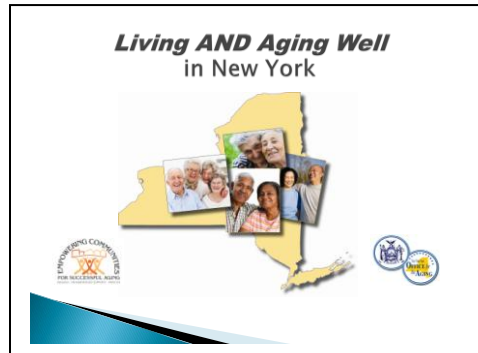


Empowering Communities for Successful Aging

July 27, 2010 – Albany

August 16, 2010 - Batavia



Keynote address by Michael J. Burgess
Director, NY State Office for the Aging

Welcome. And thank you for joining us here. I see you all as partners in a movement – a movement to make our communities aging friendly and livable for all ages. You represent the strength of NY – the innovators, the planners, the movers and shakers!

I want to thank our co-sponsors, AARP and the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, for joining us again in preparing these two conferences, in Albany and in Batavia. Also I want to thank Laura Cameron and Joanne Martel from the NYS Association of Area Agencies on Aging for their invaluable assistance in planning the conferences. I want to thank the entire Planning Committee, including the staff from the New York State Office for the

Aging, who have helped turn ideas into program and technical assistance into workshops. And, I want to especially thank Rick Ianello and Sue Kenneally and Nicole Kinns of the Albany Guardian Society for really guiding us with their conference planning experience and setting up the logistics of these events which they have worked with us on over the last several months.

Many of you were with us at the start of this process - in Saratoga Springs in November 2008 when the first conference, *Empowering Communities for Successful Aging*, was held. There we shared best practices and had time to network. Since then Our Office and so many of you have continued efforts to engage communities.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Our Office and Area Agencies on Aging

Since the first conference, the New York State Office for the Aging has mobilized its staff and dedicated our resources to providing support for this movement. We have established a link

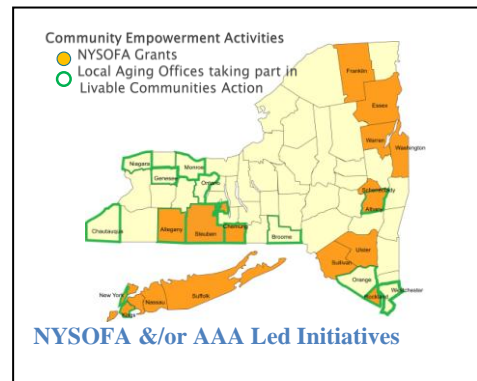


<http://www.aging.ny.gov/EmpoweringCommunities/RegionalHappenings/Regiona>

Happenings.cfm with a whole library of key information about local activities and resources on our website.

We have sponsored regional calls with many of you as local leaders to continue the momentum. And, we have provided funding to fifteen local communities to assess their needs and make plans for the future and we will be providing another round of funding later this year.

The AAAs have continued to deliver high quality home and community based services and have gone beyond their core mission to



- Mobilize older volunteers to lead many innovative programs, including wellness initiatives, and a new unique approach to service – a community supports navigator that NYSOFA and 2 AAAs are demonstrating starting this Fall
- Organize conferences to raise awareness and collaboration
- Work with county government leaders to plan for the booming population of older NYers

Our State:

- Governor Paterson created a Smart Growth cabinet in 2007 to ensure collaboration among agencies that affect growth, development and land

use. I am pleased that Paul Beyer, who works on this initiative, has joined us for the conference – and has been very supportive of our community empowerment strategy.

- Working with other state agencies on housing, zoning, environmental issues where we have mutual interests.

