



ROADMAP TO LIVABILITY

Strategies and solutions that make a community great for people of all ages



Economic Development Workbook

Book 6 in the **AARP** Roadmap to Livability Collection

A Publication of



Available online at [AARP.org/LivabilityRoadmap](https://www.aarp.org/LivabilityRoadmap)

AARP *Roadmap to Livability Collection*

Strategies and solutions that make a community great for people of all ages

Book 1 **AARP** *Roadmap to Livability*

Book 2 **AARP** *Roadmap to Livability: Community Listening Session Tool Kit*

Book 3 **AARP** *Roadmap to Livability: Housing Workbook*

Book 4 **AARP** *Roadmap to Livability: Transportation Workbook*

Book 5 **AARP** *Roadmap to Livability: Health Services and Community Supports Workbook*

Book 6 **AARP** *Roadmap to Livability: Economic Development Workbook*

A publication of
AARP Livable Communities
Community, State and National Affairs
[AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/Livable)

Available for download at [AARP.org/LivabilityRoadmap](https://www.aarp.org/LivabilityRoadmap)

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a membership of more than 37 million that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families, such as health care, employment security and retirement planning. We advocate for consumers in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services.

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Book 6 in the *AARP* Roadmap to Livability Collection

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LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ARE GOOD FOR PEOPLE AND BUSINESS

Higher property values, increased economic activity and savings for communities are some of the benefits you'll learn about in **THE LIVABILITY ECONOMY**



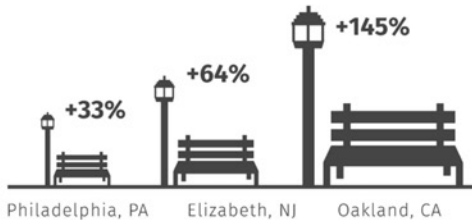
A LIVABLE COMMUNITY ...

- Features housing choices that are suitable for people of all ages and life stages.
- Reduces automobile dependence and supports a socially vibrant public realm.
- Integrates land uses so people can live closer to or within walking distance of jobs, community activities and the services they need.
- Has transportation options that enable residents to get around even if they don't drive.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES INCREASE PROPERTY VALUES



Homes closer to parks and open spaces have higher property values than those further away.



A WalkScore increase of one point can improve the value of a home by as much as **\$3,000**.



Demand for compact communities consistently increases property values by more than **15 percent** for office, residential and retail use.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES INCREASE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



Bicycling has generated more than **\$400 million** in economic activity in Iowa.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES SAVE MONEY

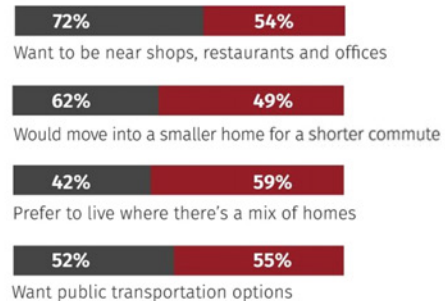


In Central Texas, compact, infill development decreased infrastructure costs by **70%** when compared to typical, more sprawling development models, resulting in a **\$7.5 billion** savings.

PEOPLE WANT LIVABLE COMMUNITIES



Boomers and **Millennials** have similar preferences for walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.



Infographic reproduced from *The Livability Economy: People, Places and Prosperity*, AARP (2015), AARP.org/Livability-Economy

“Communities with integrated live, work and play opportunities create strong market demand. Just as people are attracted to places close to work, recreation, entertainment and transit options, employers are learning that the same quality of life benefits enhance their business’s competitive position. As people and businesses make livable communities their home, these places become strong economic centers.”

— *The Livability Economy: People, Places and Prosperity* (AARP)

➤ Introduction

“Livable communities are good for people and good for business. They are places where Americans increasingly want to live, work and play. Whether a person is young or old, starting a family or a business, livable communities provide a host of appealing advantages that enhance the quality of life of residents, the economic prospects of businesses and the bottom lines of local governments.”

— *The Livability Economy: People, Places and Prosperity (AARP)*

The *Economic Development Workbook* is the sixth and final title in the *AARP Roadmap to Livability Collection*. Broadly defined, economic development is a transformative process that improves community prosperity and quality of life.¹

Investments in the built environment — such as housing, transportation, health care facilities, and accessible parks and downtowns — are key to determining who participates and is rewarded in the local economy. Whether a livability team is involved in efforts related to transportation, housing or health services, the work will have an economic impact.

Economic activity doesn't happen in isolation:

Invention and growth result when there are genuine opportunities for people and organizations to collaborate and exchange ideas. The built environment plays a critical role in facilitating or prohibiting interactions that foster economic activity.

Economic activity is influenced by population age:

By 2035, for the first time in U.S. history, adults age 65 or older will outnumber people 18 or younger.² Communities will need to change the way they think about the economy so it includes the contributions of (and meets the needs of) older residents. Unlike past generations, today's older adults are healthier than ever before and they possess talents, skills and experiences that are valuable to both employers and organizations in need of skilled volunteers.

