



Age-Friendly 
Bellbrook

Action Plan

February 2025

Bellbrook City Council

Mike Schweller, Mayor

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Introduction Letter

The population of the United States is rapidly aging. By 2030, one in every five people in the United States will be 65 years of age or older, and by 2035, the number of adults older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18. Baby Boomers, the second largest generation in history, are at or nearing retirement age. This number of adults at or over 65 will continue to grow increasingly faster over the next decade. With this substantial jump comes many challenges for communities. However, many opportunities arise as well.

Age-Friendly Bellbrook is a planning and implementation initiative designed to identify the needs of older adults and take the steps necessary to create the most livable community for all. Age-Friendly Bellbrook will not only improve the quality of life for its current residents but also welcome new citizens to experience the "Small Town Friendly" nature of the community.

Managing these challenges for an Age-Friendly Bellbrook will require an "out-of-the-box" approach. Two examples of the challenges faced in Bellbrook are accessibility/walkability and aging in place. The aging residents of Bellbrook are very active and desire the ability to move about downtown swiftly and safely. Also, unsurprisingly, the vast majority of aging residents wish to stay in their homes for as long as possible. The City of Bellbrook has begun setting the wheels in motion to address these challenges.

Improving the age-friendliness of our community is a major opportunity to improve the lives of our residents. While this project is primarily focused on aging adults, it is important to recognize this project will improve the quality of life for all ages.

Rob Schommer, City Manager

City of Bellbrook

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Community Profile

The City of Bellbrook sits in southwest Ohio, about 10.7 miles southeast of Dayton. As a village, it was settled in 1816 and named after one of its founders, Stephen Bell, who played a significant role in developing what is now known as the "old village" district. The second part of the name stems from the many local waterways, including the Little Sugarcreek, Sugarcreek, and the Little Miami River. Bellbrook is unique in Ohio as one of only three out of 250 cities that do not impose a local income tax. The City's mission is to provide effective, courteous, and fiscally responsible municipal services that enhance the quality of life for all residents. With a significant portion of its population over 65, Bellbrook is proactively prioritizing age-friendly initiatives to meet the unique needs of this aging demographic, ensuring a secure and prepared future for everyone.

The City Council, consisting of a mayor and six at-large council members, acts as the legislative body and hires a City Manager to oversee daily operations. Bellbrook's Fire Department is known for its excellent fire and paramedic services, and the Police Department effectively keeps crime rates low through community patrols and public education. The Service Department manages the City's public works, including roadways and stormwater, and provides snow removal and street maintenance services.

Covering roughly three square miles, Bellbrook has a population of approximately 7,266 residents. About 1,171 individuals (or 16.1%) of this population are aged 65 and older. Among the 3,125 households in the area, 11% consist of older residents living alone. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of adults over 65 is expected to surpass the number of children under 18 within the next decade. This demographic shift is a key factor for community planning, highlighting the need for efforts that foster age-friendliness and address the needs of the older adult population. Older adults in Bellbrook prioritize walkability, access to parks, and the ability to age in place. This information is essential for guiding the planning and policy process toward initiatives that older adult residents wish to see implemented. Regarding housing, approximately 25% of residents are renters, while 75% are homeowners. As of 2023, the median home value in Bellbrook was \$287,000.

Recognizing community demographics while working to improve age-friendliness is vital to ensure that plans are effective, efficient, and equitable so that every resident feels included and valued in our community. Bellbrook is often recognized as one of Ohio's most desirable cities for retirees, thanks to its rural, small-town atmosphere, high-quality government services, access to medical facilities, and close-knit community. Additionally, Bellbrook combines a quiet environment with an active lifestyle, providing opportunities for relaxation while offering a variety of engaging activities for residents of all ages.

Data Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimate

Action Plan Introduction

Age-Friendly Bellbrook

In Bellbrook, one in six residents is 65 years old or older. As the population ages and individuals remain healthy and active for longer, Bellbrook must adapt to these changes. Creating an age-friendly Bellbrook can foster happier and healthier residents of all ages.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities includes over 300 towns, cities, counties, and states across the United States dedicated to becoming more age-friendly. Membership in this Network signifies that a community's elected leaders are committed to creating a welcoming environment for people of all ages.

