

# THE *LIVABILITY INDEX* PROJECT

**AARP Public Policy Institute**

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The AARP Public Policy Institute is developing a web-based tool, the **Livability Index** that will incorporate mapping technology, preference survey results, quantitative measures and public policies to assess the livability of communities. The tool will use nationally available data to measure several essential attributes of livability, engage stakeholders, and draw attention to livability issues specific to the wants and needs of older adults.

## **What will the Livability Index do?**

The livability index will help users better understand their communities and make decisions about their future needs. The index can potentially be used in several ways. Here are a few examples:

- A county executive wants to know how to meet the housing needs of older adults. She can see how her community performs for each of the housing metrics relative to the national average and learn about policy and programmatic interventions that could address areas of concern.
- The director of a non-profit organization wants to show the need for transportation services in the community. He can view data on transit service available to various neighborhoods in the community and connect to resources explaining how transit is typically funded.
- A community advocate wants to make the streets safer for those who cannot afford to drive and those who can no longer drive. She can view crash statistics and speed limits for streets in the community and link to best practices being adopted in other communities.

## **What are the Livability Index's Goal and Objectives?**

The Livability Index will be a tool to help inform policy development, new initiatives, and community stakeholder participation with the primary goal of improving the quality of life for community residents. The index will provide context and information to help:

- Stimulate local changes in policy, planning, and investment
- Stimulate state level policy, planning, and investment
- Brief local policy makers on key policies, investments and other community elements that will make communities more livable
- Inform residents about elements of livable communities, allow them to make informed choices and stimulate their participation in community change

## How will the Livability Index Work?

The Livability Index will be comprised of three primary structural components. Each component will be integrated into a geographic information systems platform and will be central to calculating livability scores.

- Individual Preferences: What do people want?
- Objective Indicators: What does this community actually look like?
- Policy Interventions: What action is planned to improve this place over the long-term?

The index will be a unique tool: the first to incorporate the preferences of people age 50 and older and include policies supported by AARP to improve the livability of communities. The tool will provide livability scores for individual communities across the nation.

Users will enter an address, street name, city, or county to get a livability score for that locality. Scores for each community will reflect the perspectives of individuals living in that community, community features and attributes, policy interventions, and expert analysis.

## What community attributes will be evaluated by the Livability Index?

A community's numerical Livability score will be based on measures in certain categories, also called domains, to determine the location's degree of livability. Working domains include:

- Housing
- Environment
- Neighborhood
- Transportation
- Health
- Civic & Social Engagement
- Economic Opportunity

## Who will use the Livability Index?

The livability index tool's basic concept and function should appeal not only to a broad audience, but also provide critical data for key groups:

- *Community Decision-Makers* (public officials, policymakers and policy influencers)
- *Community Stakeholders* (associations, local institutions)
- *AARP volunteers and staff*
- *Research Community* (research centers, think tanks)
- *General Public*

## When will the Livability Index be available?

The AARP Public Policy Institute anticipates it will complete the Index and make it available to the public in the spring of 2015.