Livable Communities:

An Evaluation Guide

AARP® Public Policy Institute

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Livable Communities:

An Evaluation Guide

Prepared for the AARP Public Policy Institute

by
Arizona State University
Herberger Center for Design Excellence

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Based on the earlier publication, *Liveable Communities: An Evaluation Guide*, by Patricia Baron Pollak, © AARP 2000

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Interested in learning more about livable communities? Beyond 50.05, A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging articulates a vision of livable communities for persons of all ages, and particularly for people age 50 and older. The report presents AARP's new agenda for examining, building and retrofitting our communities to support successful aging. For more, visit AARP's website at www.aarp.org/beyond50

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

We all want to live in a livable community. Each of us has his or her own image of what such a community should look like. That image is shaped, in part, by our reaction to the communities in which we now live or used to live. For older residents, a livable community would include elements that help them to maintain independence and quality of life.

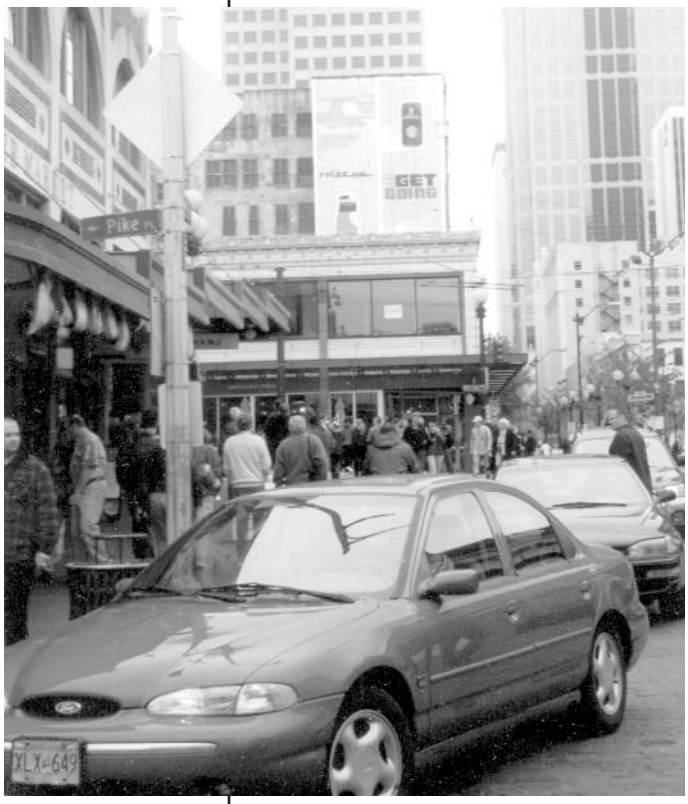
The physical characteristics of a community often play a major role in facilitating our personal independence. A safe pedestrian environment, easy access to grocery stores and other shops, a mix of housing types, and nearby health centers and recreational facilities are all important elements that can positively affect our daily lives. However, poor community design can make it difficult for us to remain independent and involved in the community around us. For instance, a limited mix of housing types can be a challenge to aging within the same community; poorly maintained sidewalks can be a personal safety concern; and physical barriers, such as busy highways and high walls, can divide and isolate communities.

> *A livable community is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate mobility options, which together facilitate personal independence and the engagement of residents in civic and social life.*

The purpose of this Livable Communities Evaluation Guide is to encourage us to take a new look at the community or neighborhood in which we now live. Although this guide is written from the perspective of older persons, the features and services discussed promote livability for persons of all ages and abilities. The intent is not to "grade" or rank communities, but rather to help residents identify areas where they can direct their energies toward making their community more livable for themselves and others. Livability will only become a reality in our individual communities and neighborhoods if citizens actively take charge and move to bring about key changes.

Creating and Updating the Livable Communities Evaluation Guide

In 2000, AARP published *Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide*, prepared by Patricia Pollack of Cornell University, so that older volunteers and other interested community members could assess the capacity of their community to meet the needs of older adults. The survey proved to be a useful tool for community volunteers who wanted to take a closer look at their own communities as a starting point for mobilizing others to effect change. This updated Guide builds on the previous document but reflects additional interests and concerns. It also includes new success stories and offers follow-up contact information and new references, including references to useful Internet sites. Although Internet references to specific documents may change over time, the basic sites will continue to be useful. Older residents, as well as others in the broader community, increasingly rely on the Internet as a valuable source of information. For those who do not own their own computers, many senior centers and public libraries have computers available for public access and offer computer classes as well.



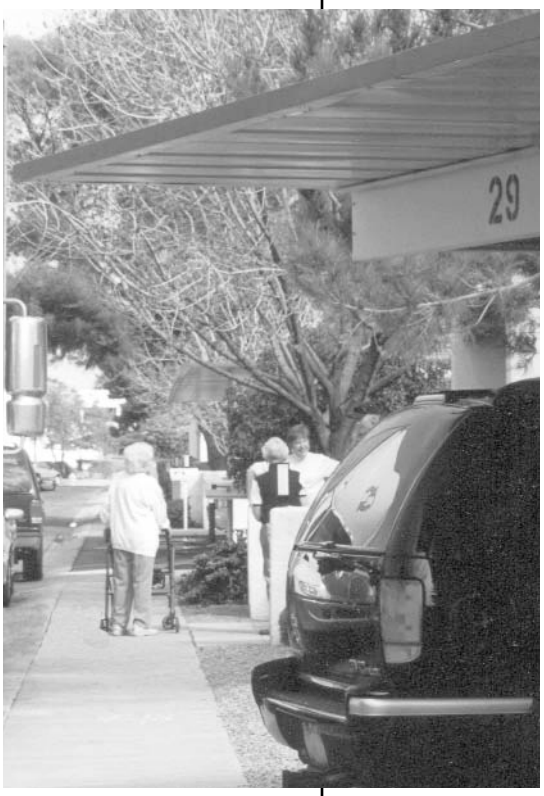
Involving Focus Groups

An important part of creating this updated Guide was the active participation of older community residents across the country. In an effort to gain a broad awareness of current perceptions of livability and community issues, a research team conducted 14 focus groups with older residents and caregivers in 13 cities in five areas of the country. The communities included Sun City, Pebble Creek, and Mesa, Arizona; Boone and Gowrie, Iowa; Borough Park, Bayridge, Hempstead, and Northport, New York; Carnation, Renton, and Bellevue, Washington; and Sarasota and St. Petersburg, Florida.

Collectively, these groups were diverse in income, race, and ethnicity. They included participants from age-restricted and intergenerational communities as well as communities in rural, urban, and suburban areas. These communities ranged in population from less than 1,000 to significantly more than one million residents. All par-

ticipants were living independently, and most were actively engaged in their communities. In addition to these focus groups, the research team created an interactive website, which attracted responses from 80 older citizens from across the country.

Participants in each focus group were selected to represent a range of interests and expertise in a given community. The participants themselves defined "community" in ways that reflected their own experiences. Some defined community in terms of the formal geographic boundaries of a particular city or subdivision; others defined it in terms of a neighborhood or particular older adult housing complex and nearby environs. Still others saw their community reaching out to include those who were linked by common organizations and associations. This type of variation is also anticipated from those who will use this guide.



Defining Elements of Livability

Despite their diverse mix of communities and participants, all of the focus groups agreed on a common definition of a livable community that is friendly to older adults- a caring community that offers a high quality of life and fosters continued independence. Each group independently developed its own list of elements that participants felt characterized an older adult-friendly community. The lists were remarkably similar. They noted in particular the importance of nearby quality health facilities, a reliable public transportation system, variety in housing types, a safe and secure environment, access to shopping, a physical environment that fosters walking ("walkability"), and opportunities for recreation and culture. Respondents to the online survey identified very similar areas of concern.

Each focus group then proceeded to conduct an initial on-the-spot community self-assessment to explore the ways in which its own community reflected its image of livabil-

ity, noting areas that needed improvement. The elements that the groups identified as improving livability reflected the participants' personal experience as well as their collective perception of the community in which they lived. The Internet responders also underscored positive aspects of their community and those that needed attention.

Moving from Discussion to Action

Several of the focus groups actually began to plan an action strategy to address issues that they had identified as needing attention. The agenda varied considerably depending on the setting and the participants' experience. For example, topics of interest included advocating for more local dial-a-ride services, pressing for a senior center in a forgotten part of the community, raising funds for a new intergenerational center, facilitating better communication strategies among community groups, advocating for more accessibility options in new homes, and identifying ways to increase opportunities for social interaction.

The *Guide* as a Step toward Action

It may be difficult for a small group to change a whole community, but residents can draw attention to an issue that is important to them and join forces with others who share similar concerns. Older volunteers in communities across the nation have done exactly that. In one community, for example, an organized group of older adults pushed for installation of a pedestrian walk signal. In another community, a group organized to keep the local hospital from closing.

This *Guide* is intended to empower groups of older volunteers to better understand their communities and work to improve them. It offers a series of community self-assessment surveys that will help groups to identify issues of concern, and it provides contacts to whom volunteers can express those concerns. The issue areas highlighted in these surveys reflect concerns raised within the focus groups and the Internet website, as well as other suggestions based on experience. Individuals and groups using this *Guide* are sure to identify additional

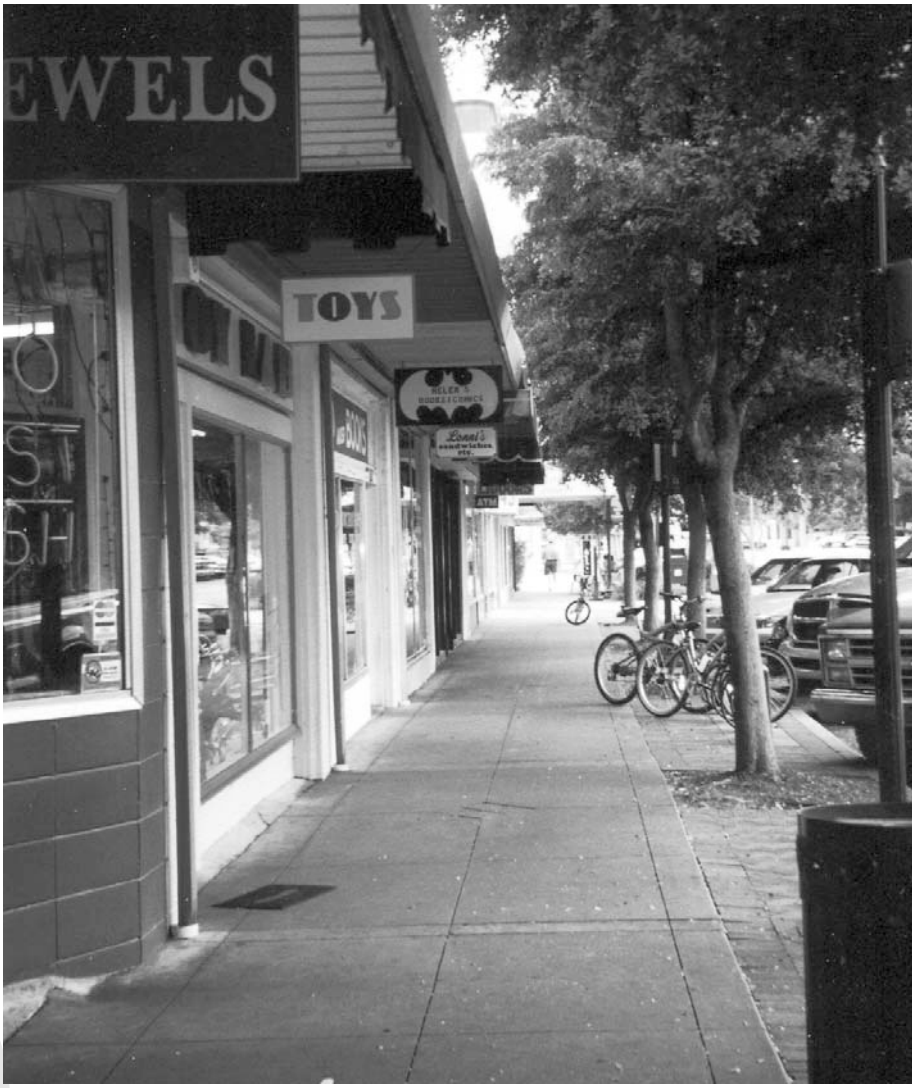
issues for their communities. What is important is for each group to select an issue that its members are deeply concerned about-and can do something about-and to address this challenge.