On the National Level:



1. President Obama created a new Office of Livable Communities that will coordinate federal interagency efforts to promote better access to affordable housing, public transportation, and employment options.
2. Enhanced investment in volunteerism – Kennedy Serve America Act
3. AOA funded the Community Innovations In Aging In Place (CIAIP)
 - Visiting Nurse Service of NYC will provide technical assistance to grantees across the country
 - DFTA received funding to broaden the scope of existing NORCs in NYC to improve the health and mental health of residents and guide systems change for aging in place models

Our Community Colleagues:

- AARP** has helped “Create the Good” – their national theme – by being the community leader across the state in promoting livable communities for older Americans. They have unleashed their organizing power with projects like Complete Streets Week, bringing volunteers to street corners around New York with an assessment tool that identified locations for improvement. I was glad to hear from their staff that the identification of dangerous streets has already led to improvements in many communities around the state as municipalities took the reports and recommendations regarding specific locations very seriously. They have been a leader in the effort to advance universal design, and an advisor to many communities on aging friendly/livable communities. They have been our partner in this community empowerment effort and the collaboration of a government agency like ours with them makes for an even more powerful force for positive change.
- NYAHS**A - Let me commend the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging which has



expanded its mission to look at housing and livable communities for older persons and is also using Americorps volunteers to enrich the volunteer programs that meet the needs of elderly clients, helping residents "age in place."

- **Neighbors helping Neighbors** - At the Saratoga conference, I said there was a self help movement growing of older persons who were determined to plan for their future to make sure there are options that allow them to remain living independently in the community.
- Older people are a resource in our communities and can make the difference that allows a neighbor to have the choice to age in the community. A model that encourages mutual support is Time Banking. I am pleased that the "father" of Time Banking, Dr. Edgar Kahn presented at the Albany conference.
- Another great example of neighbors helping neighbors is the Village movement which was spawned in Beacon Hill, Boston. This is also part of the "livable communities movement" with local leaders and residents evaluating their villages, towns, and cities and actively taking steps across all community sectors to make their neighborhoods good places

for all residents to live, work, grow up, and grow old. Since that first conference, these movements have only grown.

- **Center for Aging in Place Supports** – a non-profit organization that informs, enables and facilitates aging in place in Westchester County, providing technical assistance and support to member organizations representing neighbor to neighbor self help models.
- **Neighborhood Action Initiative** –the Community Foundation of Western and Central New York’s program to fund and support, through a learning community, neighborhood initiatives in Buffalo, and Springville, and Steuben, Schuyler and Chemung counties.
- **Village to Village Network** – a nationwide support organization fostering the development of Beacon Hill models, enabling communities to establish, and effectively manage, aging in community organizations initiated and inspired by their members

These community partners are doing wonderful work – and they are inspirational. When we get together like this we empower one another.

WHAT'S NEXT

Now, we are here to go further and to study and share ideas for concrete local planning for livable communities. You might say ***we are here to bring together appropriate technology (the latest in energy, housing, transportation) with appropriate sociology.***



A movement is inherently grassroots oriented and we are here because so many older persons in communities around the state, who live in NORCs, funded by our office and other sources, or those who want to create new models like Beacon Hill Village want to take part in planning their future to make sure that the only options aren't either houses that are too hard to maintain or leaving their neighborhoods and moving into a medical facility. ***A movement, though, needs technicians who can work with the idealism and vision of community activists and older persons to develop plans and execute them. That is why we are here today.***

Community Culture Change

One of my greatest thrills on this job was visiting the Eddy Greenhouse project.

Talk about community.....at the Eddy in Cohoes, they tore down the larger

nursing home and

cottages of twelve

common kitchen and

this to a senior



replaced it with sixteen

units built around a

hearth. I was describing

group one day and one

of the participants said, "How can I live there?" The person forgot you have to

be frail enough to need skilled nursing care to live there, but isn't it interesting

that someone would yearn to live in such a setting, even in a nursing home?

You see how culture change took place there. Well, we need a similar culture

change that makes our communities more accepting and accessible to older and

disabled persons as they age. Wouldn't it be great if people said I'd like to live in

communities in upstate and downstate New York because they are supportive

and welcoming to older persons.

Can you visualize now that in the 1950s and 1960s, when many of us grew up,

there was a culture change that redefined life in our communities. Vibrant

downtowns were abandoned for the suburbs as the automobile took over.

Younger people with greater income and mobility fled small towns, older people moved to warmer climates.

The result was another movement then. It was called urban renewal. We

heard the words "blight," urban decay and neglect.

The movement's philosophy seemed to be, that in order to save our communities or at least the downtown and public core, we had to destroy them and rebuild them. Futuristic visions included



massive tangles of elevated highways so that you could get in and out of the urban core quickly. In Albany, a highway cut the city off from the Hudson River with multiple exit tentacles to get you into the city. In Rochester, the tangle was so complicated it became known as "the can of worms." That was the vision; it reflected what was imagined in the 1930s and 1940s of what the future would be.

