



Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Action Plan August 2022



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Letter of Support from Mayor | p. 3 |
| Letter of Support from President of SAIL | p. 4 |
| Community Profile | |
| History | p. 5-8 |
| Community Character | p. 8-9 |
| Demographics | p. 9-10 |
| Age-Friendly Work in Shepherdstown | p. 10-11 |
| Core People Guiding the Work | p. 11 |
| Key Community Partners | p. 12 |
| Assessment Tools and Sample | p. 12-13 |
| Other Data We Used | p. 13 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| Limitations of our Methods | p. 13 |
| Introduction to the Plan | |
| Vision | p. 14 |
| Mission | p. 14 |
| Value Statement | p. 14-15 |
| Community Assessment and Results | |
| Listening Sessions | p. 15-16 |
| Survey | p. 16-17 |
| Action Plan | |
| Preface | p. 17-18 |
| Communication | p. 18-20 |
| Non-Vehicular Mobility and Safety | p. 20-24 |
| Need for Public Transportation | p. 24-25 |
| Development of Green Spaces | p. 25-27 |
| Need for Additional Mixed-Income and Accessible Housing | p. 27-28 |
| Domain Specific Charts | |
| Communication and Information | p. 29 |
| Outdoor Spaces and Buildings | p. 30-31 |
| Transportation | p. 32 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Housing | p. 33 |
| Social Participation | p. 34 |
| Respect and Social Inclusion | p. 35 |
| Health Services & Community Supports | p. 36 |



CORPORATION OF SHEPHERDSTOWN

104 NORTH KING STREET
P.O. BOX 248
SHEPHERDSTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA 25443-0248
TEL: (304) 876-2312
FAX: (304) 876-1473

August 23, 2022

Gaylene Miller, State Director
AARP West Virginia
300 Summers Street, Suite 400
Charleston, WV 25301

Dear Ms. Miller,


On behalf of the Corporation of Shepherdstown, I'm very happy to write this letter in support of the Action Plan developed by our Age Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board. The plan is based on a thorough assessment process which involved both survey and in-person listening sessions, careful data analysis, and thoughtful development of plans for addressing the key needs identified in the assessment.

Both our Town Council and I have reviewed the Action Plan, and we are in full agreement that the Plan proposes important projects to enhance "livability" for town residents of all ages and abilities. Further, the Plan aligns well with our overall goals for town development, and with key themes within our Comprehensive Plan.

On behalf of Shepherdstown as a whole, I'd like to voice my appreciation for the good work done by the Advisory Board and for the support provided to this effort by Shepherdstown Area Independent Living (SAIL), our town's organizational member of the Village-to-Village network that supports seniors' efforts to "age in place."

We look forward to working hard towards achieving the goals presented in the Plan and note with some pride that- as noted in the report below- we have already made progress on several of them!

Sincerely,


Arthur J. Auxer, III, Mayor
Shepherdstown WV



Shepherdstown Area Independent Living

August 24, 2022

Gaylene Miller, State Director AARP West Virginia
300 Summers St., Suite 400
Charleston, WV 25301

Dear Ms Miller,

The Board of SAIL (Shepherdstown Area Independent Living) strongly supports the concept of the Age Friendly Movement and enthusiastically endorses the specific goals stated in Shepherdstown's Action Plan to make our town as Age Friendly as possible.

SAIL is an organization of 120+ senior citizens dedicated to keeping its members actively engaged in our community and in our own homes as long as possible. An excellent example of SAIL's involvement in our community is the leadership role our members have taken in initiating this effort and developing it as it has moved forward.

SAIL further pledges its continuing commitment to the goals stated in the Action Plan to make Shepherdstown, WV a more age-friendly community as well as a safe place for people of all ages with a range of disabilities to navigate. We look forward to being part of a community partnership with the town to make the goals of this Action Plan a reality.

Sincerely,

Marianne Alexander, President
SAIL (Shepherdstown Area Independent Living)

Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Action Plan

Community Profile

Shepherdstown, West Virginia is “a true blend of amazing history and modern wonders” (Shepherdstown Visitors Center website). Recognized as West Virginia’s oldest town *and* voted as “one of America’s Coolest Small Towns” (Budget Travel), Shepherdstown is located 90 minutes from the Washington DC and Baltimore Maryland metropolitan areas. This friendly, “beautiful and charming” (Travelers Today) historic university town offers rich music, theater, and cultural offerings in a close-to-nature setting. Budget Travel described Shepherdstown as a “picturesque town. . . [with a] hip coffee culture.” Current Shepherdstown, with its “cool shops, bars, and restaurants” (Washingtonian) has a rich history.

History

Excerpted from a *Brief History and Walking Tour* revised by James C. Price and Harold Snyder in 1998 and by Jerry Thomas and Robbye Horowicz in 2011 and 2014

Colonial settlers began their migration into the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley in the early 1700s. . . . The colony of Virginia began issuing Valley land grants in the 1730s, but settlers in the area of what became Shepherdstown had arrived earlier, perhaps before 1720. In 1734, Thomas Shepherd took up a tract of 222 acres on the south side of the Potomac [River], along the Falling Spring Branch, now known as Town Run. More than twenty natural springs feed Town Run before it enters the south end of town. The Run rarely floods and never runs dry; it meanders through backyards, under houses, across alleys and beneath five streets before it rushes into the Potomac. . . .

The town contributed liberally to the cause of American Independence. Its cemeteries contain at least thirty-eight Revolutionary veterans, a measure of the town’s military involvement. Citizens also supplied clothing, wagons, saddles and other items for military use. . . .