By introducing the economic benefits of making a community more livable, the *AARP Roadmap to Livability: Economic Development Workbook* illustrates how livability principles contribute to and enhance a community's economic performance.

The information in this workbook is not meant to replace a community's existing economic development strategies. Instead, the facts and examples within these pages can help people who are working on livability projects to be effective communicators about how an investment in livability can benefit the community and support complementary initiatives. The assessment exercise on page 17 will help a team create a more vibrant, desirable and competitive environment for residential and commercial investments.

All towns, cities and neighborhoods want to be vibrant, engaging and livable. The following principles, when included in economic development efforts, are keys to accomplish that:

- Strategic investments provide an opportunity to promote mixed-use developments, walkability and transportation options.
- Strong community participation encourages innovative approaches, policies, and models that lead to more equitable development.
- Robust stakeholders (businesses, residents, local government) in the decision-making process support greater benefits for residents of all ages, abilities, life stages and income levels.

Book 6's Collection Connection

The *AARP Roadmap to Livability: Economic Development Workbook* is the sixth title in the six-part *AARP Roadmap to Livability Collection*. This workbook, which demonstrates the economic rewards of embracing livable community principles, is a companion resource to the steps and strategies presented in Book 1 (a broad overview about livability solutions), the *Community Listening Session Tool Kit* (Book 2), and the subject-specific workbooks on *Housing, Transportation*, and *Health Services and Community Supports* (Books 3, 4 and 5).

➤ Helping Communities Thrive

Here's why more and more communities are looking to investments in livability as part of their economic development strategy.

- Historically rigid policies in housing and transportation have excluded workers from where they are needed the most. Since businesses generally require access to a workforce of varying skills and income levels, the presence of housing that's affordable, for example, can reduce the gap between employer needs and available workers (and vice versa).
- Zoning codes and land-use policies are often out of date. A comprehensive update can support greater flexibility for responding to contemporary business needs.
- Older adults are attracted to communities where they can "age in place." Towns, cities and neighborhoods that have successfully implemented age-friendly policies can expect increased prosperity from the enormous spending power of people age 50-plus.
- Creating a walkable community allows for businesses to be closer to their customers and business partners.
- Cities and towns are increasingly seeing quality of life as a difference maker in attracting and retaining talent of all ages.
- When viewing livability as part of a broad economic development toolbox, livability investments can be more cost-effective than traditional growth-influencing sweeteners such as tax abatements for large corporations.
- Strategic land-use policies can protect residents and business owners from financial risk (by preventing building in areas vulnerable to severe flooding, for example).
- For many companies, investing in a city's center is an opportunity to demonstrate corporate citizenship and a way to use their sizable investing power for good.³
- Infrastructure is very expensive for state and local governments. Compact development can reduce such costs and enable more investments in other economic development activities.
- Overreliance on a single industry can lead to unintended economic, social and environmental consequences as that industry rises and falls. Instead of locking into a single projection, communities need to manage a range of possibilities and invest in infrastructure accordingly.
- Reducing vacant property and abandoned lots can signal that future investments are coming to the neighborhood.
- Investments in livability come together to create a unique brand, a clear expression of a community's competitive advantage and an attraction for tourists.
- Technological changes in wireless mobility, artificial intelligence, and teleworking can have profound impacts on the nature of work. Future-focused communities make investments that allow for changing work preferences among workers and businesses.⁴



A few examples to get started:

- CEOs for Cities found a one point score increase on *WalkScore.com* increased the value of homes by as much as \$3,000.⁵
- A study in Central Texas found that infill development (i.e. building and developing in already improved areas) would create a 70 percent decrease in infrastructure costs when compared with typical single-use, sprawling development models, resulting in a \$7.5 billion savings to the region.⁶
- The Brookings Institution found that increased walkability has been associated with higher retail rents, values and sales.⁷
- Retailers are locating in livable, more walkable communities because they're good places to do business and to attract high quality workers; businesses are making strategic decisions to locate in such communities.⁸
- Walkable, livability-related development can add value to rural communities. For instance, the Main Street Program in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, opened a farmers market as part of a strategy to reduce the downtown's commercial vacancy of 80 percent. A year after the market opened, commercial occupancy reached 100 percent and downtown shops began extending their store hours to take advantage of people walking and driving to and from the market.⁹



Simply put, livable communities are:

- *good for residents and visitors of all ages*
- *good for businesses*
- *good for the bottom lines of local governments*

➤ The Longevity Economy

“A powerful new force is changing the face of America, composed of 106 million people responsible for at least \$7.1 trillion in annual economic activity — a figure that is expected to reach well over \$13.5 trillion in real terms by 2032. This is the Longevity Economy, representing the sum of all economic activity serving the needs of Americans over 50 and including both the products and services they purchase directly and the further economic activity this spending generates.”

— *The Longevity Economy: Generating Economic Growth and New Opportunities for Business*
(Oxford Economics for AARP, 2013)

Livable communities provide a host of advantages that enhance the quality of life of residents, the economic prospects of businesses, and the bottom lines of local governments.

As the population of the United States grows older, community design that supports the participation of older people will play a larger role in the fiscal health of the entire community.