Suburban sprawl, which separated home, retail stores, and employment by an auto trip, also fostered the decline of a sense of belonging in communities. Since the 1970s, public policy, laws, and community organizations have increasingly sought to re-establish, protect, and steward the sense of community, heritage, and wholeness required for achieving an age-integrated community.

Some communities are rebuilding – and are working to restore the feeling of community. The City of Rochester is one of thirty communities participating in the national Community Experience Partnership and includes a plan to increase the capacity of mentoring programs to attract and retain senior volunteers, launched in the fall of 2009. The City is also working on initiatives to make communities more livable. Livable Rochester is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making Rochester a safer, healthier and more vibrant community by design. They began working toward a more livable community in June 2005, when a small, diverse group of committed citizens gathered in Historic Southeast Slatterly Park Neighborhood to discuss the future challenges facing this community. Livable Rochester grew out of that initial inspired meeting.

I recently visited Mashpee, Massachusetts. There a new commercial community



is being built on a town square principle. It connects small retail shops with the placement of the public library and is truly walkable. They officially note that “Mashpee is a town of balance between residential, commercial, open

space and beautiful bodies of water, all of which provides tremendous opportunity for all.”

There are many characteristics of cities, towns, and villages that can benefit people of all ages and, in creating age-integrated communities, these characteristics are a unifying factor among generations. The authors of the book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, note that, “Things that people once took for granted—family, community, a sense of belonging—must now be actively sought out.”

Community character and preservation of heritage were also elements that could be taken for granted, but now must be actively sought out, preserved, interpreted and enjoyed.

Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves

“Things that people once took for granted—family, community, a sense of belonging—must now be actively sought out.”

WHY WE ARE HERE

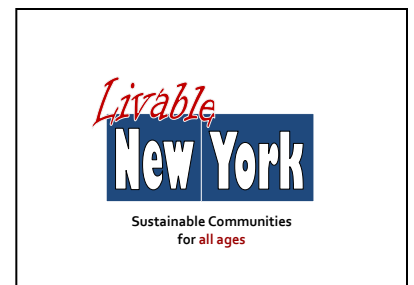
In this “next generation” Conference we will go further – and feature the technical skills that will help build the communities of tomorrow. You will see familiar themes in the tracks designed for this conference.

- **Rural Issues**– will focus on the unique needs of rural communities but contain lessons for all

- **Peers Helping Peers** – will feature successful models that lead to the development of intentional communities
- **Infrastructure** – will provide information on needed features in a livable community with an emphasis on developing the partnerships to succeed.
- **Community Building and Advocacy** – will share the methods to reach and influence local decision makers
- **Arts and Learning in Your Livable Community** – will highlight planning components that add an extra attraction in your community
- **Building Your Senior Led Organization** – will provide specific skills to get started
- **Including Diverse Populations** – will identify ways to make your community inclusive of all residents

Tomorrow morning we will be holding roundtable discussions where we hope to hear from you. Tell us the technical assistance you seek, describe the needs in your community. Additionally, we hope you'll be interested in forming a coalition to advocate for the livable communities movement. We will have a roundtable and a follow up discussion at a designated lunch area – all who are interested in pursuing a group strategy to support livable communities are welcome.

We are incorporating into this conference the Livable New York intensive as a major track. ***Livable New York***, will be launched this afternoon, and was started in a 2007 law creating a Model Zoning and Planning initiative that promoted a



collaborative effort among our Office and the Department of State and the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. That initiative is now aligned with the NYSOFA community empowerment initiative and has been renamed “Livable New York.”

The ***Livable New York Initiative*** is designed to help municipalities better plan for the housing and community needs of the state's older population, younger people with disabilities, families, and caregivers. Municipalities will be provided with information, technical assistance, and examples of successful models and practices related to: housing, universal design, planning, land use, zoning, energy alternatives and efficiency, green-building, mobility, and transportation.

It includes:

- Broad resident involvement.
- Cross-sector community involvement.
- An *inclusive* planning process.
- Community-driven planning and decision-making.

The ultimate aim is *Sustainable* livable communities & empowered communities in the areas of: transportation/mobility, housing options, housing development, universal design, planning, zoning/land-use, green building, energy efficiency and alternatives.

