# A Blueprint for Action:

## Developing a Livable Community for All Ages

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*Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.*

Partners for Livable Communities

MetLife Foundation

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# Introduction

## Building Livable Communities for All Ages

Americans are enjoying longer and healthier lives. Today, there are more than 35 million Americans age 65 or above—a tenfold increase in the 65 and over population since 1900. Over the next 25 years, that number will double, and one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older.[i] Tremendous advances in health care, economic security, and the delivery of supportive services have profoundly altered the experience of aging for the better.

These dramatic improvements for older Americans and their communities have created both new challenges and new opportunities. Older Americans are generally healthier, wealthier, and better educated than their age cohorts of previous generations. Communities that can capitalize on the diverse assets of older adults may find ways to stabilize the costs of governing and providing services, create new opportunities for economic growth, and provide a better quality of life for residents of all ages. At the same time, the aging of the population will call for continued innovations in areas traditionally associated with aging, such as health care and supportive services.

The purpose of this guide is to provide local leaders with tools to build the collaborations needed to create livable communities for people of all ages. Every area of local government has a role to play in this effort. Each day, decisions affecting residents' ability to age successfully in their communities are made by housing officials, transportation planners, planning and zoning specialists, parks and recreation officials, and economic development leaders. Early recognition of the impact that an aging population has on a community will enable these diverse departments to hone their planning and identify new opportunities. Creating livable communities for all ages calls for partnerships across agencies and among different sectors within communities.

The guide can be used as a quick-reference kit for practitioners looking for tools, resources, and best practices. It includes information based on community experiences in building local leadership and solving specific challenges relating to aging. Appendix A offers a topic-specific list of studies, articles, and leading organizations. The resources at the end of the guide can be used to find the information most immediately relevant to your community's priorities and challenges.

## Today's residents = Tomorrow's older residents

The vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age. Contrary to popular belief, only a small minority actually move to warmer climates upon retirement. Fewer than 5 percent of the 65 and over population reside in nursing homes.[ii] Instead, most Americans choose to age in place, within the same communities where they have long lived. Every community, from fast-growing suburbs to more stable rural areas, will have to adapt to a maturing population.

## When residents can age in place, everybody benefits

Although most residents want to age in place, they confront many barriers to remaining active and engaged in their communities. The following are some of the most common barriers:

- A lack of affordable and appropriate housing options
- Few opportunities for walking, bicycling, or other forms of physical activity, making it more difficult to remain healthy and engaged
- Inadequate mobility options
- Limited information about available health and supportive services in their community
- Concerns about the safety and security of the community
- Limited opportunities for meaningful, challenging volunteer service

Most obstacles to aging independently in one's community spring from a host of factors that cut across traditional disciplines and agency responsibilities. Community design that makes it difficult to walk and bicycle, for example, may factor into an older adult's increased isolation, which in turn may lead to worsening health. A lack of affordable housing options may force an individual into institutionalized care, adding to unnecessarily high health care costs.

These challenges to aging in place are community-wide concerns that affect residents of all ages and abilities. Consider the following two examples:

- Rigidly separated land uses can place businesses and services far from residential areas, making it difficult for many older adults to participate in social or recreational activities, unless they have someone else to drive them back and forth
- Affordable housing options for older adults, such as adding accessory units for a parent or elderly relative, can help keep families together and perhaps even enable grandparents to provide help with child care for younger families

Many of the strategies that benefit older adults can also benefit many others in the community. Local leaders often can advance aging in place priorities simply by adding a perspective on aging to plans, programs, and policies that are existing or under development.

## Thinking outside the box

Many communities have already begun to build the cross-cutting partnerships needed to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that come with a maturing population. Local government leaders and officials are acting as catalysts for interagency collaborations and community partnerships. Consider these examples.

- In the largely suburban metropolitan Atlanta region, the Council of Governments spurred the formation of a private-public partnership focused on aging. Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Aging Atlanta initiative has created a collaboration of 50 government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses, and has formed partnerships between community planners and aging services officials. Five Atlanta jurisdictions have enacted or are considering senior-friendly housing ordinances, and a transportation voucher program has increased travel choices for older residents.

- In the City of Milwaukee, the local housing authority collaborated with an array of community institutions to create Lapham Park Venture, a nationally recognized model of affordable continuing care for low-income older residents. The residents of Lapham Park Venture enjoy better health and more fulfilling lives, and play important roles in their community; the city has saved millions of dollars in health care costs.
- In the largely rural Central Virginia area, the Area Agency on Aging has formed a broad coalition of planners, health care advocates, housing developers, academic leaders, and other stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive plan on aging. A number of critical partnerships and actions have flowed out of this community-wide planning process, including the establishment of a legal advocacy clinic for low-income older adults and the completion of an innovative senior housing project.

Communities of all shapes and sizes—big cities and counties, medium-size cities, small towns, rural townships, rural counties, suburban bedroom communities, and edge cities—are implementing creative solutions to meet the challenges of a maturing America. Local leaders can and do play many different roles, including the following:

- Convening stakeholders from diverse fields and encouraging collaboration
- Identifying opportunities to integrate aging in place issues with existing plans, programs, and initiatives
- Empowering staff to support and adopt innovative strategies to advance aging in place
- Identifying sustainable funding streams from private and public sources to support community-wide collaborations
- Encouraging public support for creative new approaches that will enable the community to remain livable for all residents
- Providing a forum for older adults to share their concerns, needs, and talents

# Chapter 1

## About this guide

This guide offers tools to prepare for the needs of a maturing America. It draws on the most innovative and effective practices of communities throughout the country.

Specifically, you will find the following:

- An analysis of the **Key Challenges**, such as health and social service delivery, housing, land-use planning, and public safety
- A toolbox of **Action Steps** to address these key challenges
- A **Six-step Strategy** to build the partnerships needed to create livable communities for all ages
- Brief descriptions of **Leading Innovations** in communities throughout the country
- A list of **Resources**, including subject-specific expertise, valuable organizations, and leading practitioners
- A **Checklist** of essential features of an aging-friendly community that will help you assess your community's readiness for an aging population—and enable you to set priorities for improvements

## How to find what you're looking for

This guide is for local leaders who are interested in (or already are) actively working to create an aging-friendly community. Many different approaches are possible, from targeted interventions to broader initiatives that can address a wide range of issues simultaneously.

Readers most interested in learning about particular issues may wish to turn first to **Chapter 2**, "Key Challenges and Opportunities to Build Livable Communities for All Ages." This chapter focuses on common challenges and proven solutions in specific areas, such as housing, land use planning, supportive services, and transportation.

Readers looking for a broader overview of aging in place and community leadership may find particular value in **Chapter 3**, which offers a six-step strategy to build community partnerships. This chapter delineates key elements of a strategy to channel community energies into planning and implementing systemic change.

How to Use Icons:

Fact

Best Practice

Strategy

# Chapter 2

## Key Challenges and Action Steps to Build A Livable Community for All Ages

There are many factors that contribute to making a community livable for all ages. Older residents consistently cite several key components, such as affordable housing, a strong network of health and supportive services, low crime, good transportation access, and opportunities for civic engagement. These components of livability are literally built—or not built—into the places where people live. Where and how housing, stores, and health facilities are built affect residents' ability to access needed services and to remain engaged in their communities.

Focusing on these areas of housing, transportation, health and supportive services, public safety, civic engagement, and land use planning, this chapter describes common challenges faced by communities—and suggests specific ways that communities can act.

Table 1: Summary of Key Challenges and Action Steps

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Housing | • Affordable housing options are limited | • Institute property tax relief programs for older homeowners |
| | • Home and building design is tailored to a narrow range of physical abilities | • Institute home modification and repair programs<br>• Encourage universal design and visitability in new housing construction |
| | • Housing and services are not coordinated | • Build partnerships between housing and service providers |
| Planning & Zoning | • New community design that supports aging in place lacks broad public support | • Engage older adults in the planning process |
| | • Zoning regulations discourage a broad range of age-appropriate housing options | • Incorporate accessory dwelling units and senior-friendly housing in the zoning code |
| Transportation | • Road design makes walking difficult | • Use walkability audits to identify and prioritize pedestrian improvements |
| | • Many older drivers experience specific difficulties related to the driving environment | • Improve roadway design and signage<br>• Provide safety programs and refresher courses for older drivers |
| | • Customer-oriented community transportation options are lacking for older adults | • Make transit services more flexible and customer responsive<br>• Support volunteer driver programs |
| Health & Supportive Services | • Community information about available services is dispersed across agencies and providers | • Create a single point of entry for information about local services |
| | • Home-based services are often provided piece-meal rather than in a coordinated manner | • Integrate home-based services |
| | • Poor diets and physical inactivity increase health risks for many older adults | • Support farmers' markets<br>• Develop exercise and active living programs tailored to older adults' preferences<br>• Provide vaccinations and preventive screenings |
| | • Lack of transportation to hospitals and doctors' offices affects access to health care | • Improve access to medical transportation |
| Cultures & Lifelong Learning | • Relatively few community-based arts, culture, and enrichment programs target older adults | • Provide a robust range of programs to enable older adults to contribute to the cultural life of the community |
| | • Arts and culture programs often neither appeal to nor engage the talents of the increasingly diverse older adult population | • Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning around arts and cultural production |
| | • Older adults frequently do not have opportunities to stay up-to-date with advances in technology | • Increase technology training opportunities for older adults |
| Public Safety | • Older adults commonly voice concern about the safety of their neighborhoods | • Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs<br>• Create mail carrier alert programs |
| | • Elder abuse is an increasingly recognized problem | • Train law enforcement officials to detect and report elder abuse |
| Civic Engagement Opportunities | • Older adults are looking for a broader array of civic engagement options than most communi-ties currently provide | • Support intergenerational learning programs<br>• Start Senior Academies<br>• Establish Asset Mapping |

# Housing

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Housing | • Affordable housing options are limited | • Institute property tax relief programs for older homeowners |
| | • Home and building design is tailored to a narrow range of physical abilities | • Institute home modification and repair programs<br>• Encourage universal design and visitability in new housing construction |
| | • Housing and services are not coordinated | • Build partnerships between housing and service providers |

The needs and expectations for housing change with age. Housing options in our communities should reflect these evolving needs and expectations. A livable community provides a range of housing types at various levels of affordability. This range should include supportive housing arrangements, such as assisted living, that are affordable for people of low and moderate incomes. Most communities, however, face major economic and political challenges to providing a diverse array of housing stock, including apartments, homesharing options, and compact housing.

Enabling residents to age successfully in their homes and communities is critical to a community's ability to retain its tax base and preserve neighborhood stability. Homeownership rates among adults age 65 and above, at more than 80 percent, are higher than the national average.[iii] By the same token, housing options for a community's oldest and frailest residents are equally important in providing less expensive alternatives to institutionalized care.

One in every four renters age 50 and above pays 50 percent or more of their annual income on rent.

Source: AARP, *Beyond 50.05: A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging* (2005), 59.

**Strategy**

### Local Flexibility

Adding flexibility to local zoning codes is a critical step toward increasing the supply of affordable and age-appropriate housing. Many older adults would find it easier to age in their communities if housing choices such as accessory dwelling units and shared housing were more readily available. See section on Planning and Zoning for action steps to increase zoning flexibility.

## Challenge

### Affordable housing options are limited

Residents in many communities have limited housing options. In fast-growing communities, rapidly rising real estate values can displace low- and moderate-income residents, who are often older adults. Older renters tend to pay a disproportionate share of their income on housing, forcing them to cut back on other basic necessities such as medicine and food.

Housing choices are also limited because of zoning restrictions. Suburban land use regulations tend to result in homogeneous housing stock. Detached single-family homes on large lots that can be attractive to families with children may turn into a burden for older homeowners whose children are grown. Many people would like to have the option of living in more compact homes or apartments that are easier to maintain and may be within walking distance of shops and services.

## Action Step

### Institute property tax relief programs for older homeowners

Numerous tools are available to state and local governments to reduce the property tax burden on older homeowners, especially those with moderate or low incomes. These tools include the following:

- **Senior homestead exemptions:** Property tax exemptions free homeowners who fit certain criteria from having to pay some or all of their property taxes. For example, some local governments exempt all or part of the assessed value of older adult homeowners' property from school taxes.
- **Limiting assessed values:** Local governments can limit or freeze increases in property assessment values, protecting homeowners in areas with rapidly escalating real estate values. The assessed value of properties increases only when the property ownership changes, there is an addition or renovation of the property, or if a previous assessment was incorrect.
- **Property tax assistance:** Instead of changing the tax code, localities can develop tax assistance programs to provide grants to assist low-income households who cannot pay property taxes.[iv]

As with any tax issue, these tools require a careful balancing of costs and benefits. Any tool should be chosen based on a careful analysis of the community's demographics. Potential beneficiaries need to be educated about available relief programs and to be offered assistance in completing applications.

### New London uses a mix of tools

New London, Connecticut, a city of 26,000 residents, provides a range of financial and technical assistance to homeowners and renters. The city offers a property tax credit for low- and moderate-income residents age 65 and above, ranging from 10 to 50 percent (proportionate to income). The city also provides older adults with assistance completing tax forms and invites real estate professionals to educate homeowners about financing options such as reverse mortgages. New London also offers several rent-subsidized programs through designated elderly housing sites.

Source: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and MetLife Foundation, *The Maturing of America: Getting Communities on Track for an Aging Population* (2006), 12.

## Challenge

### Home and building design is tailored to a narrow range of physical abilities

Most homes have been designed for a particular group of individuals—adults raising families—and these home designs pose challenges for older adults and people with disabilities. Even for parents, steps to the home can be difficult to navigate when pushing a stroller.

The design of homes for a relatively narrow range of abilities poses inconveniences for some. For older adults and people with disabilities, the design can make the difference between aging in place and having to move to another setting.

Small modifications, such as grab bars and improved lighting, can make a big difference for many people. More fundamentally, getting home design right the first time, through features such as main-floor bathrooms and wider doorways, can greatly extend adults' ability to enjoy their homes for a lifetime.

## Action Step

### Institute home modification and repair programs

Home modifications are changes made to adapt living spaces to meet the needs of people with physical limitations so that they can continue to live independently and safely. Home modification and repair services are provided by a wide range of businesses and organizations, such as faith-based and community development groups. Most groups focus on low- and moderate-income homeowners regardless of age. Some also provide help to renters (landlords are required by federal law to allow modifications and repairs that are necessary for tenant safety and independence). Local governments can help identify funding for and help promote these services.

Some specific roles for local governments include the following:

- Expediting permitting processes so that residents can easily install modifications such as wheelchair ramps
- Funding home modification, repair, and weatherization services
- Providing home safety assessments
- Maintaining a database of qualified contractors, such as Certified Aging in Place Specialists (CAPS)
- Providing educational programs for homeowners and referrals to available services and qualified businesses
- Supporting volunteer programs, such as local Rebuilding Together affiliates

### A comprehensive approach to home modification

The nonprofit organization People Working Cooperatively (PWC) exemplifies a comprehensive home repair and modification program that helps homeowners, including older adults, with limited resources throughout a metropolitan region. Serving the Cincinnati area, including southwestern Ohio and northern Kentucky, PWC has grown since its inception in 1975 from 3 volunteers serving 43 homeowners to a staff of 75 and a volunteer corps of more than 4,000, serving thousands of homeowners each year.

PWC conducts comprehensive home assessments. As a result, homeowners can make better decisions about their home needs, and skilled craftspeople can perform the most important repairs and modifications as part of one job. Depending on the nature of the needed work and the income level of the client, modifications and repairs are provided on a grant basis or through zero-interest loans. PWC also provides weatherization services for homeowners and renters. An extensive volunteer program engages citizens in a variety of important activities, including skilled repair work, home and yard maintenance, and installation of modifications.

Sources: People Working Cooperatively, http://www.pwchomerepairs.org

- Encouraging greater communication between social workers, health workers, and aging services staff and housing officials so that homeowners in need of repairs and modifications can receive services (see "Housing, Action Step: Build partnerships between housing and service providers")

## Action Step

### Encourage universal design and visitability in new housing construction

Universal design is generally defined as including those features that enable people of all ages and abilities to enjoy a product. For housing, universal design features typically include elements such as lever faucets and door handles, roll-under sinks in kitchens and bathrooms, and wider doorways.

