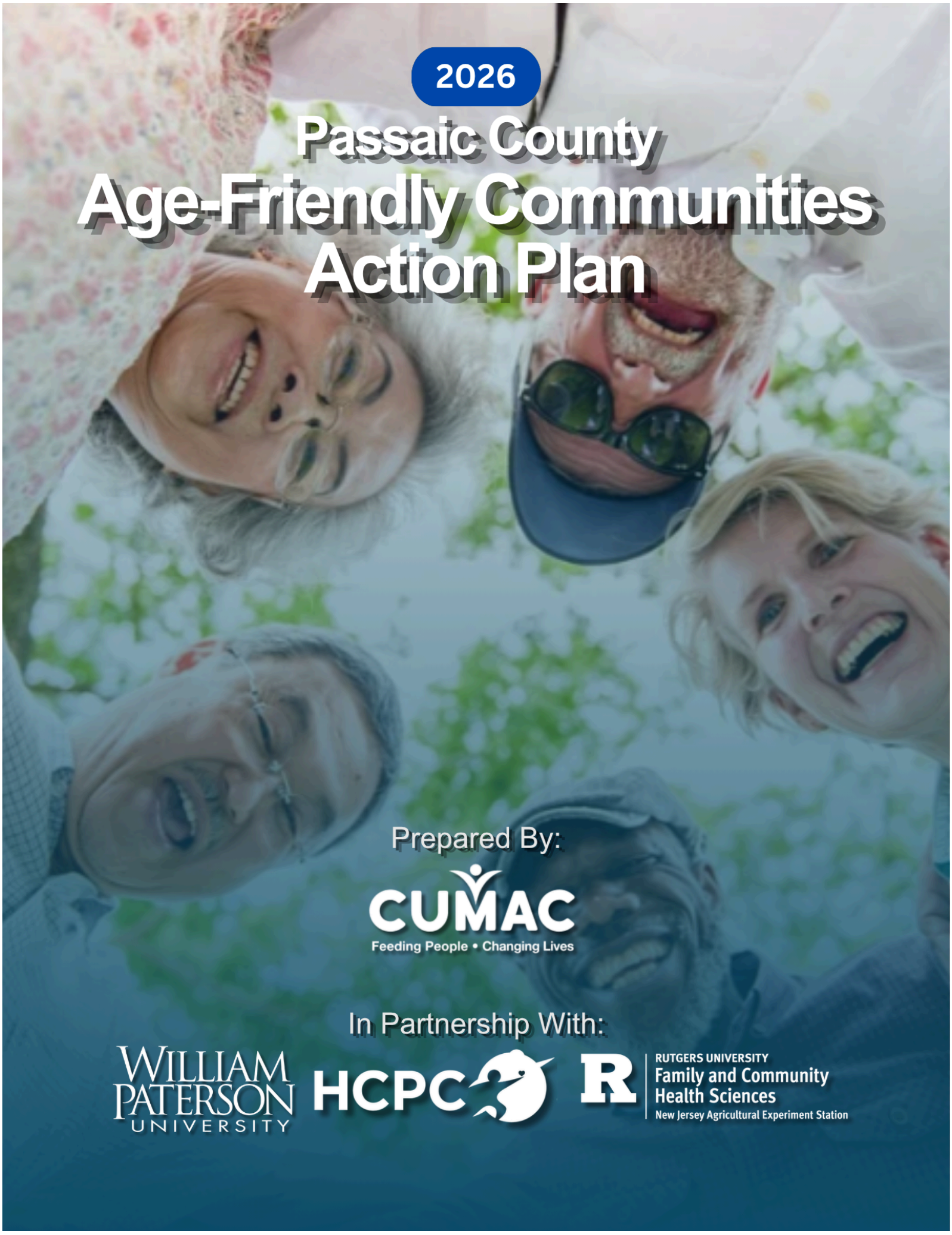


2026

Passaic County Age-Friendly Communities Action Plan

Prepared By:

CUMAC
Feeding People • Changing Lives

In Partnership With:

William Paterson University

HCPC

Rutgers University
Family and Community Health Sciences
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

Table of Contents

Project Partners **2**
Project Summary **3**
Methodology **4**
Community Survey **4**
Focus Groups **8**
Action Plan **11**
Conclusion/limitations **14**
References **17**

Project Partners

This Age-Friendly Community Assessment was made possible through the collaboration of multiple organizations whose combined expertise spans direct service delivery, public health, research, higher education, community engagement, policy, and local government.