Livability principles (such as those listed in the worksheet on page 17) have a positive economic impact on people and communities. The following facts, stats and examples demonstrate how older adults are helping towns, cities and neighborhoods throughout the nation thrive:

- With a 3.9 percent growth rate, people age 65 or older were the fastest-growing segment of the civilian labor force between 2006 and 2016. Livable communities offer a setting where older adults can continue being productive in the workforce while residing near needed and wanted services, shopping, entertainment and activities.¹⁰
- Increasing life spans have resulted in a longer "middle age" — extending the period when workers are at their most productive and creative. This population of older workers and even retirees represents a transformative force that is expected to account for more than half of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product by 2032.¹¹

- Roughly a quarter of all new entrepreneurs are between the ages of 55 and 65. While 28 percent of start-ups founded by younger people are still in existence three years after they began, 70 percent of businesses launched by "olderpreneurs" make it to the three-year mark.¹²
- Americans over age 50 are responsible for more than \$7 trillion in annual economic activity. They provide more than \$4 trillion a year in spending on consumer goods and services, creating employment for nearly 100 million Americans.¹³
- In a study about the spending habits of older Americans from 2001 to 2009, the Employee Benefit Research institute found that home and home-related expenses were the largest spending category (between 40 and 45 percent) for people over age 50.¹⁴ Most of these home-related expenses occurred in the person's local community.

About Being Age- and Aging-Friendly

Older residents are producers, consumers, community members, family members and leaders. When their potential is maximized, people of all ages benefit. Older adults are also experts about their own lives. Community planning in all domains (housing, transportation, health services and community supports and so on) must involve their ongoing participation.

➤ The Economic Impact of Livability

Livable communities are livable for people of all ages, abilities and economic levels. They promote neighborhood cohesion and maximize opportunities for residents to be active and engaged with their neighbors, family and friends.

Going Local

There is usually an identifiable geographical center in places where residents say they have a strong sense of living in a community. Communities with a great sense of place are enjoyed destinations, usually with a unique history or identifiable style and "vibe."

Economic development work at the local level can focus on a community, a neighborhood, or a downtown business district. Those are often the places where unique, local stores and services — such as "mom and pop" shops, hair salons, galleries and one of a kind restaurants — exist.

When the owners of local businesses can't make ends meet or simply retire, the community can be greatly changed by the presence of an empty storefront or the replacement of a business that's owned by a resident with one operated by an owner or company that's not fully invested in the community's overall and long-term success. Local places, spaces and proprietors matter.

The advantage of targeting a manageable area for investments, such as a downtown or Main Street, is that stakeholders can more clearly identify site-specific assets, recognize relevant partners, build on past successes, and track metrics.¹⁵

- Livable communities attract investment and the most sought-after employees. Headquarters are moving from suburban office parks to downtown cores to be closer to top talent, bringing their tax dollars with them. Skilled workers are choosing office locations in urban areas, further deepening the talent pool in cities.¹⁶ Such commercial cores help their community by "growing the firms, networks and traded sectors that drive broad-based prosperity."¹⁷



- The economic benefits of livable communities to employers stem from attracting a concentrated and larger labor pool, including experienced and qualified older workers. Compact development allows for the clustering of different workforces in business districts that produce advantages shared by the employers, such as labor pooling and knowledge spillover.¹⁸
- Businesses gain productivity benefits from being in places where the distribution of workers matches the demand for labor by occupation, particularly for small and young businesses.¹⁹
- There is a growing preference among some older Americans to live in places that are a bit more urban than where they may have raised a family.²⁰
- Between 2000 and 2010, the boomer population generally increased faster within five miles of city centers than in areas 40 to 80 miles outside of the center.²¹
- Many national big box retailers are reducing the size of their stores to exist in walkable, livable community locations.²²
- Rental rates are higher for walkable urban office space (90 percent), walkable retail (71 percent) and multifamily rentals in walkable areas (66 percent) when compared with rental rates in drivable suburban locations. The three walkable locations combined have a 74 percent rental premium over drivable suburban spaces.²³

Continued ➤

Land Use

The landmark 1926 U.S. Supreme Court case that validated the constitutionality of zoning — *Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co.* — was in fact spurred by the Village of Euclid's attempt to protect itself from industrial encroachment.²⁴ Zoning and other land-use regulations reflect a relationship between residential preferences and industrial realities over time.

When manufacturing was synonymous with noise and pollution, for example, restrictive zoning was needed to protect public health. As industries became cleaner and quieter, mixed-use development, benefiting both industry and residents, was possible. However, many communities have not updated their land-use regulations to reflect a new economic and industrial reality.

- In compact communities, people live near shops and entertainment venues and are more likely to patronize them throughout the day and evening.
- Compact communities foster profitability by spreading market demand beyond the surges associated with rush hours at the beginning and end of the 9 to 5 workday.
- The livable communities framework promotes compact land use as one way to reduce the expense of constructing and maintaining roads, sewers and other public works while also increasing property values in the community.
- In addition to enhancing walkability and the connection of residents to where they live, compact development requires less expenses per dollar of tax base to provide and maintain roads and water and sewer infrastructure as compared with sprawling, less-connected developments.