On December 3, 1787, a historical moment during the critical days of the early republic, James Rumsey conducted a successful trial of a steamboat. A large gathering of townspeople and notables witnessed the event from the banks and bluffs of the Potomac River. . . . In addition to Rumsey's ingenuity, Shepherdstown's early records reveal impressive examples of wit, learning, and culture. West Virginia's first newspaper (*The Potowmack Guardian and Berkeley Advertiser*) and first book (*The Christian Panoply*) were published here in the 1790s. A number of schools had been started before the Revolution, including an English school and a German school, and the first academy in what became West Virginia opened shortly afterwards. . . . The free school movement in Virginia led to the establishment of two free schools in town in 1848. One still stands on the southeast corner of Princess and New Streets. The first school for black students is believed to have operated from c.1867 to 1883 on Brown's Alley, between W High and W German Streets.

Because Shepherdstown provided a convenient stopover for wagon masters and other sojourners, many taverns and inns sprang up. In addition to food, drink, and lodging, these establishments provided horse racing, gambling, cockfighting, and other entertainments for the weary travelers and interested townspeople. . . .

The 1790s brought many changes. The first post office in what became West Virginia opened in 1793. By 1794, Welsh's brickyard operated along Town Run on the south side of Washington Street between Princess and King. . . . Houses for the brickyard workers, known as Fossett Row, still stand on W High Street. Black workers, both [enslaved] and free, lived at each end of German Street, Little Philadelphia on the west and Angel Hill on the east. By 1857, nearly 100 [enslaved individuals] lived in Shepherdstown.

The arrival of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in the 1830s and the opening of a Shepherdstown lock eased connections downriver to Georgetown, lowering the cost of shipping agricultural products to the seaboard. Later the canal also opened the way west to Cumberland, Maryland. . . . In 1879 the Shenandoah Valley Railroad arrived in Shepherdstown, introducing a powerful new dynamic of development that turned the town away from the river. . . . Over the course of the

mid-19th century, western wheat shipped by rail to eastern markets brought an end to local wheat cultivation. Apple growing became a new specialty of the area. . . .

As a border town on the Potomac shaped by the culture and institutions of the Old South, including slavery, Shepherdstown faced trying and tragic times during the [Civil] War. . . . After the Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, General Robert E. Lee's infantry retreated south across the Potomac at Pack Horse Ford. In one of the most consequential moments of its history, Shepherdstown provided care for 5000 to 8000 casualties. The wounded and dying filled nearly every house, building, church, alley, and street. The Battle of Shepherdstown, September 19-20, added to the carnage, leaving 162 men, including 63 Confederates and 99 Federals and many additional wounded. . . .

In the post war period, Shepherdstown served as the county seat because of changing political fortunes and war damage to the courthouse in Charles Town. . . . Though Shepherdstown lost the county seat, it found a new future as a college town, a role in keeping with its long-standing devotion to education. . . . At first Shepherd [State Normal School] provided primarily secondary education, but gradually collegiate courses were added. From this seed Shepherd University grew. From its beginning the school helped shape the town, providing educational and employment opportunities and cultural attractions. Today, the East Campus occupies about one-third of the town proper, and the West Campus takes up a large area just northwest of the corporate limits. . . .

Most of the town has been designated as a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. From time to time (notably in 1912) fire destroyed important buildings, but the rows of 18th and 19th century houses remain remarkably intact, likely the best-preserved assemblage of buildings of this vintage in the state. . . .

In 1924, the C&O Canal closed, and the state road commission built a new road through the town, signaling the arrival of the Good Roads Movement and the advance of the automobile. The canal enjoyed something of a 20th century

renaissance after it became the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park in 1971. . . .

Today's Shepherdstown retains the ambiance of an earlier time, but local folks are not content to live in a museum. They make the most of the town's historic heritage, preserving the old buildings by adapting them to new uses including many shops, restaurants, and venues for artists, crafts[people], and musicians. Shepherd University's rich program of cultural events, including an innovative summer festival of contemporary plays [The Contemporary American Theatre Festival], adds to the attraction that makes the town a tourist destination. In the spirit of cooperative work towards making Shepherdstown an Age-Friendly Community, Shepherd University opens its modern Wellness Center to all residents, and recently signed on to the Silver Sneakers program, which promotes wellness for older adults.

Community Character

Downtown Shepherdstown is the heart and soul of the community. As a vital part of the economic, cultural, social, and historic fabric of the town, the downtown area is viewed by residents as the single most important part of the larger community. Downtown Shepherdstown has a unique character as a retail and artistic hub in the context of an historic setting. The town is serious about protecting local green spaces. It is home to six parks, and all buildings in the historic district are required to maintain considerable green space as part of the property. Further, it has maintained its designation by the Arbor Day Foundation as a "Tree City USA" member for over 21 years.

Greater Shepherdstown is defined not only by its downtown hub, its focus on education and the arts, and its historic nature, but also by the beauty of the natural landscape that surrounds it. Part of a network of Canal Towns because of its proximity to a Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and path, Shepherdstown is a tourist attraction for those interested in biking, hiking, white-water rafting, climbing, birding, and gardening. It is home to an impressive array of

environmentally-focused organizations and events including the Potomac Valley Audubon Society, the National Conservation Training Center, the American Conservation Film Festival, Solar Holler, Panhandle Earth Day, Freedom's Run, Sacred Roots Herbal Sanctuary, Save Our Soil, and Sky Truth.

For a small town, Shepherdstown is surprisingly non-parochial. This is due in part to the close relationship between Shepherd University and the Shepherdstown Community. The university's strong music programs provide regular high-quality, open-to-community events and sponsor a Masterworks Chorale comprised of both students and community members. In addition, the Lifelong Learning Program, the Robert Byrd Center, the Appalachian Studies Center, and the Stubblefield Institute, all housed at Shepherd University, provide rich opportunities for educational and cultural experiences. The non-parochial nature of Shepherdstown may also be related to the fairly large number of residents who are not native to Shepherdstown or even to West Virginia. The town is a unique combination of rural and urban, young and old, locals and newcomers. The town's proximity to Washington, DC and Baltimore, Maryland, with Amtrak stations located less than 10 miles away as well as nearby access to the MARC (Maryland Rail Commuter Train), enables individuals to come and go to nearby cities frequently.

