City of Des Moines, Iowa
‘Great Places for All Ages’
Phase One Progress Report

Des Moines, Iowa
USA
T. Franklin Cownie – Mayor

Project Co-Chairs
Dr. Yogesh Shah, Des Moines University
Dr. Joel Olah, Aging Resources of Central Iowa
Douglas Romig, City of Des Moines
Kent Sovern, AARP Iowa

7/5/2013
Age-Friendly City Progress Report - Phase I (Planning) – Des Moines, IA

The Greater Des Moines ‘Great Places for All Ages’ is a community based effort designed to foster creation of an Age-Friendly City and an Age-Friendly Region in Central Iowa where public officials, elder service providers, community leaders, businesses and community members:

- Recognize the great diversity among the 50+ populations,
- Promote the civic and social inclusion and contribution of the 50+ population in all areas of community life,
- Plan, design and build infrastructure improvements that anticipate and accommodate the changing needs and uses by the 50+ populations,
- Respect the changing lifestyle choices of the 50+ populations, and
- Anticipate and respond flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences.

In an Age-Friendly community, policies, programs, services and infrastructure related to the physical and social environment are designed to enable the 50+ populations to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate in employment, civic, cultural and social life in a meaningful way. It takes into account the biological, psychological, behavioral, economic, social and environmental factors that operate over the course of a person’s life to determine health and well-being as we age.

1. Age-Friendly City (AFC) Project Team

1.1 Contact details of project team members

**Designated Contact Person** for the WHO Global Network:

- Dr. Yogesh Shah
- Academia
- Des Moines University – Associate Dean Global Health
- yogesh.shah@dmu.edu
- (515) 271-1369
- Des Moines – Great Places for All Ages - Project Co-Chair

1.2 Overview of project team

In August 2011, Dr. Yogesh Shah, associate dean of global health at Des Moines University, and Dr. Joel Olah, executive director of Aging Resources of Central Iowa, met with AARP Iowa State Director Kent Sovern to outline the WHO Age-Friendly Cities program and request AARP Iowa to become a member of the leadership team for the City of Des Moines WHO Age Friendly City project. AARP agreed to join the effort. The City of Des Moines applied for and was accepted into WHO Network of Age-Friendly Cities (AFC) in October 2011. The City of Des Moines appointed Douglas Romig, Housing Services Director as the staff lead for the Age-Friendly City project.
One of the first activities of the leadership team was to build community support for the effort by recruiting a broad cross-section of civic leaders to high-level strategic advisory committee (Attachment A). The Advisory Council is Co-Chaired by Dr. Shah and Dr. Olah and the members include the leading civic, business, government, and service provider groups in the region and the project leadership team.

The Advisory Council recommended that the findings and recommendations of the City of Des Moines AFC project be integrated into three key regional strategic planning efforts underway in central Iowa. The project leadership team recruited leaders of the Capital Crossroads: A Vision for Greater Des Moines, a five-year strategic plan comprised of strategic elements for community development; The Tomorrow Plan, a regional effort focused on sustainable development; and DART Forward 2035, a blueprint for redesigning the entire transit system for greater Des Moines to sit on the Advisory Council and to become work group team members.

Day-to-day management of the project resides with the AARP Iowa staff; Kent Sovern, State Director.

- Project ‘Advisory Council’ and ‘Leadership Team’ – See Attachment A

2. Mechanisms to involve older people in all stages of the Age-Friendly cities and communities process (Milestone 1)

2.1 – Description of mechanisms
In order to gain baseline data community response to the Age-Friendly template, a major effort of the autumn of 2011 involved a series of organized neighborhood “meet-ups” for AARP member engagement in each of the four wards of the city of Des Moines. Invitations to the neighborhood ‘meet-up’ sessions were sent to every AARP member household (About 12,000) in the city of Des Moines.

The meet-ups were designed to introduce the participants to the AFC project, gather feedback on the areas of priority, and recruit volunteers interested in engaging on the project. To gauge viability of the project and facilitate instant audience feedback and discussion, AARP used Meridia audience response technology to record participant reactions to some of the criteria in each of the three work group areas. The meet-up sessions were well attended and the format worked extremely well to help accomplish our early project objectives. The leadership team learned that AARP Iowa members embraced the project design and they welcomed the opportunity to have their voices heard and to participate in the work groups.