- By reducing greenhouse gases, compact development benefits the environment and safeguards public health.
- Marketing a community as age-friendly, modifying zoning codes to allow housing options for different life stages, and adopting building codes that encourage accessibility can attract downsizing homeowners and prevent "out-migration" by residents who need or seek aging-friendly amenities.²⁵
- Sprawling patterns of development and the subsequent need for sprawl-suitable transportation reduce opportunities for low-skill workers to participate in the economic mainstream.²⁶
- With fewer miles of roads, water and sewer systems to build and maintain, locating compact development in existing, developed areas can lower costs to taxpayers, businesses and residents by reducing initial infrastructure and long-term operating costs.²⁷

Continued ➤

"It seems counterintuitive, but it actually feels like we live in a small town. Being able to walk helps create a neighborhood feel."

— *The answer of a Texas native turned resident of Washington, D.C., when a friend asked, "How's living in the big city?"* (The Washington Post, Nov. 16, 2012)

What is a WalkUP?

A program of Smart Growth America, LOCUS is a national coalition of real estate developers and investors who advocate for sustainable, equitable, walkable development in America's metropolitan areas. The coalition, along with the Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis at the George Washington University School of Business, promotes the development

of walkable urban places — or WalkUPs — which are dense, mixed-use areas featuring transportation options and useful amenities within walking distance. A typical WalkUP is between 200 and 500 acres (0.3 to 0.75 square miles) and is a focus of a metropolitan economy. Although WalkUPs are most common to cities, they can exist within the suburbs too.



WalkUP Types:

1. Downtown

In a metropolitan area, downtown is the traditional center of the major city. In very large metropolitan areas or twin city regions, there may be two downtowns (e.g. Lower and Midtown Manhattan in New York City, and downtown Dallas and the neighboring city of Fort Worth).

2. Downtown Adjacent

WalkUPs could cluster around a central city downtown, encircling the downtown with multiple downtown-adjacent WalkUPs.

3. Urban Commercial

Former, local-serving commercial districts that economically declined during the late 20th century are revitalizing as regionally significant WalkUPs.

4. Urban University

These WalkUPs are located near higher education institutions, often with cultural and sports facilities, a hospital center, entertainment venues, housing for students and staff, and businesses that want to serve and be close to the college or university.

5. Innovation Districts

Places where the knowledge-based economy (research, start-ups, corporations) is located often grow out of an urban university WalkUP.

6. Suburban Town Center

Many traditional 18th- and 19th-century towns and Main Streets were swallowed up by larger metro areas, shopping malls and big box retailers during the late 20th century. Such communities are easily revitalized as WalkUPs because they have pedestrian-oriented street grids and now classic, historic buildings.

7. Redeveloped, Drivable 'Sub-urban'

Many corporate parks and regional shopping malls are "urbanizing" into WalkUPs.

8. Green Fields and Brownfields

WalkUPs are being developed on previously undeveloped land (green fields) as well as on developed but no longer used "brownfield" locations.

Adapted from SmartGrowthAmerica.org

Housing

If a household spends more than 30 percent of its income on housing alone, or more than 45 percent of its income on housing and transportation combined, the household is considered to be “cost-burdened.”²⁸

Even with higher housing prices, walkable neighborhoods are good for working families. People living in communities that give them the option to walk, bicycle or take transit to their destinations often pay less in total housing and transportation costs than those who live in areas with lower housing prices that are more auto-dependent.

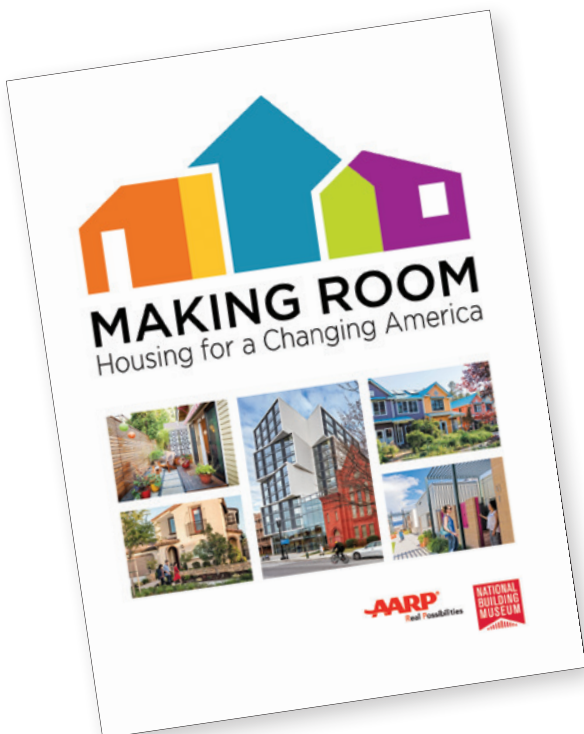
- The AARP report *Housing Policy Solutions to Support Aging with Options* explains how communities are making effective use of tools such as inclusionary zoning, low-income housing tax credits, public funding mechanisms and joint development to create housing that's affordable for older Americans.²⁹
- The Urban Land Institute's *Emerging Trends in Real Estate* report notes that locations offering walkability and strong transit systems outshine other places as good investments.³⁰