Demographics

Based on 2000-2020 data, the population of Shepherdstown, including approximately 900 students residing on Shepherd University campus, is 1,911. Because of the large number of university students, the median resident age is 21.3 years compared to the West Virginia median age of 42.9 years. Seven and a half percent of residents are under the age of 18; 55.7% are between the ages of 18 and 24; 15% are from 25 to 44; 14.1% are from 45 to 64; and 7.6% are 65 years of age or older. The gender makeup of the town is 46.5% male and 53.5% female. The town is predominantly white (83.9%). Black residents make up 9.4% of the population, Hispanics represent 2.9%, and those of two or more races make up 2.4%. It is important to add that the Corporation of Shepherdstown serves as the

“hub” of the greater Shepherdstown area (zip code 25443), and many of the almost 7500 residents within this area, all of whose mailing address is “Shepherdstown,” consider themselves Shepherdstown residents, though they do not reside within the Corporation’s limits.

The estimated median Shepherdstown household income in 2019 was \$47, 932. The estimated median house or condo value in 2019 was \$316,292, compared to \$124,600 in West Virginia. The 2019 cost of living index in Shepherdstown was 172.3 which is considered very high. The U.S. average is 100. The percentage of residents living in poverty in 2019 was 12.2% (7.7% for White Non-Hispanic residents, 16.9% for Black residents, 100% for Hispanic residents and those of two or more races). In November 2020, the unemployment rate was 4%, compared to 5.7% in West Virginia. The biggest employer in Shepherdstown is Shepherd University, providing 19% of jobs.

Age-Friendly Work in Shepherdstown

Shepherdstown is on the leading edge of efforts in West Virginia to make communities livable for people of all ages and abilities. It is home to Shepherdstown Area Independent Living (SAIL), West Virginia’s first member of the national Village to Village Movement. It is also home to Shepherd Village, West Virginia’s first cohousing community. It has a strong, active Lifelong Learning Program in partnership with Shepherd University. In 2018, Shepherdstown became the second community in the state to become a part of the World Health Organization and AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

Prior to the acceptance of Shepherdstown into the network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, the Shepherdstown Accessibility Committee endeavored to make the town increasingly accessible. The Accessibility Committee, with representatives from Town Council, SAIL, Shepherdstown Visitor’s Center, Shepherd University, Shepherd Village, the Rotary Club, and the community at large, made good progress as it worked with Town Council to install curb cuts at many intersections throughout town. Also, the committee worked with the

Shepherdstown Historic Planning Commission to ensure that future property renovations in town would be approved only if they were both historically appropriate *and* if they met or exceeded accessibility guidelines set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In addition, Accessibility Committee members worked with Shepherd University in creating safe, walkable community access to campus buildings, including a specially designated community walkway access on the West Campus, featuring overhead lighting and safety handrails. Also, at the committee's request, the university installed safety paint stripes on the steps of buildings frequently used by community members.

Further, the Accessibility Committee worked on the development of an informational brochure for local business and property owners. The brochure outlines details on how to make structures accessible for people of all ages and abilities. Finally, the Accessibility Committee led to the application for Shepherdstown to join the WHO/AARP Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

Core People Guiding the Work

Upon our acceptance into the Age-Friendly Network, we formed an Advisory Board consisting of most of the same people who had worked with the Accessibility Committee. At this time, those people include the following:

Linda Spatig, Immediate Past President of SAIL (Shepherdstown Area Independent Living)

Steve Ayraud, Shepherd University Lifelong Learning Advisory Board Member

Marcy Bartlett, Shepherd Village resident and former board member, Shepherd University

Lifelong Learning Advisory Committee member

Steve Bartlett, Shepherd Village resident

Shelley Shaffer, Shepherd University, Director of Facilities Management

Marty Amerikaner, Shepherdstown Town Council member, Parks and Recreation

Committee

member. SAIL member

Jack Young, SAIL founder and Board of Directors Member emeritus

Susan Kern, SAIL Board of Directors

Steve Pearson, Experience Shepherdstown (our local Visitor's Center), editor of The Observer,

owner, Shepherdstown Opera House

Key Community Partnerships

Our primary community partners are the Shepherdstown Town Council, SAIL, Shepherd Village, Shepherd University, and Experience Shepherdstown. Other groups with whom we are working include the Shepherdstown Parks and Recreation Committee, especially committee chair and Town Council member, Cheryl Roberts; the Shepherdstown Business Association who kindly allowed us to join one of their meetings in order to conduct a listening session; local business Evolve, especially co-owners Jan Hafer and Elise Bach, who gave us free use of their facility to host a community listening session; and the Asbury United Methodist Church whose members arranged a listening session for us at the local Clarion Hotel.

Assessment Tools and Sample

For our community needs assessment, we used two data collection strategies recommended by AARP— listening sessions and an online survey. Five listening sessions were conducted in spring and summer 2019, with Shepherd Village residents, SAIL members, greater Shepherdstown community members, Asbury Church members, and Shepherdstown business owners. A total of 50-60 individuals, ages eight and over, participated in the audio-taped sessions which were conducted by Linda Spatig, Past President of SAIL, Past Chair of Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, and trained expert in focus group interviewing.

The listening sessions focused on the eight domains of livability identified by the AARP - housing; outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation and streets; health and wellness; social participation, inclusion and education opportunities; volunteering and civic engagement; job opportunities; and community information.