In 2020, Bellbrook joined the Network and was recognized by the AARP for its commitment to developing comprehensive, age-friendly policies. The City's AARP Livability Index score is 58, placing it in the top half of communities in the United States. This score reflects an aggregate of various livability categories, including health, housing, and other factors that influence a community's overall livability. These individual scores are as follows:

	Bellbrook	2024 Median U.S. City
Overall Score	58	50
Housing	43	56
Neighborhood	52	36
Transportation	61	44
Environment	72	59
Health	58	43
Engagement	52	47
Opportunity	69	52

Source: AARP Livability Index data

Bellbrook has several strong features that support age-friendliness, but there is room for improvement and innovation. This effort is called Age-Friendly Bellbrook. The initiative is structured around the Eight Domains of Livability, a framework developed by the World Health Organization and AARP to help communities assess and enhance their age-friendly initiatives.

The City Manager and the Community Development Administrator will take primary responsibility for the administration and oversight of the action plan. They will operate under the guidance of the City Council and in collaboration with relevant City departments and local community organizations. They will also take into account feedback and opinions of older residents, caretakers, and others affected by this plan, as this information is essential in ensuring the City acts in their best interest.

Mission & Vision

The City of Bellbrook's *mission* is to create an inclusive atmosphere and supportive environment where all community members can lead fulfilling and enriching lives. We aim to enable individuals of all ages to actively participate in daily life.

Our *vision* is for Bellbrook to be a welcoming and accessible community where residents of all ages feel valued, included, and empowered to live life to the fullest.

Through the Age-Friendly Bellbrook initiative, we prioritize the needs of our older adult residents by focusing on the eight domains of livability. Age-Friendly Bellbrook is a community-driven effort that relies on feedback and collaboration with older residents and community organizations. In this iteration of the Action Plan, our focus is on enabling seniors to age in place, improving walkability and connectivity, and expanding opportunities for participation in a variety of programs.

Bellbrook is committed to continuous improvement. We regularly analyze our strengths and identify areas for enhancement to foster a more age-friendly environment. The Age-Friendly Action Plan is a "living document" that will be updated and adapted as conditions change.

Values

The City takes pride in its community and values open and transparent communication, integrity and trust, fiscal responsibility, civic engagement and participation, adaptability, and a community-centered outlook. These values direct our work in making Bellbrook a more accessible and livable community for older residents.

Community Assessment

To gather crucial information regarding how to direct Bellbrook's age-friendly efforts, City staff solicited feedback from the older adult population of Bellbrook. These residents were engaged through both online and paper surveys and focus groups. Public participation was open for two months, and City staff facilitated two focus groups. During these sessions, staff reviewed the survey questions and encouraged attendees to engage in open discussions about the needs and wants of the older adult community. More than one hundred Bellbrook residents participated in the survey and focus groups. The survey questions were developed around the AARP's Eight Domains of Livability.

Following our public engagement efforts, City staff identified key concerns among aging residents: housing affordability and the ability to age in place, walkability (highlighting sidewalk safety and lighting issues), and the demand for a variety of activities tailored to older residents. This feedback will guide our specific age-friendly initiatives, ensuring they resonate with and address the community's needs.

Key Findings

The findings from these information-gathering efforts indicate that housing, walkability, and activities are the community's most significant issues. More information on these findings can be found in Age-Friendly Bellbrook's Findings Report, linked to in the Supporting Documents section of this document.

Housing Concerns

- There is a shortage of affordable housing options for lower- and middle-income older residents.
- The ability to age in place is overwhelmingly important.
- 91% of older residents indicated that remaining in Bellbrook is very important to them.
 - Extrapolating on this, 91% of older residents expressed that being able to age within their own homes is crucial.

Walkability

- 60% of older residents reported that sidewalks are often uneven and unsafe.
- 50% stated that there are limited sidewalks in their neighborhoods.
- 54% of respondents felt that streets and walkways need better lighting.