A home designed with visitability offers a more modest set of features for the main level of a detached home. These include at least one zero-step entrance and a bathroom and bedroom on the main level. The concept of visitability was pioneered by Concrete Change, a Georgia advocacy group that publicized the difficulties many people with disabilities face when socializing with their friends and neighbors because other homes are inaccessible.

These features are not difficult to build into new homes, and homes built with universal design features look much like other homes. Many residents (and their friends and family) do not recognize the importance of such features until they find themselves physically impaired in some way. Homebuilders respond to market demands and design according to building codes. Currently, demands and codes do not provide a strong incentive to include universal design features, despite the fact that they are much needed by residents of all ages and particularly by older residents, who are more likely to have a physical disability.

**Visitability standards in Atlanta housing**

Atlanta was the first U.S. city to enact a visitability ordinance, in 1992. The ordinance was championed by Concrete Change, a leading advocacy group for people with disabilities. It requires basic visitability features, such as a zero-step entrance, for any single-family home or duplex built with any type of subsidy from the city. Since then more than 600 visitable homes have been constructed in Atlanta.

Source: Concrete Change, www.concretechange.org

Local governments can play a critical role in building the market for needed changes in accessible home design. Many local governments have made visitability features requirements in publicly funded housing. State and local governments can also create financial incentives such as tax credits for accessibility features.

A successful local policy on accessible home design requires the following:

- Convening all stakeholders, such as aging advocates, disability advocates, and developers and homebuilders, to develop consensus about what a meaningful and realistic policy would look like
- Pursuing outreach to elected officials, planning commissioners, and constituents to build the political will needed to enact new standards
- Ensuring consistent code enforcement by officials who have received training and guidance about accessibility features

## Challenge

### Housing and services are not coordinated

Although many older Americans can live independently with the addition of minor modifications to their homes, many others will require supportive services to age in their homes and communities. Nearly 20 percent of older adults have significant long-term care needs. For most of this population, providing supportive housing is a less expensive alternative to institutionalized care.

The housing problems experienced by older residents are often interrelated with health concerns. Older adults often live in poorly maintained housing stock, which can increase their risk of injury and erode their mental health. Conversely, physical impairments can prevent adults from maintaining their homes and can increase the risk of fire and other hazards. As a result, there is a critical need to coordinate the provision of housing with the delivery of health and supportive services to older adults.

Traditionally, however, housing agencies and service providers have operated essentially in two parallel, separate universes. Consider the following examples:

- Funding streams for housing and service programs come from different federal and state sources
- Housing practitioners and service providers have their own unique vocabularies and methods of practice
- Public housing funding and zoning requirements often discourage or prohibit on-site services

## Action Step

### Build partnerships between housing and service providers

To coordinate housing and long-term services, the following actions are encouraged:

- Use local funding for housing, community development, and health and human services to encourage collaborative efforts between housing and community development organizations and service providers
- Start small: encourage dialogues, workshops, home modification partnerships, and other small-scale projects to build relationships
- Build alliances for more flexible state policies on the use of Medicaid waivers to fund supportive services in housing developments

### Milwaukee works together to provide continuing care

Lapham Park in Milwaukee is a public housing project with a high proportion of residents over 70 years of age. In 1993, a diverse group of private and public partners, including the city Housing Authority, Service Empowerment Transformation (S.E.T.) Ministry, the Lapham Park Residents Organization, and the county Department on Aging formed the Lapham Park Venture to develop a model of continuing care that would enable residents to age in the community.

The partners recognized that the separate provision of housing and supportive services was expensive and inefficient. S.E.T. Ministry conducted a series of focus groups with residents, which revealed that on-site medical care was one of the highest priorities. In response, the partners worked together to fund and build a clinic providing routine medical assistance as well as other services, including prescription refills, physical therapy, dental care, hospice care, and home health care.

The partnership created a pool of more than 20 providers and 200 specialists to whom residents are referred based on assessments by S.E.T. Ministry staff, a social worker, and a resident nurse. The partnership also secured Medicaid waivers from the state to serve the 43 residents in need of assisted living. As a result, the Venture has reduced Medicaid nursing home costs by an estimated $1 million a year.

Source: Michael Davidson, "Lapham Park Venture," *Planning Magazine* (April 2004), 18; Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee. http://www.hacm.org/programs/lapham_park_venture.htm

## Learn More

"*Accessibility and Visitability Features in Single-Family Homes*," by Andrew Kochera is a report from the AARP Public Policy Institute and provides comprehensive information about state and local visitability policy options. www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility/accessibility/aresearch-import-796-INB48.html

*Aging in Place: Coordinating Housing and Health Care Provision for America's Growing Elderly Population*, by Kathryn Lawler, provides an in-depth analysis of the interrelated housing–health care challenges and the regulatory obstacles that providers face. This study is a joint publication of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and the Harvard Joint Center on Housing Studies. www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/seniors/lawler_w01-13.pdf

*Aging in Place: A Toolkit for Local Governments*, by M. Scott Ball of the Atlanta-based Community Housing Resource Center, provides a good overview of the separation between health and housing programs and identifies policy tools that local governments and providers can use to bridge this divide. The document also summarizes a range of local tax relief tools targeted to older residents. This is a publication of the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Community Housing Resource Center. www.chrcatlanta.org/pub_pub.html

**The Center for Universal Design** is a national information, technical assistance, and research center on universal design. www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/

**The National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modifications** offers a directory of current home modification services throughout the United States as well as in-depth reports, surveys, and other information on home modification. www.homemods.org

**NeighborWorks**, a national organization specializing in housing and community development, provides information about housing rehabilitation, including financing issues. www.nw.org

**Rebuilding Together** is a national organization that preserves and revitalizes houses and communities through mobilizing volunteers to provide necessary repairs and modifications free of charge to existing homeowners. Formerly known as Christmas in April, Rebuilding Together has local affiliates throughout the country. www.rebuildingtogether.org

# Planning and Zoning

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Planning & Zoning | • New community design that supports aging in place lacks broad public support | • Engage older adults in the planning process |
| | • Zoning regulations discourage a broad range of age-appropriate housing options | • Incorporate accessory dwelling units and senior-friendly housing in the zoning code |

To age in place successfully, people need to have safe and easy access to services, amenities, and support networks (such as friends and family). These basic components of daily life should be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including children and youth, people with disabilities, and older adults. The following components should be available in a livable community:

- Residents can choose to live within walking distance (generally considered to be one-quarter mile) of basic amenities, such as health facilities, drug stores, supermarkets, and banks
- Land use plans and zoning codes enable and encourage housing in proximity to services and support the formation of intergenerational, mixed-income communities
- Community planning is a transparent, participatory process

Planning and designing communities for all residents need not be difficult. The physical characteristics of a livable community can be seen on any "Main Street," where some residences are close to stores and services and people can easily travel by car, on foot, or by bicycle, or where they can access convenient public transit. Most American suburbs, however, were built with automobile travel in mind. Most baby boomers have grown up and spent their adult lives in suburban areas. As they age, communities will need to adapt to their changing physical abilities and life circumstances.

## Challenge

### New community design that supports aging in place lacks broad public support

Making a community more livable for people of all ages often requires significant changes in land use patterns. Although most Americans would like to walk more, zoning codes in suburban communities tend to discourage walkable communities. Initiating changes in zoning and land use policies to create more livable communities requires significant local leadership and broad public buy-in.

All too often, citizens and neighborhood leaders are not engaged in land use planning processes unless a significant development proposal affects their neighborhood or district. Planning concepts tend to be expressed in highly technical terms, making constructive participation from citizens even more difficult. Enlisting civic energies to support needed land use changes requires a broader, more sustained public dialogue.

## Action Step

### Engage older adults in the planning process

Older citizens are often the most experienced and influential civic leaders, and they can help local governments and planners educate their fellow citizens about the need for more flexible land uses and zoning. If local citizens realize that future residents and beneficiaries could include their parents and grandparents, they may look more favorably on development proposals.

Local governments can educate citizens about the needs of a maturing population through the comprehensive planning process. In most states, local governments are required to develop and update plans for land use every 5 to 10 years. Governments can use this process as an opportunity to educate citizens about the changes facing their community and to help—and challenge—citizens to develop solutions.

In addition, local governments can empower citizens and neighborhood leaders to shape their community's future and plan for its needs by providing new tools for understanding the planning process. Visualization tools, such as detailed aerial maps and charrettes, have been successful in engaging citizens from a wide range of backgrounds—including older adults—to unite behind, rather than against, a vision for their community's future.

55 percent of Americans say they would prefer to walk more and drive less.

Source: Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, *Americans' Attitudes toward Walking* (2003), 2.

## Challenge

### Zoning regulations discourage a broad range of age-appropriate housing options

The physical form of communities, which greatly influences livability for older adults, is defined by zoning and other land development codes. Even if a community has a current vision statement or comprehensive plan that expresses a goal of walkable neighborhoods, housing choices, and vibrant downtowns, the existing codes may not have been updated to reflect this. In many cases, outdated codes may even make it impossible to achieve this kind of vision. Local governments need to look critically at the zoning and related regulations that classify land use and that regulate building setbacks, density, parking, and other urban design functions. Furthermore, zoning codes often present the following challenges:

- Restrict or exclude important housing options, such as accessory dwelling units, shared housing arrangements, apartments, and assisted living
- Require large minimum lot sizes, which can prevent the development of more affordable housing
- Prohibit the placement of services and housing in the same buildings

Although traditional nuclear families occupy only one in four households today, the zoning of most communities still favors the production of single-family housing. To adapt to the demographics of today—and, even more so, of tomorrow—zoning codes must become more flexible.

## Action Step

### Incorporate accessory dwelling units and senior-friendly housing in the zoning code

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are private and complete housing units in or adjacent to single-family homes. They can be useful to older homeowners, who can rent the units to family members or others, sometimes in exchange for household duties. Older people can also be tenants of such units, for example, in homes owned and occupied by children or relatives. For older homeowners, ADUs can create a regular income stream and help them pay property taxes and still have money left over for other needs. For this reason, ADUs can be a particularly valuable resource in areas with rapidly rising property values where homeowners shoulder a growing property tax burden and affordable housing options are lacking for prospective new residents.

### Planning for, and with, older adults

St. Louis Park, Minnesota, a post–World War II suburb to the west of Minneapolis, sponsored a visioning exercise in 1994 that produced a consensus vision of "a community so special that people will consciously choose to make St. Louis Park their lifelong home." The city revised its comprehensive plan to incorporate long-range policies that support land use changes allowing more mixed use and public works investments facilitating walking. Zoning and development standards were amended to allow higher densities and mixed uses.

Source: Deborah Howe, Aging and Smart Growth: Building Aging-Sensitive Communities (The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, 2001), 6–7.

Creating a successful ADU program involves the following:

- **Education:** Some citizens may fear that ADUs will have a negative impact on their neighborhood. Added traffic and parking burdens, as well as a perceived threat to neighborhood stability, are common concerns. Local governments can educate citizens that the impacts are minimal and the benefits significant.
- **Promotion:** Older residents, their relatives, and other citizens should be made aware of the program, and there should be a clear, streamlined process for approving construction projects. Local governments can help residents identify the best opportunities for financing construction of ADUs or can provide low-cost loans.

Communities can use senior-friendly housing ordinances as overlay zones to build support for a broader range of housing options in particular locations. To qualify, senior-friendly housing should have accessibility features, such as zero-step entrances, wide doorways, and bathroom grab bars, and should be built on transit corridors and near shops and services, such as health care.

### Promoting accessory dwelling units in an urban/suburban area with high land values

The economically dynamic community of Santa Cruz, California used accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as an instrument to address both aging in place and a dire shortage of affordable housing. Santa Cruz created an Accessory Dwelling Unit Program that included not only zoning changes but also education, promotion, and financial assistance components to make it easier for homeowners to build ADUs. For example, the city hired seven architects to design ADU prototypes. Homeowners who build to these prototypes go through the permitting process with minimal delays. Construction of ADUs has consequently increased more than fourfold.

Source: Smart Growth Network, "Smart Growth in Action: Accessory Dwelling Unit Program." www.smartgrowth.org/library/ articles.asp?art=1828

## Learn More

*Creating a Regulatory Blueprint for Healthy Community Design: A Local Government Guide to Reforming Zoning and Land Development Codes*, by zoning expert Joseph Schiller and published by the International City/County Management Association, provides many possible models for both large-scale and more incremental efforts to reform zoning codes. http://icma.org/main/ld.asp?ldid=19338&hsid=1&tpid=31

*Real Towns: Making Your Neighborhood Work*, by Harrison Rue, offers helpful, accessible tools that empower citizens to engage in the process of planning their communities. The author is the executive director of the Thomas Jefferson District Planning Commission in Central Virginia, which has effectively engaged citizens in visually oriented design processes and built consensus for pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use communities. This publication is one of many resources by the Local Government Commission for engaging citizens in the planning process. www2.lgc.org/bookstore/

**The Active Living program** of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers a wide array of valuable tools for building community support for needed changes in land use and other key areas that affect the health and independence of people of all ages, including older adults. www.activelivingbydesign.org and www.activelivingleadership.org

**The National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modifications** has published a guide about ADUs. www.homemods.org

**The Smart Growth Network**, a national network led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the International City/County Management Association, provides many resources that can help local officials develop policies and build public support for better land use planning. http://smartgrowth.org

**The University of Missouri Extension** provides a useful online primer on ADUs as well as other resources focusing on aging in place. http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/aging/

### Senior-friendly housing in a suburban community

Cobb County, Georgia, part of metropolitan Atlanta, is one of the fastest-growing suburbs in the nation. It also has a rapidly growing older adult population. The Aging Atlanta Initiative, a strong regional partnership, worked with county commissioners to lay the groundwork for enacting a senior-friendly housing ordinance. The ordinance can be used for new housing developments near major transportation corridors and requires universal design and visitability features. The participation of older residents in meetings and at public hearings was a powerful signal of the need for such a zoning change.

The Cobb County ordinance has spurred interest across the region in this housing option. Senior-friendly housing ordinances have since been enacted by three cities and counties in the Atlanta region, and are under consideration in three other localities.

*Source:* Aging Atlanta partnership, www.atlantaregional.com; Kathryn Lawler, Director, Aging Atlanta.

# Transportation

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Transportation | • Road design makes walking difficult | • Use walkability audits to identify and prioritize pedestrian improvements |
| | • Many older drivers experience specific difficulties related to the driving environment | • Improve roadway design and signage<br>• Provide safety programs and refresher courses for older drivers |
| | • Customer-oriented community transportation options are lacking for older adults | • Make transit services more flexible and customer responsive<br>• Support volunteer driver programs |

To live independently, older Americans must be able to maintain a mobile lifestyle. In most communities today, that means owning and driving a car. But the process of aging often involves a deterioration of physical and functional skills that can make driving more difficult. The physical environment often compounds the difficulty through signage and road design that can confuse and endanger drivers of all ages and abilities. When visiting the doctor or getting a bag of groceries becomes an ordeal, residents can become less healthy and more isolated, and communities pay the price in the form of increased services and a less productive and engaged citizenry.

Most adults fear the prospect of giving up their car keys, and for good reason. Since World War II, roads and communities have been designed primarily to serve automobile travel. Enabling older adults to remain mobile and engaged in their communities will require both new ways of transportation planning and design—such as innovative adaptations of transit services and the development of new volunteer driver programs—and a rediscovery of old ways of building streets and communities that balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and automobiles.

## Challenge

### Road design makes walking difficult

Many Americans of all ages would walk more if the physical infrastructure was more conducive to walking. There are many barriers to safe and pleasant pedestrian travel. These include wide streets that are difficult to cross, absent or poorly designed curb ramps, and broken or missing sidewalks. These features of the travel environment tend to result from automobile-oriented street design guidelines. In addition, land use planning and zoning regulations often discourage the creation of pedestrian-friendly communities.

But in this challenge also lies an opportunity. With increasing interest in more walkable communities and the revitalization of "Main Street" areas, more and more local governments are integrating walking and bicycling paths into development projects and transportation plans. Accommodating older pedestrians in pedestrian planning requires attention to details such as placing benches and resting places at regular intervals, improving lighting, lengthening pedestrian crossing cycles, and repairing cracked sidewalks that can cause falls. Involving and soliciting input from older pedestrians is critical to getting the details right.