CUMAC served as the lead coordinating agency, contributing more than four decades of experience addressing food insecurity, poverty, housing instability, and benefits access throughout Passaic County. Through its direct service programs and community-based navigation model, CUMAC provided critical insight into the needs and lived experiences of some of the county's most vulnerable residents, including older adults facing economic hardship.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County (RCE) brought expertise in community assessment, research methodology, public health, and stakeholder engagement. With extensive experience conducting needs assessments and translating research into community-based action, RCE played a key role in survey design, focus group development, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

The Health Coalition of Passaic County (HCPC) contributed its longstanding expertise in community health, health equity, cross-sector collaboration, and resident engagement. As a trusted convener of healthcare providers, nonprofit organizations, and public agencies, HCPC helped ensure that health-related priorities and community voices were incorporated throughout the assessment process.

William Paterson University (WPU) provided academic and research expertise through its faculty, students, and community-focused programs. The university supported assessment design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, while contributing evidence-based perspectives on aging, social justice, community development, and public policy.

The City of Paterson brought critical municipal leadership and local knowledge, ensuring that the assessment reflected the unique experiences, assets, and challenges of Paterson residents. City representatives helped connect the project to community stakeholders and provided valuable insight into local priorities, infrastructure, and opportunities for future implementation.

The Passaic County Department of Health and Human Services contributed expertise in aging services, public health, social services, and countywide planning. As a key provider and funder of services for older adults and vulnerable populations, the Department played an important role in outreach, strategic planning, and the development of recommendations designed to improve the quality of life for aging residents throughout Passaic County.

Together, these partners brought complementary strengths and a shared commitment to creating communities where older adults can age safely, independently, and with dignity. The collaborative nature of this effort ensured that the assessment was informed by both professional expertise and the lived experiences of the residents it was designed to serve.

Project Summary

An Age-Friendly Community is one that enables people of *all ages*, particularly older adults, to **live safely, remain healthy, stay socially connected, and actively participate in community life**. The movement was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) and has since expanded globally through the American Association of Retired Persons' (AARP) Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.

On March 2, 2021, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy formally expanded these efforts by signing Executive Order 227, creating an Age-Friendly State Advisory Council to work with the Department of Human Services to develop an age-friendly blueprint outlining strategies and practices that municipalities, counties, and business organizations can undertake to create age-friendly communities.

The timing could not be better as the United States is experiencing a significant demographic shift. By 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 or older, and by 2034 older adults are projected to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history! These changes require communities to rethink housing, transportation, healthcare access, civic participation, and social connection in order to meet the needs of the population.

Research consistently shows that older adults **want to remain in their homes** and communities as they age. Age-friendly initiatives help make this possible by improving accessibility, reducing social isolation, increasing mobility, and ensuring access to services and supports. These improvements benefit residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

We entered this project with a primary guiding question: **"What do seniors and aging residents of Paterson and the most vulnerable, food-insecure residents of Passaic County need in order to age-in-place and thrive long-term?"**



This question was answered by connecting with other Community-Based Organizations and researchers, and, most importantly, by surveying a portion of the community (184 participants), conducting 3 focus groups (15 participants total), and conducting a deep dive into the results.

Methodology

To gather community input and better understand the needs, experiences, and priorities of older adults and aging residents, the assessment utilized two primary data collection tools:

1. A 28-question survey consisting of multiple-choice and open-ended questions designed to collect both measurable data and personal perspectives from community members.
2. A focus group discussion guide was used to facilitate structured conversations that enabled participants to share more detailed experiences, concerns, and recommendations regarding aging in place.

Together, these methods provided both broad community feedback and deeper qualitative insights to inform the findings and recommendations presented in this Action Plan.

Community Survey

The survey was developed and administered using Qualtrics Survey Software. The assessment tool included a mix of 5-point Likert-scale items, categorical questions, open-ended responses, and demographic questions.

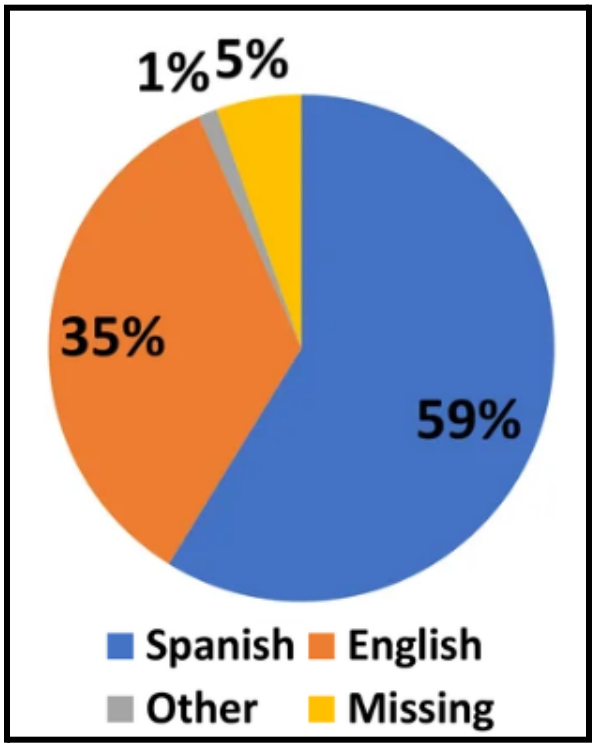
Survey development was informed by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Age-Friendly Community Survey and adapted to reflect local priorities and conditions. The instrument was reviewed by an Assessment Design Team, which included representatives from Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County (RCE), William Paterson University's Department of Community and Social Justice Studies (WPU), and the Health Coalition of Passaic County (HCPC). This collaborative review process helped ensure content validity and alignment with the project's goals and objectives.