- A study of neighborhoods in the Washington, D.C., region found that rental rates for office space, retail space and for-sale residential property values increased during the 2008-2010 recession to 44.3 percent from a pre-recession premium of 23 percent between 2000 and 2007.³¹
- Livable communities promote and expand homeownership options, safeguard home equity, and promote the innovative use of housing assets to maintain and improve the independence and quality of life of older people.
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are secondary residences — such as backyard bungalows, garage apartments and in-law suites — that are built on land occupied by a larger, primary residence. ADU-permitting policies increase property values, accommodate density and provide more options for people of different ages, abilities, life stages and incomes to live in a community. (To learn more about ADUs, see the Housing archive at AARP.org/Livable-Archives.)

Just as the housing needs of individuals change over a lifetime, unprecedented shifts in both demographics and lifestyle have fundamentally transformed the nation's housing requirements.

- Adults living alone now account for nearly 30 percent of American households.
- While only 20 percent of today's households are nuclear families, the housing market largely remains fixated on their needs.
- By 2030, 1 in 5 people in the United States will be age 65 or over — and by 2035, older adults are projected to outnumber children for the first time ever.
- The nation's housing stock doesn't fit the realities of a changing America.

Featuring infographics, ideas, solutions, photographs and floor plans from the National Building Museum exhibition of the same name, the AARP bookzine ***Making Room: Housing for a Changing America*** is a rallying cry for a wider menu of housing options. Visit AARP.org/MakingRoom to download a PDF of this publication or order a free printed edition.



Getting Around

Transportation is the vital link that connects people of all ages and abilities to economic opportunity, social activity and community services. However, for families living in auto-dependent locations, transportation expenses can be a heavy burden — the second highest family expense after housing.

For instance, a typical low-income household that qualified for U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assistance in downtown Los Angeles spent only \$1,988 per year on transportation, or less than 3.5 percent of its budget. The same household in a distant, largely isolated location in Portland, Maine, spent \$13,950 (28 percent of its budget) on transportation.³² Residents of Waco, Texas, overwhelmingly cited transportation as the “most prominent barrier to finding and keeping a job.”³³

- Complete Streets policies and initiatives seek to ensure that roadways are safe for all users. More than half (56 percent) of Complete Streets projects studied experienced a reduction in injuries. (Learn more by visiting the Complete Streets archive at AARP.org/Livable-Archives.)³⁴
- In Hamburg, New York, collisions decreased 66 percent and injuries dropped by 60 percent after a Complete Streets redo of Main Street. Business owners, inspired by the street's new configuration, invested \$7 million in 33 building projects. Building permits went up from 15 in 2005 to 96 in 2010 — and property values more than doubled.³⁵
- Each collision that a safer street averts represents money not spent in the emergency room, on hospital charges, rehabilitation, doctor visits or property damage. Comparing total averted costs for one year to the cost of 34 Complete Streets projects found that the projects would pay for themselves in less than eight years.³⁶
- People who live in walkable neighborhoods get 35 to 45 more minutes of moderate physical activity each week, making them less likely to be overweight or obese.³⁷
- Young people who walk or bicycle to school and are physically active tend to focus more and perform better in school.³⁸
- More people are employed along Complete Streets project roadways than along unimproved comparison streets.³⁹
- Complete Streets policies can have economic benefits even before the projects are finished. Per dollar spent, road improvements that include bicycle and pedestrian safety features create more jobs during construction than those that are only designed for vehicles.⁴⁰
- One bicycle corral taking up one vehicle parking spot allows for 10 individual customers to park their bicycles. After several areas in Portland, Oregon, replaced parking spots with bicycle parking, seven out of 10 business owners said they saw an increase in pedestrian and bicycle customer traffic.⁴¹
- In the Washington, D.C., area, the decision by Arlington, Virginia, to concentrate development around a public transit system that promotes walkability and multimodal travel produced noticeable results. As of 2012, \$27.5 billion of the county's \$57.5 billion assessed land value was located along two DC Metro corridors, which occupy only 11 percent of the county's land area. The number of jobs along those corridors grew from 22,000 in 1970 to 96,300 by 2011.⁴²
- Main Streets are often the commercial heart of a town and generate significant revenue for local municipalities. A study of nine communities in four western states found that in terms of dollars per acre, downtown parcels brought in, on average, five times the property tax revenue as conventional single-use commercial establishments on the outskirts of town.⁴³



Parks and Public Spaces

Parks and public spaces should create shared amenities for common use that benefit residents of all ages, abilities and economic status.⁴⁴

Those spaces should:

1. Promote human contact and social activities
2. Be safe, welcoming and accommodating for all users
3. Have design and architectural features that are visually interesting
4. Promote community involvement
5. Reflect the local culture or history
6. Relate well to bordering uses
7. Be well maintained
8. Have a unique or special character

