FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 20, 2026

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Illinois Earns a New Distinction: A Great Place to Age

AARP Illinois, Illinois Department on Aging and EngAging Illinois launch ongoing conversations about what people need to live and age well in this state

CHICAGO, Ill. – AARP Illinois today announced that Illinois has been designated an **Age-Friendly State**, recognizing the state's long-term commitment to helping people age with dignity, independence and purpose.

As only the 16th state to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, Illinois joins a select group of states committed to helping people live and age well. The designation connects state leaders with expertise and best practices to make communities more livable for all ages.

"Being named an Age-Friendly state is something Illinois should be proud of, but it's also about what comes next," said Philippe Largent, AARP Illinois State Director. "We want to start a movement across the state to encourage everyone to do their part to build an Illinois where people of every generation can thrive."

The designation connects Illinois to a national and global movement dedicated to improving housing, transportation, health, social connection, economic security, accessibility, and opportunities for civic engagement, while fostering continuous improvement and accountability.

It is designed to accelerate the Age-Friendly movement throughout Illinois by helping more cities and counties join the network and expand the benefits of age-friendly planning and innovation to residents in every corner of the state.

The designation comes alongside another significant milestone: the creation of **EngAging Illinois: A Comprehensive Plan for Living Well**, the state's first comprehensive, multi-sector plan for aging. Developed by **the Illinois Department on Aging** with public and private

partners, the plan focuses on making communities more livable and connected, improving health, supporting caregivers and making aging more affordable.

EngAging Illinois provides a long-term blueprint for ensuring Illinois communities are great places to grow up and grow older, while recognizing the important contributions older adults make to communities across the state.

Our multi-sector plan for aging, **said Mary Killough, Director, Illinois Department on Aging**, "is a dynamic, 10-year initiative that will help all of us — no matter where we live, how much we earn, what we look like, what we believe, or our abilities — to live well and to age with a sense of security and possibility. More than 20 state agencies and scores of nonprofit organizations and businesses are already hard at work creating an age-friendly future for communities, families and older adults around the state.

This AARP Age-Friendly designation is an early and important recognition of the exciting work that EngAging Illinois is already generating across Illinois," **said Michelle Hoersch, Chief Planning Officer, EngAging Illinois**. From health care to housing, from caregiving to affordability, the Plan is helping all of us rethink what it means to age in Illinois, recognizing the important value of older adults' lifelong experiences, insights and contributions and catalyze improvements that benefit communities and people of all ages.

"EngAging Illinois is doing just that," **said Mary O'Donnell, President & CEO of RRF Foundation for Aging**. "We are engaging leaders from throughout the public, private, and philanthropic sectors. All of us need to step up and support new and innovative ways to both provide needed aging services and also inspire an invigorated sense of joy and purpose among the growing number of older people living longer in Illinois."

Taking the Conversation Across Illinois

To celebrate the designation and keep the conversation going, AARP Illinois is launching programming on **WVON and WGN Radio** featuring notable Illinois residents talking about **why they like getting older here**, along with community leaders working on specific efforts to make Illinois communities more livable for older adults.

The conversations will highlight what Illinois is getting right, while also exploring where there is more work to do. Topics will include housing, transportation, health, caregiving, affordability and social connection, as well as ideas and solutions emerging through EngAging Illinois.

Together, the Age-Friendly State designation and EngAging Illinois mark an important step toward making Illinois a place where people can live well, stay connected and continue contributing at every age.

AARP Illinois has 1.7 million members statewide and advocates for all Illinoisans 50-plus and their families, working to strengthen communities and help people choose how they live as they age.