Survey questions explored a range of factors that influence healthy aging and aging in place, including access to local resources and services, housing, transportation, community safety, digital connectivity and internet access, healthcare, affordability, social engagement, and demographic characteristics.

To maximize accessibility and participation, surveys were offered virtually via a QR code, on paper, or verbally in person with 5 trained Survey Support Professionals (SSPs). SSPs received additional training on trauma-informed engagement practices to ensure participants felt comfortable, respected, and supported throughout the survey process.

Results

Figure 1: Primary Language Spoken (N=165)

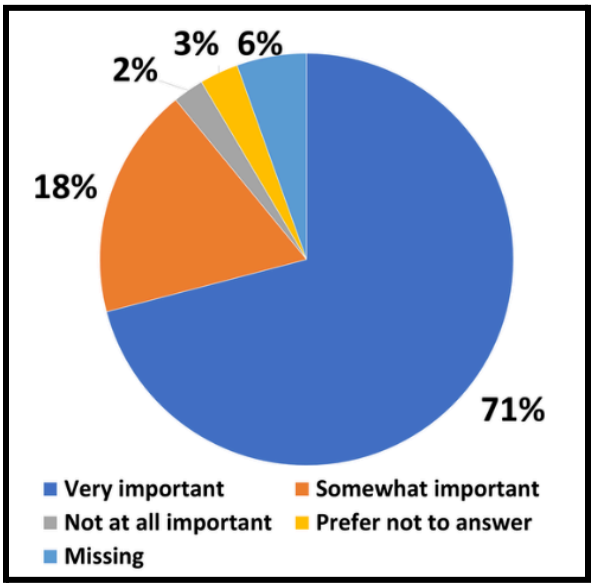


All SSPs were bilingual in English and Spanish, reflecting the community's primary languages. As shown in Figure 1, 94% of survey participants' primary language was either English or Spanish.

Our intent was to collect up to 300 surveys across age groups, with a concerted effort to collect 250 specifically from adults aged 55 and older. For this population of focus, there was an additional incentive: a $20 ready-to-use gift card for completed surveys. The surveys were collected between January and April of 2026. Our result was below target, with 187 total responses. In the following sections, please note that we only factored in responses that were completed 50% or more (therefore, we subtracted 22 "incomplete" or "test" responses). Our usable data total was 165 Surveys.

The surveys were collected by SSP's across Passaic County including the following locations: CUMAC, HCPC, St. Joseph's Hospital and the cafe within-Cup of Joe, Dunkin Donuts, Center City Mall, Various Churches, Circle of Care's Resource Fair, Straight & Narrow, C-Town Supermarket, St. Joseph's Health- Heart Health Fair, Mi Casa Es Su Casa, the Dominican Consulate, Local Community Health Fairs, Roberto Clemente Park, Living Water Church, Nathan Barnet Senior Residence, Ruby's Vision, PT Solutions Physical Therapy, Calvary Baptist Church, Bubbles Laundromat, Oak St. Health, Paterson YMCA and finally at several resident's homes- as arranged by HCPC's Pathways to Success for Seniors program.

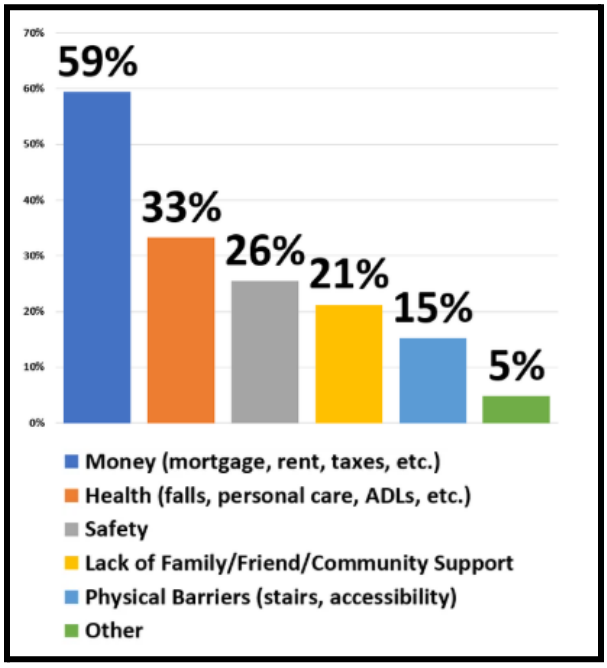
Figure 2: Importance Of Independence As One Gets Older (N=165)