This intensive will provide the assessment process and the tools community leaders like you need in order to plan and prepare the steps for every community to enact in practice livable community features. I would like to publicly thank the NYSOFA staff that have worked on this initiative. A resource manual has been compiled with over 110 documents. It will be posted to the NYS Office for the Aging website at www.aging.ny.gov.

The desire for interconnectedness, the desire for a different “look and feel” in community design, environmental issues, housing options, zoning changes, walkability and so on is ushering in a new approach and new focus and a lot of work – from government to civic groups at all levels (national, state, regional and local).

Now is the time to understand the tools and resources that are available, the innovative approaches and replicable models that can be considered that will aid in building a livable community.

A New York Times story in July reported on New York City efforts to promote aging in the community. New York City has given pedestrians more time to cross at more than 400 intersections in an effort to make streets safer for older residents. The city has sent yellow school buses, filled not with children but with older people, on dozens of grocery store runs over the past seven months.

The city has allowed artists to use space and supplies in 10 senior centers in exchange for giving art lessons. And it is about to create two aging-improvement districts, parts of the city that will become safer and more accessible for older residents.

People live in New York City because it is like no place else — pulsating with life, energy and a wealth of choices — but there is some recognition among city planners that it could be a kinder and gentler place in which to grow old.

The city's efforts, gaining strength as the baby boomer generation starts reaching retirement age, are born of good intentions as well as an economic strategy.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES & TRENDS

All communities are experiencing the effects of crucial *change drivers* that have come together to make the livable communities movement important and timely. For example, major demographic trends are transforming the make-up and character of our neighborhood populations; volatile economic fluctuations are affecting family and community vitality; and increased knowledge of the effect of environmental factors on the health and well-being of community residents is spurring a growing focus on sustainability and smart growth. This increasing

interest in community *livability* reflects the significant impact of these changes and the desire to maintain a good quality of life for all residents as population profiles and circumstances evolve over time.

Livable communities for older adults are also livable communities across the age spectrum and should not be perceived and seen as specific to one demographic.

What makes a good community? One definition from an online dictionary says this:

A high quality of life for everyone that lives there. A well planned and safe place to raise children, and educate them. People working together to make their community a better place.

What Makes A Good Community?

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http://answers.ask.com/Science/Psychology/what_makes_a...



Just what constitutes a livable community is defined differently by different professional affinity groups, but ultimately focuses on both tangible and intangible aspects that affect the quality of life of individual residents and of the community as a whole.

Tangible aspects: Many quality-of-life aspects are tangible features; for example, the livable communities movement underlies a growing call to:

- Create choices in housing alternatives;
- Incorporate the principles of universal design into homes, buildings, and public facilities to accommodate the varied physical sizes and abilities typically seen among residents in every household and in every neighborhood;
- Make communities "walkable" and homes "visitable";
- Include easy access to green space (parks; open space) in neighborhoods;
- Develop innovative, accessible, affordable mobility and transportation models;
- Make homes and communities sustainable—that is, make energy usage more efficient and affordable, and emphasize the greening of homes, buildings, public facilities, and the environment;
- Provide sufficient and accessible amenities in public spaces, such as benches, lighting, streetscapes, signage, etc.;
- Capitalize on the benefits of technology in health care and housing;

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

- ▶ *A livable community is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services and adequate mobility options.*
- ▶ *Together these facilitate personal independence and engagement of residents in civic and social life.*

AARP definition of Livable Communities



- Coordinate access to sufficient, affordable, appropriate health, social, and supportive services; and
- Maximize the advantages of inclusive planning and innovative land-use strategies and tools that promote smart growth, smart building, and sustainability.

The "good community":

- ▶ offers residents a safe place to live.
- ▶ offers access to those goods and services necessary to sustain residents at a level acceptable to them.
- ▶ must have relationships of the character that bind people together.
- ▶ must have a commonality of values and goals that helps residents pull together.
- ▶ is a place where people are treated as "whole" persons.
- ▶ is a place where the day-to-day relationships among residents are highly predictable.
- ▶ has a recognized place within the social structure for each member.
- ▶ provides sufficient opportunities for growth and fulfillment.
- ▶ is homogeneous enough to prevent conflict between neighbors but heterogeneous to create some diversity.

