



January 6, 2016

SARA CARLSON, Mayor

Will Phillips, State Director
AARP Minnesota
30 E 7th Street, Suite 1200
St. Paul, MN 55101

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

VIRGIL BATESOLE, *First Ward*

BOB KUHLMAN, *Second Ward*

BOBBIE OSTERBERG, *Third Ward*

DAVID J. BENSON, *Fourth Ward*

TODD JENSEN, *Fifth Ward*

Martin Schultz,
Administrator

Reed Heidelberger,
Assessor

Thomas A. Jacobson,
Attorney

Lynn Timm
Building Official

Tim Schoonhoven,
Engineer

Jane Blade,
Finance Director

Jeff Karrow,
Fire Chief

Dennis L. Stark,
Fire Marshal

Bill Thoennes,
*Interim Public Works
Coordinator/Park Director*

Michael J. Weber,
Planner

Richard Wyffels,
Chief of Police

Vinnie Hennen,
RCC Manager

Andrew Mellgren,
Liquor Store Manager

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Alexandria, MN 56308
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Dear Mr. Phillips:

As Mayor of the City of Alexandria, I am honored to submit this letter of support and commitment to both AARP and the World Health Organization. The City's long-standing engagement with and dedication to our aging population will be enhanced by recognition as an Age-Friendly Community, if such membership might be granted.

Alexandria is a rapidly growing micropolitan (the fastest growing such community in Minnesota in 2013, and the sixth fastest growing in the nation that year) located in the lakes area of West Central Minnesota. Our population of 13,182 persons includes a cohort of 32.5% aged 55 and older, which is expected to grow by 2.2% between 2015 and 2020. To serve this significant demographic, which the City has been planning for since the mid-1990's, we have created and implemented City policies to support public transportation, services for the elderly such as Meals on Wheels and home health care, and the continued maintenance of available housing of both independent and housing-with-services types. The City provides direct funding to the Alexandria Senior Center, and offers delayed or deferred assessments to seniors for the costs of public improvement projects, which allows many seniors to stay in their homes and still benefit from new water, storm drainage and other public improvements.

City elected officials and staff have been happily engaged in the local volunteer Task Force which is leading the effort to gain status as an Age-Friendly Community. It is our intention and commitment to continue to foster and implement plans and policies which serve the many and varied needs of our older residents in order that they may continue to contribute to the vitality and diversity of our community.

Thank you for your consideration of membership of the City of Alexandria to AARP's and the World Health Organization's network of Age-Friendly Communities. We will be proud to work with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Sara Carlson
Mayor



- If you have questions while completing this form, please email livable@aarp.org or call 202-434-2430
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: December 18, 2015

Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: Alexandria

POPULATION SIZE: 13,182

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 32.5% of the population is 55+

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Sara Carlson, Mayor

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: 704 Broadway, Alexandria MN 56308

Section 2: COMMUNITY CONTACT FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The community contact is the local staff member or volunteer who is primarily responsible for carrying out the community-level work — it is not the responsible AARP staff member.

NAME: Kathryn LeBrasseur and Dian Lopez

POSITION: Local elder volunteers

EMAIL ADDRESS: klebrass@charter.net and lopezdr@morris.umn.edu

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 320-760-9915, 320-763-3394 and 320-287-1517

Please describe the named person's role in the city or community's age-friendly initiative:

Kathryn LeBrasseur is the President of the Board of Directors and the former manager of the Alexandria Senior Center. She is on the Foundation Board of Directors at the Alexandria Technical and Community College, Foundation Board of Directors at the Douglas County Hospital, and the Elder Network Board of Directors. She is the recipient of the AARP Minnesota Andrus Award for Community Service and was named the 2015 Outstanding Senior of the Year by the Douglas County Fair Board. She is also very active in her church. Dian Lopez is an Elder Care Network Volunteer, a member of the Board of Directors at the Douglas County Hospital, and the Board of Directors for Habitat for Humanity, an AARP volunteer for fraud and advocacy and former President of the University of Minnesota Morris Retirees Association.

Section 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

2) Please provide a brief summary of the community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people and how the community plans to become more age-friendly.