How to Use the *Guide*

Part II, Introducing the Community Survey, provides general information about the reasons why a group may want to conduct a community survey; describes the general process for carrying out a survey, including any advance preparation tasks; and outlines a range of steps that groups can take to follow up on their findings. Before you begin a community survey process, read this section carefully; it provides useful information that applies to all of the surveys.

Part III, Conducting the Community Survey, is divided into sections according to issue areas that groups of active older persons have identified as important to maintaining independence and quality of life. Each section offers a description of livability as it relates to that issue area, a survey to guide a new look at a community or neighborhood, and a set of follow-up steps to address those issues.

Part IV, More Information and Contacts, identifies a variety of additional resources and sources of information.



PART 2

INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Why Conduct a Community Survey?

Your group's motivations for conducting a survey may vary. Perhaps you merely want to better understand your community and what might make it more or less livable for older adults. Or you may have identified a specific area of concern and want to find out more about it so that your group can begin to fix the problem.

Whatever your motivation, the surveys in this Guide can help you take a new look at your community and move ahead with a workable agenda that will help to further the independence of older adults and enhance your community's quality of life.

This introduction to the survey summarizes the survey process and offers suggestions to help you prepare for, conduct, and follow up on any of the surveys found here. Additional information that is specific to individual issue areas can be found with those surveys in Part III.

Getting Started

Who Should Be Involved?

No group can represent all the interests and concerns of the older residents in a community or neighborhood. Nevertheless, a discussion that involves the active participation of concerned individuals can begin to outline the aspects of the community that make it livable and point to issues and concerns that need to be addressed to make it even more livable.

Each community or neighborhood has individuals who are either leaders or people who are anxious to become involved. These people may already be active in community groups like the hospital auxiliary, the library board, or a homeowners' or tenants' association. They may volunteer at a senior center or in a faith-based group. Some may be active members of AARP, civic associations, or service clubs. Ideally, a number of these active volunteers are older or work closely with older adults. The intent is not simply to identify community problems, but actually to develop strategies to deal with those issues.

Hence, it is helpful if these initial participants are well-connected within their community. A larger group of residents may become involved once an agenda is identified.

Who Convenes the Group?
Your group of concerned and committed volunteers will need someone to convene meetings and keep the discussion on target. That person could be in a position of leadership, perhaps with a senior center, a faith-based group, a residents' association, or a volunteer organization. Obviously, the backgrounds of conveners will vary, but anyone who takes on the task of guiding a community assessment will need leadership skills and the ability to follow up once the group identifies a community concern. To be effective, a convener should not direct the group, but rather encourage it to develop its own agenda.

The convener is responsible for assembling the participants (with help from others in the community), finding meeting times and places, and launching discussion on aspects of the community that further or hinder independence.

Deciding on a Topic or Topics
Once the group is convened, you will probably want to have several initial discussions about your community and its needs. Based on what emerges from these discussions, your group should identify one or more areas of primary concern that you can examine in greater depth through a community assessment survey. The purpose of these surveys is not to rate your community, but rather to define the issue more clearly and identify a specific agenda that energizes the group.

Preparing to Conduct a Survey
Before the group plunges in with a survey, its members must prepare adequately. Below are several steps that your group can take to make the survey process more efficient and effective. These steps are summarized in a checklist that is found at the beginning of each survey.

Review the Sample Surveys
The survey questions offered with each section of the Guide are intended to get your group started. Some questions will not be relevant for your community, or you may think of others that should be included. Use the overview material provided at the beginning of each section as a starting point for discussion. Then look at the questions provided for the assessment survey and refine them so that they relate specifically to your community's particular issues.

Define Your Community
Before proceeding with a survey, members of your group should agree on the community you wish to assess in light of the particular issue covered by that survey. The Guide is intended to encourage action in a variety of areas. It can be used in neighborhoods as well as in small towns. You may want to use established legal boundaries to define your community, or you may find that other definitions are more meaningful. If you decide to conduct more than one survey, your definition of community may differ from one survey to another.

In many ways, the composition of your group and the experience of its members will define the community. A community is the place where residents primarily conduct their daily lives. For suburban communities, the geographic area can be much broader than for an urban neighborhood or a small town. The issue area you select also will help to define the community. A focus on a walkable, pedestrian environment, for example, defines a much smaller community than does a focus on community health facilities. The community's ability to promote and maintain independence for older persons will be a key

element of any definition.

Gather Materials
Several materials are indispensable for conducting a community assessment survey. Make sure your volunteers have these before starting:

Street maps of your community. Maps will help volunteers know what area they must cover in the survey. Maps are also essential because you will use them to mark items of importance to a specific survey, such as:

- sections of the community with a significant number of older residents;
- places where people meet, such as meeting halls, schools, recreation facilities;
- bus routes and other public transportation items of interest;
- intersections or street signs that are challenging for older drivers;
- shopping and restaurants;
- cultural facilities; and
- health facilities and services.

Clipboards to hold the surveys and extra paper in case volunteers want to write notes to supplement survey responses and marks on street maps. A handheld voice recorder may be an alternative to writing notes.

- Pens, pencils, and highlighters.
- A tape measure may be handy occasionally (e.g., for measuring the width of sidewalks in the "Walkability" survey).

■ A stopwatch or watch with a second hand may be useful for assessing the adequacy of crosswalk signals and the time it takes to cross certain intersections.

■ Comfortable clothes and walking shoes. Volunteers may spend a lot of time walking while conducting the survey, so they should wear comfortable clothing and sturdy walking shoes.

■ A camera can record important aspects of a survey, such as unsafe street crossings, lack of accessibility for persons with disabilities, or inadequate recreational facilities. Photos serve as documentation for the survey and become an important tool for illustrating examples of the problem to a broad audience. They are also important for documenting positive findings that can be shown as examples of how to do something right. A digital camera is especially useful because images can be transmitted electronically.

■ A flashlight may be useful as well, especially if your survey requires volunteers to be out at night.

Collect Useful Background Information

After reviewing the sample survey for the issue area you have chosen to investigate, you may find that you need to know a few facts about your community, such as zoning or preservation ordinances covering different types of buildings or regulations about sidewalk snow removal. Find out what local agency is responsible for the issue area you have identified. Determine the existing requirements and who has authority to change them. Consider reading back issues of your local paper to learn about issues affecting your community that may be covered by your survey, such as crime and safety, health care, or

recreation and leisure activities. You'll want to find out whether older residents are clustered in certain parts of your community. Finding out whether other community groups or local or state agencies are conducting similar surveys also can be extremely useful because it may influence your efforts or suggest partners for collaboration. You also may want to do some research on the experience of other communities in addressing your issues of concern. Details about their efforts, successes, and lessons learned may be very useful in helping you plan your work and may help you bolster your cause after you have completed your survey and begun addressing your findings.

Spend some time gathering background information before you start your survey. Here are some places to go for different types of information:

- For census information, try the public library or your city or county planning office. (Complete accuracy is not as important as getting a general idea of locations with concentrations of older residents.)

- For zoning and preservation information, try the city or county planning office.

- For regulations (such as snow removal), try the relevant local government agency responsible for that issue (for example, the city manager's office or the department of public works or parks and recreation).

- To find out whether other groups are conducting similar surveys, check with the relevant local government agency responsible for that issue, look for coverage in your local newspaper, ask citizens groups that may be concerned about the issue, or ask members of your group.

Enlist Allies and Partners

Enlisting the support and collaboration of others can go a long way toward making your efforts go smoothly-from gathering information before you start, to actually conducting your survey, to acting once it's done. The degree to which you involve these individuals or groups is up to you. You may want to develop a relationship with members of the group because they can help you get the information you need. You may want to inform them of your activities occasionally, or you may want to include them as members of your group. You may want to involve them in only one phase of your activities or work with them throughout the process. You may want to enter into a full-scale partnership to address a particular agenda. For example, because public officials have many demands on their time, it may be useful to invite a city council member or other sympathetic official to sit in on a meeting. That person would hear directly from citizens about how that issue affects them. The official could then be encouraged to "adopt" the issue and help move it forward among his or her colleagues.

Here are some groups to consider enlisting as allies or partners:

- local library staff;
- parks and recreation department staff;
- local police;
- local media;
- city or county planning groups;
- city or county council staff;
- local or city tourist board;
- local theater or arts groups;
- business groups or the chamber of commerce;
- community service organizations;
- faith communities; and
- other community groups.

Complete Other Advance Preparation Tasks

- Form survey teams. Create teams of two to five volunteers to conduct the survey. Working in pairs or small groups will stimulate discussion and also help with personal safety when volunteers are surveying. When creating your teams, emphasize the benefits of participating -

working on a survey is an opportunity to get some exercise, socialize with friends and meet new people, and help improve the community.

- Ask for volunteers to carry out specific responsibilities. You will need people to drive volunteers around the survey area, fill out the survey form and take additional notes, make telephone calls, visit local or city officials, do research, and perform many other jobs.

- Create a schedule. Make sure you allow plenty of time for the survey.

- Make sure that volunteers are familiar with the survey area before they begin. If volunteers know where they are going and what they need to look for before they actually begin, they will be able to conduct the survey more effectively.

Conducting the Survey

Having identified your areas of concern and completed all your advance preparation, you're ready to begin conducting your survey. Each of the eight sections that follow gives specific background information and guidance for conducting a survey on that topic. These topics include:

- transportation;
- walking;
- safety and security;
- shopping;
- housing;
- health services;
- recreation and culture; and
- caring and mutual support.

Planning and Carrying out Next Steps after the Survey Is Complete

When the group reconvenes after completing the survey, the discussion will focus on the problem areas that each team has identified, as well as areas that could serve as good examples. The teams will share the information they have been able to find about their areas of concern.

Not everyone will reach the same assessment of each item, and discussion is very helpful in sorting out the various concerns. Here are some suggestions for how to turn survey results into positive and productive community action.

Summarize and Prioritize

Have a small group of volunteers prepare a summary of the problems that the teams identified through the survey. Once the summary is completed, review it and decide which problem area needs to be addressed immediately and which problem areas are lower priorities.