Following the neighborhood ‘Meet-up” sessions, the project team created an organizational structure that includes three work groups in order to more efficiently manage analysis of existing conditions in the greater Des Moines area and to compare findings to the WHO-AFC criteria. (Attachment B) Most of the work group team members are 50+ years of age.
2.1.1 – ‘Great Places for All Ages’ Project Work Groups

- **Infrastructure** work group will address the focus areas of Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, and Housing.
  - **Charge**: The Infrastructure Work Group performs research and analysis of the current condition of Des Moines built environment and infrastructure planning as it impacts the quality of life for 50+ residents. Through this effort the project team will engage residents in order to create a more livable community; capitalize on existing Des Moines neighborhood-based and Regional planning efforts and make ‘Age-Friendly’ policy recommendations to public sector, private sector and not for profit institutions, businesses and organizations.

- **Social Capital** work group includes the focus area of Social Participation, Respect and Inclusion, and Civic Participation and Employment.
  - **Charge**: The Social Capital Work Group performs research and analysis of the current condition of selected WHO Age-Friendly City criteria including Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment as they impact the quality of life for 50+ residents. Through this effort the project team will engage residents in order to create a more livable community; capitalize on existing Regional Planning efforts and make ‘Age-Friendly’ policy recommendations to public sector, private sector and not for profit institutions, businesses and organizations.

- **Community Support/Health Services** work group includes the areas of Community Support, Health Services, Communication and Information services.
  - **Charge**: The Community Support/Health Services Work Group performs research and analysis of the current condition of selected WHO Age-Friendly City criteria including Community Support, Health Services, Communication and Information services as they impact the quality of life for 50+ residents. Through this effort the project team will engage residents in order to create a more livable community; capitalize on other Regional planning efforts and make ‘Age-Friendly’ policy recommendations to public sector, private sector and not for profit institutions, businesses and organizations.

2.1.2 – Neighborhood Associations

The City of Des Moines has 58 recognized neighborhood associations. The ‘Great Places for All Ages’ leadership team recognized that a successful AFC project demands the participation of neighborhood leaders and integration of their neighborhood plans and recommendations into the broader AFC template. Throughout 2012 and 2013 ‘Great Places for All Ages’ project leadership provided orientation sessions for the neighborhood leaders and is providing engagement sessions at their regular meetings.

2.2 – Milestone #1 Supporting materials

- Project ‘Table of Organization’ – See Attachment B
- Project ‘Work Group’ Roster – See Attachment C
2.2.1 See the following hot-links for ‘Great Places for All Ages’ - Des Moines Articles and Project Updates:

- **AARP The Journal - What Affects Your Ability to Live Your Best Life...?**
- **League of Iowa Cities Journal**
- **Des Moines University – Building an Age Friendly World**
- **AARP The Journal - Age-Friendly Cities**
  [http://journal.aarpinternational.org/a/b/2013/02/age-friendly-communities](http://journal.aarpinternational.org/a/b/2013/02/age-friendly-communities)

3. Baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city or community (Milestone 2)

3.1 Methods used

3.1.1 – Environmental Scan / What others are saying

**Selected Literature and Relevant Indexes (Appendix D)**

**Milken Institute ‘Best Places for Successful Aging’**
- [http://successfulaging.milken institute.org/](http://successfulaging.milken institute.org/)
  Rankings for Des Moines/West Des Moines, Iowa (6th in USA for Large Metros)

Best Cities for Successful Aging is a comprehensive index that generates a composite ranking for each metro area. The composite ranking is based on eight subcomponents (general indicators, health care, wellness, living arrangements, transportation/convenience, financial well-being, employment/education, and community engagement). Each of the eight subcomponents is composed of multiple individual indicators—78 individual indicators in all.

**Milken Key Findings for Des Moines/ West Des Moines**

**NAILED IT:**

**Available, affordable care**
- Geriatric, Alzheimer’s, hospice, and rehab services are readily available.
- Nursing and assisted-living facilities are relatively inexpensive.
- Happy-go-lucky population has low incidence of mental distress.

**Ready employment**
- Des Moines has high employment growth.
- A relatively large service sector offers job opportunities for seniors.
- The average commute time is short.

**Cultural, educational, and community engagement**
- As Iowa's cultural center, Des Moines boasts museums and other venues.
- The metro has an active senior volunteer scene.

