Woodstock has been named an Age-Friendly Livable Community through AARP/WHO, similar to Arlington Heights, a much larger community whose CMAP application was approved last year.

The program's rationale: Every day for the next 10 years, 10,000 people in the US turn age 65. The On To 2050 summary shows area Seniors age 85+ more than double by 2050! Ensuring safety, security and quality of life for this exploding demographic is the goal of Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative, with Woodstock participating. Resources and ideas are shared to raise community awareness and garner funding support for essential changes to Elderly-focused municipal programming, services and infrastructure.

The Age-Friendly program allows 2 years for Senior community assessment in 8 livability domains. MMC's Collaborative narrowed these to 5: Housing, Transportation, Human Services & Health, Community Engagement & Programming, and Safety. A study of Woodstock's Senior needs, with insights into these areas, would help develop the required Action Plan; communities then have 3 years to implement resulting ideas and claim the Age-Friendly Community title ongoing.

This project addresses On To 2050's goals:

1) Inclusive Growth: equity needs of a diverse city like Chicago are obvious, as reflected in CMAP/RTA materials and Symposium discussions. Small rural communities like Woodstock have less intense ethnicity equity concerns, although Woodstock does reflect a Hispanic community of almost 30% and a free/reduced lunch student population of 50%. However, our equity concerns are most definitely being felt by the Senior population, as much of the community was designed for the ex-urban family dynamic so prevalent decades ago. With its charming downtown Square and renowned entertainment options, this lively, walkable, METRA-serviced, CMAP-identified- Disinvested community could easily become a regional retirement destination.

2) Resilience: this relates to the compromised health services felt by this community. Services at our local hospital, supported over 100 years, were decimated by failed Centegra management and taken over by Northwestern Medicine. Only ER services remain with no in-patient or surgical beds. Dramatic negative impact on our residents results, and on Woodstock Fire/Rescue's staffing and equipment, as days are spent traversing 2-lane roads a half hour both ways to McHenry or Huntley. The need for Health Services assistance is clear; Housing and Transportation improvements would further aid the community's resilience to serve our aging population.

3) Prioritized Investment: given the above strong healthcare need, a focus should be supporting health service innovation. A public/private partnership proposal between the City and a start-up mobile health EMT group is being discussed that could offer in-home diagnostics and treatment using newly available teledoc services. Assistance with market feasibility for this concept could result in development of a best practices model of great benefit to our residents with potential to share widely with other communities.

Woodstock would benefit greatly from CMAP's assistance with Senior demographic analysis and funding resources. The Age-Friendly program brings together government, social services, funders and residents in proactive, collaborative, non-partisan ways for the betterment of families of every type. Public service doesn't get much better.