The online survey, designed and tabulated by AARP, was open from midDecember 2019, through the end of February 2020. A total of 356 individuals, 95% of whom are white, completed the survey. The respondents were relatively senior in age (bimodal ages—68 and 70) and well-educated, with 54% having received a graduate or professional degree and another 30% having completed a college degree and graduate study. They were relatively new to the Shepherdstown area, the majority having moved here in the last ten years. About 60% lived outside the town limits, with 40% living in town. Seventy-three percent of the respondents identified as female, 27% as male. The majority (63%) were married; with 15% widowed. Most respondents' incomes (68%) ranged from \$50,000 to greater than \$150,000.

Other Data We Used

At the request of Town Council members, in addition to data generated by the listening sessions and online survey, we used information from Shepherdstown Corporation's most recent Comprehensive Plan. The plan, an update of the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, was the result of a twelve-month process that began in August 2013. The plan expresses the community's visions and goals as well as both short and long-term strategies to meet those goals. The plan addresses six areas including land use and community characters; economic development and tourism; public services and infrastructure; natural and environmental resources; historic preservation; and intergovernmental coordination.

Limitations of our Methods

A methodological limitation was difficulty in recruiting local business owners to participate in the listening sessions. The head of the local business association kindly allowed us to use part of one of their monthly meetings for the purpose of a listening session. Unfortunately, the attendance at the meeting was low, as has been common for some time, and of the few people attending, two had already participated in the general community listening session held downtown the previous week. Further, our Advisory Board representative from the local business community regrettably resigned during the pandemic this past year. She was struggling to keep her business operating and did not have time for other commitments.

Introduction to the Action Plan

Vision

We envision Shepherdstown, our quaint and delightfully quirky historic hometown, as an accessible, life-enhancing town where people of all ages and abilities can thrive and participate actively in community life.

Mission

Our mission is to increase Shepherdstown's livability for residents and attractiveness for visitors. We will collaborate with diverse community stakeholders to strengthen communication among us, explore public transportation possibilities, improve our public green spaces and enhance access and mobility options such as bike paths, handrails, and safer sidewalks.

Value Statement

Age-Friendly Shepherdstown's value priority is to support the Town's overall values by focusing on their applicability to people of all ages and abilities.

- Outdoor activities and green spaces: We are proud of our parks, green space requirements, and easy access to outdoor recreation. An Age-Friendly priority is to maximize accessibility to and utilization of these places and activities by people of all ages and abilities.
- Historic Preservation: Shepherdstown is the oldest town in West Virginia and is proud of its historic buildings and associated heritage. An Age-Friendly priority is to encourage and facilitate prioritization of safety and accessibility to historic sites for people of all ages and abilities.
- Tourism: Tied to the historic and green space themes noted above, Shepherdstown is proud of how attractive the area is to tourists, and our economy is intimately tied to tourism. An Age-Friendly priority is to support activities and programs that are of interest to tourists of all ages and abilities, and to facilitate the accessibility and safety measures required for a diverse tourism environment.
- Communication: One value commonality, as revealed through our data collection, is a desire for greater communication within the Town about key Town issues and activities. An Age-Friendly priority is to promote new communication methods within the town.
- Arts and Education: For a small town, Shepherdstown demonstrates a high level of commitment to, and benefit from, the arts and educational programs that are available in the community. An Age-Friendly priority is to encourage and support arts and educational programs that are of interest to people of all ages and abilities, as well as safe and reliable access to those activities by all.

Community Assessment

As was noted earlier, the Committee made use of both *listening sessions* and a *survey* format to collect the data needed for assessing the community's goals and

priorities regarding the process of making Shepherdstown a more fully AgeFriendly town.

Listening sessions

Five listening sessions were conducted in the spring and summer of 2019. These were held with key constituency groups, including:

- a. Members of SAIL (Shepherdstown Area Independent Living, which is part of the Village to Village Movement and a key partner in the Age-Friendly effort)
- b. Shepherdstown business owners
- c. Residents of Shepherd Village, a co-housing community within the town, which aims “to create a close-knit neighborhood that will support aging in place, staying actively engaged in life and enjoying deep friendships” (Shepherd Village Website).
- d. Asbury United Methodist Church, a primarily African American church in Shepherdstown.
- e. An open session for all members of the community.

Results: Respondents spoke favorably about living in Shepherdstown, often mentioning the benefits of a small community with an abundance of educational, cultural, and social activities and opportunities. That said, five areas of concern were identified by participants across the groups:

1. Lack of **public transportation** (raised in all five groups, with much interest in some kind of shuttle or circulator bus system)
2. Need for improved **sidewalks, alleys, bike and pedestrian paths** (raised in all five groups, with special concerns raised by residents at both east and west ends of town)
3. Need for better **communication** about town events and activities (raised in 4 groups)
4. Need for more **mixed-income and accessible housing** (raised in four groups)
5. Desire for more **public green spaces** (raised in four groups)

Survey

The AARP Age-Friendly Online Community Survey was open from midDecember, 2019, through the end of February, 2020. A total of 356 individuals, 95% of whom are white, completed the survey. The respondents are relatively senior in age (bimodal ages – 68 and 70), and well-educated, with 54% having received a graduate or professional degree and another 30% having completed a college degree and graduate study. They are relatively new to greater Shepherdstown, the majority having moved here in the last 10 years. About 60% live outside the town limits, with 40% living in town. Seventy-three percent of the respondents identified as female, 27% as male. The majority (63%) are married; with 15% widowed. Most respondents' incomes (68%) range from \$50,000 to greater than \$150,000.