**NEEDS WORK:**

**Lack of quality health care**
- While care is available and affordable, Des Moines lacks magnet and long-term hospitals.
- Few seniors are engaged in regular leisure-time physical activity.
- Caregivers are in short supply.
MILKIN STUDY TAKE AWAY:
Des Moines has dynamic financial services and insurance industries, and its economic outlook is bright. However, the car is still king in this mid-size Midwestern city, making it difficult for seniors who no longer drive. Des Moines ranks 45th out of 100 in the transportation/convenience indicator. Detailed analysis of each indicator can be accessed by clicking on the hot link embedded in each heading.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>% of 65+ below poverty</td>
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<td>Capital Gains as % of AGI</td>
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<td>Mean Fare for 65+</td>
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<td>Investment in Public/Senior Transportation</td>
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<td>Number of Grocery, etc.</td>
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<td>% of Households with Proximity to Grocery</td>
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<td>Number of Museums, cultural, etc.</td>
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<td>Senior Volunteer Rates</td>
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### Employment/Education Indicators

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<td>65+ Unemployment Rate</td>
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<td>Employment growth in health, education, leisure and hospitality</td>
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<td>Output of service/manufacturing</td>
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<td>College Enrollment</td>
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<td>Community Colleges</td>
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<td>Number of Universities</td>
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### Living Arrangements Indicators

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<td>Median Rental Price</td>
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<td>% of Houses with 65+ Residents</td>
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<td>Number of Nursing Beds</td>
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<td>Median Price Semi-Private Nursing Room</td>
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<td>Number of Doctors</td>
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<td>Life Expectancy at 65</td>
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<td>% of Seniors Living in Family Households</td>
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<td>% of Older Americans with frequent mental distress</td>
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<td>Number of Golf courses, skiing, marinas, bowling</td>
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Assessment Methods Used (continued):

3.1.2 – AARP Iowa Household Survey

In October 2012, AARP in Iowa commissioned a survey to explore the perceptions of residents age 50 and older living in Greater Des Moines/Polk County Iowa regarding their local community in terms of attributes services, accessibility, and activities. The survey also collected information about their work status, health status, modes of communication, and demographics. AARP purchased a sample from SSI, Inc. of household addresses in Greater Des Moines/Polk County where at the age of head of household is 50 year or older. Surveys were designed by staff at AARP and administered by mail from AARP to people age 50+ residing in the Greater Des Moines/Polk County area of Iowa.

An initial notification letter went to all potential respondents informing them of the pending survey and the value their input will have in helping decision makers improve communities in Greater Des Moines/Polk County. Approximately a week later, the first survey along with a post-paid return envelope was mailed to all potential respondents from AARP in Washington D.C. Approximately two weeks after the initial survey was mailed, a reminder post card complete the survey was sent, shortly followed by a second mailing of the survey and subsequently, another reminder postcard. All completed and usable surveys were and received by AARP in Washington D.C. and sent in bulk at Questar for data cleaning, entry, and tabulation.

In order to balance the sample, weights were applied to the sample based on age and gender of the 50 and older population residing in Des Moines/Polk County. The annotated survey reflects the weighted percentage of respondents marking each response.

3.1.3 – On-line surveys

The AARP Household survey was re-formatted and placed on-line for use by each of the Great Places work groups. The hot links for the on-line surveys are distributed to the general 50+ populations through the City of Des Moines publications, the Des Moines Neighborhood Associations’ communications organs and through new and traditional media. The surveys are located on-line at:

- Infrastructure
- Social Capitol
- Community Supports / Health & Communications

The AARP on-Line surveys will remain active throughout 2013.
3.2 AARP Survey / Key findings

The Community

✓ On average, residents of Greater Des Moines/Polk County indicate they have lived in their neighborhood for 23 years and in Polk County for 41 years. Additionally, while most reside in Greater Des Moines/Polk County year round, slightly more than one in ten (12%) say they reside outside the county during a particular season or temporarily.

✓ Most (70%) residents of Greater Des Moines/Polk county age 50+ say it is not likely they move to a different home outside of the county, and over half (59%) say it is not likely they will move to a different home within Greater Des Moines/Polk County.

✓ Not surprising then, is that most (74%) residents of Greater Des Moines/Polk County age 50+, say it is important to them to remain in their neighborhood as they grow older with four in ten (41%) saying it is extremely or very important to them.

✓ Moreover, the majority of residents of Greater Des Moines/Polk County age 50+ say it is important to them to remain in their home as they age, with nearly two-thirds (64%) saying it is extremely or very important to them.

✓ However, almost two thirds (63%) of residents of Greater Des Moines/Polk County age 50+ say they would rate their neighborhood as a good or fair place for people to live as they age while just one in ten (10%) say their neighborhood is an excellent or very good place to live as they age. Nearly one quarter (23%) rate their neighborhood as a poor place to grow older.