One approach is to start small with one manageable project and, once that has been done successfully, move on to additional projects. With each success will come the confidence to tackle the next, possibly more complex project. With each success you will also build credibility in the community, which will further enhance your future efforts with other projects.

A priority-setting exercise may help your group decide which problem area to focus on initially. The problem area needs to be something that can excite interest and for which a solution is possible. A list of contacts for follow-up information is included at the end of each section of the survey. These contacts may help the group begin to explore ways of addressing various types of concerns.

Make Other People Aware of the Problem

The next step is to organize your survey results and put that information in a format that can be presented easily to public officials, interested community groups, and other important individuals and groups. Organize your results so that the problems are clearly identified. It should be clear to public officials and other audiences how the key problem that you selected as an action item affects a specific activity that is important to the health and well-being of older residents and their ability to continue living independently. Here are some examples of clearly articulated problems:

- Busy intersections in neighborhoods with many older drivers do not have left-turn lanes or left-hand-turn arrows, creating safety concerns for drivers and pedestrians.

- The only way that older residents in a new leisure development on the edge of town can get to shops is by walking along the shoulder of a busy highway because there is no sidewalk or bus service.

- In this community, accessory housing units are not currently permitted in areas zoned for single-family units, but there is considerable interest in that housing option.

- The helpline for older adults is not well publicized, so residents don't know where to look for key services.

You should also include a description of how resolving the problem might improve a specific experience for older residents. The suggestions associated with each chapter should help in identifying places where the community and your volunteer group can start. Information about the experiences of other communities may come in handy at this point. Obviously, each community has its own special character and its own structure. No one solution works for all communities, but the experience of others may help you in your work.

At this stage, it also may be appropriate to inform the local media. Getting local media involved not only will help make the community aware of the problem, but may encourage other volunteers to address similar problems. For example, some older adult groups have been very successful in inviting media representatives to observe a dangerous street crossing or an unlighted, remote bus stop.

Mobilize for Action

As noted above, strategies need to be designed for individual communities, and they should include a broad base of public involvement. This is one place where your alliances and partnerships with others who share your

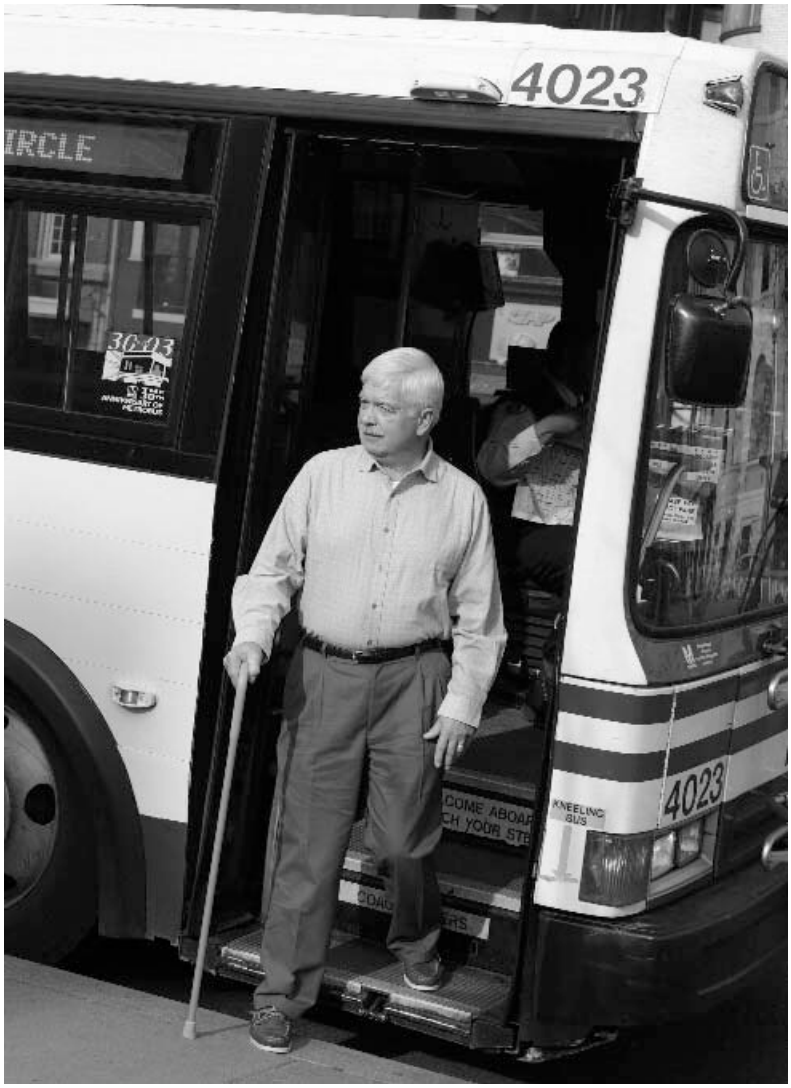
interest or concerns or who can effect change in that area will be critically important. For example, youth recreation advocates can be natural allies in park improvements. Local theater or arts groups may be interested in working with you on an effort to expand cultural and arts activities. The police department is an obvious collaborator in a community safety audit. Some issues, such as insufficient affordable housing or limited shopping opportunities, will require conversations and strategy building with key private interests, such as developers or local chambers of commerce.

Talk with municipal government because many issues fall within the responsibility of local government. For example, placement of street signs within a community would most likely fall within the province of the local department of public works, but requirements regarding dimensions and placement may well be determined by the city or county council. Improving the environment for pedestrians may involve several entities, though it may be best to start with a specific local agency. For example, most municipalities establish requirements for building and maintaining sidewalks. However, the responsibility for maintaining the sidewalks belongs to the property owner. And while in old neighborhoods, the city may be responsible for fixing or constructing sidewalks, in new neighborhoods the developer is generally responsible for constructing sidewalks.

The key to success in all of these areas is to focus attention and select a manageable issue in which your group and its partners can actually make a difference. It will be much better to build on a success than to drag out a project that is too big for your group to handle.

Issue areas that cannot be resolved immediately can be placed on the broader community's agenda. For example, the broader community would need to be involved to offer incentives for a small grocery store to open in a downtown area near a large number of older residents. Younger residents could prove to be natural allies in that effort. Some agenda items may already coincide with agendas of local transit agencies, libraries, senior centers, or city/county councils.

PART 3 THE COMMUNITY SURVEY



TRANSPORTATION

- Mobility Options
- Continuing to Drive

MOBILITY OPTIONS AND CONTINUED INDEPENDENCE

Introduction
With the decline of downtown shopping areas in many urban and rural communities and the scattered development pattern of suburbs, it is increasingly difficult for older residents in many neighborhoods to get to shops, services, and recreational opportunities without an automobile. In downtown areas, shops often cater to tourists and antique shoppers, while basic shops and grocery stores have moved from downtown to strip malls miles away. Affordable apartments for older adults and housing with supportive services are frequently located on the urban fringe where land is less costly and little thought is given to proximity to shopping and personal services. New leisure communities similarly emerge on large tracts on the urban fringe. The views may be restful and recreational opportunities delightful, but those communities may also be located miles from the nearest shopping center or medical facilities.

For older adults who do not drive much or who have stopped driving altogether, this land-use pattern can present a real threat to continued independence. Few completely satisfactory alternatives to the automobile are available in communities that were designed with the automobile in mind or were transformed in the age of the automobile.

Public Transportation
Public transportation may be one viable option. Almost all participants in community focus groups highlighted quality public transportation as an essential factor of a livable community. Ideally, a public transportation service would have almost all the attributes of a private car (convenience, flexible routes, frequent schedules, and limited out-of-pocket costs) but many participants said they would be willing to settle for just reliable service. The only two locations where public transportation did not seem to be a main issue were places where residents could walk easily to shops, services, and recreational facilities. Notably, such areas are frequently the most cost-effective for transit service because of population density and diversity of land uses.

Variation in Quality and Type of Public Transportation

The quality and type of public transportation services vary considerably across the country. In fact, many communities have no public transportation, making it necessary for nondrivers to depend on others for all types of trips. In some communities, organized groups of volunteer drivers help older residents meet basic needs. Some communities have special-purpose vans that provide trips to the doctor, a meal program, or other human services programs, but not for shopping or social purposes. Although some communities have regular fixed-route buses with established stops, the quality of those systems also varies. Some operate seven days a week at frequent intervals into the evening, while others only operate during the workweek. Some provide only very limited midday schedules, the time of day that many older citizens prefer to travel. Even where there is frequent, reliable weekday bus service, users usually express a need for expanded routes and weekend service. Across the country the price of bus fare varies considerably. Almost all cities offer a reduced fare for older residents, and some states offer an additional subsidy for older public transit riders.

Fixed-Route Buses

In some communities, bus routes are clearly marked on maps that also have large-print schedules. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) now requires that transit systems, including buses, announce major cross routes to help people identify their stop or a major transfer point. The driver may make the announcement, but newer vehicles may be equipped with automated announcers. Some senior centers offer volunteer escorts to help older residents learn the system.

In other communities, the routes may not be well marked or easily learned and may seem very confusing to older residents. Difficult experiences with use of fixed-route buses may discourage older individuals from venturing

out alone. Furthermore, the routes themselves may not provide for the needs of some older residents. Although most regular-route buses stop at shopping facilities, other places such as nursing homes, medical facilities, religious institutions, or even newer residential areas may be off the route. Some common stops for older people may require transfers, which can add stress, inconvenience, and confusion.

All bus stops require a walk from home. That walk can be a pleasant stroll over a well-maintained sidewalk with shade trees, or it can be a challenging trek over an uneven path or require street crossings without pedestrian signals. In some communities, bus stops offer benches, shade, and shelter from the weather; other communities provide only a sign marking the bus stop. Some communities provide adequate lighting at stops, which gives a greater sense of safety and security, yet other communities offer no such protection.

The buses themselves contribute to a sense of safety and security if they are well maintained and have courteous drivers. In urban areas with crowded buses, clearly marked signs offering preferred seating to older residents may be a major asset.

Dial-a-Ride

The ADA requires public transportation providers to operate paratransit for riders who cannot reach or use buses because of a disability such as a visual impairment, mental disability, or even a problem made worse by seasonal changes like emphysema. This type of dial-a-ride service picks up eligible residents at the curb in front of their homes as long as they live within three-quarters of a mile of a bus route. Some communities offer a dial-a-ride, door-to-door service for older residents and those with disabilities, usually at a higher cost than most fixed-route buses. In small communities with no regular-route bus service, a dial-a-ride service is sometimes

available to the general public if the individual can afford to pay an established fare. These services frequently require advance booking and usually involve a shared ride. Some older people find shared ride services inconvenient, and others find it difficult to schedule rides in advance.

Other Mobility Options

Some communities offer a mix of alternative transportation services, including volunteer drivers. Where taxis are available, the cost is often too high for those with fixed incomes. Some leisure communities or housing facilities for older adults offer specialized van service to the doctor as well as scheduled group trips for shopping, cultural, and recreational activities. These certainly help to meet basic needs, but they offer little choice in destinations and trip timing.