## Action Step

### Use walkability audits to identify and prioritize pedestrian improvements

A walkability audit, which is usually several hours long, provides an opportunity for a group of decision makers, citizens, planners, or other stakeholders to experience a pedestrian environment together.

A local presenter may start out with a visual introduction to walkable environments, providing local and national examples. The group leader then directs the group along a selected route, pointing out good and bad conditions along the way and encouraging participants to do the same.

Participants may bring and fill out an assessment form that allows them to identify specific gaps in the pedestrian network, such as missing curb cuts or broken sidewalks. Several different assessment forms exist and are listed in "Transportation: Learn More."

An audit allows give and take between citizens, who have the best knowledge of on-the-ground conditions, and officials who have expertise in planning, building, and maintaining roads and sidewalks. Discussions focus on people's observations, likes and dislikes, potential solutions, and specific technical or political challenges to implementation. The audit may end with agreement on possible action items or priority projects.

One in five Americans age 65 and above does not drive.

Source: Linda Bailey, Aging Americans: Stranded without Options (Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, 2004), 4.

## Challenge

### Many older drivers experience specific difficulties related to the driving environment

Although older drivers have fewer crashes than other age-groups, they also generally drive less and limit their trips as they age, which can increase their isolation. Older drivers tend to experience difficulties driving at night, reading traffic signs, and turning at busy intersections. All drivers—but particularly older drivers—benefit from improvements to the driving environment. These improvements include larger and well-placed directional signs, clearer road markings, brighter stop lights, and dedicated left-turn signals.

## Action Step

### Improve roadway design and signage

Small modifications in roadway design and signage can greatly improve safety for all motorists, especially older adults. State and local transportation departments have found that relatively minor improvements have measurably reduced crashes. These improvements include the following:

- Brighter stop lights and pavement markings
- Larger lettering on street-name and directional signs
- Protected left-turn signals
- Converting two-way-stop intersections to four-way-stop intersections

These and other modifications enhance mobility for older adults, improve the driving environment for all, and free up fire, police, and public health resources for other community needs. Many of these modifications can be implemented as part of ongoing activities of transportation departments. For example, the entrance to a new shopping center might be designed with protected left-turn signals and brighter stop lights.

Implementing these improvements in roadway design and signage requires leadership and buy-in within state and local transportation departments. Any new roadway design feature requires intensive research and data collection, training, and incorporation into standard engineering manuals. Local governments can accelerate this process through the following:

- Conducting training of traffic and highway engineers
- Initiating research to identify best practices and local priorities to reduce crashes involving older motorists and pedestrians

### Leadership in Michigan saves lives

The Michigan Department of Transportation (DOT) has moved rapidly toward small-scale improvements that make a big difference for motorist safety. The department has implemented new standards for pavement markings, installed brighter stop lights, and increased the size of street-name signs. One busy street in Detroit has experienced a 35-percent drop in injurious crashes for drivers age 65 and above since these and other changes were made.

"Safety is a bunch of little things, and the key is to come up with a whole menu of remedies that collectively will cut crashes and fatalities," says John Friend of Michigan DOT. "I know in Michigan we have taken many approaches. Our fatality rate is going down."

Sources: AARP Office of Legislative Counsel, *The Policy Book*: AARP 2004 Public Policies, 10–18; Gene Amparano and David A. Morena, "Marking the Way to Greater Safety," *Public Roads* (July/August 2006), 52-60.

- Reaching out to physical therapists, health experts, and providers of aging services to better understand the challenges facing older drivers in their community
- Developing pilot projects that can build evidence and make the case for broader community-wide changes in road design
- Analyzing crash and injury data and involving local older adults in identifying trouble spots

## Action Step

### Provide safety programs and refresher courses for older drivers

Although national organizations such as the American Automobile Association and AARP have long-standing programs to help older adults refresh their driving skills, a more community-based approach can reach many older motorists who otherwise would not be aware of or participate in such programs. Driver safety programs can include several components:

- Driving skills assessments
- Classes focusing on improving agility and other driving-related skills
- A phone hotline providing advice to older drivers, caregivers, and family members
- Help in identifying other mobility options and training older adults how to use new mobility options, such as public transportation
- Partnerships with occupational therapists and other specialists who can help assess and improve drivers' skills

### "Getting in Gear" in St. Petersburg

In St. Petersburg, Florida, the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas County developed the Getting in Gear Senior Driving Program to provide a range of services addressing safe driving and other mobility options. The program offers older drivers a computer and road test to assess driving abilities, a defensive driving course, and a computer-based "useful field of view" test that measures an individual's visual driving competence. Counseling is provided on appropriate driving choices, and information on mobility programs and services is available for older adults who decide to reduce or stop driving. The Getting in Gear program spurred the development of the Florida Aging Driver Council, a planning and education group devoted to the safe mobility of Florida seniors.

Source: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, "Community-Based Approach to Promoting Older Driver Safety," Older Driver Safety Project. www.n4a.org/older_driver_safety

**Strategy**

### Technical Assistance

The Older Driver Safety Project of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) and the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration provides technical assistance to local Area Agencies on Aging to develop safety programs for older drivers.

## Challenge

### Customer-oriented community transportation options are lacking for older adults

Older adults represent a large and largely untapped market for transit and other community transportation options. Only 3 percent of all trips taken by Americans age 65 and above are by bus or train.[v] Many of today's baby boomers and 65 and over population are accustomed to driving for all mobility needs and are unfamiliar with public transportation.

Older individuals have different travel patterns than many "traditional" transit users, such as commuters. They often travel outside normal peak hours and use public transportation for different purposes, such as visiting friends and shopping. Older individuals who are not familiar with transit services need assistance in understanding and using these services. Individuals with health impairments or disabilities often have difficulty using fixed-route transit systems, because of factors such as poor pedestrian accessibility or the lack of accessible design features at buses and rail stations.[vi]

## Action Step

### Make transit services more flexible and customer responsive

Transit providers can use a range of tools to adapt services to customers' needs. These include the following:

- Allowing same-day scheduling for patrons of paratransit services through computerized scheduling and dispatching systems
- Extending service hours for paratransit and fixed-route transit services to weekend and evening times
- Providing neighborhood circulator services, such as smaller shuttle buses serving senior centers
- Purchasing low-floor buses, which are easier for older adults to board and reduce waiting times

### The Sunshine Bus in St. Johns County

The Sunshine Bus is a highly customer-responsive transit service operated by the St. Johns County Council on Aging, in a suburban area near Jacksonville, Florida. Every day it takes people to work, to make their commuter connection to Jacksonville, to go shopping, and to run errands. During ArtWeek, Sunshine Bus provides free trips to local art galleries. The low-floor vans take people throughout the county and make eight daily trips to Jacksonville. Although the buses have fixed routes, they stop at any corner along the route when a person waves. This convenience is especially important for older persons who could not manage a long walk to a bus stop.

Source: Community Transportation Association of America, www.ctaa.org/ntrc/senior/

"The physical problems associated with aging that make driving difficult also make using our current forms of public transportation very difficult." Jon Burkhardt, Adam McGavock and Charles Nelson, *Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons.* Federal Transit Administration, Transit Cooperative Research Program Paper No. 82 (2002), ES-3.

## Action Step

### Support volunteer driver programs

Next to driving themselves, the most preferred mobility option of older adults is to ride in cars driven by friends, relatives, or other trusted companions. Volunteer driver programs provide such a mobility option. Many communities and organizations use volunteer drivers to help older adults with their travel needs, some on a relatively informal basis and others in the form of a more structured program. In some communities, more formal and coordinated programs have been developed, some quite successfully, to help address the transportation needs of older adults throughout the community. Local governments can provide funding for and help promote volunteer programs.

A good volunteer driver program must achieve the following:

- Provide a clear "job description" and thorough training
- Coordinate volunteers effectively
- Secure insurance coverage

## Learn More

*Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians* and the companion publication, *Guidelines and Recommendations to Accommodate Older Drivers and Pedestrians*, published by The Federal Highway Administration, can be used to improve roadway design for older drivers. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/older_driver/

*Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons*, a publication of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transit Cooperative Research Program, contains numerous strategies and best practices for improving transportation services.

*Innovations for Seniors: Public and Community Transit Services Respond to Special Needs*, a publication of the Beverly Foundation and CTAA, describes exemplary programs. **The Beverly Foundation** which focuses on mobility options for older adults, offers a Volunteer Driver Program Turnkey Kit for planning, implementing, and evaluating programs. www.beverlyfoundation.org

*Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide,* by AARP, includes a walkability survey tool. www.aarp.org

*Safe Mobility for a Maturing Society*, by The U.S. Department of Transportation (2003), offers a range of strategies for improving older driver safety.

### Portland volunteers pitch in

The Independent Transportation Network (ITN), a nonprofit organization started by a community organizer in greater Portland, Maine, provides adults age 65 and above and those with visual impairments with a highly flexible, consumer-oriented suite of services. ITN users become members, paying $35 annual membership dues and $25 to open a prepaid account. Volunteer drivers provide the trips, which are charged against the balance of the account so that no money or vouchers need to change hands. Fees are based on the distance of the trip, whether the ride is shared, and whether the reservation was made in advance or on the same day. Fares are usually about half the cost of a taxi.

Volunteer drivers receive either a cash reimbursement or an equivalent credit for every mile they drive. Volunteers may save these credits for their own transportation needs when they limit or stop driving, or they may donate them to family members or low-income older adults.

ITN has created a national program, ITNAmerica™, to help other communities replicate this model.

Source: AdvantAge Initiative, *Best Practices* (2003): 34-36. www.vnsny.org/advantage/

**The American Occupational Therapy Association** offers resources on older driver rehabilitation and publishes a directory of trained professionals. http://www.aota.org/olderdriver/

**The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)** offers various examples of customer-responsive community transportation services addressing the needs of older adults, including extensive resources on rural transportation and volunteer driver programs. www.ctaa.org/ntrc/is_senior.asp

**Faith in Action** is an interfaith volunteer caregiving initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Many local affiliates have volunteer driver programs. www.fiavolunteers.org

**The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety** regularly publishes reports and analysis relevant to the challenges facing older drivers. www.iihs.org

**The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration** provides a variety of resources relating to older driver safety. www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/

**The National Area Agencies on Aging** (n4a) **Older Driver Safety Project** contains information about local driver safety programs and other resources. In addition, AARP and the American Automobile Association conduct driver safety programs in communities throughout the country. www.n4a.org/older_driver_safety/

**The National Complete Streets Coalition** supports efforts to design streets that serve all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities, and transit users as well as motorists. www.completestreets.org

**The Partnership for a Walkable America** offers a walkability audit tool oriented toward parents and children, but the tool is adaptable for other age-groups as well. www.walkableamerica.org

**Walkable Communities**, led by pedestrian expert Dan Burden, provides information on improving walkability. www.walkable.org

### Older adults walk the talk

In Richmond, Virginia, a team of older adult volunteers working with AARP and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation "Active for Life" program learned to use a walking audit tool. Over the course of one summer, the volunteers assessed 150 square blocks surrounding the 25th Street historic area. Many of the volunteers quickly identified patterns of poor walkability between two elementary schools and many missing sidewalks near the area's hospital. They also identified two five-point intersections that were challenging for both young and elderly pedestrians.

Through an "Active Living Tour," city staff, citizens, and media traveled by bus around the city to study examples of good and bad walkability, including the audited East End neighborhood. Within a few weeks of that tour, city staff had improved one of the audited sidewalks along an arterial road. Audit data helped feed into the planned redevelopment of the 25th Street Corridor and strengthened the case for reducing building setbacks and other pedestrian-friendly guidelines. In addition, the audits led to a partnership with the Virginia Safe Kids Coalition, and city engineers have assessed sidewalk conditions around 30 elementary schools.

Source: International City/County Management Association, *Active Living for Older Adults: Management Strategies for Healthy and Livable Communities* (2003); James Emery, program consultant.

# Health and Supportive Services

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Health and Supportive Services | • Community information about available services is dispersed across agencies and providers | • Create a single point of entry for information about local services |
| | • Home-based services are often provided piecemeal rather than in a coordinated manner | • Integrate home-based services |
| | • Poor diets and physical inactivity increase health risks for many older adults | • Support farmers' markets<br>• Develop exercise and active living programs tailored to older adults' preferences<br>• Provide vaccinations and preventive screenings |
| | • Lack of transportation to hospitals and doctors' offices affects access to health care | • Improve access to medical transportation |

Access to quality health care—health care that is adequate, available, and affordable—is the most important priority for many older adults. A livable community for all ages has a high capacity both to address and to prevent health problems. The capacity to address health problems includes accessible hospitals and clinics, transportation services to and from health care facilities, and home- and community-based care services. Although the frailest residents may need institutionalized care, many other residents who require long-term care can and should be able to receive such care for as long as possible in their homes and communities. The capacity to protect and improve residents' health and wellness includes an environment that encourages physical activity, preventive health programs such as health fairs and free screenings, and creative efforts to engage older adults in the civic and cultural life of the community.

Supportive services are critical to the health, independence, and productivity not only of their direct "clients," such as people with health impairments, but also of the friends and family members who provide informal care. Providing more support to caregivers is an important economic and social priority for employers and communities that rely on their skills.[vii]

## Challenge

### Community information about available services is dispersed across agencies and providers

For individuals in need of health and supportive services as well as their caregivers, identifying appropriate services can be a challenge. Navigating the maze of different service options in a given community can be stressful. Centralizing information about services in a local community, or within a larger region, enables consumers to make better choices about services.

## Action Step

### Create a single point of entry for information about local services

Many communities have created a single point of entry to help older residents and caregivers find information about local services quickly and easily. This information source can be a Web site, a printed directory, or a toll-free number that connects residents with expert staff. Each of these sources, as well as other forms of information, demands a different level of investment of time, funds, and staff resources.

Creating a "one-call" phone number often requires a significant investment, but it may save money over the long term by helping residents identify and choose services more wisely. Some one-call number programs employ a large enough corps of trained staff, such as social workers, that residents' calls can be answered or returned quickly by a live voice, rather than being routed through an automated system. The staff members respond to needs described by the caller, identify available service options in the community, and, when needed, facilitate three-way conversations with service providers.

Setting up such a program requires a broad-based effort on the part of program planners and service providers. Components include the following:

- Researching and reaching out to the full array of service providers in the community
- Getting input from consumers about their information needs and the problems they experience
- Designing the right program for organizing information, and finding or creating technology software
- Recruiting and training staff
- Promoting and marketing the service in the community

### One stop shopping for services in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

In the 1990s, the Department of Social Services (DSS) in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, convened leaders of the aging services community in a series of brown bag lunches and meetings. A consensus emerged that area residents needed a single point of entry to access information about local services. A partnership effort led by DSS developed and implemented what would become Just1Call—a live information service staffed by professional social workers.

Focus groups and community surveys conducted by the partners showed that potential users placed an extremely high priority on speaking with a live voice. Given the diversity of the population, the service needed to be multilingual if it was to help a broad range of citizens. In addition, planners learned through focus groups that some minority residents were reluctant to use services provided by the state.

All of this feedback was incorporated into the design and marketing of Just1Call. The program employs a team of social workers, who answer every call from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. After-hours calls are returned the following morning. The program uses a service from AT&T that can respond to callers in 140 languages. Government involvement is played down in marketing efforts.

"We needed buy-in from everybody," says Beverly Patnaik, a gerontologist at Duke University who helped develop the program. "Making it an inclusive process was absolutely critical."

Sources: Beverly Patnaik and Alan Geltman, "Developing Access Services in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: The Just1Call Experience," Duke Long-Term Care Resources Program, Paper No. 12 (Feb. 2001), http://ltc.duke.edu/pdf/Just1Call.pdf; Rick Ramseyer, "Just1Call," Community Partnerships for Older Adults, www.partnershipsforolderadults.org

## Challenge

### Home-based services are often provided piecemeal rather than in a coordinated manner

In any given community, a wide array of health care institutions, community organizations, faith-based groups, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies provide critical services to help people live independent lives. These services are often provided to any given individual piecemeal, rather than in a coordinated fashion. The lack of coordination can lead to duplication of services and frustrate individuals' efforts to find appropriate health care while remaining in their homes and communities.

Traditionally, home-based care has been segmented into several different categories of services. Services are provided in reaction to an individual client's needs of the moment, and they are provided by different providers who do not share information or coordinate services. For example, a client who has limited mobility and who needs assistance with home modifications may be served by two different providers, resulting in less efficient and less effective services.