Results: Key results are presented here; the full, 68-page report is available upon request. We focus on items for which there was convergence of results; items with widely divergent responses are not reported or discussed. Respondents expressed strong positive views of Shepherdstown as a livable community, with 88% rating the town as an excellent, very good, or good place for people to live as they age. Further, the majority of respondents (70%) hope to stay here permanently. For those who foresee a possible future relocation, seeking better health care facilities is the main reason. For a large majority (93%) it is very important to live independently at home as they age. Also, there were strong positive ratings on social engagement. Most respondents are socially connected in the community with (87%) reporting daily or multiple times per week contact with family, friends, or neighbors and over 70% rarely or never feeling lonely or a lack of companionship. Further, most respondents rated Shepherdstown as excellent, very good, or good on providing opportunities for volunteering.

Respondents had less favorable views about getting around in the community. Sidewalks were rated fair or poor by 75% and pedestrian and bike paths were rated fair or poor by 87%. Also, 78% gave a fair or poor rating on “audio and visual pedestrian crossings.” Ratings of public transportation are similarly low, with 92% rating it as fair or poor.

Ratings related to access to community information also were low. The majority of respondents gave fair or poor ratings on an item asking about “access to community information in one central source” and one about “clearly displayed community information with large lettering.”

Community Assessment Conclusion

It is heartening that so much of the assessment results, from both the listening sessions and the survey were positive or favorable in nature. Further, the identification of concerns- particularly those that emerged within both of our assessment methods, provided guidance for our Advisory Board in terms of the key themes and desired action items discussed within the Action Plan described below.

Action Plan

Preface

As a preface to discussing our Action Plan, a few comments are offered here for context. First, it is important, we believe, to note again that the non-student population of the Corporation of Shepherdstown hovers around 1000. As a small community, we make this point to emphasize that we have proportionately fewer resources of all kinds than the larger communities that are more typical within the Age-Friendly Network. Our partners care deeply about Age-Friendly issues, and we take pride in our ongoing efforts in these areas, while also accepting that our small size requires us to focus on key priorities.

Second, it is worth noting that Covid has had a significant impact on the writing of this plan. The data collection process described above was completed prior to the pandemic’s outset but writing the plan was delayed as we faced challenges tied to the health crisis. However, the community has been making ongoing progress on several of our short- and intermediate-term goals during this writing delay. Thus, our timeline may be a bit unusual, since we include what were, at the time,

several shorter-term goals that we have already made progress on, even as work on the written Action Plan was delayed.

It is worth noting, too, that during the last two years, a new medical facility associated with West Virginia University has opened just on the edge of our town limits, while a new, modern public library building opened in late July of this year. These developments are significant for the quality of life of our residents and are important contributions to our age-friendly goals.

Our Action Plan is organized around key themes that emerged from our data collection. In discussing them, we tie each to the World Health Organization (WHO)/Age-Friendly Domain(s) to which it relates.

THEME 1: COMMUNICATION

The first theme that emerged was a perceived need for better communication within the town, and particularly between the town government and town residents. We understood this need to reflect residents' desire to be more fully informed about the issues being discussed by town governing bodies, as well as for better communication about upcoming events in the community.

WHO Domains: Communication and Information, Social Participation

GOAL 1: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION FROM THE TOWN TO RESIDENTS.

- a) Develop a process of communicating directly to all residents who would like to receive more information from the town government.
- b) Continually work to increase resident awareness of and enrollment into the program.

ACTION: To address residents' desire for more communication from the Town we agreed that a new email list would be proposed to Town Council. Residents would be asked to indicate their interest in participating, and thus be able to "opt in" to the list. This list would then serve as one important vehicle for the Town to communicate directly with residents.

TIME FRAME:

a) Part “a” was considered a *Short-Term Goal* since there was relatively little cost or planning needed to achieve it. In late 2020, a member of the Age-Friendly Advisory Board who serves on the Shepherdstown Town Council introduced a proposal for the email list to the Council, establishing a method to invite people to join and “ground rules” for the list. The proposal was passed by Council, and the new list was initiated in early 2021.

b) Part “b” is ongoing and involves periodic invitations to residents to join the list. Letters to the local newspaper, comments at Council meetings and reminders sent to residents are all methods that can be used to promote enrollment.

OUTCOME: Over the last year, messages have been sent out regularly – approximately one per week – and informal feedback from residents has indicated a great deal of appreciation for the new flow of information. We currently have approximately 500 active email addresses on our Town List.

FOLLOWUP PLAN: We want to recruit more residents to the email list; We will use reminders in other town mailings (e.g. water bills) and news releases to encourage enrollment.

GOAL 2: ESTABLISH A METHOD TO INFORM VISITORS AND RESIDENTS ABOUT TOWN ACTIVITIES, PARKS AND AREA ATTRACTIONS, AND LOCAL BUSINESSES.

PLANNED ACTION: In discussions about communication, our Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board focused in part on the importance of tourism to Shepherdstown, and the potential value of a new communication vehicle for informing tourists as well as area residents about upcoming activities, ongoing attractions, and local businesses. Based in part on a web search, we found that informational kiosks in central, public locations were frequently found in small communities such as ours. We agreed that such a kiosk, designed to fit with Shepherdstown’s historic architecture and ambiance and to address the lighting and readability needs of all age groups, would be a valuable contribution to the town.

TIME FRAME: The kiosk project is considered an intermediate-term project. A tentative design has been developed, and several possible locations have been identified. Remaining challenges include obtaining funding for the kiosk, finalizing the design details, obtaining bids from qualified craftspeople, and working with Town government on approval for the final site. We have one very promising potential source for funding, and have one bid so far from a reputable blacksmith in town.

THEME 2: NON-VEHICULAR MOBILITY AND SAFETY

The second theme that emerged from our community assessment was a perceived need for improvements to existing infrastructure intended to promote safety, accessibility, and enjoyment of public spaces, including walking paths, bike routes, sidewalks, building accessibility, crosswalks, and alleys. The complexity involved in addressing each of these needs necessarily puts them into the intermediate and long-range categories, but we identified sequential steps we could undertake in the short-term as we work towards achieving the goals tied to this important theme.