In urban neighborhoods with established subways or light rail trains, access to the stations may be an issue, and routes do not always serve the destinations that older residents prefer. Where available, commuter trains link suburbs to central cities and offer older residents access to recreational and cultural opportunities, sometimes at reduced midday rates. They may not provide access to basic services or shopping, however, and stations are usually located at a considerable distance from residences.

The issues associated with mobility options vary among communities and neighborhoods. The following survey questions are intended to help you take a closer look at existing services in your community. The same type of transportation system is certainly not appropriate or viable in communities of different sizes. Nonetheless, older residents in all communities need alternatives to the automobile. These questions are intended to help you identify characteristics of a local public transportation system that, with some improvement, could enhance livability for older adults.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Enabling Transportation

The City of Mesa, Arizona, offers a mileage reimbursement program, Enabling Transportation (ET), for older residents and persons with disabilities. It provides qualifying clients who cannot drive with a 34-cents-per-mile reimbursement for car trips when a friend or neighbor volunteers to drive for them. (Relatives who live with the ET passenger are not eligible for the funding.) Reimbursements are paid directly to participating or eligible ET passengers who are required to pass the payment along to their volunteer drivers. The program provides reimbursements for trips to medical appointments, grocery shopping, personal errands, banking, religious activities, volunteer work, as well as to the local senior center. Since March 1999, over 560 older residents have joined the ET program.

The Independent Transportation Network (ITN)

ITN is a nonprofit, membership-based organization operating near and within Westbrook, Maine. It is committed to providing dignified transportation for older persons. ITN uses automobiles, rather than vans or buses, to pick up clients at their doors and take them anywhere in the service area. The service is safe, affordable, and desirable for people who have given up driving but who still want to maintain an independent lifestyle. Clients and their families plan and pay for transportation that effectively replaces the private automobile (for further information see www.itninc.org).

Boone County Transportation

This rural/small town transportation system is a nonprofit organization providing quality, affordable transportation to all citizens of Boone County, Iowa. Boone County is a largely rural area in central Iowa made up of one larger full-service community of 12,000 and several surrounding small farming communities. Twenty-five percent of the population is over age 65. With the leadership of a determined and dedicated manager the system grew from three older vehicles to a current fleet of 13 fully- accessible vehicles. The system now serves 80–90,000 trips a year within the county on a dial-a-ride basis in addition to three regular trips to the dialysis center in the next county each week.

Managing the funding for this system takes particular dedication. The costs-per-ride continue to rise. Donations from the passengers don't begin to cover these costs. The system manager juggles 132 different funding sources that she has been able to piece together including a variety of city, county, state and federal grants, foundation funding, individual contributions, and rider donations. The system also accepts memorial gifts and hosts an annual giving campaign. The drivers are all dedicated retired persons who have participated in driver training programs and are able to secure wheel chairs.

MOBILITY OPTIONS SURVEY

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Transportation survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)
- ❑ Flashlight (if desired)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the commu nity with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Gather information on current public transporta tion options and schedules in the community from library, senior center, city or transportation com pany websites, or state department of transporta tion

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Community transportation agency
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create a schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with sur vey area

Conducting the Survey

Availability of Public Transportation

1. Does your community have a regularly scheduled bus or other public transportation service that picks up passengers at established stops? (If there is no regularly scheduled service skip to question # 21.)

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. If there are regularly scheduled bus or other services, are stops located within a 10-minute walk of residences in the sections of town with older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note particularly sections of the community that are NOT served.

_____

_____

_____

3. Are the sidewalks that serve bus stops maintained? Is shade available? Are street crossings safe?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note areas that need attention.

_____

_____

_____

4. Does this system serve hospitals, clinics, shopping facilities, and other routine destinations of interest to older persons?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If not, note which key destinations are NOT served?

_____

_____

_____

5. When is this service available? (Every day? Monday through Friday only? Saturdays? Sundays? Holidays? Hours of service?)

_____

_____

_____

6. Would other service times help older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, which times?

_____

_____

_____

7a. Are schedules and route maps easy to read?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7b. Are they readily available in libraries?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Senior centers?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Medical facilities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

shopping centers?

❑ YES ❑ NO

transit stops?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note other places where public transportation schedules are available or should be made available.

_____

_____

_____

8a. Is it possible to call the transportation company for route and schedule information?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8b. Is information available for those who have difficulty hearing?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8c. Is transportation information available in languages other than English? If so, note what languages and whether this meets the language needs of the community.

❑ YES ❑ NO

_____

_____

_____

9. Is it relatively easy to transfer between two buses or other forms of public transportation?

❑ YES ❑ NO

10. Does the driver provide information about transfers when you board, and are you informed about transfer points?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note how much time you need to wait for a transfer bus at several major transfer points.

_____

_____

_____

11. Are reduced public transportation fares available for older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Quality of Transit Stops

12. Are the transit stops well marked?

❑ YES ❑ NO

13. Do most of the transit stops offer shade, seats, and shelter from the weather?

❑ YES ❑ NO

14. Is there adequate room for a wheelchair?

❑ YES ❑ NO

15. Are routes and schedules served by each stop clearly posted?

❑ YES ❑ NO

16. Is information also available for those with limited sight?

❑ YES ❑ NO

17. Are the transit shelters well lighted in the evening?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note stops that need particular attention.

_____

_____

_____

Quality of Public Transportation Vehicles

18. Is preferred seating available near the door for those who have difficulty walking or standing?

❑ YES ❑ NO

19. Are upcoming stops announced?

❑ YES ❑ NO

20. The ADA requires that all fixed-route bus systems must be accessible to those with disabilities. How do those traveling in wheeled mobility devices and other types of mobility devices access vehicles in this system? What accommodations are made for individuals with vision or hearing impairments?

_____
_____
_____

Dial-a-Ride

21. Does your community have a dial-a-ride service? (If not, skip to question #30)

❑ YES ❑ NO

22? Who is eligible to use the service?

_____
_____
_____

23. What do riders have to do to participate?

_____
_____
_____

24. What area does the service cover?

_____
_____
_____

25. Does it offer door-to-door service for residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

26. How far ahead do you need to call for service?

_____
_____
_____

27. Does the dial-a-ride service usually arrive at the appointed pickup time?

❑ YES ❑ NO

28. Does it charge a higher fare than the fare for regular fixed-route buses?

❑ YES ❑ NO

29. Do older residents in the community express concerns about the cost or convenience of dial-a-ride fares?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Taxi

30. Is taxi service available in the community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

31. Does it serve the whole community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

32. Do older residents express concerns about the cost or reliability of taxis?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Specialized Services

33. Do local organizations (such as senior centers, churches, or other groups) offer van service to meal sites, doctor's appointments, or special recreational excursions?

❑ YES ❑ NO

34. Is this service well advertised?

❑ YES ❑ NO

35. Who is eligible for this type of trip?

_____

_____

_____

36. Do medical centers offer their own transportation service for dialysis and other regular medical needs?

❑ YES ❑ NO

37. Do leisure communities have their own van to take residents shopping, to the doctor, and to cultural activities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Volunteer Services

38. Is there an organized volunteer driver program in your community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

39. For what purposes is that program available?

_____

_____

_____

40. Is it available to all older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

41. How is it advertised?

_____

_____

_____

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps

After completing the survey, note areas that could use improvement and plan a strategy to address these areas. In most cases, you should discuss these issues directly with the agency operating the transportation systems in your community. Funding may limit an immediate response, but the agency can certainly consider your ideas when developing its own operations plans and applications for federal or state funding. For example, some simple suggestions, such as better distribution of schedules and larger-print schedules, may only require reallocation of existing resources. Discuss ideas for enhanced private services or senior center services with the appropriate system operator.

If your neighborhood has no public transportation service, you may want to raise that issue directly with your city or county transportation agency or with your community homeowners' association or senior center. The

federal government makes funding available to the states to assist in purchasing vehicles and services for specialized transportation services for older persons and persons with disabilities. Federal funds are also available through the states to assist with rural public transportation. For both specialized transportation and rural public transit service, you may want to contact your state department of transportation to find out where such funding is directed, the services currently available, and whom to contact about ways of enhancing or augmenting them.

Establishing some form of new transportation system will require considerable effort, and other members of the broader community can often help in this effort. Parents of young teenagers may be natural allies, as are community development and environmental advocates.

Resources

Helpful information on alternative ways of providing for the transportation needs of older residents is available from the Community Transportation Association of America (http://www.ctaa.org).

Senior Navigator has a website with helpful suggestions: "Transportation Services: Where to Get Them in Your Community" (http://www.seniornavigator.com/content/community/transportation.asp).

Information on forming or enhancing new volunteer programs can be acquired from Easter Seals "Solutions Package for Volunteer Transportation Programs." (http://www.easterseals.com/transportation)

Access to shopping continues to be a major issue for older adults. For a success story see Harrison Right Rue, "The Corner Store: Cornerstone of a Livable community," available from the Florida Sustainable Communities Center. (http://fcn.state.fl.us/fdi/fscc/ news/state/corner1.htm)

Additional discussion of issues is found in: *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options*, Surface Transportation Policy Project, Washington, DC, 2004. (http://www.transact.org).

A comprehensive source of information for communities looking at how to coordinate human service transportation is at (http://www.unitedweride.gov/).

CONTINUING TO DRIVE

Introduction
The number of drivers 70 years old and older increased by 111 percent from 1980 to 2000, from 8.8 million in 1980 to 18.9 million in 2000 (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov). Those older adults who drive far outnumber those who use public transportation. Even those who occasionally do take alternative forms of transportation also continue to drive.

For many Americans, regardless of age, driving an automobile is equated with personal independence. Obtaining a driver's license is a rite of passage into independence for a teenager, and retaining that license seems all important as we get older. Most of us continue to drive and enjoy the convenience of being able to travel at a moment's notice.

Nevertheless, driving may become more difficult as a person ages, particularly in inclement weather or at night. Reaction time may slow and vision may become less sharp. The glare of headlights is a major factor affecting older drivers' visual abilities at night. Slower reaction time can make left-hand turns more challenging. It is possible, however, to make streets safer for older drivers and, at the same time, safer for all drivers.

Enhanced Street Signs
Several street design changes can be particularly helpful. One key improvement is installing street signs with large letters that are easy to read at a distance. Lighted or reflective center-mounted street signs mean drivers do not need to strain to read small, side-mounted street signs.

Regularly placed streetlights also help drivers see pedestrians or unexpected obstructions in the road at night. In addition, central medians that soften the effect of the lights from oncoming traffic are much easier on the eyes than are simple jersey barriers or pavement markings. Raised reflectors in the road can reinforce pavement stripes and offer an extra warning about crossing lanes unintentionally.

Intersections
Half of all fatal crashes involving drivers 80 years and older occur at intersections. The disproportionate involvement of older drivers is due in part to increased driving task demands for a given maneuver (Federal Highway Administration Guidelines). Intersections where roads meet at sharp angles are particularly difficult for those who have trouble turning their heads. Some states have begun to address this issue.

Left-hand Turns
Left-hand turns create particular challenges for older drivers. A dedicated left-hand-turn lane and a turning arrow are very helpful. Where those are not provided, older drivers may have to travel out of their way just to be able to make a series of right-hand turns. Drivers have the time and distance they need to be sure that the opposing lane is clear before turning left if a dedicated left-hand-turn lane begins at mid-block.