Summary of the key findings in each of the eight domains covered in the WHO Guide

- **Infrastructure – Outdoor Spaces & Buildings**
  o Most residents of Greater Des Moines/Polk County age 50+ agree there is a sufficient number of public parks in their neighborhood (Strongly agree: 42%; Somewhat agree: 37%), that they are well maintained and clean (Strongly agree: 42%; Somewhat agree: 36%), and that public buildings are well maintained and clean (Strongly agree: 36%; Somewhat agree: 40%). Most also agree that streets are adequately lit at night (Strongly agree: 31%; Somewhat agree: 41%), public safety is actively promoted (Strongly agree: 30%; Somewhat agree: 39), public buildings are handicap accessible (Strongly agree: 35%; Somewhat agree: 34%), and there are enough sidewalks (Strongly agree: 33%; Somewhat agree: 35%).

- **Infrastructure - Housing**
  o Over half agree that home prices overall are affordable (Strongly agree: 12%; Somewhat agree: 42%), and about four in ten agree that many homes are for sale (Strongly agree: 14%; Somewhat agree: 37%).
  o Another half or more agree that home repair contractors in their neighborhood do quality work (Strongly agree: 13%; Somewhat agree: 43%), are trustworthy (Strongly agree: 12%; Somewhat agree: 42%), and there are many from which to choose (Strongly agree: 18%; Somewhat agree: 31%). Still, one in five or more say they are not sure if they agree or disagree with each of these statements (21%; 22%; 24%, respectively).
  o Just one in five 50+ residents in Greater Des Moines/Polk County agree that the low-income housing in their neighborhood is well maintained (Strongly agree: 6%; Somewhat agree: 12%) but thirty-one percent say there are not sure if they agree or disagree, and another quarter (25%) indicate this feature does not exist in their neighborhood.
• Infrastructure – Transportation
  o Most residents age 50+ residing in Greater Des Moines/Polk County agree that in their neighborhood traffic signs are easy to read (Strongly agree: 46%; Somewhat agree: 41%) and streets are well maintained (Strongly agree: 32%; Somewhat agree: 45%).
  o About six in ten agree speed limits are enforced and drivers yield to pedestrians (Strongly agree: 18%; Somewhat agree: 41%). While just over a third agree that pedestrian crossings have hearing and visually disabled cues (Strongly agree: 15%; Somewhat agree: 21%), one quarter (25%) of residents say they are not sure if this feature exists in their neighborhood.
  o At least one third agree that public transportation is affordable (Strongly agree: 16%; Somewhat agree: 24%), stops are conveniently located (Strongly agree: 17%; Somewhat agree: 23%), and the vehicles are clean (Strongly agree: 16%; Somewhat agree: 18%). Few agree that driver education or refresher courses are available in their neighborhood (Strongly agree: 12%; Somewhat agree: 16%).
  o Up to forty-four percent of residents say they are not sure about each of the transportation features tested in the survey question.
  o About two-thirds of Greater Des Moines/Polk County residents age 50+ agree that their neighborhood multi-use trails for running, walking or biking are convenient (Strongly agree: 37%; Somewhat agree: 31%), there is sufficient public parking (Strongly agree: 25%; Somewhat agree: 40%), and public transportation is available (Strongly agree: 31%; Somewhat agree: 32%).

• Social Capital – Respect & Inclusion

• Social Capital – Volunteerism
  o Six in ten older residents of Des Moines/Polk County say they belong to a religious or faith based organization, and well over one-third of them say they attend religious services at least once a week. About one in ten say they attend religious services at least once a month (12%) and seven percent say they attend only on major holidays (7%). Four in ten (43%) did not respond to this question.
  o When asked to consider the types of services or opportunities their faith-based organization offers, over four in ten (43%) say it offers volunteer opportunities and over a third (35%) says it offers fundraisers or community fairs or events.

• Social Capital – Employment
  o After considering what they have seen or experienced, almost two-thirds of all respondents say they think people over the age of 50 face age discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, 30 percent say they or someone they know has faced discrimination in the workplace in the last four years. Thirty-eight percent say they nor anyone they know has faced age discrimination in the last four years, and over one-quarter (27%) are not sure.
  o So not surprisingly, most say they strongly or somewhat agree that Iowa needs to do more to ensure people age 50 and older continue to have equal opportunity to work for as long as they want or need to regardless of their age.

• Community Support - Health Services
  o Over half of all residents of Des Moines/Polk County age 50+ rate their health as excellent (20%) or very good (34%) with another thirty-one percent rating their health as good. One in ten residents personally rates their health as fair or poor.
  o When asked how important it is to them to remain physically active for as long as possible, most say it is extremely (65%) or very (27%) important to them.
Community Support - Communications

- Over half of all older residents of Des Moines/Polk County indicate that local TV affiliates (like KCCI, WHO, WOI, or Fox17) (73%), the daily newspaper (Des Moines Register) (56%), public television (57%), and local radio stations (54%) are extremely or very helpful sources for news and information in their local community. Somewhat fewer find other community organization newsletters (39%), local city/county newspaper (31%), or Weekly Shopper news (23%) extremely or very helpful sources of news and information.