WHO Domains: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Social Participation, Health Services and Community Support

GOAL 1: CREATION OF NEW BIKE AND WALKING PATHS

PLANNED ACTIONS:

- a. **BIKE PATH FROM TOWN TO MORGAN’S GROVE PARK:** The Town has recently finalized the funding and obtained the State Highway Department approvals needed to construct a new bike path connecting our downtown area with Morgan’s Grove Park, which has a scenic, near-one-mile walking path around its perimeter and is the largest park in greater Shepherdstown. A start date for construction has not yet been announced, but we are hopeful that it will be within several months.

TIME FRAME: Short-to-intermediate term, depending on construction schedule being established.

- b. **NEW BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN ROUTES CONNECTING TOWN PARKS AND OTHER SITES:** Members of our Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board have created maps of possible new bike routes within and around the Town that would connect our parks, while avoiding state-controlled roads or high traffic streets. Progress on these plans will require input and approval from the Town Police Department, Public Works Committee, and Shepherd University (because part of one route involves biking through the campus). Since creation of the bike routes will not involve new construction, the costs involved are anticipated to be minimal (e.g. several new signs and markings along the routes to identify them to riders and drivers, where appropriate, as bike routes).

TIME FRAME: Intermediate; while the actual creation of the routes would be relatively inexpensive and could be quickly accomplished, the detailed planning and approval process has not begun. Most likely this would be a full year process.

- c. **WALKING PATH IN CULLISON PARK:** The Shepherdstown Parks and Recreation Committee is currently seeking bids for a proposed new multimodal walking path that will encircle the largest park within the town's corporate limits and connect it to a nearby park via a dirt trail through a beautiful, wooded area. The trail is planned to include a post-and-rope hand assist to encourage utilization by people who need some assistance while walking as well as several benches for those who might want to rest along the path. Plans for the path's construction will require review and approval by Town Council.

TIME FRAME: Intermediate-term. It will take a few months to finalize path design, obtain needed bids and then work with the chosen company on construction time schedule. We have tentative approval from the Town for required funds to build at least the initial phase of this trail.

GOAL 2: IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY WITHIN THE TOWN

PLANNED ACTIONS:

- a. CURB CUTS: The Town, along with the State Highway Department, has been systematically working to install new ADA compliant curb cuts at all significant intersections within the Corporation. A multi-year project, the second “installment” was completed by the State in early March.

TIME FRAME: Most key curb cuts in the downtown area have been completed; others will be scheduled by the town as needed

- b. SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS: As a historic town, Shepherdstown features both brick and concrete sidewalks. Our community assessment data revealed significant concern from residents about inconsistent maintenance and resulting safety hazards on sidewalks throughout Town (Note: A Town Ordinance clarifies that sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of property owners, while enforcement of the Ordinance is the responsibility of the Town).

The Town has recently completed a survey of sidewalk conditions throughout the town and sent notices to property owners whose sidewalks were deemed problematic, informing them of required improvements and a timeline for compliance. The Town has also allocated money to re-fund a program to assist property owners with the costs of sidewalk repair when such assistance is requested.

The Public Works committee of the Town is exploring possible grant opportunities to supplement needed funding to improve existing sidewalks and to extend several sidewalks from their current termination sites.

TIME FRAME: We anticipate that these recent steps by the Town will accelerate improvements in sidewalks, but we also expect that it will be an intermediate-to-long range project to achieve full compliance with the needed improvements.

- c. PUBLIC BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY: We will complete an assessment of Town buildings to establish which buildings do not have at least minimal assistive

devices (e.g. handrails or signage providing directions to an accessible entrance) and then work with the Town on processes to foster compliance with ADA requirements.

TIME FRAME: The assessment is a short-term goal, to be completed within six months. More challenging may be fostering compliance from building owners; this will likely be an intermediate to long-range process tied to discussions aimed at fostering cooperative agreements, legal requirements, and possibly securing funding to assist some property owners.

- d. LIGHTING:** Another safety concern raised in listening sessions concerned a perceived need for additional lighting in several sections of town. Intersections, alley ways and several sections of sidewalks were seen as inadequately lighted, particularly by the older residents. Last year, the Town began a study of street lighting which was focused on possibly adopting LED lighting along our streets. This has proved somewhat controversial, and currently the study has been “tabled.”

PLANNED ACTIONS:

Our first goal is to promote renewed interest in the lighting study, with a wider focus upon identifying all areas where additional lighting would serve the safety needs of the community, while concurrently working to problem-solve with residents who have concerns about specific approaches to adding lights in public spaces. The follow-up goal is to see appropriate types and levels of lighting added to public areas identified as needing it, in a manner that is responsive to residents' concerns and consistent with the Town's historic heritage.

TIME FRAME: The time frame for the first goal may be short-term, since the study process can be re-initiated by the Public Works committee with a simple vote of the committee, if it is persuaded that there is community support for this activity and that any plans to add lighting will be take a problem-solving approach to working with residents' concerns.

The follow-up goal is likely to require a more Intermediate to long-term time horizon. Public discussion will almost certainly generate concerns from some

residents. Careful consideration, and a problem-solving, consensus-oriented approach will be required, followed by the potentially time-consuming processes of decision making by the Town in terms of design and funding of new lighting plans.

THEME 3: NEED FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Another priority for many is development of a public transportation option for residents who are unable to drive, walk, or bike to important destinations such as the new medical center, social or educational events in town or on campus, and the shopping complex located just outside of town limits.