Parking
Parking also can be difficult for older drivers. Challenges to peripheral vision, perception, and reaction time all make parallel parking a complex task. It becomes even more difficult to pull out of a parking space when parked next to a larger vehicle (such as an SUV or minivan), which can block the driver's view of oncoming traffic. Diagonal parking, on the other hand, is usually easier to negotiate.

Parking lots often do not have clear driving patterns, and cautious drivers may encounter other drivers racing around looking for parking spaces. Directional arrows can make it easier for drivers to know where to look for other cars. Parking lots also can be difficult places for anyone to walk through, and they are even more challenging for someone who walks slowly. A few parking lots now offer walkways between banks of cars that lead right up to the stores. Ample lighting helps with security issues. Some shopping centers are introducing parking lot surveillance cameras to increase security.

Drivers with disabilities that make it difficult for them to walk welcome dedicated parking places. To be effective, however, these parking places need to be monitored regularly and unauthorized cars ticketed or towed.

The following survey questions are intended to help you look at your community from the perspective of safe and comfortable driving for older residents. Depending on the size of your community and the volume of traffic on its streets, the following may or may not be issues for you. Note any aspects that you would like to follow up on.

DRIVABILITY SURVEY

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Continuing to Drive survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps in a scale large enough that you can code specific intersections that are challenging for drivers, problematic street signs, and other dri vability issues
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and high visibility clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)
- ❑ Flashlight (if desired)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the commu nity with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Gather information on driving and traffic safety issues involving older drivers from surveys con ducted by the department of transportation or public safety

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Community transportation agency
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create a schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

Conducting the Survey
Your survey teams will want to take at least two trips through your community in an automobile, one during the day and one in the evening. For now, avoid traveling during peak driving periods-7 am to 9 am and 4 pm to 6 pm. You will want to drive slowly and observe traffic patterns and street signs. Afterward, you may wish to observe key areas during peak driving periods to see how challenges differ. In larger communities, teams of three can survey different neighborhoods. The day trip should include an assessment of major parking lots in shopping centers, post offices, libraries, and other activity centers older residents frequently visit. The night drive will note lighting, sign legibility, and glare problems.

1. Does your community have street signs with large enough letters to be seen at a distance?

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Are those street signs readable at night?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3. Are there streetlamps at regular intervals?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4. Do your streets have turning arrows at intersections and dedicated left-turn lanes?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5. Do the dedicated left-turn lanes start at the middle of the block?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6. If your community has streets with a heavy volume of traffic, are there medians or other devices to minimize the glare from opposing traffic at night?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7. Are the lane markings clear?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8. Are they reinforced by reflectors?

❑ YES ❑ NO

9. Do parking lots have clear travel patterns?

❑ YES ❑ NO

10. Do lots have an ample number of parking places that are easy to use?

❑ YES ❑ NO

11. Are there well-marked parking spaces for individuals with disabilities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12. Is proper use of these spaces monitored and enforced?

❑ YES ❑ NO

13. Are there safe walkways to get to the stores from the parking lots?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps

Following up this survey may involve focusing on a variety of issues with several public agencies. For example, if you note that street signs are not visible from a distance, you will want to follow up with the public works or transportation department in your city. If the proposed sign changes would be on a designated state highway or federal highway that runs through your city, you will want to contact the state department of transportation.

Keep in mind that, due to costs, many transportation improvements are planned years in advance. In some cases, needs that have already been identified by planners can be prioritized and moved up. But generally, city staff will value input on those issues that can be addressed in the short and long term.

Also remember that city councils often make decisions about selecting street signs because the signs can relate to a community identity. Some city council members may

feel strongly about a traditional type of sign. Your agenda, however, will relate to public safety and can attract broad-based public attention if you enlist the support of the local media and other local community groups. Perhaps your community could phase in larger signs for major streets or even install advance warning signs announcing major intersections.

Improved traffic signals with better walk signs and green left-hand-turn arrows should also be discussed with the department of transportation. Those signals are costly and will require the full cooperation of the city traffic engineering staff for installation. There may be cost efficiencies for a smaller city to cooperate with other cities in the area in a joint purchase agreement. You can raise the possibility of retiming existing signals with the city traffic engineering staff. It is difficult to make changes in a single signal light without affecting traffic flow on the entire street, but changes are possible if you make an effective case for them.

Efforts to install designated left-hand-turn lanes will require a concerted effort as well. Street modifications would need to be included in a city's long-term transportation improvement plan. Items are identified for inclusion in the plan as a result of transportation department studies and accident reports issued by the department of public safety. Items within the plan are prioritized and identified for action each budget year. Public meetings are held to discuss these priorities, so a concerted volunteer effort can draw attention to problems at a critical intersection and potentially move the issue up on the list of priorities. Because safety issues affect everyone in the community, this issue may be particularly ripe for alliances and partnerships with other community groups that are also concerned about traffic safety.

Resources

One of the most comprehensive technical resources is the Federal Highway Administration's *Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians* (Staplin, L., K. Lococo, and S. Byington,and D. Harkey. Fhwa_RD-01-103, May 2001).

The State of Florida Traffic Engineering Manual (section 6.1) includes "Florida's Elder Road User Program," which offers a complete guide to improved roadway design and traffic control devices. *Traffic Engineering Manual* (FDOT Manual Number 750-000-005 March 1999)

Alicandri, Elizabeth, Mark Robinson, and T. Penney. *Designing Highways with Older Drivers in Mind* (http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/mayjun99/olddrivers.htm).

Designing Roadways to Safely Accommodate the Increasingly Mobile Older Driver, July 2003, a report prepared by the Road Information Program (TRIP), 1726 M Street NW, Suite 401, Washington, DC 20038 (http://www.tripnet.org).

U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Safety Administration. *SAFE Mobility for Older People Notebook*. DOT HS 808-853, April 1, 1999. (http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/)

Some programs like AARP's Driver Safety Program are available to assist older persons sharpen their driving skills and maintain their independence. The program is taught by other older adults (through AARP) and is particularly useful in helping older drivers compensate for changing vision and reaction time (www.aarp.org).

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety also offers helpful guidance for older drivers through an easy-to-read brochure titled, "The Older and Wiser Driver" (www.seniordriver.org)

WALKABILITY

Introduction

Walking is the oldest form of transportation, and sidewalks are the fundamental building blocks of a pedestrian network. For older adults who no longer drive, sidewalks are a crucial resource for remaining active and interacting with others. Most important, they allow older people to get to a variety of vital destinations, such as shopping and medical facilities. (This survey is concerned with walking as a crucial mode of transportation. The recreational aspects of walking are covered in Section 7, Recreation and Cultural Activities.)

Unfortunately, in too many communities, the transportation system has been built around the automobile, and little consideration has been given to the needs and desires of pedestrians. Lack of sidewalks, construction of sidewalks too close to streets and roads, and lack of maintenance can discourage people from using this vital aid to walking and can keep those who need to walk from reaching their destination.

Challenges for Pedestrians and Why People Don't Walk

Obviously, many people do walk. But many more would like to walk if their community had an adequate pedestrian system in place that made walking safe and enjoyable. What are some of the challenges that your community faces in encouraging walking as an alternative mode of transportation? Here are a few common problems; your community may have different or additional concerns.

Weather

Weather plays a role in when, where, and how far people are willing to walk. Realistically, there is not much we can do about the weather, but if other physical constraints are minimized, weather can become less of a factor in walking. For example, having and enforcing rules about keeping sidewalks clear of ice and snow can make walking safer and more possible in winter.

Discontinuous and Disjointed Routes
Sidewalks that stop and then pick up again later can make it physically impossible for some pedestrians to reach a destination. Sidewalks that do not go where people want or need to go can discourage residents from walking.

Traffic Conflicts
Poor design and poor placement of sidewalks cause pedestrians real or perceived danger from fast-moving vehicles. Locating a sidewalk immediately next to busy streets can discourage many people from using it. For instance, having a strip of grass between the sidewalk and roadway may help pedestrians feel safer.

Difficulty in Crossing Streets
Pedestrian signals, where available, often do not accommodate those who walk more slowly than the standard four feet per second. This presents a serious danger, particularly where there are very wide streets, or where multi-lane streets lack a median for pedestrians to pause until the next signal.

Personal Security
Poor design and lighting can contribute to people feeling vulnerable to crime and fearful about walking.

Poor Design
Narrow sidewalks that make it difficult for two people to walk side-by-side can discourage people from walking.

Lack of Maintenance
Uneven surfaces, broken pavement, and large cracks are examples of poorly maintained sidewalks and increase the risk of falling.

Obstructions
Obstructions such as overgrown bushes and trees can make it difficult for people to walk on a sidewalk. Likewise, poor planning can result in obstacles such as fire hyrdants or utility poles being placed in a sidewalk. In addition, unleashed dogs can be threatening to a person walking along a sidewalk.

WALKABILITY SURVEY

Preparing to Conduct the Survey
To conduct a survey of the walking opportunities in your community, it is important that your teams take the time to walk the streets and record their results. If your community is very large, you may want to select a smaller, more manageable area on which to focus. Depending on the interests of the survey teams, you also may want to focus on specific issues, such as sidewalk location or maintenance.

An added note about preparing for this survey: Although the survey questions provided here focus on problems with sidewalks, consider asking your survey teams to collect information about areas that are particularly commendable as well. Being able to demonstrate that your objectives are being met in some locations can bolster your argument for action in other locations.

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Walkability survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Measuring tape (if desired)
- ❑ Stopwatch or watch with second hand (if desired)
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)
- ❑ Flashlight (Some questions address lighting issues, and you will have to check for this at night. You will need a flashlight to record your responses and pro vide light in those areas where lighting is inade quate.)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the community with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Gather information about regulations on sidewalk snow removal and other maintenance issues

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Community transportation agency
- ❑ Local police (an officer may be willing to join you on a nighttime survey)
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams (DO NOT GO ALONE TO DO THE SURVEY AT NIGHT)
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create a schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

Conducting the Survey

Sidewalks and Their Maintenance

1. Are there sidewalks throughout your community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Are the sidewalks well maintained? (Surfaces should be flat with only minor cracks and minimal separation between slabs.) Note the location of problem sidewalks.

❑ YES ❑ NO

_____

_____

_____

3. Are curb-cuts visible? Would it be difficult for those with visual impairments to detect them or those with wheelchairs or walkers to negotiate them? Note the location of problem curb-cuts.

❑ YES ❑ NO

_____

_____

_____

Useful Terms to Know
Curb-cut: The area cut out of the edge of a sidewalk at an intersection. Curb-cuts allow people with wheelchairs, bicycles, and strollers to move easily from the sidewalk to

4. Are any sidewalks obstructed by bushes or overhanging tree branches? Note the location of problem sidewalks.

❑ YES ❑ NO

_____

_____

_____

5a. Does the community have a regulation regarding snow removal from sidewalks? (Your local public works department or city/county manager's office should have this information.)

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note locations where sidewalks are not cleared, if applicable._____

5b. Does the community have a program to help older persons clear snow from the sidewalk in front of their home?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6. Are the sidewalks wide enough for at least two people to walk together? (A minimum width of 4 feet is needed for two people to walk together.)

