One in Four: With Virginia aging population expected to double, Charlottesville Area Alliance, local governments, take action.

Take a look at this recent report from UVA’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. The number of seniors in Virginia is expected to double (yes, double) by 2030, and by then one in five Virginians will be over 65, much of that growth in our rural areas. By 2024, one in four people in the Greater Charlottesville area will be 65 or older. One in four!

Fortunately, a local aging alliance is leading the way, and our local governments are stepping up.

Under leadership by the Charlottesville Area Alliance (CAA), a collective of regional partners whose objective is to lead the advancement of an age-friendly community, Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville have been accepted into the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, an affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program. An age-friendly community is one that is organized to help all live safely, enjoy good health, and stay involved.

“The Board of Supervisors has adopted a strategic objective to establish and implement an approach to consider intergenerational community needs as part of
County planning in its FY17-19 Strategic Plan,” said Interim County Executive, Doug Walker. “Albemarle County’s acceptance into the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities demonstrates our commitment to actively work towards making Albemarle County a great place to live for people of all ages.”

Maurice Jones, City Manager, said “The City of Charlottesville is pleased and excited to be a member of the AARP and WHO Age-Friendly Cities Network. This allows us an opportunity to assess our strengths and make sure that our region supports our seniors in a vibrant and inclusive community.”

By 2024, one in four people in the Greater Charlottesville area will be 65 or older. Planning for the needs of our growing aging population coincides with the needs of all residents in our community. The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities encourages states, cities, towns and counties to prepare for the rapid aging of the U.S. population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic, and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.

Membership in the Network of Age-Friendly Communities does not necessarily mean that Greater Charlottesville area is currently age-friendly or a great place to retire. Rather, membership provides access to resources to help create a plan to becoming age-friendly. It is the first step in demonstrating our commitment to understanding how we
can become age-friendly. Peter Thompson, chair of the Charlottesville Area Alliance and Executive Director of the Senior Center, stated “Albemarle and Charlottesville’s commitment to entering the age-friendly network is considered a landmark day for our community. The framework will drive the Charlottesville Area Alliance’s work with local government, business, non-profits, and citizens for generations to come.”

Age-friendly or livable communities have features such as walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities. Investing in these types of features helps position our community to be better equipped to attract and retain people of all ages. Supporting connections that promote healthy relationships, inclusion and respect will help the entire community.

About the CAA
The CAA is a collective of regional partners whose objective is to lead the advancement of an age-friendly community, being mindful of the unique needs of this region and taking action when needed through education, advocacy, engagement, planning, and evaluation. The CAA aims to develop a common understanding of the needs and issues; to develop policy recommendations; and to encourage implementation by government, non-profit organizations, the general public, and businesses.