As seen in Figure 2, independence emerged as a key priority among respondents. Almost three-quarters (71%) of survey participants indicated that maintaining independence as

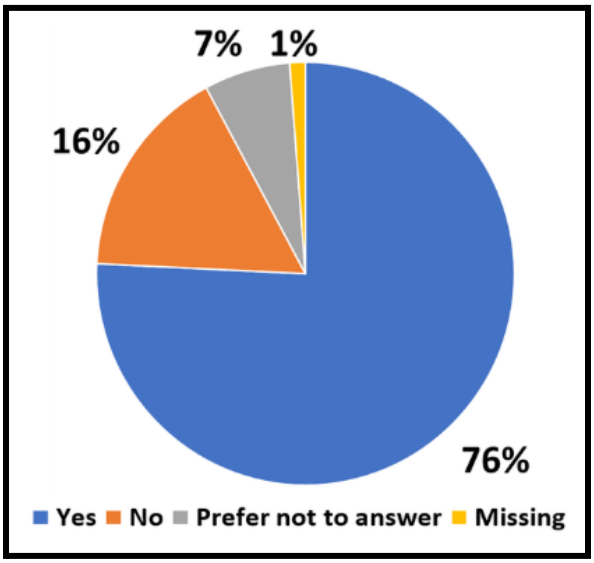
they age is very important, while an additional 18% reported that it is somewhat important. Combined, 89% of respondents identified independence as an important aspect of aging, highlighting the strong desire among older adults to remain self-sufficient and age in place within their communities.

Figure 3: What Are Your Top Concerns About Living Independently At Home? (N=165)



To better understand potential threats to independence, respondents were asked to identify their top concerns related to aging. As shown in Figure 3, financial insecurity was the most frequently cited concern, with 59% of respondents reporting money-related concerns. Health-related concerns followed at 33%, while 26% identified personal safety as a concern. Additionally, 21% expressed concerns about a lack of community support, and 15% reported concerns about physical barriers that could affect their ability to age in place. These findings suggest that while older adults highly value independence, many face economic, health, environmental, and social challenges that may hinder their ability to remain safely and comfortably in their homes and communities over time.

Figure 4: Do You Feel Safe In Your Neighborhood? (N=165)

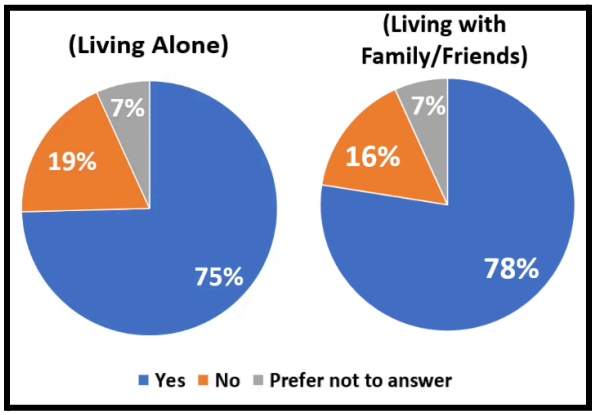


One of the more surprising findings from the assessment was the apparent disconnect between residents' perceptions of neighborhood safety and their concerns about maintaining independence as they age. As shown in Figure 4, 76% of survey respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood. However, when asked, "What are your top concerns about living independently at home?", safety emerged as the third most common concern, with 26% of respondents identifying it as a significant issue (Figure 3).

These findings suggest that concerns about safety extend beyond current perceptions of neighborhood crime. While many residents report feeling safe today, they may simultaneously worry about their ability to remain safe as they age. Focus group

discussions revealed that concerns often centered on desire for increased police presence and shorter response times, cleaner streets, repairing potholes, less noise, reducing crime, gun violence, and public intoxication. In this context, safety encompasses not only crime but also the ability to navigate one's environment confidently and independently.