Economic Benefits

- Homes located closer to parks and open spaces have a higher property value than those located farther away.⁴⁵
- The outdoor recreation economy generates \$887 billion in annual consumer spending that creates 7.6 million jobs. Overall, consumers spend more on outdoor recreation than they do on education, household utilities, pharmaceuticals, or car-related expenses.⁴⁶
- San Francisco estimates that the city's park system increases property value by \$122 million, which contributes \$25 million in municipal income from property taxes on the increased assessed and sales value of property located close to the park system. Residents save approximately \$49 million annually in health care costs by being physically active in the parks.⁴⁷
- In the western United States, between 1970 and 2015, rural counties with the most federal lands had faster population, employment, personal income and per capita income growth than did counties with the lowest share of federal lands.⁴⁸

- Parks have direct-use benefits for residents, encourage people to live healthy lifestyles, and contribute to community cohesion.
- Natural areas promote clean air and water.
- Safe, accessible public areas ensure that residents of all ages, abilities and economic levels can access all that a community has to offer.

Tourism

- Parks are attractive places to visit for tourists, who spend money in local hotels, restaurants and retail shops. In 2017, visitors to Acadia National Park in Maine added \$284 million to the local economy.⁴⁹
- The Great Allegheny Passage, which links Cumberland, Maryland, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, goes through Confluence, a small town in rural Pennsylvania (population 814). Between 2008 and 2014, more than a dozen new businesses opened there, all but two of which were directly related to the trail and tourism.⁵⁰

Direct Use

- Seattle, Washington, boasts 485 public parks that offer playgrounds, nature trails, recreation facilities, kayaking, fishing, gardening opportunities, and special events, such as festivals and concerts. If residents had to pay for the opportunities they can enjoy for free in the park, the total cost would be almost \$500 million.⁵¹
- Public green spaces provide opportunities for renewal and social interaction. Older people who visit public parks tend to spend one part of their time being physically active and the other part of their time people-watching or interacting with others. In a study of older people's use of parks in Cincinnati, 25 percent cited relaxation and social interaction as primary benefits of using the park.⁵²

Health

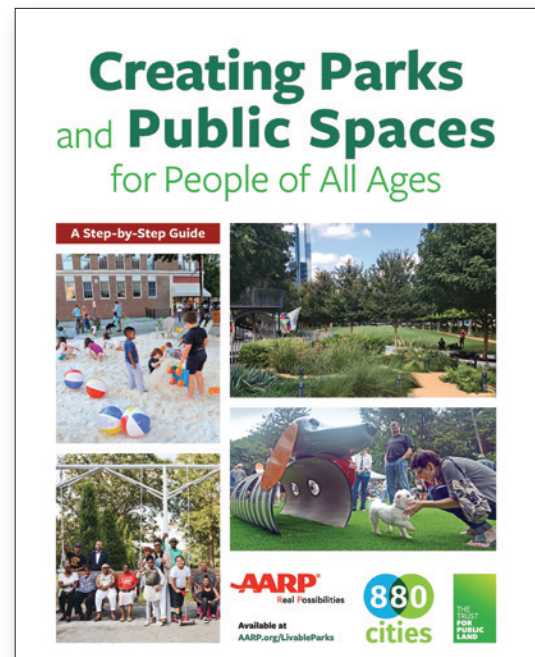
- People who live near a park or public green space tend to sleep better, have lower stress levels, and report better health and well-being.⁵³
- When it comes to healthy choices, sitting is the new smoking. Living a sedentary lifestyle is bad for health and accounts for about 20 percent of total medical spending in the United States.⁵⁴
- In one study, 20 minutes of time spent outdoors, such as walking in a park, improved the concentration of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as effectively as common prescription medications.⁵⁵
- The combined medical cost savings for the 5,790 residents of Beaufort County, South Carolina, who use county-maintained parks, trails, open spaces and recreation facilities to meet guidelines set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for physical activity: \$7.91 million.⁵⁶

Community Connections

- Adequate public seating, such as benches in and around civic buildings, shopping areas, and public parks, is associated with a 10 percent higher level of community pride and trust in local government and a four percent increase in public participation. Living within 10 minutes of a community garden or a public park has a similar effect.⁵⁷
- Accessible public places and buildings are welcoming for all residents and encourage the social connections that contribute to community cohesion.
- Difficulty walking around a neighborhood often prevents older people from leaving their homes. Difficulty entering and leaving public buildings prevents participation in activities offered in those spaces. Taken together, inaccessible communities make it harder for people to interact with their neighbors.⁵⁸
- In neighborhoods where people feel connected to their neighbors, have a strong attachment to the area, and are willing to intervene for the common good, people are more likely to be physically active and older people have a reduced risk of stroke and heart problems.⁵⁹

Cleaner, Safer Water and Air

- Reducing the amount of land consumed by development helps preserve fields, forests and farms and supports better water quality by reducing pavement runoff.⁶⁰
- Controlling the floods that plagued the downtown was a priority when civil engineers designed Railroad Park in an industrial area in Birmingham, Alabama. The resulting green space and system of streams and lakes significantly reduced flooding and attracted \$185 million from investors who renovated a vaudeville theater and built a hotel and condominium developments.⁶¹
- Parks in the nation's cities are home to about 370 million trees, which has a significant impact on air quality. Each park acre with trees removes about 80 pounds of pollution and 1.2 tons of carbon dioxide from the air, for a nationwide economic benefit of \$550 million.⁶²



In ***Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages***, AARP, 880 Cities and The Trust for Public Land highlight the importance of parks — and give community leaders (and park advocates from all corners) tools they can use to both create and improve green spaces and public places for people of all ages. Visit **[AARP.org/LivableParks](https://www.aarp.org/LivableParks)** to download a PDF of the guide or order a free printed edition.