- Most residents of Des Moines/Polk County age 50 and older have a working cell phone, and just over one quarter indicate it’s a smart phone such as a blackberry, iPhone, or Droid. So it is not surprising that about one quarter indicate they receive all (15%) or most (9%) calls on their cell phone. Most continue to use landline phones for some to all of their calls coming into the household.

- Most (90%) older residents of Des Moines Polk County communicate with family living outside the household by phone and another half communicate via face to face visits (52%) or through email (50%).

- Phone, face to face visits, and email are also the preferred modes of communication for older residents of Des Moines/Polk County with their family, friends and neighbors in their community, friends and neighbors outside their community, and colleagues or coworkers.

- Almost three-quarters (72%) of all Des Moines/Polk County residents age 50+ say they own a computer with internet access and nearly two-thirds (64%) of all respondents access the internet at least once a day with half (49%) saying they access it several times a day.

- Among those who access the internet, most say they send and receive email or text (72%) when they use the Internet. About half (54%) seek/read local, state, or national news and information or buy a product online such as books, music, toys, clothing, etc. and just under half (47%) say they perform online banking or other financial services and seek local community events, entertainment, and dining options (45%). Others engage in activities such as buying reservations online for travel (41%) and to use Facebook (36%).

- When considering communication with clubs or organizations, phone and email are preferred by at least thirty-seven percent of these older residents while phone and face to face visits with local businesses or services are preferred by at least one-third.

3.3 Baseline assessment report
AARP Household Survey - Attachment E
WHO Age-Friendly Criteria Analysis – Attachment F
4. Action Plan (Milestone 3)

4.1 Priorities
Please outline the priority areas for action identified in the action plan, indicating which areas have emerged from the Age-Friendly assessment conducted.

4.2 Implementation timeline
*The WHO Network Cycle suggests a three-year implementation period. This may vary from city to city depending on local planning cycles.*

When was the plan of action approved?

How long is the implementation period for the action plan?

4.3 Budget
What budget has been allocated to the implementation of action plan?

4.4 Responsibility for implementation
Please indicate which department / entity is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the plan

4.5 Age-friendliness as a cross-cutting issue in municipal planning
The action plan may link to other municipal instruments to ensure that age-friendliness becomes a core responsibility for all municipal departments. Please provide a short description of these linkages as applicable.

Please attach your action plan.
5. Indicators to monitor progress against this plan (Milestone 4)

Phase 2 of the Network Cycle requires cities and communities to implement their plan of action and to monitor their progress over time. As part of the planning phase, indicators should be identified for each area of the action plan to make progress measurable over time.

5.1 List of indicators
Please provide the list of identified indicators or indicate if these are included in the action plan. These may include tangible measurements (i.e. the number of new park benches provided) or opinions (i.e. the number of residents [65+] who report that roads in their neighborhood are suitable for walking).

5.2 Monitoring strategy
Briefly describe your monitoring strategy, i.e. how you intend to monitor and assess progress against your own goals as outlined in the action plan

Please submit this form as well as all supporting documentation to the Network Secretariat in electronic format: gnafcc@who.int with the subject line: Phase I Review (+ city/community name).
If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.
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Great Places for All Ages
Greater Des Moines / WHO Age Friendly Cities
Organizational Structure

DSM AFC Advisory Committee

Great Places for All Ages - Executive Committee

Infrastructure Work Group
- Open Spaces & Buildings
- Transportation
- Housing

Social Capital Work Group
- Social Participation
- Social Inclusion & Respect
- Civic Participation & Employment

Health Services and Communications Work Group
- Health Services & Community
- Communications & Information
Greater Des Moines Age Friendly Cities Collaborating Organizations

Greater Des Moines Age Friendly Cities – Coordinated State & Regional Planning Efforts

The Tomorrow Plan
Partnering for a Greener Greater Des Moines

Blue Zones Project

Metropolitan Advisory Council

Des Moines Neighbors
## Des Moines ‘Great Places for All Ages’ - Age Friendly Community Project

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Environmental Scan - Selected Literature and Relevant Indexes

General Indicators


Health-Care and Wellness Indicators


Living Arrangement Indicators


**Transportation Indicators**


**Financial Indicators**


**Employment/Education Indicators**


Community Engagement Indicators


Relevant Indexes on Topics Related to Aging