As the population of older adults grows, the need for home-based health and supportive services will increase. This is especially true for the fastest-growing subset of the older adult population, individuals age 85 and above.

## Action Step

### Integrate home-based services

In a more integrated service delivery model, one government agency serves as the umbrella for home-based services and plans services on an individual client and a systemwide level. Adult protective services, social service programs, and volunteer programs are administered by a single agency. Each client is assigned a single caseworker, and information about the client is stored in a single database.

Systemwide service needs can be mapped using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that identify areas with high concentrations of clients, such as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs). Mapping these areas enables local governments to plan services and assign providers and contractors more efficiently. GIS is a particularly useful tool for mapping services in large suburban, exurban, and rural areas.

### Fairfax County creates "clusters" to better serve older adults

Fairfax County, Virginia, a fast-growing suburban area in metropolitan Washington, DC with more than 1 million residents, adopted a "cluster care" model to more efficiently provide home-based care.

The program divides the county into sections or clusters for planning purposes. Within each cluster, the county contracts with a single home care agency to provide services on a task basis, replacing its former time-based billing system. An analysis of its services revealed that many tasks, such as home-delivered meals and grocery shopping, could be performed by volunteers. In response, the county expanded the volunteer program and geographically matched volunteers and clients. Sixty volunteers now serve more than 70 clients.

The cluster care model combines the county's intake process for a number of services, so that the same staff can now initiate services for Adult Protective Services, home-based care, Adult Services, and Area Agency on Aging services. "We have focused on trying to integrate all of the services that a person needs to stay safe and independent," says Barbara Antley of the County Department of Family Services. Social workers work with each client to assess their needs, and clients receive an integrated suite of services based on the assessment.

The county has reduced its cost of services by more than $1,000 per client, enabling it to serve more people with the same amount of funds.

Source: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and MetLife Foundation, *The Maturing of America*, 14; Grace Starbird, Barbara Antley, and Trina Mayhan-Webb, Fairfax County Department of Family Services.

## Challenge

### Poor diets and physical inactivity increase health risks for many older adults

Compared with previous generations, Americans have fewer opportunities for physical activity and live more sedentary lifestyles. Medical research links sedentary lifestyles with numerous physical and mental health problems, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. In 2000, poor diet and physical inactivity were responsible for an estimated 400,000 deaths per year. Many experts believe that these two factors will soon surpass tobacco as the nation's primary cause of death.[viii]

Most private fitness programs are tailored to younger consumers. The physical environment in suburban areas, where most older adults live, often discourages active transportation modes like walking. The most vulnerable older adults are low-income individuals, whose communities are often underserved by supermarkets and other sources of healthier foods.

### Reno helps older adults enjoy healthier lifestyles

The City of Reno, Nevada is a lead partner with the State of Nevada Food Commodity and Distribution program in supporting the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition program. This program, funded through a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, provides eligible low-income seniors with vouchers to use at accredited farmers markets throughout the community. The City of Reno provides a significant amount of the outreach for this program, including designing and printing the informative posters and hosting television shows educating the community about the program. The City of Reno enlists seniors in the program and offers group transportation to the farmers' markets to use their vouchers. High school volunteers have also participated, helping seniors do their shopping and carrying their vegetables and fruits.

Source: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and MetLife Foundation, *The Maturing of America*, 8.

## Action Step

### Support farmers' markets

Establishing and supporting farmers' markets can be an effective and flexible way for local governments to make fresh, healthy, and locally grown food available to residents. Farmers' markets can usually support themselves with vendor fees. Typically, the only direct costs are for advertising and marketing. Farmers' markets can be planned within a relatively short time and do not face the stringent land use requirements applied to supermarkets.

Local governments can provide support through the following:

- **Designating public land for a market:** Sites can range from a municipal parking lot, bus station, or park to a blocked-off intersection.
- **Allowing the use of food stamps:** Local governments can select vendors that participate in nutritional food stamp programs such as Senior Nutrition programs.
- **Promoting markets:** Local governments can promote farmers' markets through city newsletters, event guides, and other inexpensive means.
- **Helping with setup, cleanup, and maintenance:** Local governments can use their department of public works to prepare the site by setting up tents or tables, for example.[ix]

## Action Step

### Develop exercise and active living programs tailored to older adults' preferences

Local governments can play a critical role in developing programs that encourage active living among older adults:

- **Exercise classes:** Many local governments offer exercise classes that are tailored specifically to older adults, such as swimming programs, osteoporosis prevention classes, and line dancing. These can be held at accessible, convenient locations such as senior centers.
- **Walking programs:** Local governments can encourage walking by sponsoring group programs and distributing pedometers, enabling participants to track their exercise.
- **Developing and promoting parks and trails:** Walking in parks and on trails is a favored means of recreation for older adults. Local governments can promote area trails by distributing maps and other materials that make these amenities easy to find and use.

### Walk for Fun and Fitness in Seattle

The Sound Steps program in Seattle is designed to encourage sedentary adults age 50 and above to walk for fun and fitness. The program was launched in 2003 by the Healthy Aging Partnership (HAP), a coalition of 40 local nonprofit and public organizations dedicated to the health and well-being of older adults. Local community centers recruited, organized, and supported older adults who joined groups that would meet at least once a week, sometimes more, to walk on predetermined neighborhood paths. With a modest advertising budget ($5,000), HAP recruited participants through an insert in a monthly Valpak® (coupon) mailing and through a member mailing funded by one of its partners, AARP Washington. In its first year, Sound Steps attracted approximately 500 participants. In the second year, 620 people registered.

The Seattle Parks and Recreation Department obtained funding to continue developing Sound Steps as a year-round program. A corps of older volunteers leads walks and provides program support. The University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center developed three Sound Steps programs tailored to Vietnamese and Somali residents, as well as low-income multicultural older adults.

Sources: Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, *National Blueprint Mini-Grant Program: Outcomes Report*, available at www.agingblueprint.org; Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, "Sound Steps Toolkit," www.chef.org//resources/sstk.php; Seattle Parks and Recreation, www.seattle.gov/parks

## Action Step

### Provide vaccinations and preventive screenings

Vaccinations and preventive screenings at health fairs and other venues can diagnose and help prevent pneumonia, cardiovascular diseases, breast cancer, and other conditions that commonly befall older adults. Many local governments provide inexpensive or free vaccinations and health screenings. Some local governments partner with pharmacies, shopping malls, and other businesses to promote and provide screenings in places frequently patronized by older adults. Screenings are particularly effective when targeted to the most vulnerable residents in terms of age, gender, and underlying condition or family history.

## Challenge

### Lack of transportation to hospitals and doctors' offices affects access to health care

Having the finest doctors and facilities means little unless residents of all ages and economic backgrounds have transportation and access to them. Rural communities can face particularly severe challenges in ensuring that residents can get to doctors' appointments and fulfill other preventive health needs.

Creating or augmenting medical transportation services requires a highly coordinated effort among local governments, health providers, transportation planners, transit agencies, aging and disability advocates, human service organizations, and community groups. All of these stakeholders provide some form of individual transportation services, but rarely are the services coordinated. In addition, because Medicare does not reimburse most forms of nonemergency medical transportation, community-wide partnerships are needed to identify other funding sources, such as federal transportation programs and local foundations.

## Action Step

### Improve access to medical transportation

Local governments can convene and encourage collaboration among transportation services so that services are provided in a comprehensive and efficient manner. They can also provide funding and leverage outside sources, such as matching federal funds.

Examples of effective and creative partnerships to improve access to medical transportation include the following:

- Working with the local transit agency to adjust routes so that older adults have easier access to health care services
- Creating a brokerage service connecting health care consumers with the most appropriate available transportation services
- Encouraging vehicle sharing among health institutions, human service providers, and other organizations with fleets that may be used at different times

### Health-transportation partnership in rural Colorado

There is only one dialysis center in the 9,500 square-mile rural Northeastern Colorado region. Some dialysis patients must travel 180 miles round trip three days a week for treatments. Lack of transportation access would place unbearable strains on patients, caregivers, and other family members. But thanks to a partnership between the region's main health services provider and the regional transportation provider, patients and their families do not have to worry about transportation. Banner Health contracts with the Northeastern Colorado Association of Local Governments (NECALG) to provide transportation through NECALG's County Ride program. Improved transportation has reduced Banner Health's administrative costs through better discharged planning and fewer "no shows."

Source: Jessica McCann, *Medical Transportation Toolkit and Best Practices* (Community Transportation Association of America, 2005), 73.

One in five older Americans does not know who to call for information about local services in their community.

Source: Center for Home Care Policy and Research, *A Tale of Two Older Americas: Community Opportunities and Challenges* (2004), 8.

## Learn More

*Best Practices: Lessons in Supporting the Health, Well Being and Independence of Older People* contains several case studies of collaborative efforts to coordinate services. It is a publication of the AdvantAge Initiative, a community-building effort focused on creating vibrant and elder-friendly communities. www.vnsny.org/advantage

*Community Health and Food Access,* a publication of the International City/County Management Association, provides many proven tools for improving access to healthy foods. www.icma.org/activeliving

*Medical Transportation Toolkit and Best Practices* (2005), by The Community Transportation Association of America, explains the key issues in health care and transportation access and provides tools for building and funding community-wide collaborations to improve access to health facilities. www.ctaa.org.

**The Active Aging Partnership**, including AARP, the National Council on Aging, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has created a National Blueprint and helped support community-wide efforts to increase physical activity among adults age 50 and above. www.agingblueprint.org

**The Active Living program** of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on encouraging physical activity through improved community design. www.activeliving.org

**Community Partnerships for Older Adults**, a program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, supports integrated community-wide approaches to long-term care. www.partnershipsforolderadults.org

**The International City/County Management Association**, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, supports government leaders as they create and promote policies, programs, and places that enable active living and healthy eating at the local level. www.icma.org/activeliving

**The International Council on Active Aging** is a collaboration that helps reach older adults with active-aging messages, facilities, programs, and guidance. www.icaa.cc/Index.asp

### Danville makes it easy to check health

Danville, Virginia, provides routine blood pressure and Body Mass Index screenings at 23 different sites across the city, including restaurants, grocery stores, the mall, and pharmacies. The city publishes a schedule and provides staffing to cover two to four hours of screening at each location, where residents can receive simple baseline health checks and possibly referrals for further care. Because of the convenience and affordability, many residents rely on these services as their first line of health care.

Source: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and MetLife Foundation, *The Maturing of America*, 7.

# Culture and Lifelong Learning

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Culture and Lifelong Learning | • Relatively few community-based arts, culture, and enrichment programs target older adults | • Provide a robust range of programs to enable older adults to contribute to the cultural life of the community |
| | • Arts and culture programs often neither appeal to nor engage the talents of the increasingly diverse older adult population | • Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning around arts and cultural production |
| | • Older adults frequently do not have opportunities to stay up-to-date with advances in technology | • Increase technology training opportunities for older adults |

Lifelong learning and participation in cultural and recreational activities are important for older adults' health and communities' quality of life and economic competitiveness. Older adults are among the most generous and impassioned patrons of arts programs. They increasingly participate in lifelong learning programs such as computer classes and intergenerational programs such as oral histories.

Culture embraces a broad range of activities and programs that allow individuals to creatively express their identity and history. Communities can use cultural assets such as public libraries and local universities to provide new lifelong learning opportunities for older adults. Providing these opportunities can build a powerful advocacy voice in the community for more funding to libraries, parks, and schools.

Older adults participating in weekly arts programs reported better health, fewer doctor visits, and less medication usage.

Source: Dr. Gene Cohen, Primary Investigator, "The Creativity and Aging Study" (George Washington University, Center on Aging, Health, and Humanities, 2006), 1.

## Challenge

**Relatively few community-based arts, culture, and enrichment programs target older adults**

As the baby boom generation ages, the demand for arts and cultural activities will grow. Participation in arts and culture programs have proven health benefits for older adults. However, most communities are unprepared for the coming demand. Providing a range of arts and culture programs attuned to older adults' interests and abilities requires partnerships with youth programs to foster intergenerational learning, as well as with universities, senior centers, libraries, and other groups and institutions.

## Action Step

**Provide a robust range of programs to enable older adults to contribute to the cultural life of the community**

Local governments can serve as catalysts to connect different groups' and institutions' assets and provide new cultural enrichment opportunities for older adults. Several principles underlie successful community-based programs engaging older adults:

- Partnerships between artists/cultural organizations and organizations and agencies serving older adults, such as senior centers;
- Training of artists in residence and other teachers by gerontologists and other professionals in the unique needs and abilities of older adults;
- An asset-based approach that taps older adults' unique strengths, such as intergenerational oral history programs;
- Engagement of older adults in planning programs, for example through creating advisory councils led by older adults.

### Cultural outreach in the Big Apple

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) in Brooklyn, New York offers programs featuring professional artists in creative writing, story telling, visual arts, and theater. Founded in 1979, ESTA has developed a wide range of partnerships with artists, cultural institutions, and senior facilities in New York City:

- The *Writing from Life Experience Workshop* is a partnership with Morningside Gardens Retirement and Health Services in Manhattan. A group of 12-15 older adults meet two hours weekly with a professional writer to read from their prepared work and discuss the writings. Each May, a public reading is convened where friends, family, and community members gather to listen to the writers read their work.
- The *Story Circle* is conducted in the local branches of the Brooklyn public library that are coupled with a neighboring senior center. Older adults are matched with a writer who shapes their oral experiences.
- *Legacy Works* employs a visual artist who works with older adults to transmit their memories and life experiences into visual art, such as painting, collage and photography. Each program culminates with a public art presentation in community-based sites such as senior centers or broader public venues such as museums.
- *The Pearls of Wisdom* is a touring ensemble of older storytellers who share their lives in crafted theatrical presentations. The storytellers perform in a variety of venues, including the Museum of the City of New York, Lincoln Center, and the United Nations.

Source: Jessica E. Thomas and Katie Lyles, *Creativity and Aging: Best Practices* (National Endowment for the Arts: 2006), 4-5.

## Challenge

### Arts and culture programs often neither appeal to nor engage the talents of the increasingly diverse older adult population

As cultural opportunities for older adults expand, there will be a great need to highlight the uniqueness of culture within each community. During the next 25 years, the older Latino population will grow four-fold, from 2 million today to 8 million in 2030. The older Asian population will grow from 1 million to 4 million. In areas in states with high immigrant populations, such as Florida and Texas, the growth will be even more dramatic.[x] Communities should view diversity within the aging population as an important way for older adults and people of other ages, such as youth, to share cultural differences with one another. Bi-lingual events may prove to be an essential aspect of cultural opportunities.

## Action Step

### Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning around arts and cultural production

Local governments can encourage and help fund programs that use arts and cultural activities to bring together different generations and cultural groups. For example, many programs use theater as a tool to educate the community about cultural and generational differences. Some programs, such as that of San Francisco's Planning for Elders in the Central City, use theater as an educational and advocacy tool on issues such as health care and housing. By encouraging partnerships between repertory theaters, artists, and community organizations and agencies serving older adults, local governments can create new opportunities to fund and increase the relevance of arts and cultural programs in the community.

### Performance theater engages people of all ages in Los Angeles

The Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles, California is a multi-ethnic, ensemble-based theater that commissions and produces new plays, bringing together professional artists and people of many ages, cultures, and levels of theatrical experience. Much of Cornerstone's work centers on training new generations of community-based theater artists, where older adults serve as mentors and role models. Cornerstone's Summer Residency program works with various California communities to create productions that combine students' artistry with that of experienced professionals and community collaborators. For the 2006 Institute, playwright Octavio Solis collaborated with older adults and their caregivers in San Francisco to create "Lethe," a play that explores the fragility of memory and how people prepare for the end of life. Community partners included staff, volunteers and residents from St. Anne's Home for the Elderly, the Institute on Aging's Adult Day Health Center and Hospice by the Bay.

Source: *Creativity and Aging: Best Practices*, 4; Cornerstone Theater Company, www.cornerstonetheater.org

Only 1 in 3 older adults today has access to the Internet.

Source: SeniorNet, www.seniornet.org/php/default.php?PageID=8199.

## Challenge

### Older adults frequently do not have opportunities to stay up-to-date with advances in technology

Computer skills are increasingly needed to access community information and participate in the workforce. Many older adults who wish or need to remain in the workforce may require training or retraining to meet changing job market needs. Others simply wish to keep up with the digital age so that they can email children and grandchildren, get information without going to a library, read the daily newspaper in large-font size, or get up-to-date medical information. Technology can also enable older adults to work in part-time, consultative and other more flexible employment arrangements.