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/cd-fact/1703.html>

Intangible aspects: In addition, the movement also underlies the increasing attention on intangible elements that have a remarkable influence on the quality of our living environments. For example:

- ***Sense of community:*** Leaders and residents are examining the extent to which community members (residents and business owners) feel there is a "sense of community"; that is, members say there is a community identity, social cohesiveness, and a shared feeling of belonging; members feel a shared sense of interconnectedness among residents and among business owners, of relating to each other on a variety of levels; members believe that they matter to one another, believe that their opinions have value and are counted, and believe that members' needs will be met through a commitment to act

together as a community. They believe there is a system of social support and caring – not isolation.

- *Social capital:* Leaders and residents are searching for effective ways to build upon their community's social capital; that is, how to support intergenerational-interdependence, how to promote engagement and communication among their community's various population groups, and how to capitalize on the creativity, skills, and opportunities inherent in involving all age groups, all household types, and all cultural and ethnic groups in defining and resolving crucial community issues. Leaders and residents are seeking avenues to strengthen community empowerment; that is, how to promote the ability and stimulate the desire of residents to actively engage in community planning and decision-making.



Community Empowerment

Active citizens – people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed

Strengthened communities – community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions

Partnership with public bodies – public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people

The benefits of **Community**

Empowerment are vast – from

promoting health through volunteering

and the physical activity and mental

stimulation that arises from it to the

economic impact on the state because

individuals who are connected to their communities are less likely to leave for

other states, to building and redesign of community that creates job and attracts retirees and younger individuals to consider New York as an attractive place to live and a legitimate retiree destination due to community structure, beautiful geography, culture, arts, history, volunteer and civic opportunities and educational opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS

Livable communities don't replace social work or case workers, or the many aging-related services that are functioning and needed in our communities. In fact, I want to take a moment to commend the area agencies on aging and the entire aging service network for what they do daily to keep people living with dignity. The livable communities movement will enhance those services by providing more options so that older persons and those working with them can be more successful in remaining connected with services and supports.

I am not interested in hearing the laments about New York State, particularly about the exodus from upstate. That negativity becomes an excuse too big to overcome even with energy and innovative ideas.

The truth is:

- we must always try to make our state more attractive to keep our younger people here and our business climate encouraging,

WE ARE STAYING

- ▶ We are the majority and we include 3.7 million older persons and 5 million Baby Boomers.



- many of us live here and **WE ARE STAYING**, not because we have been sentenced to live in winter tundra and land of economic devastation. We are staying because we choose to. We are the majority and we include 3.7 million older persons and 5 million Baby Boomers. New York has the third largest number of older adults in the United States.
 - They are the most diverse of all age groups—a multi-generational group ranging in age from 55 to over 100, with extremely varied traits, characteristics, preferences, life experiences and needs.

- According to the US Census, the mature market (age 60+) will grow more than 11 times faster in the next two decades than the remaining adult market.
- Older consumers have more than \$1.6 trillion in spending power and a net worth that's nearly twice the U.S. average. They account for more than 40% of ALL consumer spending, spending more than \$1 trillion on goods and services each year. They purchase 41% of all new cars, spend more per capita on groceries, over-the-counter products, travel and leisure than any other group. They spend \$7 billion on-line annually and are the most brand loyal age group.
- In New York, Social Security pumps over \$36 billion into our economy – of this \$23.5 billion (65%) went to older adults. 77% of all wealth in America is held by people ages 50 and older. So of course we want their incomes, pensions, savings and social security spent in the state and attracting retirees and retaining those that are here would help the states economic future tremendously.

WE ARE STAYING – and we must be the leaders who are determined to make our communities become what we need to be – friendly and accommodating for all ages.

WE ARE STAYING and we know that a livable community comes by choice, by design and planning

WE ARE STAYING and we know that a community that doesn't have this kind of approach to plan for changes in the population will likely be a community that ends up with the same kind of community decay and neglect that we saw in an earlier generation

WE ARE STAYING and we know that success is due to the many volunteers who are making it possible for older persons to have the support they need, but what is truly required is the leadership of the community to complement that altruism.

WE ARE STAYING because this is our home, for many of us it is our roots, it is the place we love and we want to make a better future for ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods and our communities.