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note the location of substandard sidewalks on the survey map.

7. Do bicyclists, skateboarders, roller skaters, and other nonpedestrian users make walking difficult?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If this is a problem in specific areas, locate those areas on the survey map.

8. Are there other problems that affect use of the sidewalks, such as animal waste or unleashed dogs that threaten pedestrians?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If this is a problem in specific areas, locate the areas on the survey map.

_____

_____

_____

Traffic Signals

9. Are traffic signals located at pedestrian crossings?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map where you think additional traffic signals are needed.

_____

_____

_____

10. Do the traffic signals provide adequate time for pedestrians to cross the street without feeling rushed?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map the location of signals that do not provide adequate time for crossing.

_____

_____

_____

11. Do signals have push-to-walk buttons to help stop traffic on a busy street?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note location of signals without push-to-walk buttons on the survey map.

_____

_____

_____

Traffic signals generally provide a safe method for pedestrians to cross a street. However, non-signalized crosswalks can create a false sense of security that could result in a pedestrian fatality. The Federal Highway Administration Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians: Recommendations and Guidelines (December 2000) suggests that the shorter stride and slower gait of less agile older pedestrians requires that pedestrian control signal timing should be based on an assumed walking speed of .85 meters or 2.8 feet per second.

12. Do any long streets with no intersections have mid-block crosswalks?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note location on the survey map.

_____
_____
_____

13. Are crosswalks well marked? (This could include striping, signage for pedestrians and vehicles, caution lights.)

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note locations of crosswalks that are not well marked.

_____
_____
_____

14. Do all crosswalks have curb-cuts to provide a transition from the sidewalk to the roadway?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note locations on the survey map of crosswalks that do not have curb-cuts or curb-ramps.

_____
_____
_____

15. Are curb-cuts textured to alert persons with visual impairments that they are about to enter the street?

Pedestrian Amenities

16. Are the sidewalks in your community shaded by trees?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map where there are no shade trees.

_____
_____
_____

17. Are there resting places (e.g., benches, low walls) for pedestrians along the sidewalks?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map where resting places are located, especially in areas of the community with many older residents.

_____

_____

_____

18. Are there enough resting places?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map where you think additional resting places are needed.

_____

_____

_____

19. Are resting places shaded adequately from the sun?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map the location of seating places that are not shaded.

_____

_____

_____

20. Do the community's signs provide clear directions for pedestrians?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note on the survey map where you think signs are needed or should be improved.

_____

_____

_____

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps
Most of the concerns raised in the walkability survey will require working with the city or county public works department. For example, you can present your findings about placement and width of sidewalks and sidewalk maintenance issues directly to this agency. However, keep in mind that responsibility for specific sidewalk issues may vary. For example, even though the city public works department is the place to begin to address sidewalk maintenance, such maintenance ultimately may be the responsibility of property owners. The addition of a new walkway may require negotiating with the respective property owners about paying for it. This process is easier if what is needed is to fill in a gap rather than to install a completely new walkway that will cross a number of private properties. Trimming bushes that overhang the sidewalk is the responsibility of the property owner, but the city or county will send an official notice to request that the property owner take care of it. If the property owner does not comply, a public works crew may trim the bushes and bill the property owner. In some neighborhoods, the responsibility for sidewalks rests with the homeowners' association, and you should address your concerns there.

Some communities or neighborhoods have ordinances that restrict installation of sidewalks or curbs because of aesthetics or as part of an effort to make the area appear to be less urban. That will present a real challenge to any group that wants to add sidewalks to make walking easier. In these communities, you must present the need for sidewalks to the city or county council. In the short term, you might direct your energies more effectively toward other issues, such as ensuring that neighborhood streets are well maintained.

If action on sidewalks is not possible, your group may be able to move forward in other areas that can help to make streets safer to walk along. For example, some communities have been very effective in urging that the city install traffic calming measures such as roundabouts, speed tables, or speed humps as ways of reducing cut-through traffic or speeding cars. In Peoria, Arizona, residents in a housing development can collect signatures on a petition requesting traffic calming devices. If all residents sign, the city will install devices at the city's

expense. If 80 percent sign, the city will pay 80 percent, with the property owners paying the rest as an assessment. No devices are installed if less than 70 percent of the property owners sign the petitions.

You may pursue action on streetscapes that need more effective streetlights, benches, and shade trees through different agencies or organizations depending on the location. Consider forming an alliance with downtown merchants or others who may be interested in improving your community's visual identity. Other groups that may be interested include the planning department, which would be involved in improving streetscapes, or the parks department, which might be involved in planting trees. Local parent-teacher associations (PTAs) may also be interested because of their concern for safe routes to schools.

Traffic signals are the responsibility of the traffic manager in the city or county department of transportation. Pedestrian cross signals are usually timed for a person to walk at four feet per second; however, older residents often take longer to cross streets. It is possible to allow more time in locations with many older residents. However, such a change will affect the rest of the signal lights on the street, so the traffic manager may be reluctant to make such an adjustment.

Crosswalks are another important issue to raise with officials. Signalized crosswalks with flashing lights or special signals activated by a walk sign are the safest. New types of crosswalks in which the striping in the crosswalk itself lights up when activated by a pedestrian demonstrate the potential of technology to enhance pedestrian safety. Representatives of the city or state department of transportation may be interested in a demonstration site that shows how older residents will particularly benefit by improvements in major street crossings.

Resources
The Internet has many available resources on walking and community livability. Here are just a few:

National Center for Bicycling and Walking (www.bikewalk.org)

Walkable Communities (www.walkable.org)

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (http://www.bicyclinginfo.org and www.walkinginfo.org)

Quality Places (www.qualityplaces.marc.org)

Active Living Network (www.activeliving.org)

Smart Growth Network (www.smartgrowth.org)

Sustainable Communities Network (www.sustainable.org)

American Institute of Architects, Center for Livable Communities (http://www.aia.org/livable/)

Numerous other sources are available that deal with pedestrian signs and safety, such as:

The New Jersey Department of Transportation site, "Pedestrian Safety." (http://www.state.nj.us/commuter/pedsafety/crosswalks.shtm)

Guerrier, Jose, and Sylvan Jolibois. "Give Elderly Pedestrians More Time to Cross Intersections," 1999 (http://www.msstate.edu/org/gerontology/hfes-gep.htm).

SAFETY & SECURITY

Introduction

A sense of personal safety and security is fundamental to a livable community. Sidewalks will remain unused and older adults will be reluctant to venture from their homes unless they are confident that they will be able to reach their destination and return home safely. In fact, participants in several of the focus groups indicated that personal safety and security was one reason why they would choose to live in an age-restricted, gated community if they had sufficient income.

Traffic signals and well-maintained walkways encourage walking, but equally important is the atmosphere of the community-perceptions of criminal activity and the attitudes of residents. In towns or cities with a high incidence of petty theft, older residents may be targets. Appropriate street lighting, well-maintained streets, and well-trimmed bushes and trees can go a long way toward enhancing personal security. Special neighborhood designators (that is, a special community design for signs or a unique planting pattern in common areas) can help to create a special identity for a neighborhood. Neighborhood watch signs can indicate that an active and concerned group of residents lives in that area.

Another major contributor to personal safety is living in a well-maintained neighborhood whose houses have windows facing the street. One urban focus group participant who had been knocked down in an attempted purse snatching reported that she was rescued quickly by concerned neighbors who had seen her plight from their windows. Sometimes, the mere possibility of being seen can deter crime, such as on a street with other pedestrians or windows facing the street.

What can community residents do to make sure that they and their neighbors are safe inside as well as outside their homes? In addressing these questions, it is important to understand first what causes older persons to be fearful in their neighborhoods and communities.

Fear of Crime

Fear of crime is one of the most important problems that older persons must confront in their communities. In national surveys over the last several decades, more than

40 percent of Americans have consistently identified crime or the fear of crime as the primary reason that they will not walk in their neighborhoods at night. Fear is highest among certain groups, primarily women and older residents.

In most communities, fear of crime is related to features at both the macro and micro scale. The macro scale relates to the broader community, including areas where people work or congregate for leisure activities, such as downtown areas or malls. Micro scale relates to areas in neighborhoods and around homes that are perceived to be unsafe and that people tend to avoid, such as alleys or certain properties. These unsafe areas make residents hesitant to walk in their neighborhood at night, or in some cases, even during the day. They do not feel safe, although in many instances it may be difficult for them to identify the source of their fear. Helping older persons to identify the elements of the physical environment that cause fear is addressed later in this section.

In general, two basic theories help explain why people fear their physical environment. One theory suggests that deterioration of the physical environment sends a signal that a place is no longer maintained or controlled by those who live or work there. People also fear signs of deterioration, such as trash on the ground, graffiti, or deferred maintenance, because they know that criminals are attracted to neighborhoods that appear to be deteriorating. Dealing with neighborhood deterioration issues is generally a public policy issue and should be addressed through the local government.

A second theory suggests that some physical features, such as bushes, low lighting, dark walkways, and enclosed areas created by building design and location, can of themselves enable crime to develop. It is not always easy to identify these types of physical features, but the safety survey in this section can help.

Social Impacts of Fear of Crime

Fear of crime has serious negative social impacts outside of those generated by crime itself. Fear causes decreasing participation in public activities and use of public spaces.

Such withdrawal is detrimental to individuals and leads to missed opportunities and a lower quality of life. A reduction in the number of participants in public space and public life diminishes the entire community. Crime may even increase under these conditions. Fewer "eyes on the street" increase the likelihood that crimes will not be witnessed or discouraged.

People sometimes assume that the solution to crime and security concerns is to live in a gated community. Typically, such communities are designed for higher-income homeowners. More that seven million households (about 6 percent of the national total households) live in developments behind walls and fences. About four million of them are in communities where gates, entry codes, key cards, or security guards control access. Renters also sometimes choose gated apartments because they perceive such housing to be safer.

However, it is unclear whether living in a gated community is in fact safer than living in a traditional community. Research by the Urban Land Institute and others challenge the actual security value of a gated community. Probably the most significant outcome of gated communities is the physical separation that it creates. Gates keep other residents out of the gated community, and they make it more difficult for community members to access amenities in the broader community, such as parks or retail stores. This is particularly true for residents who no longer drive.

Creating a Sense of Community with Design

What makes older residents feel safe in their physical environment? This varies by community, but basically they prefer an environment in which they feel a sense of community, where they have the opportunity to socialize and interact with others, and where they are confident that others are also invested in the quality of the neighborhood. Whether it is a senior center, recreation center, park, coffee shop, or some similar facility, communities should have spaces that facilitate social interactions.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY SURVEY

Preparing to Conduct the Survey
This survey should be conducted in both daytime and after dark, particularly because lack of lighting is often a major contributor to safety problems. Conduct the daytime portion first so you can become familiar with the area and identify possible trouble spots. Travel in a group or arrange for a police officer to accompany the survey team. Some police officers have Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training that will help the team identify unsafe areas. It is also important to include a member of the city planning staff who is familiar with local zoning ordinances to help identify health and safety issues. Depending on the size of your community, you may decide to have more than one team walk different areas or the same team walk the entire neighborhood on different days or evenings. The following checklist can help your group get ready for the survey.