Programming and Entertainment

- 63% of respondents expressed a desire for more access to programs and activities specifically tailored to older residents.
- 72% wanted a greater variety of activities.
- 81% desired more fitness-related options.

Action Plan Details

The Eight Domains of Livability

Based on input from the community and the Bellbrook City Council, several projects to enhance age-friendly improvements and activities are fully planned or in the planning stages. An ongoing assessment of our progress will help ensure that Bellbrook is prepared to support the aging community.

Each action item will result in key outputs, including policies, services, programs, or collaborations with other organizations. The overarching outcomes of these efforts are to enhance Bellbrook's age-friendliness and foster a supportive environment for all residents, and the long-term impact is the improved well-being of residents of all ages.

Staff is also working to align Bellbrook's Age-Friendly Action Plan with the Comprehensive Plan with the intent to enhance support and create efficiencies in the actions undertaken by City staff. The alignment is anticipated to encompass, at least in part, all eight livability domains.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings (OSB)

Individuals of all ages benefit from outdoor spaces and buildings that are safe, accessible, and thoughtfully designed. Key features that enhance the inclusivity of the environment include green spaces, public amenities and facilities, and walkability. Based on the findings from our public engagements, Bellbrook residents value walkability. Sixty percent of survey respondents stated that Bellbrook has uneven or unsafe sidewalks. This issue is salient in Bellbrook's downtown area and several residential neighborhoods. Some sidewalks downtown are quite narrow and directly adjacent to the street. Also, all residential neighborhoods constructed before 1970 were built without sidewalks, making walkability difficult. To comply with ADA requirements, some sidewalks must be widened, and ramps and tread mats must be added. The City has taken steps to address these issues in a Downtown Revitalization Project scheduled for the summer of 2023. Age-Friendly Bellbrook aims to create a physical setting that supports older residents, particularly downtown, where activities such as shopping, exercise, worship, and business occur.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community where residents of all ages enjoy safe and convenient access to natural and built environments, including parks and public facilities.

- Goal 1: Improve accessibility to City amenities and locations
 - Action Item 1: Continuation of implementation of downtown streetscape projects
 - Action Item 2: Assess sidewalk lighting to ensure adequate visibility for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Goal 2: Implement policies and zoning code changes that promote age-friendliness
 - Action Item 3: Investigate the applicability of universal design, Complete Streets, mixed-use developments, and other best practice options

Transportation (T)

While driving is the primary mode of transportation across the nation, alternative ways to navigate the community include walking, biking, carpooling, and public transit. To ensure pedestrian safety, it is crucial to have safe sidewalks and easily crossable streets. Public transportation options can vary from large to small-scale services. Dedicated bike lanes promote exercise and provide an environmentally friendly travel option. Age-Friendly Bellbrook will prioritize safer pedestrian transportation methods and education on alternative transportation options.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community where residents of all ages can access an array of reliable and safe transportation options.

- Goal 1: Promote walking as a viable transportation option
 - Action Item 1: Research and adopt applicable policies to improve walkability and downtown access
- Goal 2: Offer information on a range of transportation options, focusing on individuals with mobility limitations and disabilities
 - Action Item 2: Identify transportation options and develop a guideline document for older residents on these alternatives
 - Action Item 3: Collaborate with community organizations to promote transportation options that more effectively accommodate individuals of all ability levels

Housing (H)

Research indicates that most older residents prefer to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible as they age; in fact, 91% of respondents to the Age-Friendly Survey responded that staying in Bellbrook is very important to them. This is achievable if homes are designed or modified for aging in place or if the community offers housing options suitable for various income levels and life stages. Age-Friendly Bellbrook is committed to facilitating the ability to age in place.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community that provides diverse housing options to suit the needs of older residents and their families.

