



Real Possibilities

Newport to Become an Age-Friendly Community

By Dave Reville

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<http://states.aarp.org/newport-to-become-an-age-friendly-community/>



With the support of Newport Mayor Paul Monette, Newport City Council and developer Bill Stenger, Newport is poised to become Vermont's first city to join AARP's nationwide Network of Age Friendly Cities. As such, the city embraces the changing demographics of an aging population by focusing on safe, walkable streets, better housing and transportation options, access to key services and community engagement opportunities for all ages. As Newport plans for major redevelopment of its downtown and economic base, the city and its partners — including AARP Vermont and the

Newport City Renaissance Corp. — are looking at ways to prepare for a rapidly aging population.

“With our aging population, especially in Vermont, we must ensure all communities are friendly to all residents from our youth to our senior citizens,” said Mayor Monette in his letter of support to AARP. With the support of a city council resolution, he pledged to establish an advisory citizens’ committee that includes the active engagement of older adults, and he committed to responding with a “concrete and robust plan of action” to address the needs of older residents. Jay Peak CEO Bill Stenger also expressed support to have Newport considered an Age-Friendly city as part of the AARP network. “I would very much like to see Newport as a frontrunner in our state to proactively address the needs of our valuable aging population,” he wrote. “This initiative will prepare our city and community for the steadily aging population while benefiting all of our residents.”

AARP’s role in this program advances efforts to help people live easily and comfortably in their homes and communities as they age, and encourages older citizens to take active roles and have their voices heard. Focus areas include housing, transportation, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combatting isolation among elders.

A key player in leading the effort has been the Newport City Renaissance Corp. and its executive director Patricia Sears. “We are very excited about this partnership with AARP and really value its role in helping Newport realize our potential as a livable community for all ages,” she said. “With the significant investment coming to our region, our city is in a unique position to effect change in ways that will benefit residents and businesses alike.”