## Action Step

### Increase technology training opportunities for older adults

Local governments can help create computer centers that are conducive to the learning styles of older adults. Programs can hire older adults as teachers, use larger fonts in class, and create alternatives to tests in measuring participants' progress. Local governments can help libraries and community centers set up computer learning programs tailored to older adults. They can also partner with national organizations such as SeniorNet, which works with local communities and funders to set up computer learning centers throughout the country.

### Maumelle partners with local university to bridge the digital divide

In Maumelle, Arkansas, a rural community of 14,000 people in the Little Rock metro area, the local government developed a task force to study the older adult population and consider how it could better serve them. As a result of the study, Maumelle now partners with the University of Central Arkansas in Conway to provide educational classes and workshops to local older adults. Through the partnership, the city provides the classroom space and the university provides professional instructors for computer classes at introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels. Residents age 60 and older can register for classes free of charge and are actually enrolled in the college, enabling them to receive credit for the courses.

Source: *The Maturing of America,* 13.

## Learn More

*Creativity and Aging: Best Practices*, a publication of the National Endowment for the Arts compiled by Jessica E. Thomas and Katie Lyles, profiles 15 exemplary practices engaging older adults in arts and cultural activities. www.arts.gov/resources/Accessibility/BestPractices.pdf

**Generations United** provides a wide range of information about intergenerational learning programs and opportunities. www.gu.org

**The National Center on Creative Aging** provides best practices and other information regarding creativity and aging. www.creativeaging.org

**Partners for Livable Communities** works with local governments and philanthropies to help tap communities' cultural assets for economic development and other priorities. www.livable.com

**SeniorNet** is a national nonprofit organization that works with local communities throughout the U.S. and internationally to set up computer learning centers run for and by older adults. www.seniornet.org

**The Senior Theatre League of America** promotes theater produced and performed by older adults. www.seniortheaterleague.org

# Public Safety

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Public Safety | • Older adults commonly voice concern about the safety of their neighborhoods | • Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs<br>• Create mail carrier alert programs |
| | • Elder abuse is an increasingly recognized problem | • Train law enforcement officials to detect and report elder abuse |

Both the perception and the reality of a safe environment are important for enabling residents to remain active and engaged in the community as they age. More than one-third of older adults interviewed in a national survey identify crime as a problem in their neighborhoods.[xi] Some fears about neighborhood safety can stem from other concerns, such as a lack of communication between citizens and law enforcement agencies or cultural differences between older adults and other community residents.[xii]

Elder abuse at the hands of relatives or caregivers is often not reported or detected. Older adults who are physically or mentally abused, or financially exploited, often do not know where to turn to find redress. Collaboration between social services agencies and law enforcement officials is critical to detecting and preventing elder abuse.

## Challenge

### Older adults commonly voice concern about the safety of their neighborhoods

In a national survey by the AdvantAge Initiative, 34 percent of older adults report crime as a problem in their neighborhoods. Crime is the top problem reported by African-American and Hispanic older adults.[xiii] Many older adults are at risk of feeling isolated in their neighborhoods.

## Action Step

### Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs

Neighborhood Watch programs organize citizens to work with law enforcement to keep trained eyes and ears on their communities, while making their presence known at all times of the day and night. As a tool for all communities and residents of all ages, active Neighborhood Watch programs can benefit older residents by reducing opportunities for crime. These programs can be used as a civic engagement tool for older adults who often have the most knowledge of their neighborhoods and play vital roles as "eyes on the street."

Neighborhood Watch programs are citizen driven. Citizen leaders organize to plan the program, set up meetings, identify issues that need to be addressed, and canvass the community to get commitments from neighbors to participate. Watch members set up phone trees and e-mail listservs so that neighbors can communicate information quickly and mobilize a community-wide effort. Volunteers learn how to observe and report crimes, and block captains relay information and serve as liaisons between the neighborhood and police.

Law enforcement officials support Neighborhood Watch programs by training residents in crime prevention and reporting, providing information about crime issues and statistics, and participating in meetings to share expertise and encourage citizen efforts.

## Action Step

### Create mail carrier alert programs

Many local governments help older adults, especially those living alone, feel safer and more secure through programs that match them with neighbors, friends, or other volunteers. One example is a mail carrier alert program. Mail carrier alert programs match older residents with friends and neighbors, whose contact information is provided to local postal service administrators. If a mail carrier notices that a resident's mail has not been collected, the third party is contacted so that he or she can check up on the resident. In another variation, the Area Agency on Aging can serve as the liaison with the postal service and can notify a selected friend or neighbor.

### Unique partnership with postal carriers saves lives in Allegheny County

In the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, metropolitan area, the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging has managed a Carrier Alert program since 1984. Older adults and people with disabilities register to participate in the program at their local senior center or through the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). The AAA notifies the local post office of customers participating in the program. Letter carriers watch for signs of distress such as an unusual accumulation of mail. If the letter carrier finds an accumulation of mail, he or she may report this to the postal supervisor, who will then report it to the AAA. The AAA will then try to contact the customer by phone. If she or he cannot be reached, the agency will try to contact a designated friend or relative. More than 1,800 postal customers are enrolled. The agency's one-call Senior Line number enables it to manage the Carrier Alert and other programs seamlessly.

Sources: Allegheny County Area on Aging, "Carrier Alert" (brochure).

## Challenge

### Elder abuse is an increasingly recognized problem

Elder abuse is any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. This includes physical, mental, and financial exploitation. Over the past two decades, the phenomenon of elder abuse has received increasing attention from multiple stakeholders. It is estimated that 1 to 2 million Americans age 65 and above have suffered elder abuse; however, detecting and preventing elder abuse is inherently difficult. Many victims are isolated and do not know where to turn for redress. For every one case of elder abuse that is documented, approximately five cases go unreported.[xiv]

## Action Step

### Train law enforcement officials to detect and report elder abuse

Police departments can work with aging advocates and Adult Protective Services agencies to improve detection and reporting of elder abuse. Training sessions for command staff and specialized units (e.g., senior response units) can achieve the following:

- Familiarize law enforcement officials with Adult Protective Services procedures, so that both agencies can more easily coordinate resources
- Demonstrate effective reporting procedures, so that perpetrators can be effectively prosecuted
- Clarify the laws governing elder abuse

## Learn More

**The National Center on Elder Abuse** offers a clearinghouse of research and best practices. www.elderabusecenter.org

**The National Crime Prevention Council** provides a comprehensive set of materials that aid citizens and law enforcement officials in establishing and partnering with Neighborhood Watch programs. www.ncpc.org/Topics/Neighborhood_Watch/index.php

### Boston police spot elder abuse

A broad community-wide partnership in Boston helped bring law enforcement officials in closer contact with aging advocates and service providers. Through their participation in the Boston Partnership for Older Adults (BPOA), law enforcement officials learned that elder abuse was a key concern among local advocates. Further discussions indicated that some basic gaps existed in the process of reporting elder abuse. Two police sergeants became champions within the department for addressing elder abuse. When BPOA presented recommendations for training officers in older adult issues, the police department was ready to put the recommendations into action. In eight months, 230 officers were trained in elder abuse law and reporting procedures. That year, police reporting of elder abuse incidents increased almost fivefold, from 7 to 34.

Source: Community Partnerships for Older Adults, "Police Training to Safeguard Older Adults in Boston" (*Community View* newsletter, December 2005).

# Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

| Issue | Challenge | Action Step |
|---|---|---|
| Civic Engagement and Opportunities | • Older adults are looking for a broader array of civic engagement options than most communities currently provide | • Support intergenerational learning programs<br>• Start Senior Academies<br>• Establish Asset Mapping |

The gifts and talents of every individual should be put to use so that communities can become better places for all. A livable community for all ages engages older adults in meaningful work for the common good:

- Retired individuals have opportunities to use the skills and experience they've developed over time to serve their communities directly and take leadership roles
- Community-wide collaborations count older individuals as core leaders
- Intergenerational connections are routine: older adults function in their communities as mentors, tutors, coaches, teachers, and role models, as well as in other roles that benefit children and youth

## Challenge

### Older adults are looking for a broader array of civic engagement options than most communities currently provide

Today's and tomorrow's retirees have the skills, ideas, connections, and time to put toward the betterment of their communities. Tapping into these civic assets, however, will require new models of volunteering and a reworking of the way we traditionally view the "golden years."

Many of tomorrow's retirees—the baby boom generation—express a desire to volunteer more upon retirement. But outdated models of volunteering constitute a critical challenge. Most community organizations and nonprofits are not prepared to manage large numbers of volunteers and mobilize their full range of skills. Too often, volunteers are consigned to low-level tasks. Age stereotypes also represent a major barrier to meaningful engagement of older adult volunteers.

## Action Step

### Support intergenerational learning programs

Research has shown that older adults prefer working with children and youth more than any other volunteer activity.[xv] Young people who participate in intergenerational programs show measurable improvements in school attendance and attitudes toward school.[xvi] Older adults also benefit through an increased sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

Intergenerational learning can occur and develop in a variety of forms. Intergenerational tutoring and mentoring programs have become increasingly common in urban areas. Experience Corps, a national program with local affiliates in 19 cities, mobilizes adults age 55 and above to work as tutors, mentors, and classroom assistants in elementary schools that serve predominantly low-income families.

Although intergenerational learning can take a variety of forms depending on the interests and skills of the people involved, the programs should be developed carefully and be based on strong partnerships between youth agencies and organizations that have experience working with older adults.

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"Many well-established and well-managed volunteer organizations report that they could not easily absorb large numbers of new volunteers. If the boomers were to show up at their doors in droves, they might well be turned away." Margaret Gerteis, Harvard School of Public Health, Center for Health Communication and MetLife Foundation, *Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement* (2004), 29–30.

### Intergenerational learning in San Diego County

San Diego County, California has mobilized older adults to tackle some of the biggest social and economic issues facing the area. With leadership from the Department of Aging and Independence Services (AIS), older adults play key roles in welfare reform, the foster care program, and early childhood development:

- Older adults are employed in part-time jobs as mentors to four to five families who are transitioning from welfare to work, providing advice on selecting child care, finding rewarding work, and other needs.
- A school for foster care children provides nearby housing for older adults, who receive reduced rents in exchange for mentoring the children.
- When California started the "First 5" program, which uses tobacco tax revenue to fund early childhood development services, the county started a grant program that provided funds for Head Start programs and other agencies to engage older adult volunteers as aides to teachers.

AIS director Pamela Smith reports that many welfare case managers consider the senior mentoring program the most effective welfare-to-work program in the county. Teachers in early childhood development programs attribute a more positive learning environment to the presence of older mentors. "Some people think intergenerational programs are cute," says Smith. "We think they're critical."

Source: Pamela Smith, Director, San Diego County Aging and Independence Services.

## Action Step
### Start senior academies

Senior academies are programs that teach older people how to effect change in their communities through greater civic involvement. Through partnerships with local organizations and institutions, these "schools in service" incorporate structured educational and hands-on community experiences. Senior academies have been established in several metropolitan regions.

Although Area Agencies on Aging are often the catalysts or sponsors of senior academies, at their core, senior academies depend on a wide range of community partnerships. Critical resources provided by partners include meeting space, faculty and subject experts, course materials, and recruitment assistance. Depending on the focus of the program, key community partners may include local elected officials, community-based organizations, local universities, and regional Councils of Governments.

Senior academies can take many different paths in terms of the flexibility of course offerings, commitment expected from participants, and breadth of content. For example, participants in the Leadership Academy in Atlanta are asked to volunteer an average of 25 to 35 hours per month for a year, whereas the Senior Statesman Program in Milwaukee offers a more discrete three-day program once a year. Often the programs aim to instill a better understanding of the policy-making process through both course content and experiential learning (e.g., attending a county board meeting).

Keys to creating a successful senior academy program include the following:

- Developing a wide range of community partnerships for planning the curriculum, recruiting faculty, finding meeting space, identifying volunteer opportunities, and other needs
- Designing course offerings with sufficient flexibility to attract a broad base of participants
- Ensuring that meeting sites are physically accessible to people of all abilities
- Sustaining participants' involvement (e.g., through reunions and alumni programs)

### County taps into local seniors knowledge to better deliver services

The Senior Statesman Program of Milwaukee County was founded in 1997 in response to concerns that the county government's role in delivering and financing services in Wisconsin was not widely understood. The three-day program is offered to 25 county residents each year. The County Department of Aging coordinates the program; three other organizations, including Marquette University, contribute expertise, planning support, staff time, and meeting facilities. The program focuses on experiential learning. Program dates are planned to coincide with a county board meeting, and participants meet with the chairs of all committees. Participants are invited to attend a five-hour annual reunion session. The reunion is a substantive learning exercise as well as a networking opportunity that focuses on a different issue each year.

The core operations are funded by the county, but local philanthropies are now investing because they see an opportunity to tap into older adults' skills and interests to address key local issues. With support from three foundations, the program will offer its first Water Advocates class in partnership with local clean water organizations.

Sources: Community Partnerships for Older Adults, "Senior Academies Cultivate Civic Leadership," www.partnershipsforolderadults.org; Stephanie Sue Stein, Director, Milwaukee County Department on Aging.

## Action Step
### Establish Asset Mapping

Asset mapping can be an effective tool for empowering older adults and building community capacity, especially in neighborhoods or districts with growing concentrations of older adults, such as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs). Mapping is based in the practice of asset-based community development (ABCD), which is a way to organize communities by drawing on the assets of individuals, associations, and institutions within the community to solve community problems.

In contrast to more traditional approaches, an asset-based approach to solving community problems focuses on what communities have—not what they lack—such as the skills, connections, and other special capacities of its residents, groups, businesses, and so on. "Outside" organizations, such as nonprofits, universities, or local government, can support an asset-based approach through research, technical assistance, and funding. Usually ABCD occurs in a discrete set of neighborhoods or along a corridor—for example, within a geographic area that has been identified as a NORC.

Asset mapping is the first major step in an ABCD process. A group of trained community citizens inventories a community's assets through written surveys, face-to-face interviews, and other means. An outside partner such as local government often provides planning expertise to help create a detailed map

### A focus on assets revitalizes an inner ring suburb

Blue Island, Illinois, is an inner-ring Chicago suburb that has become increasingly diverse. Once working-class and exclusively white, the community is now an almost even mix of white, Latino, and African-American. A local social worker at Metropolitan Family Services undertook a 10-month process of building relationships with and getting input from the older adult population. She then conducted a survey of older adults to gauge their interest in becoming involved in the community, especially as volunteers. An advisory group of Blue Island older adults was formed to help design ways to create a "senior-friendly" town.

The community responded by developing a series of intergenerational programs: a video oral history project, a "Reading Buddies" tutoring program, and "Learn to Connect," a computer technology class for older adults taught by middle-school students. The city of Blue Island has assimilated the advisory group into the first Blue Island Commission on Aging.

Source: ABCD Institute, *Hidden Treasures* (2005), 64–73. www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html

of these assets. For example, GIS technology and expertise are critical resources that outside organizations often provide, helping the community see the density of assets that it possesses and, as a result, change its attitudes.

Asset mapping is both a process and a product. An exhaustively researched asset map shows a community what it has and helps stakeholders better identify connections and partnerships. At the same time, the process of research itself develops relationships and forges connections that match overlooked assets with community needs.

The talents and experience of older residents are often among the most overlooked assets in a community. For this reason, asset-based approaches are becoming increasingly useful tools for aging in place efforts. Yonkers, New York, and Calgary, Alberta (in Canada), are two communities that have used ABCD as an aging in place tool.

## Learn More

**The Asset-Based Community Development Institute**, headed by John McKnight and Jodi Kretzmann, offers a comprehensive set of tools and best practices in ABCD. www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html

**Calgary Elder-Friendly Communities** is a project that applies ABCD to four NORCs in the city of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. www.elderfriendlycommunities.org

**Civic Ventures** is a national nonprofit organization focused on redefining aging as an opportunity for individual and social renewal. Civic Ventures programs include Experience Corps, which engages adults age 55 and over as tutors and mentors. www.civicventures.org

**Community Partnerships for Older Adults**, a project of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, profiles three senior academies—in Milwaukee, Atlanta, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg. www.partnershipsforolderadults.org

**Generations United** focuses on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Their website contains a wealth of specific information about intergenerational learning tools and policy options. www.gu.org

Older volunteers in one intergenerational program reported higher activity levels, increased strength, and a bigger support network.