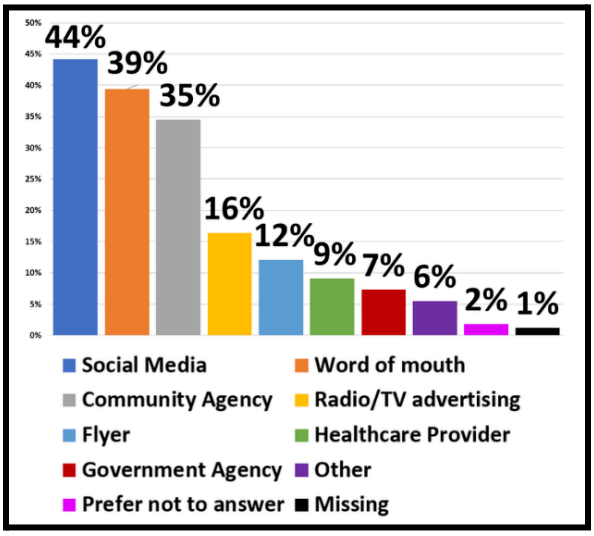
Figure 5: Do You Feel Safe In Your Neighborhood? (N=165)



To further explore this finding, survey responses were analyzed based on household composition. Results showed only a modest difference between individuals living alone and those living with others. Among respondents living alone, 75% reported feeling safe in their neighborhood, compared to 78% of those living with family or friends. As noted in Figure 5. This small variation suggests that perceptions of neighborhood safety are relatively consistent regardless of living arrangement and that other factors may be influencing concerns about aging independently.

Current crime data indicate that Paterson continues to experience higher rates of violent crime than New Jersey and national averages. According to FBI-reported data compiled by NeighborhoodScout, Paterson's violent crime rate is 9.69 incidents per 1,000 residents, compared to 2.18 per 1,000 statewide. Residents have approximately a 1 in 103 chance of becoming the victim of a violent crime, compared with 1 in 459 across New Jersey. Overall, NeighborhoodScout ranks Paterson as safer than only 6% of U.S. communities, illustrating that public safety remains a significant challenge, reinforcing concerns expressed by assessment participants.

Figure 6: How Do You Learn About Local Resources That May Be Available To You (N=165)



When asked how they typically receive information about community resources, programs, and services, respondents reported that social media was their primary source of information (44%), followed by word of mouth from friends, family members, and neighbors (39%), and community agencies and organizations (35%).

These findings challenge common assumptions about older adults' information-seeking behaviors. While traditional outreach methods remain important, the results suggest that many older adults are actively engaged with digital

platforms and increasingly rely on social media to stay informed about local events, services, and opportunities. This presents a significant opportunity for organizations, municipalities, healthcare providers, and community groups to use social media as a key communication tool to promote programs and resources for older adults.

At the same time, the continued importance of word-of-mouth communication highlights the value of trusted relationships and community networks.



Focus Groups

The focus group discussion guide was developed using a structured, evidence-informed approach grounded in established age-friendly community assessment practices. Key resources included the AARP Age-Friendly Community Survey and the Orange County, North Carolina, Master Aging Plan Focus Group Guide, both of which informed the selection of content areas and the development of questions.

The design process was further guided by Richard A. Krueger's Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews, published by the University of Minnesota, which provided best practices for focus group structure, question sequencing, facilitation techniques, and the roles and responsibilities of facilitators and note-takers.

The final discussion guide consisted primarily of open-ended questions designed to encourage participant engagement, foster meaningful dialogue, and capture rich qualitative data on participants' experiences, challenges, priorities, and recommendations regarding aging in place. Questions explored topics including housing, transportation, healthcare access, social connectedness, safety, community resources, and overall quality of life.

The goal of the qualitative research was to better understand the population's perspective on current living conditions in the county and how best to support community members as they age so they can thrive in place. All focus groups were held at CUMAC, and each group consisted of five community members. Focus groups were held on April 7th, April 10th, and April 20th of 2026.

Focus group participants were recruited both from survey participants who indicated they were interested in being a part of the focus group, as well as individuals who were at CUMAC’s Choice Marketplace on the day of. All participants were at least 55 years old and lived in Passaic County.

It is important to acknowledge the timing of the focus groups when interpreting the findings related to neighborhood safety. In the days immediately preceding the focus group sessions, a fatal shooting occurred within the community. Although facilitators did not prompt discussion about this event, participants in all three focus groups referenced it organically. This demonstrates how informed, engaged, and aware residents are of local events and how

closely they follow issues affecting their neighborhoods.

The timing of this incident may also help explain the difference observed between survey and focus group findings on safety. While 76% of survey respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods, safety emerged as one of the most prominent topics in every focus group. It is possible that the recent shooting heightened participants' awareness of neighborhood safety concerns or influenced the direction of the conversations. Because the assessment was not designed to measure the impact of current events on participant responses, it cannot be determined whether the incident directly affected the focus group findings. However, it is an important contextual factor to acknowledge when interpreting the results.

