buildings:

- Doors are too heavy for older people to open. More businesses should have automatic doors or handicap-accessible doors.
- A number of people leave the community to shop:

- They dislike the setup of shopping areas (parking can be too far from the business; there are too few curb-cuts; curb-cuts are too far from parking spaces as well as from desired businesses).
- There is too much traffic in Maple Grove.
- The different commercial districts of Maple Grove are difficult to locate and navigate, especially if new to the community.
- In large stores it would be helpful to have seating *within* the store to rest. It can amount to a lot of walking for some older people.
- In some large stores the entrances and exits are far away from each other and in some cases from even handicapped parking (handicapped parking might put you near the entrance but then far from the exit).
- More curb cuts are needed in long stretches of sidewalk to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs.

Action Items: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES				
Goal 1.1 Ensure that city parks are inviting to and utilized by older adults				
Key Activities		Potential Partner(s)	Indicators	Completion Date
a.	Incorporate age-friendly commitment and park practices into the MG Parks Plan due in 2018.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MG Parks & Recreation 	Age-friendly commitment included in 2018 Park System and Recreation Plan.	Year 1
b.	Gather more information about park usage among older residents to help inform strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MG Parks & Recreation 	Existing data compiled and additional data gathered.	Year 1
c.	Identify neighborhood parks that would be suitable for age-friendly adaptations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MG Parks & Recreation 	At least two parks identified with adaptations planned or made.	Year 2
d.	Assess current dementia-friendliness of key parks; explore adding dementia-friendly park features. <i>(Dementia concerns raised as an issue under Domain 7.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MG Parks & Recreation 	Report on dementia-friendliness of key parks including recommendations.	Year 3
e.	Explore installation of public exercise equipment in key parks, using knowledge gained in previous steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MG Parks & Recreation ● Community partners 	Create recommendations for Parks & Rec on location and feasibility of adding such equipment.	Year 3

f.	Inform parks projects to ensure age-friendly considerations are embedded in process and plans (e.g., Weaver Lake Park, community center remodeling). <i>(Timing unknown; TBD by city's timeline.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MG Parks and Recreation 	Age-friendly strategies integrated in park redesign.	<i>TBD according to city timeline for such projects.</i>
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BUILDINGS				
Goal 1.2 Make buildings used by the public easier to access.				
<i>Key Activities</i>		<i>Potential Partner(s)</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Completion Date</i>
a.	Conduct a retail audit of key businesses to gather, analyze and share data about baseline age-friendliness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local businesses and restaurants • Commercial property owners and/or brokers • Chamber of Commerce • Arbor Lakes Business Association • MG Economic Development 	Audit of 10-15 local businesses completed and disseminated to key stakeholders e.g., city departments, property owners, and businesses.	Year 1
b.	Encourage and provide guidance to major retailers and restaurants to make their buildings and property easier to use or navigate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local businesses and restaurants • Commercial property owners and/or brokers • Chamber of Commerce • Arbor Lakes Business Association • MG Economic Development 	Five to 10 priority businesses will integrate age-friendly changes to physical space and/or business practices	Year 2
c.	Create a checklist of age-friendly features for new commercial development that the city would use to encourage integration of such considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MG Community Development • MG Economic Development • Planning Commission • MG Building Department 	Checklist created and included as part of city's development process.	Year 3