Source: Linda P. Fried, Michelle C. Carlson, Marc Freedman, Kevin D. Frick, Thomas A. Glass, Joel Hill, et al., "A Social Model for Health Promotion for an Aging Population: Initial Evidence on the Experience Corps Model," *Journal of Urban Health* 81, no. 1 (2004), 64–78.

# Chapter 3

## Turning Best Practices into Common Practice:
### Six Steps for Focusing Community Energies on Aging in Place

Every part of government and every sector of the community has a role to play in building livable communities for all ages. Local government leaders have the unique ability to channel community energies toward this goal. Certainly, community-wide initiatives focused on aging in place can be initiated by civic leaders, community activists, and nonprofit organizations. At some point, whether at the beginning of the process or somewhat later, local government leadership is critical to sustaining such initiatives and engaging the entire community.

This leadership role often comes from "connecting the dots" rather than a "take charge" approach. Many different initiatives and programs focused on aging, or related to it, may already be under way. Linking these efforts, and encouraging new partnerships, are roles uniquely suited for local government leaders. Public officials and staff interact with a wide range of community actors. They can use their knowledge of the community to identify and connect complementary assets. In this chapter, six steps are outlined to provide a framework to enable your community to build on existing efforts related to aging. The six steps for focusing community energies on aging in place are as follows.

## Six Steps for Focusing Community Energies

**Step One:** Assemble a team of public and private leaders

**Step Two:** Assess the community's aging-readiness

**Step Three:** Take focused action

**Step Four:** Promote success

**Step Five:** Set a long-term course

**Step Six:** Get resources

These steps do not have to be followed sequentially. Some communities may wish to engage in long-term planning (step five: set a long-term course) earlier in the process than outlined here; others may want to take action at once (step three: take focused action). In other instances, communities may consciously choose not to develop a formal collaboration (step one: assemble a team of public and private leaders), but rather develop a looser network of related initiatives that affect Aging in Place.

**Strategy**

### Team-building tips

As a rule of thumb, it may work best to start with a relatively small group of leaders and build unity over the course of several meetings. But different communities can create different formulas for success.

- In El Paso, Texas, a small group of aging and disability advocates convened by the state AARP leader developed a common understanding and platform that enabled them to get buy-in from the mayor and expand the coalition.
- In Central Virginia, a community-wide planning effort started with a kickoff conference involving more than 90 stakeholders.
- In Hartford, Connecticut, a group of leaders was developed informally through participation in joint neighborhood-based projects. All three efforts have been successful.

Where your community should start in building a core team depends on many factors, including the influence of the convener and the history of previous collaborations in the community.

# Step One
## Assemble a team of public and private leaders

Local government leaders are uniquely positioned to encourage collaboration by serving as conveners and catalysts. Some of the issues underlying residents' ability to age in place successfully may be controversial. In many communities, for example, land use and zoning are key factors and may cause friction between competing value systems. Many other obstacles spring from a lack of communication and coordination. For example, administrative barriers and the lack of a mechanism for service providers to communicate with one another often divide the various providers of supportive services in a given community.

The first order of business is to create a forum for key aging in place stakeholders to talk to one another and develop a consensual approach to aging in place. Local elected officials and agency heads are often best suited for this convening role. Many aspects of convening and developing such a team will be intuitive and will vary depending on the community and the stakeholders. But two aspects are essential:

- Public, civic, business, and nonprofit leaders all must be involved from the start.
- The stakeholder base must be broad, including both "traditional" leaders on aging issues (such as gerontologists and social service providers) and representatives of other agencies, organizations, and industry sectors that affect residents' ability to age in place successfully (such as land use planning, architecture, transportation policy, and community development).

### Identify stakeholders

A stakeholder can be defined as a group or individual that needs to be involved in the process to reach the desired outcome or overall team purpose. The list of potential aging in place stakeholders in any given community is likely to be long. Although it must include representatives of groups and agencies that work with older adults professionally and on a daily basis—such as service providers, aging advocates, and gerontologists—success will be predicated on the participation of many other groups that have the needed expertise and connections within the community. For example, the local planning director's knowledge of zoning regulations and the land use planning process may be invaluable to advancing efforts on a range of fronts, such as making health care facilities more accessible.

**Strategy**

#### Brainstorming

Brainstorming among two to three core members, such as AAA staff and planners, can help identify potential stakeholders. One-on-one meetings with stakeholders can build on this list.

Key stakeholders in aging in place issues that should be included are:

**Area Agencies on Aging**
In their responsibility for planning, coordinating, and offering services for older adults, local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) possess a wide range of knowledge on issues affecting older adults. AAA representatives can be critical connecters to other organizations and resources in the community.

**Providers of health and supportive services**
Many different nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, and government agencies provide a range of services focused on helping older adults remain in their homes and communities. Examples include Faith In Action affiliates, community-based health clinics, hospitals, senior centers, and aging services divisions.

**Aging and disability advocates**
Often communities have many local groups that advocate for programs, services, and community improvements for older adults and people with disabilities. These might include Centers for Independent Living, AARP chapters, and locally founded disability advocacy groups.

**Housing advocate**
Individuals and groups advocating for housing that serves people of low and moderate incomes are natural allies. These include regional HUD officers, Fannie Mae, community development corporations, and nonprofit housing developers.

**Community planners**
Individuals with responsibility for and expertise in land use planning can be of vital help in decoding the decision-making process for planning and zoning. Planning department directors and other staff planners, as well as planning commissioners, are critical stakeholders. Development firms and urban planning programs at local universities often house considerable expertise, and can provide critical resources later in the collaborative process such as facilitation skills and specialized research.

**Transportation officials**
Local, regional, and state transportation agencies house a range of important resources. Depending on the community, these agencies may include transit authorities, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and Regional District Councils, as well as local transportation departments and state Departments of Transportation.

**Urban design professionals**
Architects and urban design firms have a knowledge of the built environment that can be highly important to making communities more accessible and attractive to all residents and visitors, including older adults.

**Local nonprofits**
Nonprofit organizations have unique credibility among key constituencies as well as unique forms of expertise. They can help promote initiatives and get the most active and knowledgeable citizens involved. Some potential nonprofit stakeholders include bicycle and pedestrian advocates, affordable housing advocates, and human services groups.

**Children and youth organizations**
Public and nonprofit sector programs serving children and youth can provide resources benefiting older adults and also receive key benefits, such as volunteer support. As critical partners in intergenerational learning programs, their early participation in any community-wide collaborative can help develop "win-win" situations for the community.

**Local philanthropies**
Private foundations, community foundations, and United Way affiliates often have both a strong interest in issues relating to aging and important connections that can leverage community-wide participation.

## Get input before the first meeting

Targeted one-on-one outreach, through phone calls and meetings, is an important way to identify other key stakeholders. This outreach is essential to building a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for advancing an aging in place initiative. It's important to understand the different perspectives toward such a multifaceted issue—and to do so before the first group meeting has been held.

Some key outcomes from these one-on-one discussions include the following:

- **Increased understanding:** A greater understanding of both current and past collaborative efforts related to aging might include building awareness of affordable housing campaigns, downtown revitalization efforts, efforts to coordinate services and information delivery, and other efforts. Potential participants will have much greater confidence in a new initiative if they see that leaders have done their homework and understand specifically what is new and different about the proposed collaboration.

**Strategy**

### Face-to-face benefits

El Paso aging and disability advocates scheduled a series of meetings with city officials and housing leaders to listen to their priorities and build the upfront credibility of their collaboration. By their first meeting, a wide array of players including the mayor's office, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the local YWCA were already active participants.

**Strategy**

### Learning from history

Input from various stakeholders in a Denver-based effort to coordinate transportation services taught the convener, a respected local community foundation, why past efforts at collaboration had foundered: some key decision makers had not been identified and brought to the table. A broader outreach effort engaged key transportation policy makers and helped build an effective statewide coalition.

- **Better chemistry:** Leaders in different fields may have different styles of communication and different vocabularies. When the convener or other core stakeholders take time to get to know them, preparation for a successful first meeting becomes that much easier.
- **More trust:** When each potential stakeholder is given the opportunity to ask questions and provide input, and this input is reflected back during the initial meetings, the group will feel empowered and will be far more likely to bring the organizational resources they command to the table.
- **A broader net:** Knowledgeable leaders can help map the complex web of relationships in the community so that the collaboration can identify core stakeholders and other participants with specialized resources, such as subject expertise and credibility among key audiences, which can move the collaboration forward.

## Define your expectations

Much will be "in play" during the early stages of any collaboration, but a shared understanding of some basic parameters should be established at or near the start. If the collaboration has been convened by a local government official, clarity about the government's role in the collaboration is critical. Some questions might include the following:

- Does the local government see itself primarily as a convener, enabling stakeholders to meet and encouraging partnerships? Or does it plan to take a more active role and be a lead partner?
- Do local officials have specific concerns or priorities relating to aging? Is there really one major issue that is motivating the convening?
- Are there politically sensitive issues that would be better left unaddressed or taken up by another collaboration without government participation?

Similarly, participants should clearly understand what is expected of them:

- How many hours a week or month are they expected to commit?
- Has their agency or organization been invited because they are expected to have specific resources to offer (such as staff support, expertise, outreach, or funds)?
- Are they being asked simply to share ideas and build relationships, or are they expected to actively participate in a long-term effort?

**Strategy**

### Defining "community"

How participants wish to define the geographic scope of their community will depend on the composition of the group. In many instances, the answer will be fairly self-evident. A group convened by the mayor will be focused on its city or town, for example. Groups convened by private citizens and civic groups may be focused on a particular neighborhood or district of a larger locality. If stakeholders from across a metropolitan area can be convened, the collaboration may choose to embrace the entire metropolitan region as its scope.

## Focus on assets

Individuals, including leaders and experts, often are more sensitive to a community's problems and needs than to its opportunities and assets. But a skilled facilitator of the initial meetings should keep the focus on what a community has to offer rather than what it lacks. Every community has a wide range of resources available, such as specialized expertise, key personal and professional connections, and inexpensive or free skilled labor.

Look to local university programs that have skilled graduate students who are hungry for opportunities to give them real-world experience—as Chattanooga, Tennessee did when it staffed an urban design center with University of Tennessee students, helping spark a nationally renowned downtown revitalization.

Perhaps most important, seek the skills and resources possessed by the community's retirees. This is a huge and mostly untapped base. Older adults can serve directly in the community, and many communities are increasingly tapping into their skills for direct service needs. But they also have strategic expertise and credibility that can bolster a collaborative effort.

The communities that have been most successful at developing collaborations are those that have been most resourceful in tapping into their wide range of human and institutional assets.

# Step Two
## Assess the community's aging-readiness

A comprehensive assessment process has two major benefits:

- It provides a baseline for measuring future progress and setting priorities
- It spurs interagency dialogue about aging in place

Much of the information needed may already have been collected by various agencies; the main challenge is to pull it all together. A call from above (such as from a mayor or city manager) for a comprehensive assessment process is another tool for building partnerships among a broad base of stakeholders.

A comprehensive assessment helps identify and expose among a broader group the things that a community is *already* doing to advance aging in place. In this way, it helps a community build on existing efforts. An assessment process can show a community how to tweak existing programs and initiatives under an aging in place framework.

There are many assessment tools that communities can choose from and adapt for measuring their aging-readiness.

### Assessment tools

Appendix B has a checklist of key features of an aging-friendly community that will help you assess your community's readiness for an aging population—and enable you to set priorities for improvements. The following assessment tools can also be used to measure aging-readiness:

- *The AdvantAge Survey*, produced by the AdvantAge Initiative, uses 33 indicators to measure a community's livability for residents age 65 and older. The information is gathered through a telephone survey of older residents. The survey is a valuable tool for communities that have developed a broad leadership corps and are publicly committed to a long-term effort. Undertaking an AdvantAge Survey requires significant funding and a commitment to measure progress on an ongoing basis. www.vnsny.org/advantage/

**Strategy**

### A tale of two surveys

Different communities will have different needs and expectations for their survey tools. Two very different and equally successful survey experiences bear this out.

In Battle Creek, Michigan, the Area Agency on Aging convened a steering committee to focus on a specific issue: retaining and growing the town's population of skilled and prosperous baby boomers. As a way of beginning to explore the issue, the leaders created a survey form asking respondents about their preferred living options when they retired. The form was designed so that it could be completed in five minutes or less, and was distributed at an outdoor festival, in the local newspaper, and on the Internet. In a town of 50,000, the survey received an impressive 400 responses. Leaders used it to inform their strategic plan on aging and economic development.

In Dunedin, Florida, the mayor and city manager placed their support solidly behind an interdepartmental initiative with community-based input to make the town of 37,000 residents an "elder-friendly" community. The effort was supported by a statewide aging in place initiative that provided critical support to communities that underwent a process of self-assessment, planning, and implementation. Dunedin's assessment process, led by a subcommittee of the Committee on Aging, lasted seven months and included a detailed snapshot of housing costs and taxes, quality-of-life features, and community accessibility components. It involved all agencies in collecting information, channeled significant staff resources into collecting and analyzing data, and relied on extensive volunteer support. For example, citizens conducted a comprehensive audit of bus stops to assess the aging-readiness of the transit system. The town's restaurants were assessed for their lighting, noise levels, dietary issues, and other factors. Even as the assessment was being done, the town was developing projects to address identified priorities. Dunedin has received extensive statewide and national recognition for its subsequent innovations.

### The lesson:

Design your assessment tools according to the conditions you sense in the community, including leadership support, scope of the effort, and available resources.

- AARP's *Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide* is designed principally for private citizens and civic groups to use as an assessment and an educational tool. The guide offers comprehensive assessment tools for a broad range of livability components, such as housing, walkability, and health services. It is particularly valuable for its focus on the role of the built environment in influencing aging in place. Local governments can help promote the tool's use and provide citizens with needed data to complete the surveys. www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility/indliving/d18311_communities.html
- *The Michigan Community for a Lifetime Toolkit* provides a comprehensive tool for assessing 10 categories of livability, including walkability, housing, and enrichment. The assessment is meant to be undertaken as part of a long-term planning effort and complements other planning and implementation tools. The assessment can be downloaded at http://otsego.org/efc/assessment_tool.pdf

**Strategy**

### Westchester County builds a big tent

Over the past 15 years, a broad-based collaboration of business leaders, aging advocates, planners, elected leaders, and other stakeholders has taken hold in Westchester County, a large and increasingly diverse suburban area just north of New York City. Led by the commissioner of the Department of Senior Programs and Services (DSPS), the county forged a cross-cutting approach to aging and community planning.

In 1991, DSPS and business leadership joined forces to create the Westchester Public/Private Partnership for Aging Services. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the partnership creatively taps private sector funds to support enrichment programs and preventive health and wellness services—leveraging public resources for core operations. In 2000, the Partnership started the Millennium Aging Project (MAP), a five-year project that surveyed 3,000 residents of all ages to assess the needs of an aging population.

The partnerships were broadened and intensified when Westchester began planning for the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. This 18-month process engaged 270 volunteers from all walks of life—attorneys, business people, and consumer advocates, to name a few. Participants were mobilized through 18 caucuses on issues such as transportation, diversity, and intergenerational learning. Each caucus included subject experts and stakeholders with key related expertise; the transportation caucus, for example, included both the Commissioner of Transportation and a representative from DSPS.

This extensive planning process is funded by private grants and donations and supported by extensive contributions of expertise. DSPS and its partners have taken this energy and are developing an intergenerational county-wide initiative. Livable Communities: A Vision for All Ages has tremendous support from elected leaders, with a committed champion in the county executive. The county has developed a plan to provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions so that they can map assets and create their own, asset-based strategies to advance aging in place.

### Convene departments to gather information

With support from a leading elected or appointed official, a critical first step is to bring together heads of agencies or other key agency staff, including the Area Agency on Aging, human services, housing, planning, parks and recreation, transportation, public works, and economic development. Gathering the needed information for an assessment involves these basic steps:

- Review available assessment tools and create one that best fits your community
- Research existing data—for example, from census documents, housing studies, and comprehensive plans. Plug the existing data into the assessment
- Fill in the gaps

### Get input from the community

The process of gathering objective information should be complemented by public outreach to understand older residents' needs and priorities.