Rather than viewing the survey and focus group findings as contradictory, they should be considered complementary. The survey captured participants' general perceptions of neighborhood safety over time, while the focus groups provided space for participants to reflect on recent experiences, community changes, and emerging concerns. Together, these methods offer a more complete understanding of how older adults experience safety in their communities and underscore the importance of considering both quantitative data and lived experiences when developing age-friendly policies and programs.

While the focus groups were designed to identify barriers and unmet needs, they also revealed a remarkable level of resilience, adaptability, and community spirit among participants. Many of the older adults who participated had never met one another prior to the sessions, yet discussions quickly evolved into supportive and engaging conversations. Participants shared personal experiences, offered advice, validated one another's concerns, and frequently exchanged ideas about how they could collectively address challenges facing older adults in their communities. This willingness to connect with strangers and engage in meaningful dialogue suggests that older adults in Passaic County possess a strong desire for community, belonging, and mutual support.

Across all focus groups, participants demonstrated an impressive commitment to remaining active, informed, and engaged despite the challenges associated with aging. Rather than focusing exclusively on problems, many participants discussed practical solutions, shared available resources, and emphasized the importance of helping neighbors and peers navigate complex systems. Their comments reflected a desire not only to improve their own quality of life but also to contribute to the well-being of other older adults in the community.

Although conversations varied, the focus groups guided the way, and three themes emerged consistently across all discussions:

1. neighborhood safety and security
2. affordable healthcare and insurance access
3. financial support and senior services.

Participants expressed concerns about crime, neighborhood maintenance, and public safety, and a desire for stronger police presence and faster response times. Discussions regarding healthcare focused on affordability, access to specialists, transportation to medical appointments, and navigating insurance and

benefits systems. Financial concerns included the affordability of housing, utilities, food, and other basic necessities, as well as the need for increased awareness of available resources and services.

Importantly, many of these discussions naturally returned to the value of social connection. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of having opportunities to gather, build relationships, and remain involved in community life. Requests for additional recreation centers, senior clubs, educational opportunities, and daytime activities were often framed not only as services but as mechanisms for reducing isolation and strengthening community bonds. In many ways, the focus groups demonstrated that one of the community's greatest assets is the older adults themselves—individuals who remain eager to support one another, share knowledge, and work collectively toward creating a more age-friendly Passaic County.

The findings presented throughout this assessment highlight both the strengths and the challenges experienced by older adults in Paterson and Passaic County. While participants demonstrated remarkable resilience, strong community connections, and a desire to remain independent, they also identified clear opportunities to improve the systems, services, and environments that support healthy aging. Taken together, these insights provide a roadmap for meaningful action.

The following section outlines a series of recommended strategies and priorities developed from the survey findings, focus group discussions, community partner expertise, and existing age-friendly best practices. These recommendations are intended to serve as a foundation for ongoing collaboration, advocacy, and investment, helping to create a community where all residents have the opportunity to age safely, independently, and with dignity.



Action Plan

Priority 1: Financial Stability, Economic Security, and Benefits Access

Financial insecurity emerged as the most significant concern among survey respondents. While maintaining independence was identified as a top priority, many participants expressed concern about their ability to afford the costs associated with aging in place. Rising housing costs, grocery pricing, and healthcare expenses seem to outpace minimum wage and cost-of-living increases, especially for fixed-income households. As the older adult population continues to grow, ensuring economic security must remain a central component of age-friendly planning. Access to benefits and resources can mean the difference between aging successfully in the community and experiencing housing instability, poor health outcomes, or social isolation.

Recommended Actions:

- Update and regularly maintain a comprehensive Passaic County Senior Resource Guide to ensure information remains current and accessible.
- Expand outreach and enrollment efforts for SNAP, LIHEAP, Medicare Savings Programs, PAAD, Senior Gold, property tax relief programs, and other benefits.
- Develop a coordinated benefits-navigation network among healthcare providers, community organizations, senior centers, and municipal agencies.
- Increase one-on-one application assistance for older adults who face barriers related to technology, language, literacy, mobility, or documentation requirements.
- Explore opportunities for financial literacy and retirement planning workshops targeted toward older adults and caregivers.
- Strengthen partnerships between social service organizations and healthcare providers to identify and address economic hardships before they become crises.

Future Advocacy Opportunities:

- Advocate for increased state and federal investment in programs that support older adults living on fixed incomes.
- Support efforts to simplify application and recertification processes for public benefits.
- Advocate for expanded eligibility thresholds that better reflect the true cost of living in New Jersey.
- Promote policies that address food insecurity, utility affordability, and property tax burdens among older adults.
- Encourage the development of countywide aging policy initiatives that elevate the voices and experiences of older residents.

