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## **Virginia's Blueprint for Livable Communities**

### **Welcome to Virginia's Blueprint for Livable Communities!**

As the "Commonwealth of Opportunity", Virginia strives to be a place where all people are able to experience the dignity of decision-making in their own lives; to have a chance to engage meaningfully in social and civic activities; to participate in the economic mainstream; and to live well while challenging themselves to learn and grow through new experiences.

In efforts to support the changes urgently needed to secure all Virginians the opportunity to live and age optimally in their community, a "Blueprint" for Livable Communities was created to offer diverse and useful best practices to assist communities across the Commonwealth of Virginia in developing livable communities. The intent of this information is to spur creativity by sharing the current innovative actions of Virginians improving their communities' livability.

#### **What is a "Livable Community?"**

A "livable community" is a community that is designed and functions in a way that facilitates well-being for all of the people who live there, regardless of age, income, or ability. It is a holistic goal that is achieved through a long-term, open-ended, community planning process.

#### **What is Livable Communities Planning?**

Livable communities planning is the process through which a community focuses on supporting the lifelong wellness of its population through both the design of the spaces people use and the services that support them to do so. An activity aimed at improving community livability can be undertaken by any group of citizens, advocates, or leaders in a community; and the "community" itself can encompass a

geographic area that is as small as a city block or neighborhood and as large- or larger than- an entire state. A project need not be comprehensive in order to have an impact. One citizen petitioning for an accessible bus stop or fundraising for a strategically-placed park bench can improve community livability in the same way as a county-wide rezoning initiative or a multi-million-dollar collaboration on an accessible housing development.

In short, communities and people may differ widely in how they choose to undertake livable communities planning.

### **Virginia's Blueprint for Livable Communities**

In 2010, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation that required the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to develop a blueprint for long-term services and supports. With leadership from the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Virginia Department for the Aging, Virginia convened an 18-member Blueprint for Livable Communities Citizen Advisory Group comprised of citizens and state agency representatives with expertise and background experiences in critical fields involved in livable communities planning. The advisory group informed the creation of the Blueprint for Livable Communities and still meet periodically to help promote and support the development of livable communities across the Commonwealth.

You can download the [\*\*full report in PDF format\*\*](#).

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