➤ Myths and Realities

There are many assumptions about what is and isn't good for a community and local economy. Here are more facts to debunk a few common myths.

MYTH: *“Investing in a downtown is expensive. The suburbs are cheaper to develop.”*

REALITY: Revenue-starved regions can garner far more taxes per acre from downtown multistory buildings than from strip malls and housing subdivisions. For instance, a big box retail store less than three miles from Asheville, North Carolina's downtown had a tax value of \$20 million on 34 acres of land, yielding about \$6,500 an acre in property taxes. By contrast, a remodeled department store in downtown Asheville generated \$634,000 in tax revenue per acre.⁶³ Over the next few decades, the needs and preferences of aging boomers, new households and one-person households will drive real estate market trends. Walkable, livable, downtown locations are likely to attract many of those people.

MYTH: *“Big box retailers bring big revenues to the communities they do business in.”*

REALITY: Big box stores encourage sprawling land use, automobile dependence and the paving of large tracts of land. In addition, the stores contribute to the decline of urban and neighborhood centers because they pull retail activity out of central business districts and into the urban fringe. As local businesses close, residents increasingly use automobiles and travel farther to shop. Several studies show that the arrival of a big box retailer negatively impacts wages and employment at locally owned businesses.⁶⁴ Further, when a big box store closes, the community is left with a huge, usually unappealing building with limited reuse options.

MYTH: *“Narrow roads hurt business.”*

REALITY: By reducing traffic speeds and accommodating people who are walking and bicycling, narrower roads are one of the best ways to increase retail revenue. The slower speeds resulting from this technique, called a “road diet,” provide drivers with better sight lines and make streets and shopping area entrances and exits easier to negotiate.⁶⁵

MYTH: *“We need more parking lots, not fewer.”*

REALITY: In Portland, Oregon, property values and customer volume in parking-restricted areas near transit stations are higher than in other areas, and the properties sell and rent quickly even without dedicated parking spaces. An off-street parking space costs between \$3,000 and \$27,000 to build and about \$500 a year to maintain and manage. On-street parking is more efficient and can bring in as much as \$300,000 per space in annual revenues.⁶⁶

MYTH: *“People in cars bring more business than those who walk or bicycle.”*

REALITY: Pedestrians and bicyclists tend to spend more money at local businesses than drivers do.⁶⁷ Bicycle- and walk-friendly streets boast slower speeds that enable drivers to more easily see business storefronts. The North Carolina Department of Transportation found that although bicycle facilities in the Outer Banks cost \$6.7 million to build, the installations brought an annual economic gain of \$60 million with 1,400 jobs created or supported.⁶⁸ After protected bicycle lanes were added to Manhattan's 8th and 9th avenues in 2007, retail sales increased up to 49 percent compared with 3 percent in the rest of the borough.⁶⁹

Worksheet: Community Assessment of Livability Principles

The following checklist will help in identifying which livability principles are currently in place — and implemented — and whether a principle is a target for a change effort. If it is, plan action steps using the worksheet on page 20. Once completed, this worksheet can be used as a guide for determining the steps needed to integrate economic development work and livability principles into the community's master or comprehensive plan (that, ideally, includes regional strategies and engages historically disenfranchised residents).

	Principle in Place		Principle Implemented			Target Area for Change Effort	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes	No
General Livability Principles							
Improve overall livability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a strong sense of place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invest in existing communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve access to quality, affordable health care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote community wellness opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide affordable, accessible recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhance safety and personal security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protect civil and legal rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Actively engage a representative cross section of residents in the planning process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support the economic well-being of residents of all ages and abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strengthen the community's assets and supports for all ages and abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize how livability factors are interrelated and have an intergenerational impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks and Public Spaces Principles							
Create public places where people can meet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote unique assets that attract tourists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve waterfront and river access (if available)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify brownfield sites for redevelopment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invest in trails to improve pedestrian and bicycling connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Call for wayfinding signage (including for pedestrians)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invest in public art and creative placemaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invest in green infrastructure to protect commerce and public safety in case of natural or man-made disasters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Continued ➤

* Including policies, programs, procedures and/or infrastructure

	Principle in Place		Principle Implemented			Target Area for Change Effort	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes	No
Land-Use Principles							
Promote communities for all ages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote mixed-use development, identify and modify zoning codes that separate uses, such as housing and commercial, from one another	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure and enhance access for all residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster engagement by people of all ages and abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modify or remove required parking minimums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support increased density near transit stations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote walkability/visitability that can foster small businesses and greater interactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce business risk through the use of safe development practices in commercial districts and surrounding communities **	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allow for the emergence of new businesses or transformed industries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation and Mobility Principles	Yes	No	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes	No
Support investments that allow residents to use a variety of transportation modes (walking, personal bicycle, bikeshare, bus, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve bike and pedestrian access to the downtown or other commercial areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that transportation is accessible for people of all ages and abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish or support home-to-transit/transit-to-home mobility services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote affordable transportation options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve coordination between transportation modes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify areas where there is a mismatch between transportation needs and available options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

** Strategies may include locating structures outside of flood plains, preserving natural lands that act as buffers from storms, and protecting downtowns and other existing development from the impacts of extreme weather.