- Goal 1: Adopt age-friendly housing policies and zoning code changes to promote aging in place
 - Action Item 1: Draft and implement a text amendment to the Bellbrook Zoning Code permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Action Item 2: Research zoning code updates that promote aging in place
- Goal 2: Improve means by which homeowners can improve their properties
 - Action Item 3: Expand the Bellbrook Community Reinvestment Area maps and terms to encourage needed property improvements
 - Action Item 4: Research options and volunteer organizations that assist older residents with property maintenance activities

Social Participation (SP)

Engaging in social activities—such as clubs, events, programs, and other gatherings—is essential for maintaining connections with friends, family, and the community. From the Age-Friendly Survey, 63% of respondents desired more access to programs and activities specifically tailored to older residents with a focus on variety and fitness-related options.

The Bellbrook Senior Center and the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Park District offer a variety of activities and groups. Age-Friendly Bellbrook will promote and support local organizations that provide programming for older residents.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community that provides a diverse range of affordable and accessible social and recreational opportunities, ensuring that older residents feel welcomed and encouraged to participate actively.

- Goal 1: Engage with community organizations that offer social participation opportunities for older residents and see where the City can participate or assist where feasible
 - Action Item 1: Promote the work of community organizations that offer age-friendly programs and activities
 - Action Item 2: Investigate creating gatherings to help combat loneliness

Respect and Social Inclusion (RSI)

Everyone deserves to feel valued, included, and important within their community. Multigenerational activities offer opportunities for young and older individuals to learn from each other. Age-Friendly Bellbrook is dedicated to fostering an atmosphere of appreciation and inclusivity for all residents, recognizing the valuable contributions that older residents make to the community.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community that emphasizes the voices of its older residents, ensuring they feel heard, valued for their contributions, and actively included in community life.

- Goal 1: Engage with community organizations that offer programs to address respect and social inclusion
 - Action Item 1: Collaborate with local organizations to understand the types of programs and services available for older residents and promote them
- Goal 2: Improve community relationships with older adults
 - Action Item 2: Train Administrative staff on knowledge and skills when interacting with people living with dementia

Work and Civic Participation (WCP)

An age-friendly community encourages older adults to engage actively in community life, providing opportunities for work and volunteering. While many older adults are retired, the ability to work, volunteer, or participate in other ways is an appealing way to stay engaged with the community and an enjoyable use of one's time. Age-Friendly Bellbrook is committed to inviting older adults to participate in the City's initiatives.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community where senior residents have diverse opportunities to engage in meaningful and fulfilling work and volunteer activities.

- Goal 1: Ensure older adults can easily engage with the community
 - Action Item 1: Raise awareness of education, volunteer, and work options offered by local organizations (colleges, faith-based organizations, etc.)
 - Action Item 2: Promote openings/vacancies on City Boards and Commissions

Communication and Information (CI)

Effective communication and access to information are vital for staying connected and informed. The City employs various methods to distribute information and public announcements, including social media, a mass-calling and email system, newsletters, and bulletin boards at key locations such as the public library, post office, and local shops. Additionally, residents have access to public computers at the Winters Library. The Findings Report shows that the majority of respondents utilize computers and smart devices and access the internet to obtain information. Age-Friendly Bellbrook will enhance its communication and information efforts to ensure they are relevant, timely, responsive, and clear.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community that fosters effective communication of relevant and timely information through methods that engage and accommodate members of all ages.

- Goal 1: Ensure effective communication through the City's available communication channels and improve where necessary
 - Action Item 1: Incorporate age-friendly information in the Bellbrook newsletter
 - Action Item 2: Provide comprehensive information on the City's website regarding local services (utilities, transportation, health, etc.)
 - Action Item 3: Updating Bellbrook's phone and email database with current information for Hyper-Reach and email communications

Health Services and Community Supports (HSCS)

Good health and well-being are essential for quality of life. The community offers a wide range of healthcare facilities, including a large hospital, a clinic for the uninsured and underinsured, several medical centers, and various healthcare practitioners. Most respondents to the Age-Friendly survey reported that they have access to medical offices and healthcare professionals. Age-Friendly Bellbrook will work to raise awareness of these options to ensure that residents are informed about how to maintain their health throughout their lives.

Vision: We envision Bellbrook as a community where older residents have seamless access to comprehensive community and health services that effectively address their needs.