WHO Domains: Transportation, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion

Goal 1: DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR TOWN RESIDENTS

PLANNED ACTIONS

- a. Discussions with Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA):
The EPTA is the public transportation agency in this area of West Virginia. It is already contracted to provide scheduled bus service around the Shepherd University campus for students and staff. One possible action on this goal would be to develop a cooperative agreement whereby those same buses expand their routes to allow Town residents to go to designated stops during specified hours. It is also plausible that a new route might be developed that connects Shepherdstown with other population and service centers. A preliminary phone conversation between EPTA and an Age-Friendly Shepherdstown representative suggested that EPTA was interested in exploring these ideas. Covid interrupted further planning; we plan to resume that work in the near future.

TIME FRAME: This planning process will likely be intermediate in terms of a timeline. Much will depend on the EPTA's flexibility in terms of their bus routes, their ability to do estimates of demand for these services and the potential for cooperation with Shepherd University regarding existing University bus routes and

schedules. Approval of routes and necessary funding would also need to be approved by Town committees and by Town Council.

- b. Currently, Shepherdstown Area Independent Living (SAIL) offers a service for members whereby volunteers are available to drive members to nearby locations such as doctors' offices, grocery stores, and other necessary places. It is possible that such an effort could be expanded to include one or two regularly scheduled routes to pick up members and others and bring them to a limited number of specific locations such as the shopping area and medical center located just outside Town limits. This change would require extensive discussion by SAIL leadership concerning issues such as availability of volunteers, liability, funding and likely demand/usage of such a service.

TIME FRAME: As a preliminary idea originating withing this Advisory Board as we develop the Action Plan, and thus not yet discussed with SAIL leadership, this possible action would best be considered intermediate to long-term, most likely being considered only after other options such as the planning with EPTA and Shepherd University were exhausted.

THEME 4: DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN SPACES

The fourth theme that emerged from our community assessment data was a desire for more and improved public "green spaces" in town. Ideas within this theme are closely tied to hoped-for improvements in the town's parks, as well as development of newer green areas for public gatherings and enjoyment. Shepherdstown is proud of its designation as a "Tree City USA", and it is consistent with the town's Comprehensive Plan to work continually on improvements to the community's parks and outdoor spaces.

WHO Domain: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

GOAL 1: IMPROVEMENTS TO AND INCREASED AMOUNT OF PUBLIC GREEN SPACE IN SHEPHERDSTOWN

PLANNED ACTIONS:

- a. The Shepherdstown Parks and Recreation Committee recently completed a survey of community residents to assess their priorities for the Town's parks. The highest priority identified was additional or improved walking paths. As noted earlier, the Parks and Recreation Committee is actively working to develop a new walking path in the largest park in town.

TIME FRAME: Intermediate; see discussion of "walking paths" under Theme 2 above.

- b. A second need identified by community residents is for public restrooms within the town park system. The Parks and Recreation Committee has begun work towards responding to that need by submitting a grant application to provide funding for a restroom facility in one of our parks.

TIME FRAME: Intermediate-to-long term. The Town will likely not learn about the grant application referred to above until 2023. Additional funding opportunities will be sought in the meantime. Design, location, construction, and maintenance issues tied to the facility will require approval from several town committees.

- c. Another desire for age-friendly green spaces in the parks is to update the playground equipment at each location to include more modern equipment accessible to all ages and abilities. The Parks and Recreation Committee shares this concern and is looking to access new funding sources to make those equipment improvements.

TIME FRAME: Intermediate; as with other infrastructure improvements, the challenge is to secure necessary funding, either through grants or reallocations within the Town's budget. As funding is secured, new equipment installations need to be approved by Town committees (e.g., public works, finance).

- d. Residents noted a desire for additional green space in the central downtown area. Since the Town is small, space in this area is quite limited. There have been preliminary discussions about possible spaces to convert into small new town park areas. Possible locations that have been discussed include a) an expansion of “Library Park”- the smallest in our system- to include a green space behind the building that might serve as a “town center” and b) a cooperative project with Shepherd University to enhance a current green space into a more developed park area. Both are very preliminary ideas that need significant further review.

TIME FRAME: This is likely to be a longer-term project, involving significant discussions within the community, followed by detailed planning, committee reviews, and construction for any approved project(s).

THEME 5: NEED FOR ADDITIONAL MIXED-INCOME AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

The fifth theme that emerged from our data centered on a perceived need for more mixed-income housing and high-quality assisted living facilities in the community. As a small town with a significant historic district within the corporation limits, there is limited space for new housing and the existing housing is relatively expensive compared to other communities in the region. Further, relatively few housing structures within the town are of the one-story design that maximizes accessibility for those with mobility challenges.

WHO Domain: Housing

GOAL 1: SEEK FUNDING AND PARTNERS TO PROMOTE BUILDING MIXED INCOME AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING IN THE GREATER SHEPHERDSTOWN COMMUNITY

PLANNED ACTIONS:

- a. While the need for lower cost and more accessible housing is clear, it's less obvious what concrete steps our group can take to address the

concern. At the present time, our key actions in this area will be focused on a) keeping abreast of possible funding initiatives focused on supporting low- and mixed- income housing and assess availability of mixed income housing in town; b) pursuing opportunities for development of high-quality assisted living facilities in the greater Shepherdstown area; and c) seeking consultation from communities as well as advocacy organizations and developers that have been addressing these issues.

TIME FRAME: Long-term; this is a significant, long standing structural problem in our community, and likely to take extensive research and sustained attention over a period of years if real progress is to be made.

WHO Domain: Health Services and Community Supports

As noted in the introduction to our Action Plan, a new medical facility (WVU Medicine Shepherdstown Office Building) opened in town during the period of working on this Action Plan. Although a facility such as this was mentioned as a community need in listening sessions, the survey data did not highlight this need, and thus it was not identified within one of our “themes.” However, a representative of Age-Friendly Shepherdstown met with the regional director of the WVU medical system to promote the idea of a local medical facility. We are thrilled that the facility is operational, and we include an item here in our Action Plan focused on “next steps” that we’d like to see regarding the facility.