The city of Alexandria has a long history of financial and community support for seniors which changes with their fluctuating needs. Programs include free and reduced Meals on Wheels and congregate dining, Alexandria Senior Center, Senior Companion, Experience Works Employment Program, Let's Go Fishing, Douglas County Senior Office, AARP driving safety and Elder Care Network. There are Senior Volunteer Opportunities through many organizations. Free services include; parish health nurses, legal aid, health counseling, AARP income tax preparation, AARP fraud awareness, computer education, etc. There are many senior services available in Alexandria that address senior housing, health, social, financial, recreation, physical and emotional needs. Service information is available via phone through the Senior Linkage Line and via internet at www.minnesotahelp.info. We will become more age-friendly by surveying our senior community and working on addressing their most pressing needs.

3) How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming more age-friendly?

Once all the older citizens are identified, we will survey them to find out their current challenges in living in their own homes and remaining active in the community. We already know that transportation for those who can no longer drive is a problem in our rural areas. However, there may be many more issues that need to go on our "issues to be solved list". The only way to identify them is to ask the older citizens in our community. Once identified, task forces can be created with local over 50 residents, government representatives and not-for-profit and for-profit businesses to research what has been done elsewhere and brainstorm on possible solutions for our area. Once solutions have been identified, groups of older citizens can be asked if these would meet their needs and to prioritize them based on funding. A method of communicating results and feedback will need to be developed to not only keep our older citizens informed and involved, but also in evaluating the results. By publishing the "issues to be solved list" and the potential solutions in the local press, we can also begin the process of educating the entire community about the need for age friendly-access to all community events and activities. In addition, local businesses would become aware of this effort which may cause them to be aware of accessibility and age friendly changes they might make in their own locations, not to mention increase potential support and funding for solutions.

3) Briefly describe the mechanisms the community has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments.

The Alexandria area already has quite a bit of collaboration occurring between different organizations and agencies that provide services or support healthy aging. Some of these agencies include the Task Force on Aging, County Committee on Aging, Douglas County TRIAD, Alexandria Senior Center, and Douglas County Senior Services. They work collaboratively and individually to bring comprehensive programming to seniors. Our Age-Friendly Alexandria Committee intends to have a series of discussions with organizations that are already in place and doing some problem identification and planning solutions. Through our community meetings, we hope to gradually bring all interested participants into our age-friendly discussions and planning.

Section 4: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

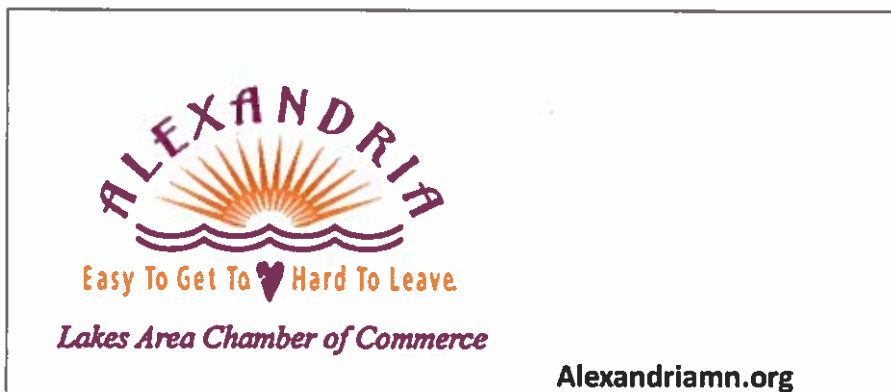
Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your membership in the global age-friendly network and better enable us to understand how to support the network.

4) How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

The Alexandria area hopes to contribute to these efforts by facing and solving some of the largest challenges rural communities face in assisting people to live easily, safely and comfortably in their homes and communities as they age. Challenges such as transportation and isolation are exceptionally hard in the winter for our residents. With a multitude of local partners in this effort, we will not only encourage older adults to take a more active role in our community, have their voices heard, and help in the problem solving process, but to take an active role in their health and wellness as well. If we can find cost effective solutions to the challenges that rural Minnesota communities face, they could become possible options for other communities with similar issues around the globe.

5) What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

The Alexandria Community has long been involved in age-friendly initiatives because of our high population of retirees. In 2015, 32.5% of the residents of Alexandria were 55 or older. That number is rising fast. Between 2015 and 2020, the population in our area of 65 - 84 year olds is projected to grow by 2.2% and the 85+ group by 1.1%. We are excited about sending out the AARP survey and working hard on areas that our fellow elders feel need improvement. We want to learn more about what other communities are doing and hope to share our successes also. Our retirees are biting at the bit to work on ways to make our community better for all and especially age-friendly for our many retirees.



6) Please provide a digital file or link of a logo or other image that represents your community.

The image

resolution should be at least 72 dpi. As an example of an image, here's ours >