- Goal 1: Promote available community resources
 - Action Item 1: Publicize the availability of local health services and community support groups
- Goal 2: Support families and caregivers of older adults
 - Action Item 2: Investigate opportunities to help and support caregivers of older residents
 - Action Item 3: Research the Village Movement and other community-based support groups for applicability in Bellbrook

Appendix

OSB – Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

RSI – Respect and Social Inclusion

T – Transportation

WCP – Work and Civic Participation

H – Housing

CI – Communication and Information

SP – Social Participation

HSCS – Health Services and Community Supports

Goal	Action Item	Involved Entities	Timeline	Metrics
OSB Goal 1 Improve accessibility to City amenities and locations	OSB Action Item 1 Continuation of implementation of downtown streetscape projects	City of Bellbrook Greene County ODOT	Ongoing (multi-phase)	Completion of downtown streetscape projects as outlined in the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan
	OSB Action Item 2 Assess sidewalk lighting to ensure adequate visibility for pedestrians and bicyclists	City of Bellbrook	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Compilation of findings and development of a plan to address any issues
OSB Goal 2 Implement policies and zoning code changes that promote age-friendliness	OSB Action Item 3 Investigate the applicability of universal design, Complete Streets, mixed-use developments, and other best-practice options	City of Bellbrook	2025	Showing applicability where feasible and appropriate and presenting it to the City Planning Board and City Council for recommendation
T Goal 1 Promote walking as a viable transportation option	T Action Item 1 Research and adopt applicable policies to improve walkability and downtown access	City of Bellbrook	2026-2029	Implementation of applicable policies
T Goal 2 Offer information on a range of transportation options, focusing on	T Action Item 2 Identify transportation options and develop a guideline document for older residents on these alternatives	City of Bellbrook	2025	Development of a guideline document

individuals with mobility limitations and disabilities	T Action Item 3 Collaborate with community organizations to promote transportation options that more effectively accommodate individuals of all ability levels	City of Bellbrook Greene Couty Council on Aging Greene CATS	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Information on transportation options on the City's website, social media, newsletter, and through other communication tools
H Goal 1 Adopt age-friendly housing policies and zoning code changes to promote aging in place	H Action Item 1 Draft and implement a text amendment to the Bellbrook Zoning Code permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)	City of Bellbrook	2024	Adoption of the updated code
	H Action Item 2 Research zoning code updates that promote aging in place	City of Bellbrook	2025	Compilation of findings and recommendation of applicable policies to the Planning Board and City Council
H Goal 2 Improve means by which homeowners can improve their properties	H Action Item 3 Expand the Bellbrook Community Reinvestment Area maps and terms to encourage needed property improvements	City of Bellbrook	2025	Adoption by the City Council of the updated CRA
	H Action Item 4 Research options and volunteer organizations that assist older residents with property maintenance activities	City of Bellbrook	2025-2026	Presentation of information through the City's means of communication
SP Goal 1 Engage with community organizations that offer social participation opportunities for older residents and see where the City can participate or assist where feasible	SP Action Item 1 Promote the work of community organizations that offer age-friendly programs and activities	City of Bellbrook Greene County Council on Aging Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District	2025	Information about these organizations and programs on the City's website, social media, newsletter, and through other communication tools
	SP Action Item 2 Investigate creating gatherings to help combat loneliness	City of Bellbrook Winters- Bellbrook Community Library Greene County Council on Aging Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District	2026	Compilations of findings and presentation to City leadership for next steps
RSI Goal 1 Engage with community organizations that offer programs to	RSI Action Item 1 Collaborate with local organizations to understand the types of programs and services available for older residents and promote them	City of Bellbrook Greene County Council on Aging	Ongoing (beginning 2026)	Information about these organizations and programs on the City's website, social media, newsletter, and through other communication tools