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Safety survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)
- ❑ Flashlight (Some questions address lighting issues, and you will have to check for this at night. You will need a flashlight to record your responses and provide light in those areas where lighting is inadequate.)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the community with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Read crime columns of your local newspaper to get a sense of trouble areas and of the types of crimes

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Department of public safety
- ❑ Department of public works
- ❑ Local building permit agency
- ❑ Local police (ask officers to join you on a nighttime survey)
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams (DO NOT GO ALONE TO DO THE SURVEY AT NIGHT)
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create a schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

Conducting the Survey

Lighting

1. Do the streets in your neighborhood have adequate street lighting?

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Are the sidewalks adequately lighted at night?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3. If your neighborhood has alleys, are they well lighted?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4a. Are public areas well lighted?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4b. Are private areas (e.g., yards near public sidewalks) well lighted?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note which areas, if any, are not well lighted.

_____

_____

_____

5. Does the neighborhood have signs that designate it as a neighborhood watch area?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Sight Lines

6. Are there areas with overgrown vegetation and limited lighting along the sidewalks where someone could hide or where pedestrians would feel unsafe?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note these locations.

_____

_____

_____

Neighborhood Safety Survey

As part of the Safe Communities Program, the Phoenix Planning Department initiated a Neighborhood Safety Audit project for neighborhoods in Phoenix, Arizona. The safety audits are coordinated with the police department and with the Neighborhood Services Department. The police department participates as part of their Neighborhood Policing Program. The Neighborhood Services Department participates as part of their Neighborhood Fight Back Program. Neighborhood Services is also responsible for enforcing the Neighborhood Preservation Code. The first neighborhood safety audit was conducted in October 1997, and since that time more than 30 audits have been conducted to target improvements to site lines, lighting, walking areas, etc.

Eye/Ear Isolation

7. Are there locations in your neighborhood where a pedestrian would be isolated and out of the earshot of other residents? Would anyone hear if a person called out for help? (Consider how this answer might be different during the day and during the evening/nighttime)

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note these locations.

_____

_____

_____

Entrapment Areas

8. Are there areas along a pedestrian route that might become locations for entrapment (small, confined areas adjacent to a pedestrian route that are shielded on three sides, such as walls around dumpsters or insets or bump-outs in buildings)?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If yes, note locations.

_____

_____

_____

Escape Routes

9. Do you see routes that criminals could use to escape easily from your neighborhood onto a major street?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, note these routes.

_____

_____

_____

Sense of Ownership/Maintenance

10. Are there locations in your neighborhood that are not properly maintained?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, note these locations.

_____

_____

_____

Police Services

11. Are there call boxes that are well marked in case of emergency?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12. Do police patrol the area routinely?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps
Once you have completed the safety survey, selected the most important issues, and discussed an action plan, you may want to conduct a public awareness effort about key issues you discovered through the survey. Such an effort can be very important in mobilizing support for action. Consider starting this effort through an informal neighborhood social event. Invite residents and property owners and present your safety findings. Placing fliers on all homes is another way to increase awareness about your group and its safety efforts.

Lighting
Adequate lighting is a key safety issue. If your survey identified poorly lit locations, work with your local government agencies to identify the procedure for installing additional streetlights. Because new streetlights represent an expense, municipalities prioritize requests across a community. Local officials are more likely to pay attention to active, involved neighborhoods with a clearly-defined request.

Sight Lines
Many cities require residents to trim bushes and do other maintenance to ensure clear lines of sight on sidewalks and near buildings. Notifying the city public works department regarding overgrown bushes or other visual obstructions will probably trigger a notice to the property

owner to trim the bushes in question. As noted in the Walkability survey section, if the property owner does not comply, the city will trim plantings that overhang a street, alley, or sidewalk and then bill the property owner. This is especially true if a public safety issue is raised. Neighbors can band together and push for such an ordinance if none exists.

A similar approach may be successful in alerting property owners about potential entrapment areas and the need to modify them. Property owners may be willing to comply if they are aware of possible liability for those who are aware of safety issues and do not take steps to deal with them. The city building permit department may be willing to issue guidance on placement of walls around dumpsters or building designs that involve insets and bump-outs.

Signs

Signs can also announce neighborhood block watch programs and will be posted by the department of public safety once a neighborhood block watch has actually formed and is operating.

Some neighborhoods attempt to enhance local pride by seeking a special designator, a sign or other identifier. Both formal and informal designations are possible. The city planning department and the public works department would be important contacts for a group planning a more formal identifier for the neighborhood.

Resources

The National Safety Council (NSC) is the leading advocate for safety and health issues (http://www.nsc.org).

The Community Policing Consortium's primary mission is to deliver community policing training and technical assistance to police departments and sheriff's offices (http://www.communitypolicing.org).

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) is an important resource for a broad cross-section of safety and security issues (http://www.ncjrs.org).

Administration on Aging, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Resource Directory for Older People*. (http://www.aoa.gov/eldfam/How_to_Find/ResourceDirectory/resource_directory.asp)

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults*. (http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/falls.htm)

Organizations
National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) (http://www.nfpa.org or 1-800-433-3555 or 1-617-770-3000 if outside the United States).

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) (www.cpsc.gov).

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) (http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc or 1-770-488-1506).

Websites
SAFEUSA (http://www.safeusa.org/olderfalls.htm)

FirstGov for Seniors (http://www.seniors.gov)

Community Safety Series (http://www.be-safe.org)

National Safety Council (http://www.nsc.org)

Administration on Aging (http://www.aoa.gov)

National Institute on Aging, National Institute of Health (http://www.nia.nih.gov)

The Enterprise Foundation (http://www.enterprisefoundation.org)

SPEED
LIMIT
15
WARNING

SHOPPING

Introduction

As noted in the section on transportation, access to shopping opportunities is important to older residents who value their independence. Yet, in many communities it is becoming increasingly difficult for those who cannot or choose not to drive to get to basic retail and banking outlets. Most major retail establishments have responded to the movement of large segments of the population to the suburbs by relocating in strip or shopping malls, which require more driving trips. Those who want to stay or reopen in a downtown area often find that the price of land and the cost of rent are much higher in that area than they are in the suburbs or the urban fringe, and that only smaller parcels of land are available. As a result, older residents in downtown areas may have few useful shopping opportunities near their homes. Where downtown areas have been reinvigorated, new shops frequently cater to tourists or become a center for arts and culture.

For older residents in suburban settings, strip malls that are easily accessible by car appear unfriendly to pedestrians. Even in suburban areas that are served by public transit, stops are located on sidewalks, leaving pedestrians to walk across expansive and busy parking lots to reach the stores. This situation is a challenge for anyone, but for older persons who are carrying grocery bags or are unsure of their footing, it can be dangerous. Even more disconcerting is the fact that familiar shops in older strip malls often close their doors and move farther out on the suburban fringe toward newer developing areas. All too often, the result is rundown strip malls that are not economically viable and do not serve local residents adequately.

Some older strip malls are being renovated for new and innovative uses, and some cities are reintroducing mixed-use development with shops on the lower level and residences above. A major benefit of the mixed-use approach in downtown areas is increased activity in sections of town that were fairly deserted after five o'clock. Some

new communities are taking a different approach by incorporating small shopping areas into design. These efforts are encouraging for older residents when the shops include basic groceries, banking, reasonably priced hair stylists, coffee shops, and gift stores.

In some communities, older residents who do not drive an automobile may need to rely on friends and relatives to help with basic shopping. Getting to a hairdresser or the dry cleaner also may prove to be challenging. Senior centers or assisted living facilities may provide excursions to shopping centers, combining social activity with shopping.

Availability of Grocery Stores

Access to grocery stores is essential for older people's independence. The trend among supermarkets, however, is to move into larger and larger facilities that they can share with a pharmacy and a branch bank and to expand their inventories to include a broad range of household and other items such as flowers. The annual *Financial Review* released by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) indicates that the average supermarket was 44,000 square feet in 2000, up from 33,000 square feet 10 years ago (www.fmi.org). Because typical grocery store profits after taxes are only 1.36 percent (FMI cite), they must operate on a high volume of sales, which encourages the trend to increasingly larger stores. Downtown locations generally do not have the space that supermarkets need for their large inventory or for customer parking. This kind of space is typically only available along arterial highways or near the urban fringe. The result is a downtown without a grocery store. For many urban residents, the only outlet available is a convenience store with a limited selection and higher prices. Even older residents living in suburban settings may find it difficult to get to grocery stores; public transit is often not available in these settings.

Some chain grocery stores have considered a variety of solutions to this problem. For example, Ralphs, a large California chain, has introduced an urban store in San Diego. It is accessed from a sidewalk and has parking underneath. Giant, a fairly large chain in Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., has opened a smaller store on the lower level of a Washington office building. Office workers, nearby college students, and local neigh-

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

City Place in Long Beach, California, is an effort to transform an older downtown into a vibrant community with a range of housing units, retail shops, and a grocery store. In Bellevue, Washington, the revitalized downtown includes two grocery stores, drugstores, retail shops, and a range of housing options. A rejuvinated city park offers recreation and an urban focus.

In Stanton, California, 25 miles from Los Angeles, a rundown strip mall with excess commercial space is being transformed by adding shops that present a single architectural theme. Most important, 50 percent of the excess commercial space is being transformed into townhouses, housing designated for older people, and small-lot, single-family homes.

In Saginaw, Michigan, a five-day workshop focused on a fragmented landscape lined with 1970s malls and 1990s big-box retailers with massive parking lots. A design team came up with a new concept that included a comprehensive plan to affect land use and infrastructure design for future commercial developments. The plan requires changes in zoning, design standards, and infrastructure that will make this area safer, more pedestrian-oriented, and more public transportation-friendly.

borhood residents all frequent the store. The Independent Grocers Association (IGA) serves a global market with 4,400 associated stores. Following its slogan, "hometown proud," IGA markets have been able to maintain smaller stores in a number of locations abandoned by larger supermarkets (www.igainc.com). Other stores have instituted services to make shopping more pleasant for customers, for example, helping customers to carry out bags of groceries or load them into the car or offering home delivery service for groceries and pharmacy products.

Mobility within Stores

For those who are able to get to a large supermarket or large retail store, the problem may be mobility within the store. The distances are frequently too great for someone who has difficulty walking to manage effectively. Other older shoppers may find store layouts confusing and tiring to negotiate. Some stores respond to mobility needs by providing motorized carts as a courtesy to shoppers. Shoppers with wheelchairs may have trouble navigating if aisles are cluttered. Signage noting key items needs to be legible at a distance and posted near the beginning of the aisle. Places for customers to sit and enjoy refreshments are welcome, as is a bench near the door. Well-maintained public restrooms and friendly, helpful employees are particularly appreciated.

SHOPPING SURVEY

Preparing to Conduct the Survey
The key factor in this survey is the proximity of shopping options to residences of older people and the ease with which older residents can use shopping facilities.