GOAL 1: PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN URGENT CARE COMPONENT TO THE WVU MEDICAL FACILITY

GOAL 2: PROMOTE ACCESS TO A WIDER RANGE OF SPECIALISTS AT THE WVU MEDICAL FACILITY

PLANNED ACTIONS:

- a. Consult with administrative leaders of the WVU Medical facility to explore the plausibility of devoting a greater portion of each day to “walk in” visits and to scheduling additional WVU specialists to work periodically in the facility.

TIME FRAME: Intermediate. Scheduling meetings with WVU Medical administration is more of a short-term goal, but it is likely to take longer to put together needs assessment data in support of these actions.

Domain Specific Charts:

Domain: *Communication and Information*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|---------------|--|---|---|--|
| Communication | Improve Communication from Town to Residents | Develop Town Email List | Town Council | Short-term: Approved and initiated Winter, 2021 |
| | | Encourage additional enrollment in Town Email List | Town Council | Ongoing |
| | Establish Method to Inform Visitors and Residents re: Parks, Activities, Attractions | Design, Construct, Install and Maintain Kiosk in a Town Center Location | Age-Friendly Advisory Board, Public Works, Town Council | Intermediate: (planning and installation) Ongoing: keeping posted information current |

Domain: *Outdoor Spaces and Buildings*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Non-vehicular Mobility and Safety | New Bike and Walking Paths | Bike Path to Morgan's Grove Park | Town Council | Short-to-Intermediate |
| | | New Bike And Pedestrian Routes Connecting Parks and Other Sites | Age-Friendly Advisory Board, Public Works Committee, Shepherd University Buildings and Grounds, Town Council | Intermediate |
| | | Walking Path in Town Park | Town Council, Shepherdstown Parks and Recreation Committee | Short-to-Intermediate |
| | Improved Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility | Curb Cuts | Mayor, Town Council, State Highway Dept | Short-to Intermediate |
| | | Sidewalk Improvements | Mayor, Town Council, Public Works Committee | Intermediate to Long Range |

| | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| | | Public Building Accessibility | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, Mayor, Town Council, | Intermediate to Long Range |
|--|--|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------|

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| | | | Building Owners | |
| | | Downtown Lighting | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Committee, Public Works, Town Council, Mayor, | Intermediate to Long Term |
| Development of New Green Spaces | Improvements To and Development of New Green Spaces in Town | Improvements to existing parks: 1. Walking Path in Town Park (Described above) | Town Council, Shepherdstown Parks and Recreation Committee | Short- to-intermediate |
| | | 2. New Restroom(s) in Parks | Parks and Rec Committee, Public Works, Town Council, Mayor | Intermediate to Long Term |
| | | 3. Updated Equipment in Parks | Parks and Recreation Committee, Finance Committee, Mayor | Short- to-Intermediate Term |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|--|-----------|
| | | 4. New Green Spaces | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation, Grants Committee, Mayor, Town Council | Long Term |
|--|--|---------------------|--|-----------|

Domain: *Transportation*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------|
| Need for Public Transportation | Development of Public Transportation for Residents | Work with Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA) to Configure New Routes Through Town | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, EPTA, Planning Commission, Police Department, Mayor, Town Council | Intermediate to Long Term |
| | | Shepherdstown Area Independent Living (SAIL) Development of Transportation Options | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, SAIL | Intermediate |

Domain: *Housing*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|--|--|--|--|------------|
| Need for Mixed Income and Accessible Housing | Seek Funding and Partners to Promote Building of Accessible, Mixed Income Housing in the Shepherdstown Area | Learn about Related Funding Opportunities, Seek Consultation | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, Grants Committee, | Long Term |
| | Seek Funding and Partners to Promote Building of High-Quality Assisted Living Facilities in the Shepherdstown Area | Learn about Related Funding Opportunities, Seek Consultation | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, Grants Committee, | Long Term |

Domain: *Social Participation*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------|
| Need for Public Transportation | Development of Public Transportation for Residents | Work with Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA) to configure new routes through Town | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, EPTA, Planning Commission, Police Department, Mayor, Town Council | Intermediate to Long Term |

| | | | | |
|---------------|--|---|---|--|
| Communication | Improve Communication from Town to Residents | Develop Town Email List | Town Council | Short-term: Approved and initiated Winter, 2021 |
| | | Encourage Additional Enrollment in Town Email List | Town Council | Ongoing |
| | Establish Method to Inform Visitors and Residents re: Parks, Activities, Attractions | Design, Construct, Install and Maintain Kiosk in a Town Center Location | Age-Friendly Advisory Board, Public Works, Town Council | Intermediate: (planning and installation) Ongoing: keeping posted information current |

Domain: *Respect and Social Inclusion*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------|
| Need for Public Transportation | Development of Public Transportation for Residents | Work with Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA) to Configure New Routes Through Town | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, EPTA, Planning Commission, Police Department, Mayor, Town Council | Intermediate to Long Term |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--------------|
| | | Shepherdstown Area Independent Living (SAIL) Development of Transportation Options | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board, SAIL | Intermediate |
|--|--|--|---|--------------|

Domain: *Health Services and Community Supports*

| Our Theme | Goal | Action(s) | Responsibility | Time Frame |
|-----------|---|---|---|--------------|
| N/A | Promote the Development of an Urgent Care Component to the WVU Medical Facility | Consult with Administrative Leaders of the WVU Medical Facility | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board | Intermediate |
| | Promote Access to a Wider Range of Specialists at the WVU Medical Facility. | Consult with Administrative Leaders of the WVU Medical Facility | Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Advisory Board | Intermediate |