address respect and social inclusion		Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District		Compilations of findings and presentation to City leadership for next steps
RSI Goal 2 Improve community relationships with older adults	RSI Action Item 2 Train Administrative staff on knowledge and skills when interacting with people living with dementia	City of Bellbrook	2026	Training program created and implemented
WCP Goal 1 Ensure older adults can easily engage with the community	WCP Action Item 1 Raise awareness of education, volunteer, and work options offered by local organizations (colleges, faith-based organizations, etc.)	City of Bellbrook Area organizations (businesses, non-profits, etc.)	2026	Information about these options available through the City's communication channels
	WCP Action Item 2 Promote openings/vacancies on City Boards and Commissions	City of Bellbrook	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Information about these vacancies through the City's communication channels, as well as direct outreach to potentially interested individuals
CI Goal 1 Ensure effective communication through the City's available communication channels and improve where necessary	CI Action Item 1 Incorporate age-friendly information in the Bellbrook newsletter	City of Bellbrook	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Age-friendly information published in the Bellbrook newsletter
	CI Action Item 2 Provide comprehensive information on the City's website regarding local services (utilities, transportation, health, etc.)	City of Bellbrook Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Community Resource Center	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Information available on the City's website
	CI Action Item 3 Updating Bellbrook's phone and email database with current information for Hyper-Reach and email communications	City of Bellbrook Greene County	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Internal database with valid contact information
HSCS Goal 1 Promote available community resources	HSCS Action Item 1 Publicize the availability of local health services and community support groups	City of Bellbrook Open Arms Health Clinic Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Community Resource Center	Ongoing (beginning 2025)	Information about these organizations through the City's communication channels
HSCS Goal 2 Support families and caregivers of older adults	HSCS Action Item 2 Investigate opportunities to help and support caregivers of older residents	City of Bellbrook Greene County Council on Aging Ohio Department of Aging	2026	Presentation of options to City leadership
	HSCS Action Item 3	City of Bellbrook	2026	Presentation of applicability to City leadership

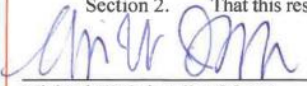

	Research the Village Movement and other community-based support groups for applicability in Bellbrook			
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Additional Resources

- Greene County Council on Aging
 - 937-376-5486
 - www.gccoa.org
- Bellbrook Sugarcreek Senior Center (through the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Park District)
 - 937-848-3535
 - www.bellbrooksugarcreekparks.org
- Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Community Support Center
 - 937-848-3810
 - www.bscsc.org
- Ohio Department of Aging
 - 1-800-266-4346
 - www.aging.ohio.gov

Supporting Documents

- Age-Friendly Bellbrook [Findings Report 2023](#)
- Age-Friendly Bellbrook Survey [Results](#) (begins on page 9)
- City of Bellbrook's [Downtown Streetscape Master Plan](#)
- City of Bellbrook's [Comprehensive Plan](#)
- The City of Bellbrook's Resolution 2020-E: A Resolution to Seek Membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities

RECORD OF RESOLUTIONS	
Resolution No. 2020-E	February 24, 2020
<p style="text-align: center;">City of Bellbrook Resolution No. 2020-E A Resolution to Seek Membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.</p> <p>WHEREAS, the health and safety of residents of all ages is of highest concern to the citizens of Bellbrook; and</p> <p>WHEREAS, as the U.S. population ages and people stay healthy and active longer, communities must adapt; and</p> <p>WHEREAS, planning processes including community revitalization and economic development plans should include the needs of all people regardless of age, income, physical ability, race, and other factors of older adults; and</p> <p>WHEREAS, community decisions on land-use, housing and transportation should be consistent with the comprehensive plan that has been developed with public input; and</p> <p>WHEREAS, members of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities become part of a global network of communities that are committed to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives; and</p> <p>WHEREAS, membership in the Network of Age-Friendly Communities includes access to financial assistance and technical expertise; and</p> <p>NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED</p> <p>Now, Therefore, the City of Bellbrook Hereby Resolves:</p> <p>Section 1. That in order to ensure The City of Bellbrook is a well-designed, livable community that promotes health and sustained economic growth for residents of all ages, the City of Bellbrook supports the planning process and requests participation in the Network of Age-Friendly Communities.</p> <p>Section 2. That this resolution shall take effect and be in force forthwith.</p> <p> _____ Michael W. Schweller, Mayor</p> <p> _____ Pamela Timmons, Clerk of Council</p>	



Thank you to our partners in age-friendliness!