	Principle in Place		Principle Implemented			Target Area for Change Effort	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes	No
Housing Principles							
Recognize local and regional housing needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify abandoned or underused buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore the feasibility of transforming excess parking areas into new housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support local hiring in new construction and building rehabilitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve home design so housing is suitable for residents of all ages and abilities (i.e. incorporates Universal Design or visitability principles)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that housing is available for people at all economic levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase capacity for public-private partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote a wide variety of housing types, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase capacity for public-private partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partner with anchor institutions (universities, hospitals, libraries, foundations, etc.) to maximize benefits of new development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protect the financial security of residents' housing assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prioritize development in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and commercial districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure strong eviction protections to stabilize families and communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support home- and community-based services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address neighborhood blight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NOTES:

Worksheet: The Action Plan

Community Name: _____

The Initiative's Vision: _____

The Initiative's Goal(s): _____

Partner Organization(s): _____

Other Involved Group(s): _____

Activities	By Whom	By When
<i>What needs to be done?</i>	<i>Who will be responsible for the task completion?</i>	<i>By what date will the action be done?</i>

Worksheet: The Action Plan

Person/People Responsible for Maintaining and Updating Information: _____

Frequency and Schedule of Meetings: _____

Resources and Support		Potential Barriers or Resistance	Partnerships	Metrics
<i>Resources Available</i>	<i>Resources Needed</i>	<i>Which individuals and organizations might resist? How?</i>	<i>Which individuals and organizations should be informed about or involved with these tasks?</i>	<i>Which indicators will measure progress?</i>

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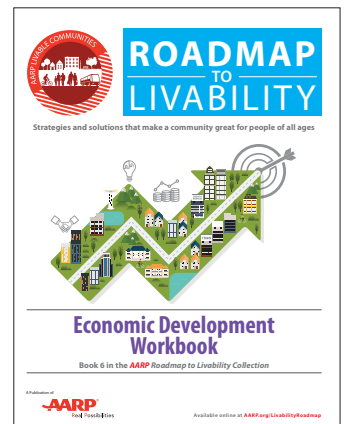
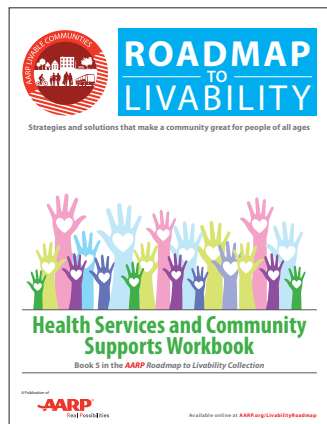
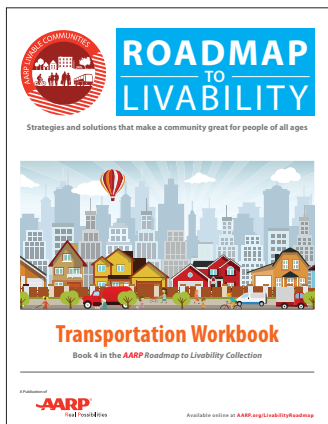
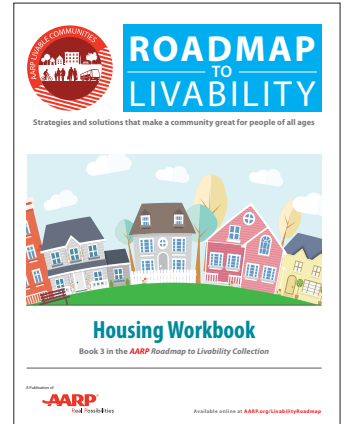
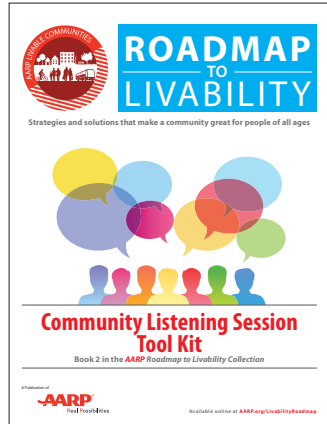
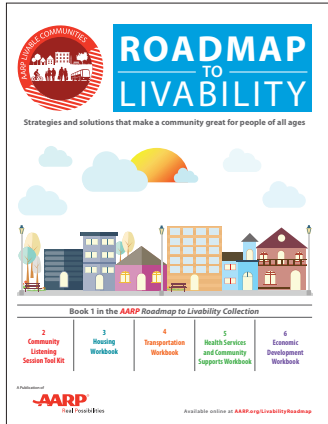
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