Age-Friendly & Active Living: Lessons from Hennepin County

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Presentation Overview

• Age-Friendly Sampler
  – Importance of “gateway” intersections
  – Importance of programming

• General Lessons/Takeaways
“...enablement rather than disablement.”

Source: Kalache and Kickbusch, 1997
“Gateway” Intersections

Examples from
Brooklyn Park and Maple Grove
Brooklyn Park: Brooklyn Blvd and Zane Avenue
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Creekside Gables
- Low-income senior housing (unsubsidized)
- 90 units (no vacancies)

Brooks Landing
- Section 8 & 42 senior housing
- 110 units
Brooklyn Park: Brooklyn Blvd and Zane Avenue

- **Unexpected assets**: People buy basics at places like Speedway & Walgreen’s. (Nearby; small stores that are easy to navigate)

- **Immigrants & refugees more likely to walk, out of necessity** (no license; concerns over immigration status; can’t afford it; etc.)

- **Access to discount stores is important**. Low-income, fixed-income residents rely on these stores.

- **Safe neighborhoods, safe buildings make a difference.** Concerns for personal safety once outside.
Brooklyn Park: Brooklyn Blvd and Zane Avenue
Maple Grove: Main St. & Lakeview Ave.
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- Arbor Lakes Commons
- Maple Grove Library
- Town Green Park/walking paths
- MG Government Center
- Retail, restaurants
- Public parking

Maple Grove: Main St. & Lakeview Ave.
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- Arbor Lakes Commons
- "Gateway" pedestrian intersections
- Maple Grove Library
- Public parking
Maple Grove: Main St. & Lakeview Ave.

- Cars drive too fast
- Cars don't come to a complete stop
- Don't honor pedestrians
Maple Grove: Main St. & Lakeview Ave.
Takeaways on intersections

• Make sure people can access the infrastructure that you've invested in
• Don't wait for accidents/fatalities to take action
• Not only near senior housing buildings: neighborhoods with more older residents
• Be aware of less obvious destinations (e.g., Speedway)
• Safer intersections benefit ALL AGES!
Programs Make the Link to Activity

Examples from Brooklyn Park and Maple Grove
Brooklyn Park: Older Liberians take fitness class

**Program:** Pilot fitness class (Walk With Ease) for Liberian immigrants

**Purpose:** Engage residents who don’t use City programming as-is

**Key Elements:**
- **Location:** On-site at trusted and convenient location
- **Cost:** Free to participants
- **Instructor:** Experienced, flexible, willing to learn
- **Partner organization** served as bridge
Program: Active Living Every Day class

Purpose: Help people incorporate activity into daily life; meet them where they are

Key Elements:
• Build confidence
• See what’s possible
• Changing mindsets - not about “exercise”

“I walked to the grocery store. It’s only 15 minutes.”
Where to start

**Hard to overcome**

- Traditional suburban design:
  - Few sidewalks
  - Housing far from destinations
  - Wide, busy roads
- Car culture
- Winter!

**Easier to overcome:**

- Problematic intersections
- Making links through programs
- Increasing safety, or feeling of safety
- Sufficient & appropriate seating on walking paths
- Engage older residents directly

*Project by project over time
Impact of policies over time*
Stray Thoughts

- Engaging older adults leads to greater service delivery
- ADA minimums often not enough; go farther
- Shared paths feel treacherous
- Seating/benches on walking paths need to be spaced at the right intervals; designed appropriately
The population is aging, and...

- Cities and services were not developed for modern lifespans
- Older adults are excluded by default; deliberate inclusion is key
- Community-level response is critical; not just individual level response
Maple Grove: Main St. & Lakeview Ave.

- **Arbor Lakes Commons**
  - Section 8 senior housing
  - CommonBond Communities
  - Independent living
  - 50 units/65 residents
  - Centrally located
  - High demand; infrequent vacancies

Public parking

Town Green
Park/walking paths

Maple Grove Library

MG Government Center

Retail