As the end users of public programs and services, residents provide expertise of a different sort—that is, the lessons learned through daily experience. Both subject expertise and lived experience are needed to set priorities for a long-term effort.

For example, input from residents of a Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) in Atlanta, Georgia, gathered through a door-to-door outreach campaign showed a prevailing concern about the safety and security of the neighborhood. Police statistics painted a different picture: reported crime in the area was relatively low. Subsequent discussions revealed that residents' deeper concern was a lack of communication with public safety programs. The Aging Atlanta initiative convened a year-long series of meetings between the community and fire and police departments. The initiative helped organize a community fashion show featuring various "models"—such as a water meter reader, a community police officer, and service personnel—to enable residents to better understand the various roles of the uniformed service personnel who commonly appeared in their community.

You can use a wide variety of methods to get community input. The AdvantAge Initiative survey is one example of a highly comprehensive and resource-intensive community survey tool. Other

methods require a smaller commitment of time and money, such as the following:

- Door-to-door outreach involving trained staff, such as social workers
- Written surveys distributed at events, online, and through other means
- Community forums and symposiums
- Focus groups

Whatever mix of methods you use, it's important to have a strategy for outreach with a common set of questions and a plan for collecting, recording, and organizing the information you get back—along with a sincere intent to use this information as the basis for planning.

### Identify challenges and opportunities

Use the completed assessment to target areas of the greatest concern and the best opportunities for moving forward. This could be done through a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis or through a simpler exercise. For example, the challenges and opportunities identified through the assessment might be listed on easel boards to engage stakeholders in a discussion to prioritize these points.

Stakeholders should discuss the degree to which they wish to publicize the results. In some instances, community assessments may be excellent tools for promoting the issue through media attention and building public awareness. Key statistics can be pulled to tell a powerful story.

For example, leaders in Indianapolis used its AdvantAge survey to build a public platform to address aging-related challenges. The degree to which you want to publicize the assessment results depends on the "ripeness" of the collaboration and stakeholders' willingness to step out into the public and commit the community to a long-term effort.

# Step Three
## Take focused action

In the march toward creating a livable community for all ages, individuals are inspired to move forward by a steady drumbeat of actions.

Some actions may take the form of major initiatives—such as a strategic planning process or the development of a housing facility. But many others, particularly in the early stages of a collaboration, will take the form of shorter-term projects. These projects have many benefits for a community-wide collaborative effort:

- They set achievable goals that show participants, "We can do this!"
- They involve participants in planning and build their capability to plan for longer-term goals, such as in a strategic planning process
- They involve the larger community
- They can get attention in the media and create a story about aging that shows what can be done—rather than just what problems they face
- They build trust among stakeholders and form a path toward deeper partnerships

Selecting and developing discrete, doable projects is critical to broadening the circle of stakeholders. These projects form a kind of gateway through which other community leaders and citizens begin to enter the collaboration and the broader community starts to take ownership of an aging in place agenda.

### Select a banner issue

To channel its energies, the core group should agree at an early stage (i.e., by the second meeting) to focus initially on one issue, such as mobility, improved service delivery, or older adult volunteerism. The process of agreeing on this issue is itself important and helps build unity. A good facilitator who can encourage without forcing consensus is essential for this.

The banner issue should be a motivator to action, an announcement to the community signaling not only that something "big" is getting started but also that it has a focus. It does not necessarily have to represent the most urgent issue. A community may have a major affordable housing problem, for example, but it may also have a complex history of trying to address this problem without many results. It is better to start with an issue that offers good chances of early success and many opportunities for collaboration.

**Strategy**

#### Battle Creek's downtown festival

The leaders of the aging in place initiative in Battle Creek, Michigan, organized a downtown baby boomer festival showcasing cultural activities, health care alternatives, and housing options. The event attracted more than 300 people over the course of a weekend. They used the festival to survey baby boomers about their preferred living options in the community when they retire. Outcomes included the following:

- The local newspaper promoted the festival through a special insert and devoted a feature article to housing and other community issues affecting residents' ability to age in place.
- The survey responses informed the development of the strategic plan.
- Relationships were built among key stakeholders, including downtown housing developers, health care practitioners, and museum officials.

**Above all, make the banner issue asset-driven rather than needs-driven.** What does the community have that it can build on now? In Fort Wayne, Indiana, for example, a strong network of transportation services and pedestrian-friendly planning motivated the selection of mobility as the banner issue. Lexington, Kentucky's ability to attract educated and affluent older adults motivated its "Engaging Aging" campaign, focusing on enhancing civic engagement and enrichment opportunities.

## Create an "easy win"

The emphasis of the first project should be to pique public interest and develop community buy-in. As a rule of thumb, the project should be completed within six months—a long enough time to plan and promote an effort, and discrete enough to keep participants engaged without exhausting their limited resources of time.

The first project can take several forms:

- **Public gatherings**—such as a community forum on transportation, a tour of age-appropriate housing options, a health fair, and so on. You can use information collected from the gathering (through breakout groups, short written surveys, and other means) to identify a priority need.
- **Awareness-raising events**—such as a Disability Awareness Day engaging public officials and decision makers to experience the community from the perspective of a person with disabilities, or a day of service mobilizing local government staff and other citizens to participate in home modification projects. These types of events can garner media attention and raise the profile of key aging in place issues.
- **Information clearinghouses**—stakeholders can compile a directory or other centralized information sources on transportation services, health services, housing programs, and so on to help residents make more informed decisions.

Projects are about details and follow-through. One person will need to step up to coordinate the project. That person will need help getting and following through on specific commitments of time and resources from stakeholders. Each stakeholder needs to commit resources to advancing the project—in the form of his or her own time and energy, funds, materials, contacts, and other needs. New participants need to be recruited to help with the countless tasks that go into every project. If the project is identified, developed, and managed well, there are few better ways of bringing new leaders into the collaboration and building its credibility.

### Thank participants

After the project is "done," make sure to build on its success. Thank all the people who made it happen, and find a way to celebrate, such as hosting a dinner or throwing a party. Make sure *all* participants are acknowledged—from the committee chairs to the volunteers who bought extra food at the last minute. Most important, communicate the project's success in the community, and use it to engage new stakeholders.

## Step Four
## Promote success

Getting tangible things done is critical to building momentum. Letting the community know what you've done is equally critical. With countless issues and responsibilities competing for the attention of citizens and community leaders, recognizing and showing successes keeps participants involved and brings new players on board.

### Celebrate success

All community teams need cheerleaders. There are many different ways to recognize and celebrate progress. Successes should be recognized as a regular part of communications within the core group. Being creative about this can go a long way. Coordinators of the initiative in Dunedin, Florida, used a "report card" to measure its progress, and the coordinator changed the color of the card each time it notched a new accomplishment. Even administrative tasks, such as keeping good meeting notes and maintaining up-to-date participant records, should be recognized for the value they create for any long-term, community-wide effort.

### Engage influencers

It is important to follow up projects with targeted outreach to a broader circle of community leaders. These individuals may not have the same stake in the issue as the core leaders, but they have unique abilities to influence the community in one way or another.

- **Elected officials:** If elected officials are not yet "on board," they need to be apprised about the collaboration. The first discussions may have to do less with policy than with possible ways they can help move the collaboration along, such as through convening meetings and identifying civic leaders.

- **Media:** The collaboration's first projects offer a good opportunity to "plant" aging in place issues in the local media and build relationships with reporters and television and radio stations. If a community has done a comprehensive assessment of its aging-readiness, leaders can use its findings in meetings with editorial boards.
- **Business leaders:** Chamber of commerce leaders and economic development officials should be educated about the economic aspects of aging in place.

## Dedicate staff time for coordination

Acknowledge that the collaboration has reached a new, more professional level. It has grown from a volunteer-driven effort into an ongoing enterprise that requires dedicated staff for coordination. This does not necessarily require funding to create a new position. Stakeholders often can creatively identify opportunities to free up staff time and carve out a part-time coordinator position. Just 10 to 20 hours a week from someone who has a gift for paying attention to detail and following up can work wonders in keeping the group on task. At the same time, the coordinator needs to have access to and support from members of the steering committee.

# Step Five
## Set a long-term course

A watershed in the life of any collaboration is the process of creating a strategic plan. Strategic plans set goals and outline strategies over a long time period, often as many as 20 to 30 years, a full generation.

A strategic plan is your "big picture" approach to building a livable community. It is your group's opportunity to "think big" about your community's challenges to aging in place and its opportunities for creating a truly livable community for everyone, including future generations. *What do you want your community to look like for you, your children, and their children?*

When done well, the strategic planning process can energize local leadership and give stakeholders an even deeper sense of ownership of the initiative.

### Define roles

The expanded group of stakeholders should agree on who the core stakeholders are and formalize this group as a steering committee. The steering committee will develop the strategic planning process, and it will be accountable to the community for achieving aging in place goals. Even more important than for the original core group, it is essential that many members of the steering committee have the authority to move key organizations and agencies toward these goals.

Be explicit about identifying who makes decisions, who provides input, what kinds of input are needed, and how the input will feed into decision making. Not everybody wants the burden of making decisions. Many people will gladly contribute as long as they understand their roles. The more clearly stakeholders see their value, the more invested they will be in the collaboration's success. A given individual can and often must play more than one role, but defining roles can help prevent overloading

**Strategy**

### Model strategic planning for aging: Central Virginia

More than 400 citizens and community leaders created Central Virginia's 2020 Community Plan on Aging through a two-year planning process. The convener and driving force for the planning process was the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA).

The process began in March 2001, with a conference involving more than 90 community leaders. JABA kept the momentum by holding seven additional public forums throughout the five-county area between March and June.

Based on the input of 359 community participants, JABA staff divided the planning process into four focus areas: cultural and recreational opportunities; citizen participation; health; and infrastructure and land use. A work group of 15 to 25 members was assembled for each area. Convened in March 2002, each of the work groups had identified and prioritized major goals by the second meeting (May 2002).

At the third meeting, in July 2002, the work group members were given an opportunity to comment on and prioritize goals in all areas across the plan. Each person selected the three goals they felt were most important to the plan. Out of this, four top goals emerged out of a total of 20:

- Promote access to high-quality health care, pharmaceuticals, and support services
- Provide a variety of quality affordable and accessible senior housing options integrated within the community, and provide safer, more convenient, flexible, and affordable transportation options
- Increase the availability and awareness of opportunities to address issues of seniors' social isolation
- Enhance services and advocacy activities to improve resources for seniors and caregivers

The work groups then developed action plans with timelines. The plans were reviewed by a 19-member steering committee, including community planners, JABA board members, health officials, academic leaders, housing advocates, advocates for the area's children and youth, and faith-based leaders.

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individuals with too much work. Inevitably, some stakeholders will take on a great deal of responsibility, but being clear about roles can ensure that no stakeholder is either excessively overloaded or overlooked.

In Las Vegas, for example, a clearer definition of roles became essential as more than 60 groups, organizations, agencies, and individuals joined in the collaboration to build an affordable assisted living center. As this campaign entered its most critical and labor-intensive phase, those involved in the collaboration established an executive committee to make the complex decisions needed to push the vision forward. Committee members included the stakeholders who had initially convened the collaboration, as well as the individuals who all participants agreed had the biggest investment in its goal. Meanwhile, the collaboration's stakeholders assigned other roles to participants, including gathering information, providing expertise, and advocating for local policy changes.

### Develop a planning process

The products of a strategic plan are straightforward and are familiar to public leaders:

- The **Vision** statement expresses, in succinct form, your dream for how your community should be
- The **Mission** statement expresses both what you want to accomplish (in the form of a brief formulation of your vision, such as "a livable community for all ages") and how you will accomplish it
- **Goals** are the long-term results that you need to achieve to make your vision and mission a reality
- **Objectives** express the activities and outcomes needed to reach your goals
- **Strategies** articulate the specific actions needed to meet the objectives

The process of creating these linchpins of the plan is complex, however, and requires careful planning—especially to gather and digest public input. To effectively carry out a strategic planning process, you must ensure the following:

- Know when the time is ripe for undertaking such a process. Does the community have enough confidence in the collaboration? Will participants have time to devote to an extended process? Will the community be able to follow through?
- Gather input from a wide cross-section of the community, including the leading stakeholders, key constituencies, and older residents, so that community members have an opportunity to express their views and feel that they are being heard.

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### Build key partnerships

Partnerships by the Jefferson Area Board for Aging established or strengthened during the planning process continued through the implementation of the plan.

Outcomes include:

- The University of Virginia Law School started an Advocacy Clinic for the Elderly to provide services for low-income older adults. Meanwhile, the university's provost obtained funding for applied research pilot projects. Students and faculty at the university's School of Architecture and Planning collected data and prepared analyses on health care facilities, housing needs, and a wide range of other issues.
- The Piedmont Housing Alliance, the area's leading housing and community development organization, provided low-cost loans and technical assistance for an innovative senior housing project.
- The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, which coordinates planning among the local jurisdictions, convened community charrettes, provided technical expertise, and offered a wide range of unique resources to expand housing and mobility options.

- Shape this input into a broad and coherent framework for moving forward.
- Express a compelling "vision" that distills input from hundreds or thousands of people into a statement that inspires most members of the community.

To meet the goal of gathering community input, you must have achieved the following:

- Developed channels for communicating and building trust with the community (through the community surveying, your initial project, the process of recruiting stakeholders and using their own networks, and other means)
- Completed the complex logistics of setting up community forums and other venues (which might include online forums, telephone calling, senior center meetings, and so on) for collecting input
- Identified experienced facilitators who can moderate discussions and scribes or tape recorders to record the input
- Secured a corps of stakeholders who can digest and analyze all the input, so that it can be presented in a coherent way, enabling well-informed decisions

Once the input has been assembled into a coherent and comprehensive report or some other similar format, it is time to make the hard decisions. A committee including steering committee members should be charged with shaping a first iteration of the plan. It will take several facilitated meetings to do this.

Present this rough cut of the plan to the broader circle of stakeholders and then refine it based on their input.

### Reinforce planning with projects

As you progress through the strategic planning process, you can continue to get things done and raise the community profile of the collaboration through more discrete projects. Most important, the strategic planning process itself will require a great deal of "in the trenches" effort, and it should be broken down into smaller chunks, both to manage the workload and show an action-oriented approach to the larger community. To complete a strategic planning process, you will have to undertake the following projects:

- Organize and publicize public forums
- Produce a report on public input
- Draft and revise the plan

Identify and recognize (once it is accomplished) each step along the way to build momentum and remind the public that something real and tangible is happening. Make the public forums fun and interactive. Set up a website that posts the latest results of the process, and publicize the process in the media. Remind all stakeholders that community-wide planning is a way of taking action.

## Create an action plan

A strategic plan provides the "10,000-foot view" of the opportunities to build a livable community. To anchor the strategic plan more firmly to the resources of your collaboration and the on-the-ground conditions in your community, develop one-year action plans that set forth the projects you will undertake to advance your strategies. Action plans identify the range of tasks in any project and the people who are going to complete these tasks. In addition, they provide budgets for the plan and timetables for when the work should be completed.

## Nurture new leaders

Successful collaborations are continually developing new leaders from various sectors of the community—such as neighborhood-based networks, business groups, and civic organizations. Part of the challenge lies in taking a flexible approach that provides structure and allows good ideas to be put into action.

A planning process may inspire new ideas and actions, and uncover existing projects and programs—for example, neighborhood-level programs to help older adults maintain their homes, or faith-based efforts to provide transportation services. A community-wide collaboration can provide an "umbrella" for these various efforts and offer small but meaningful resources, such as technical assistance, meeting space, and small grants.

The Aging Atlanta initiative, for example, has helped seed numerous local projects under the auspices of a broad partnership embracing a 10-county region. In one area, citizens received technical support to conduct a walkability audit and work with local officials to address problems. In another metro Atlanta county, the initiative helped older citizens become advocates for creating a senior-friendly housing ordinance. After that successful campaign, many of those same citizens are now working with the county transit agency and helping develop specific recommendations to improve services. In Dunedin, Florida, volunteers were empowered to do much of the critical on-the-ground research needed for its community assessment.

# Step Six
## Get resources

Successful collaborations are highly creative in identifying potential resources. Clearly, creating and implementing a strategic plan requires money. But the foundations of collaborations are laid through contributions of people's time, expertise, and other human resources. Funding is likely to follow a collaboration that shows evidence of a broad commitment of community resources.