Priority 2: Housing Stability and Aging in Place

Older adults overwhelmingly prefer to remain in their homes and communities as they age. However, housing affordability, accessibility, maintenance costs, and limited availability of age-appropriate housing threaten many residents' ability to age in place successfully. Survey findings, focus group discussions, and

statewide demographic trends indicate that housing will become an increasingly urgent issue as Passaic County's older adult population continues to grow.

Recommended Actions

- Create a centralized directory of age-restricted and senior housing opportunities throughout Passaic County.
- Establish housing navigation services to help older adults understand available housing options and complete application processes.
- Expand awareness of home modification programs that support accessibility improvements.
- Develop volunteer and community-based programs that assist with minor home maintenance and safety improvements.
- Explore innovative housing models, including shared housing and roommate matching opportunities for older adults.
- Strengthen partnerships between housing providers, municipalities, and service organizations.

Future Advocacy Opportunities:

- Advocate for increased development of affordable and accessible senior housing.
- Support legislation and funding opportunities that promote aging in place and home modifications.
- Encourage local planning and zoning initiatives that incorporate age-friendly housing principles.
- Promote state-level investments in programs that help older adults remain safely in their homes and avoid premature institutionalization.

Priority 3: Health, Wellness, and Caregiver Supports

Health concerns ranked among the top issues identified by survey respondents. As the population ages, demand for healthcare services, behavioral health support, home-based care, and caregiving resources will continue to increase.

Recommended Actions:

- Expand community-based wellness and prevention programs.
- Improve healthcare navigation services and insurance counseling.
- Increase awareness of caregiver support resources.
- Strengthen referral pathways between healthcare providers and community organizations.

Future Advocacy Opportunities:

- Advocate for workforce development initiatives that strengthen the pipeline of nurses, home health aides, direct support professionals, and geriatric specialists.
- Support policies that improve caregiver support and respite services.
- Promote sustainable funding for community-based health programs.

Priority 4: Social Connection, Safety, and Community Engagement

Aging well requires more than access to healthcare and housing. Strong social networks, meaningful engagement, and a sense of belonging are critical to physical and emotional well-being.

Many participants expressed concerns related to safety, isolation, and limited community support. Addressing these concerns can improve quality of life while strengthening independence.

Recommended Actions:

- Expand opportunities for social engagement through senior centers, libraries, faith communities, and community organizations.
- Develop peer ambassador and neighborhood outreach programs.
- Increase transportation options that support participation in social and civic activities.
- Promote intergenerational programming and volunteer opportunities.

Future Advocacy Opportunities

- Advocate for age-friendly transportation investments.
- Promote public safety initiatives designed with older adults in mind.
- Support the implementation of social prescribing models that connect healthcare providers with community-based activities and services through dedicated community link workers.

Priority 5: Age-Friendly Leadership, Awareness, and Advocacy

Creating an age-friendly community requires ongoing leadership, coordination, and public awareness. While many resources already exist, participants frequently reported difficulty locating, understanding, or accessing available services. Building a culture that values aging requires sustained advocacy efforts and cross-sector collaboration. When considering the primary methods respondents learn about resources, it is important to consider sharing the same information over many different platforms including Social media (#1 way older adults reported receiving information with 44% of individuals citing this as their primary source of receiving information), sharing the information with thought leaders and advocates in the community for word of mouth information spreading (2nd highest with 39% of older adults citing this as their primary source of information learning) finally, from trusted sources such as community agencies (ranked third at 35% of respondents selecting this as their primary means of information gathering).

Respondents report learning about resources from a variety of platforms, so it is imperative that community partners share the information over many different platforms, including:

- Post on social media: the #1 way older adult survey participants (44%) reported receiving information
- Share with thought leaders and advocates in the community for informal networks: 39% of older adults cited word of mouth as their primary source of information
- Provide to trusted sources, such as community agencies: 35% of respondents selected this as their primary means of gathering information.

Recommended Actions:

- Establish an Age-Friendly Community Coalition to oversee the implementation of this Action Plan.
- Develop an Age-Friendly Ambassador Program that empowers older adults to serve as community advocates and trusted messengers.
- Conduct regular community assessments to monitor progress and identify emerging needs.
- Create a countywide asset map highlighting services, programs, and opportunities available to older adults.
- Launch public awareness campaigns focused on aging in place, resource navigation, and healthy aging.