The creation of a community-wide strategic plan on aging offers tremendous opportunities to tap into a broad range of resources. A strategic plan is a tangible product that can be "shopped" to philanthropies, business leaders, state and federal government officials, and other potential sources of funding and support. In addition, the planning process often builds partnerships and nontraditional alliances, which can attract the interest of private funders.

### Conclusion

Collaboration is an investment. It requires tremendous time and energy before tangible dividends can be earned. Once results begin to emerge, in the form of short-term projects, the effort must be nurtured and guided through strategic planning and implementation. This kind of civic capital is created through the efforts of individuals who have both stature and commitment to a larger vision. In turn, this kind of leadership requires a process—a process that usually involves the six steps outlined here. Local leadership to tackle any major challenge requires a constant give-and-take exchange among stakeholders to identify and act on common priorities. When a broad range of community leaders unite to identify common goals and work together toward achieving these goals, creative solutions emerge and communities change.

# Appendix A

**Table 2: Resources for Focusing Community Energies on Aging in Place and Developing a Livable Community for All Ages**

| Name | Description | Web site URL |
|---|---|---|
| | **General** | |
| Aging in Place Initiative | A joint project of Partners for Livable Communities and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. This website offers an array of tools for identifying, convening, and organizing discussion among a broad stakeholder base. | www.aginginplaceinitiative.org |
| Community Partnerships for Older Adults | This program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers in-depth guidance on building community collaborations to meet the current and future needs of older adults. | www.partnershipsforolderadults.org |
| International City/County Management Association | Provides local government leaders with tools and promising practices addressing livability for older adults | www.icma.org/aging |
| | **Assembling a team** | |
| Partners for Livable Communities, *Community Empowerment Manual* | Draws on Partners' 30 years of experience in facilitating broad livability collaborations in a wide range of communities across the United States. Chapter 2 provides many practical tips for developing a broad-based stakeholder group. | www.livable.com |
| National League of Cities | Offers tools for developing an inclusive, collaborative, and effective relationship built on trust between citizens and government. | www.nlc.org |
| | **Assessing the community's aging-readiness** | |
| Community ToolBox: Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development | Offers various tools for community assessment, such as listening sessions, Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analyses, and asset inventorying. | http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/part_B.htm |
| AdvantAge Initiative | Offers tools for participatory planning and engaging older citizens in community assessment. The AdvantAge Survey uses a telephone survey of residents to gather information and assess a community's aging-readiness. | www.vsny.org/advantage |

| Name | Description | Website URL |
|---|---|---|
| **Setting a long-term course** | | |
| Michigan Community for a Lifetime Recognition program | Offers a detailed assessment tool for Michigan communities that can be adapted in other states. | http://otsego.org/efc/assessment_tool.pdf |
| National Park Service Northeast Regional Office, Community Toolbox for Public Participation | Includes tools for developing action agendas, identifying goals, and setting priorities. | www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox |
| Community Problem Solving | Offers tools for public, nonprofit, and private sector leaders to collectively address significant issues such as housing. | www.community-problem-solving.org/ |
| Lincoln Filene Center (Tufts University), "Kernels of Democracy" | Distills 22 lessons learned from a study of participatory democracy in several communities. Includes guidance on promoting initiatives and ensuring broad community-wide awareness and participation. | www.cpn.org/topics/community/kernels.html |
| Kettering Foundation Website | Offers resources for strengthening democracy, including developing citizen leadership within communities. | www.kettering.org |
| Jefferson Area 2020 Plan | Provides extensive information on the planning and implementation process in the Jefferson Area Planning District in Central Virginia. | www.jabacares.org/about~mission.html#p2 |

# Appendix B

## Assessing Your Community's Aging-Readiness: A checklist of key features of an aging-friendly community

Use this series of questions to collect information and conduct a "litmus test" of your community's livability for older adults. The questions provide a basic checklist that you can use to identify key issues and priorities.[1]

### Housing

- ☐ What proportion of households headed by someone age 65 and above pay more than 30 percent of annual income on housing?
- ☐ Are skilled, reasonably priced home modification and repair services available to residents?
- ☐ Does your community provide modified services for older and disabled residents (such as snow shoveling and backyard trash pickup)?
- ☐ Are assisted living options available and affordable to a broad range of residents?

### Planning and Zoning

- ☐ Does your zoning code allow flexible housing arrangements, such as accessory dwelling units and homesharing?
- ☐ Does the zoning code allow mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development in appropriate areas (such as town centers)?
- ☐ Does your comprehensive plan take into account an aging population and the needed adjustments in land use to accommodate this trend?
- ☐ Can residents safely and conveniently get necessary goods and services without having to drive?
- ☐ Do most residents (a) understand the process by which decisions about development are made, and (b) consider the process fair and predictable?

### Transportation

- ☐ Are varied types of community transportation options available?
- ☐ Can most residents walk or use a community transportation option to get to a grocery store, doctor's office, and pharmacy?
- ☐ Are bus stops enclosed, do they have seating, and do they post timetables?
- ☐ Have community transportation services, including public transit, incorporated programs and plans to increase ridership by older adults, such as travel training programs, route and service adjustments, low-floor buses, discounted fares, and so on?

[1] This checklist draws on more detailed planning assessment tools such as the AdvantAge Survey, Michigan's Community for a Lifetime Recognition program, and AARP's Livable Communities Evaluation guide. For more information on these tools, see Chapter 3, "Turning Best Practices into Common Practice: Six Steps for Focusing Community Energies on Aging in Place".

- ☐ Has the community audited key areas for walkability and developed local pedestrian and bicycle improvement plans based on these audits? Is the community dedicating local transportation funding to these projects?
- ☐ Are comprehensive land use plans coordinated with transportation planning?

## Health and Supportive Services

- ☐ Is there at least one primary care physician for every 1,000 residents (of all ages)?
- ☐ Are residents offered free preventive screenings, such as mammograms and blood pressure checks?
- ☐ Are inexpensive transportation services offered to and from health care facilities?
- ☐ Can residents easily find out about and participate in exercise and wellness programs?

## Culture and Lifelong Learning

- ☐ Does the library in your community have a program to deliver books to people in their homes?
- ☐ Do community centers or other public facilities offer informational programs on topics of interest to older adults?
- ☐ Are there opportunities in your communities in which older adults can continue learning?
- ☐ Are low-cost programs teaching computer skills available and marketed to older adults?
- ☐ Is it easy for residents of all ages, backgrounds, and cultural interests to participate actively in the civic and cultural life of the community?

## Public Safety

- ☐ Would most older adults say they feel safe living in the community?
- ☐ Do police and fire departments actively focus on preventing injuries and threats to older adults?
- ☐ Do law enforcement and fire department employees receive training on how to be sensitive to the changing needs of adults as they age?
- ☐ Does the community have a Neighborhood Watch program?

## Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

- ☐ Is there a central clearinghouse that people can visit or call to learn about volunteer opportunities?
- ☐ Do older adults commonly serve on government advisory boards and other committees?
- ☐ Do local nonprofits and other community organizations provide meaningful volunteer opportunities suited to older adults?
- ☐ Have older adults been surveyed about their volunteer interests?

# Appendix C

## Resources

### Background Information

AARP. 2006. *Aging, Migration, and Local Communities: The Views of 60+ Residents and Community Leaders.* www.aarp.org/research/

AARP. 2005. *Beyond 50.05: A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging.* Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute. www.aarp.org

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Frey, William H. 1999. *Beyond Social Security: The Local Aspects of an Aging America.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. www.brookings.org

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and the MetLife Foundation. 2006. *The Maturing of America: Getting Communities on Track for an Aging Population.* www.n4a.org/pdf/MOAFinalReport.pdf

Partners for Livable Communities. 2005. *Aging in Place: Making Communities More Livable for Older Adults.* Washington, DC: Partners for Livable Communities. http://aipi.n4a.org/index.htm

White House Conference on Aging. 2005. *2005 White House Conference on Aging: Report to the President and the Congress.* www.whcoa.gov

### Housing

Ball, M. Scott. 2001. *Aging in Place: A Toolkit for Local Governments.* Atlanta: Atlanta Regional Commission and Community Housing Resource Center. www.atlantaregional.com

The Cohousing Association of the United States website. www.cohousing.org

Lawler, Kathryn. 2001. *Aging in Place: Coordinating Housing and Health Care Provision for America's Growing Elderly Population.* Cambridge, MA: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University and Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. www.nw.org/network/comstrat/aginginplace/reports.asp

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. 2002. *Aging in Place: Solutions to a Crisis in Housing and Care.* www.nw.org/network/comstrat/aginginplace

*A Quiet Crisis in America: A Report to Congress by the Commission on Affordable Housing and Health Facility Needs for Seniors in the 21st Century.* 2003.

## Planning and Zoning

Goldberg, David. 2005. *Choosing Our Community's Future: A Citizen's Guide to Getting the Most Out of New Development.* Smart Growth America. www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

Howe, Deborah. 2001. *Aging and Smart Growth: Building Aging-Sensitive Communities.* The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. www.fundersnetwork.org

## Transportation

Bailey, Linda. 2004. *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options.* Washington, DC: Surface Transportation Policy Project.

Community Transportation Association of America. 2003. *Senior Transportation: Toolkit and Best Practices.* www.ctaa.org

International City/County Management Association. 2003. *Active Living for Older Adults: Management Strategies for Healthy and Livable Communities.* www.icma.org/aging

Straight, Audrey, Anita Stowell Ritter, and Ed Evans. 2002. *Understanding Senior Transportation: Report and Analysis of a Survey of Consumers Age 50+.* AARP Public Policy Institute. www.aarp.org/ppi

Transportation Research Board. 2004. *Transportation in an Aging Society: A Decade of Experience.* www.trb.org

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). 2003. *Safe Mobility for a Maturing Society: Challenges and Opportunities.* www.crag.uab.edu/safemobility/SafeMobility.pdf

## Health and Supportive Services

Generations United. 2006. *Intergenerational Shared Sites: Making the Case, and Intergenerational Shared Sites: Troubleshooting.* www.gu.org.

Krassner, Enid. 2006. *Home Care Quality: Emerging State Strategies to Deliver Person-Centered Services.* AARP Public Policy Institute. Available at www.aarp.org/research/

National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. 2004. Caregiving in the U.S. www.caregiving.org

## Culture and Lifelong Learning

Partners for Livable Communities, Culture Builds Community program. www.livable.com/culture_builds/index.htm

National Center on Creative Aging. www.creativeaging.org

SeniorNet. www.seniornet.org

### Public Safety

National Center on Elder Abuse website. www.elderabusecenter.org

### Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

Calgary Elder-Friendly Communities website. www.elderfriendlycommunities.org

Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health. 2004. *Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement.* Boston, MA: Harvard School of Public Health. www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/reinventingaging/Report.pdf

Civic Ventures website. www.civicventures.org

Freedman, Marc. 1999. Prime Time: *How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America.* New York: Public Affairs.™

Generations United website. www.gu.org

The Next Chapter. A project of Civic Ventures that provides expertise and assistance to community groups across the country working to help people in the second half of life set a course, connect with peers, and find pathways to significant service. www.civicventures.org/nextchapter/overview.cfm

### Focusing Community Energies

AARP Public Policy Institute. 2005. *Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide.* Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University Herberger Center for Design Excellence. www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility/indliving/d18311_communities.html

Administration on Aging and Center for Home Care Policy and Research, Visiting Nurse Service of New York. 2005. *2005 Livable Communities for All Ages Competition.* www.vnsny.org

AdvantAge Initiative. Online Toolkit. Features tools for engaging all members of the community in planning activities. www.vnsny.org/advantage/resources.html#tool

Center for Home Care Policy and Research, Visiting Nurse Service of New York. 2003. *Best Practices: Lessons for Communities in Supporting the Health, Well-Being, and Independence of Older People.* New York, NY: Center for Home Care Policy and Research. www.vnsny.org

# Notes

[i] Wan He, Manisha Sengupta, Victoria A. Velkoff, and Kimberly A. DeBarros, *65+ in the United States* (National Institutes of Health and U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), 1.

[ii] Lisa Hetzel and Annetta Smith, *The 65 Years and Older Population: 2000* (U.S. Census Bureau, October 2001), 7.

[iii] U.S. Census Bureau, *Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Annual Statistics* (2006), available at www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/hvs.html.

[iv] Adopted from M. Scott Ball, *Aging in Place: A Toolkit for Local Governments* (Community Housing Resource Center, 2001), 9–10.

[v] Jon E. Burkhardt, Adam T. McGavock, and Charles A. Nelson, *Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons* (Transportation Cooperative Research Program Report No. 82, 2002), 1:ES-1.

[vi] Anita Stowell Ritter, Audrey Straight, and Ed Evans, *Understanding Senior Transportation: Report and Analysis of a Survey of Consumers Age 50+* (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2002), 32–33.

[vii] See, for example, *The MetLife Caregiving Cost Study: Productivity Losses to U.S. Businesses* (MetLife Mature Market Institute and National Alliance for Caregiving, 2006).

[viii] International City/County Management Association, *Managing Active Living Communities* (2004), 1–2.

[ix] Adapted from International City/County Managers Association, *Health and Food Access: The Local Government Role* (2006), 4–7.

[x] He et al., 65+ in the United States (National Institutes of Health and U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), 3.

[xi] Center for Home Care Policy and Research, *A Tale of Two Older Americas: Community Opportunities and Challenges* (2004), 7.

[xii] See, for example, "'Peace Making Circles' Overcome Generational and Cultural Barriers in Milwaukee," *Community View* newsletter (Community Partnerships for Older Adults, December 2005), available at www.partnershipsforolderadults.org.

[xiii] Center for Home Care Policy and Research, *A Tale of Two Older Americas*, 7.

[xiv] Statistics in this section are drawn from the *National Elder Abuse Incidence Study*, prepared for the Administration for Children and Families and Administration on Aging by the National Center on Elder Abuse (1998), 1–30.

[xv] Richard Adler, *Engaging Older Adults in After-School Programs* (Civic Ventures, 2002), 10.

[xvi] Joanne D. Meier and Marcia Invernizzi, "Book Buddies in the Bronx: Testing a Model for America Reads," *Journal of Education and Students Placed at Risk* 6.4 (2001): 319–33.

## About the Aging in Place Initiative

Aging in Place is an initiative of Partners for Livable Communities (Partners) and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). It was developed to help America's communities prepare for the aging of their populations and to become places that are good to grow up, live in and grow old.

For the past three years, Partners and n4a have worked directly with nine laboratory communities to assist them to advancing policies, programs and services to promote Aging in Place. What we have learned from these efforts is that many community leaders are taking positive steps toward a livable community with no age boundaries, but other communities are unsure where to begin.

In 2006, n4a collaborated with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National League of Cities (NLC) and Partners for Livable Communities, with support from MetLife Foundation, to conduct a survey of the nation's cities and counties to determine how they were addressing the needs of their aging populations. The report from this survey, *The Maturing of America: Getting Communities on Track for an Aging Population,* can be downloaded at www.aginginplaceinitiative.org.

To help those communities that have begun the journey and those yet to take the first step, Partners and n4a joined again with ICMA, NLC and NACo and with additional support from MetLife Foundation to produce a comprehensive toolkit, *A Blueprint for Action: Developing Livable Communities for All Ages.* We hope the *Blueprint* will be used to facilitate community-wide discussion, assessment and action to ensure that America's cities and counties take advantage of the changing demographics to become livable for all ages. Additional copies of the *Blueprint* and other useful resources can be downloaded at www.aginginplaceinitiative.org.

**MetLife Foundation—**Established in 1976 by MetLife for the purpose of supporting education, health, civic and cultural organizations. In aging, the Foundation funds programs that promote healthy aging and address caregiving issues, intergenerational activities, mental fitness and volunteerism. www.metlife.org

**Partners for Livable Communities (Partners)—**A national, nonprofit organization working to renew communities for all ages. www.livable.com

**National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)—**A leading voice on aging issues for Area Agencies on Aging across the country. www.n4a.org

**ICMA (International City/County Management Association)—**The premiere local government leadership and management organization. http://icma.org

**National Association of Counties (NACo)—**A national organization representing county governments in the US. www.naco.org

**National League of Cities (NLC)**—The largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States. www.nlc.org

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