Future Advocacy Opportunities

- Advocate for age-friendly considerations in municipal, county, and state planning efforts.
- Encourage representation of older adults on advisory boards, planning committees, and decision-making bodies.
- Promote policies that incorporate aging considerations into transportation, housing, healthcare, emergency preparedness, and economic development planning.
- Support the development of a long-term Passaic County Age-Friendly Strategy that aligns local priorities with state and national aging initiatives.

Conclusion/Limitations

This assessment was designed to better understand what older adults and aging residents of Paterson and Passaic County need to successfully age in place and thrive within their communities. Through surveys, focus groups, and extensive collaboration among community organizations, academic institutions, healthcare leaders, and government agencies, several clear themes emerged. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining independence while expressing concerns related to financial stability, healthcare access, housing affordability, neighborhood safety, and social connectedness. At the same time, the assessment revealed significant community strengths, including resilience, adaptability, and a strong desire among older adults to remain engaged with and supportive of one another.

As with any community assessment, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, while considerable effort was made to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds and communities throughout Passaic County, the sample represents only a portion of the county's aging population. The findings should therefore be viewed as reflecting the experiences and perspectives of participants rather than as a statistically representative analysis of all older adults in Passaic County. Additional research with larger sample sizes and more targeted demographic outreach would help validate and expand upon these findings.

Second, the assessment relied heavily on self-reported perceptions and experiences. While these perspectives are critically important for understanding community needs, they may not always align with objective measures or external data. This dynamic was particularly evident in discussions surrounding neighborhood safety. Although 76% of survey respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods, safety simultaneously emerged as one of the most frequently cited concerns related to aging independently and was discussed extensively in all focus groups.

This apparent contradiction may reflect several well-documented psychological and social phenomena. Individuals often adapt to their surroundings over time and may normalize conditions that outsiders would perceive differently. Researchers have described concepts such as normalcy bias, defensive denial, and system justification, which can influence how individuals perceive and report risks within environments they know well. Long-term residents may develop coping strategies, become familiar with neighborhood dynamics, and form strong emotional attachments to their communities that shape how they assess safety. As a result, perceptions of safety and concerns about safety can coexist and should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. While this assessment was not designed as a scientific analysis of these psychological factors, the findings suggest that future research exploring the relationship between perceived and objective safety may provide valuable insights.

Additional opportunities for future study also emerged through the assessment process. For example, while social media was identified as the most common source of information among respondents aged 55 and older, the survey did not distinguish between specific platforms. Understanding whether residents primarily rely on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, neighborhood groups, or other channels would help organizations tailor outreach and communication efforts more effectively. Similarly, future assessments may benefit from deeper exploration of housing needs, caregiving responsibilities, transportation barriers, and the experiences of specific subpopulations within the older adult community.

Despite these limitations, the assessment provides a meaningful snapshot of the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of aging residents in Paterson and Passaic County. Perhaps most importantly, it highlights not only areas of need but also the strengths that already exist within the community. Focus group participants demonstrated a remarkable willingness to connect with one another, share experiences, exchange resources, and collectively envision solutions to community challenges. Their resilience, optimism, and commitment to supporting their peers represent important assets upon which future age-friendly efforts can build.

This report should be viewed as the beginning of an ongoing process rather than a final destination. The findings and recommendations outlined in this Action Plan provide a framework for future collaboration among residents, community organizations, healthcare providers, educational institutions, municipalities, and county leaders. Moving forward, implementation efforts should align with broader state and national aging initiatives, including New Jersey's State Plan on Aging and other age-friendly community frameworks, ensuring that local priorities contribute to larger efforts to improve the quality of life for older adults across the state.

Ultimately, creating an age-friendly community requires sustained partnership, continued listening, and a commitment to adapting as community needs evolve. By building on the insights gathered through this assessment and maintaining a focus on both challenges and strengths, Paterson and Passaic County are well-positioned to create environments where residents can age safely, independently, and with dignity for generations to come.

References

1. American Association of Retired Persons. Age-Friendly Community Survey. https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/aarp-community-survey-questionnaire.html
2. New Jersey Division of Disability Services. (2026). *New Jersey Resources.* NJ Department of Human Services. https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dds/resources/
3. New Jersey Department of Human Services. (2024). *Age-Friendly Blueprint.* NJ Department of Human Services. https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/news/reports/AF%20Blueprint_v5.pdf
4. Krueger, R.A. (2002). *Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews*. University of Minnesota. https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf
5. Orange County Department on Aging. (n.d.) *Master Aging Plan Focus Group Guide.* Orange County Department on Aging. https://www.orangecountync.gov/DocumentCenter/View/354/Focus-Group-Discussion-Guide-and-Implementation-Plan-PDF
6. NeighborhoodScout. (n.d.). *Paterson, NJ Crime Rates and Statistics.* NeighborhoodScout. https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/nj/paterson/crime