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Shopping survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)
- ❑ Flashlight (Some questions address lighting issues, and you will have to check for this at night. You will need a flashlight to record your responses and provide light in those areas where lighting is inadequate.)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the community with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Research zoning codes to see if they permit mixed-use development

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Department of public safety
- ❑ Local police (ask officers to join you if you conduct part of the survey after dark)
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Prepare maps by drawing a circle representing a quar ter-mile in every direction from each cluster of older adult residence. These circles represent a comfortable walking distance.
- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

Conducting the Survey

1. Does your community have grocery stores within a safe, convenient walking distance (¼ mile) of clusters of residences of older adults?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, note which neighborhoods have and do not have grocery stores and briefly describe the type of store (e.g., large chain store, "mom and pop").

_____

_____

_____

2. If your community has a large supermarket or retail store, does it provide wheeled mobility aids to help shoppers?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3. Is it relatively easy in the nearest grocery store to find items?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Include any notes about the mix of merchandise and layout of the store (e.g., how easy is it for older shoppers to find and reach merchandise?).

_____

_____

_____

4. Does the large supermarket have clear, legible signs in high-contrast lettering, indicating the location of key grocery items?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5. Do grocery stores in the area offer home delivery service?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6. Do drugstores/pharmacies in the area offer home delivery service?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7. Are other shops that meet the needs of older residents located within walking distance?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, note which neighborhoods have and do not have other shops, and briefly describe the type of store.

_____

_____

_____

8. Are the stores laid out in such a way that older residents can easily find and reach what they need?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Include any notes about layout.

_____

_____

_____

9. Is there a sidewalk and a safe crossing between residences and shops?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note whether the sidewalk is in good repair, whether traffic signals allow enough time for pedestrians to cross the street, and whether the crosswalks are well marked. (See the Walkability survey for more questions about street crossings.)

_____

_____

_____

10. Is there a public transportation connection between residential areas and shops?

❑ YES ❑ NO

13. Is public transportation to stores available at times that are convenient to older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

14. Does your community's zoning code permit mixed-use development?

❑ YES ❑ NO

15. If so, are there mixed-use developments with shops and a mix of residential units that would appeal to older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

16. Are there active community efforts to encourage replacement of grocery stores and other retail stores by redeveloping vacant properties near clusters of residences of older adults?

❑ YES ❑ NO

17. What additional types of stores do you think older residents need the most?

_____

_____

_____

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps

Pressing for Business Incentives in Downtown Areas

It will be a challenge for your group by itself to be effective in urging changes to the development pattern of the city or town in which you live. Cultivating a partnership with a downtown business association and neighborhood business associations can be crucial to the success of your efforts. Together, you can press the city council to offer incentives to businesses that are considering locating in a downtown area. The city planning department is another key ally. Not only does it have expertise about downtown revitalization, but it also typically plays a major role in reviewing plans for large subdivisions. It

may even press for adding retail stores into subdivisions. Locations as diverse as Missoula, Montana, and Buckeye, Arizona, have been successful with this approach.

Pressing for Mixed-Use Development
The planning department also can identify sections of town that are zoned for mixed use or champion the case for a zoning changes that will allow for mixed use. A number of cities are moving in this direction, including Jackson, Wyoming; Seattle, Washington, and Wilmington and New Castle County, Delaware. Ultimately, elected leaders will need to approve this type of change. Housing developers will need to be encouraged to build more homes or apartments in the downtown area to create a market large enough for a mixed-use development to succeed.

Attracting Specialty Grocery Stores
You and your allies also may want to consider some smaller-scale strategies. It is not easy to attract a typical large grocery store to an area where space is limited. Concerns about insufficient space for a store and parking lot will greet any plea for such a store. One solution for areas with a stable or increasing population base might be to approach a specialty grocery that also carries a full line of groceries. Whole Foods, Wild Oats, Fresh Grocer, or Trader Joe's are groceries that offer a range of foods, yet their stores are typically much smaller than those of major supermarkets. In fact, this type of grocery store has moved into locations abandoned by major supermarkets and therefore fit easily into more urban niches. For example, Whole Foods now has more than 140 outlets around the country. Its rapid expansion was accomplished by absorbing similar smaller chains in several parts of the county. Its strategy is to take advantage of the emerging market of young, upwardly mobile residents who are returning to more established neighborhoods in reviving downtown areas. Young, upwardly mobile residents would be ideal allies in seeking out a specialty grocery store in neighborhoods with older residents. A similar strategy might be effective in an area with a new mixed-use development.

This approach has worked in a variety of settings. For example, a Hispanic neighborhood in Tempe, Arizona, was able to attract a small Food City grocery store that

offers ethnic foods in a site that a standard grocery store had abandoned. Food City is a subsidiary of Bashas (www.bashas.com), an Arizona-based supermarket chain that prides itself on its involvement in the community. Nearby residents in established older neighborhoods are served by the new store as well. In Seattle, a specialty oriental market recently located on the first floor of a new apartment building. The store also carries basic grocery staples and is open to all residents in the area.

Advocating for Public Transportation Stops on Routes near Stores

Still another strategy would be to mobilize local residents to press for a public transportation stop near a strip mall with a grocery store and other shops older residents frequent. You will need to work with your local transportation authority on this issue.

Resources

General sources of information on community revitalization are available through the American Planning Association (www.planning.org), the Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org), and the International City/County Management Association (www.icma.org). These organizations are interested in revitalizing urban core areas where a number of older residents are aging in place.

There are a number of websites focused on downtown revitalization that provide links to other sources. One helpful site is (http://www.revitalization.blogspot.com)

The Center for Community Economic Development, maintained by University extension at the University of Wisconsin (www.uwex.edu/ces/cced), offers a helpful newsletter, *Let's Talk Business*. The December 2002 issue (issue number 76) included a helpful article entitled, "Keeping a Grocery Store Downtown," by Neil Loehlein and Bill Ryan.

The Rural Information Center of the U.S. Department of Agriculture offers a handbook titled, *Smart Towns: A Community Guide to Downtown Revitalization* (http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/faqs/downtnfaq.htm). The center, which provides information searches, library searches, and searches for film, videocassettes, slides,

and other materials, is affiliated with numerous other government sources.

The Downtown Research and Development Center (www.downtowndevelopment.com) also offers a number of resources, newsletters, free planning tools, and books to assist with downtown revitalization and direct links to other information.

The National Main Street Center offers assistance to qualifying communities that are committed to economic development and plan to use their heritage to move in that direction (www.mainstreet.org).

A project that is included in a city's consolidated plan may be eligible for community development block grant funds (www.hud.gov/progdesc/cdbgent.cfm). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development site offers helpful information for organizing your community (http://www.hud.gov/community). The Small Business Administration site (www.sba.gov) is a good place to start looking for funds to attract needed businesses or reinvigorate existing ones. In addition, a number of cities and states offer revolving loan funds to assist with business enhancements (www.state.co.us/oed/bus_fin/funds.cfm).

HOUSING

Introduction

Everyone needs housing. As we become older, our family composition, interests, and abilities change. For some, the need for increased accessibility requires modifications to an existing home, while others move into a different type of housing or community. Some older adults choose to leave a large home in which they raised children to move into a home that is smaller and more manageable. Still others are forced to sell their home because they can no longer afford the costs associated with maintaining it. Maintenance costs, rising utility bills, and property taxes are particularly difficult for those on fixed incomes.

A ramp can be retrofit to existing home

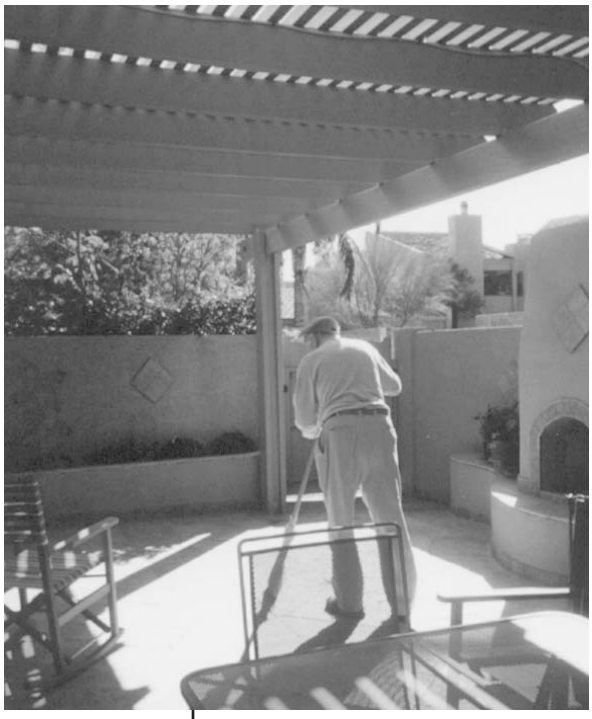
Each community is unique in the housing types it offers. Ideally, however, each community provides a variety of housing types (including services-oriented housing) at various levels of affordability. This is essential if a community wants to foster continued independence of its older residents.

Choosing to Stay

Despite rising housing costs, many older adults prefer to age in place. According to AARP's 2000 survey report, *Fixing to Stay*, more than 90 percent of persons age 65 and older prefer to remain in their current residence as long as possible. Their reasons include familiarity with the home and neighborhood, social relationships with nearby friends and neighbors, and the accumulated memories and life experience they identify with their home. Older persons who do move often attempt to remain in or near the same community.

For reasons like those, many communities have become a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC). This type of community develops as residents move in at a young age and remain in place over a long period-eventually resulting in a long-established community of older people. A NORC can refer to a block of apartments or a neighborhood of older single-family homes. By some estimates, nearly a quarter of people age 65 and older live in an area that could be described as a NORC.

Home Modification and Weatherization
For many older people, home modification can make it easier to live in and enjoy the use of a home. For older people who are frail or disabled, home modification may even become a necessity, if they are to continue to age in place.



Many types of home modifications are possible, including:

- lever door handles;
- 32-inch minimum entry door, with 36 inches preferred;
- nonslip surfaces;
- low thresholds;
- stairs with handrails on both sides;
- kitchen counters at varying work heights and with rounded corners;
- single-lever faucets; and
- grab bars.

In addition to home modifications, many older residents need assistance with home repair and maintenance. Such activities may include painting, repairing siding or roofing, replacing equipment such as water heaters or air conditioning units, and fixing leaking faucets.

With both home modifications and home repair, problems with deciding on immediate needs and how to pay for them often occur. Some national organizations offer checklists of what to look for (some are listed at the end of this chapter), and many local agencies and volunteer groups for older people help link residents to information and resources. Some may even offer an on-site home assessment.

For low-income residents, public resources may be available through a local housing agency. Federal funds are frequently available to communities (through such federal programs as the HOME program or Community Development Block Grants) for a variety of local housing needs, including home modifications and repair.

Some people may be eligible for assistance with improving a home for long-term energy savings through the federal Weatherization Assistance Program. This program, which began during the 1973 oil crisis when prices for fuel increased dramatically, is an attempt to respond to the needs of low-income families and individuals who typically spend a high percentage of their annual income for energy to heat, cool, and run appliances in their homes. The program provides funds to add insulation to residential buildings, shade sun-exposed windows, institute air leak control measures, and install low-flow showerheads. In addition, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program helps low-income families pay their heating or cooling bills. These programs are funded through the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but are administered locally through a variety of community action agencies.

This kitchen area includes a roll under sink area, lever handle faucet, and a stove/oven unit with controls up front

Home Loans and Reverse Mortgages

Older residents who cannot afford to modify or repair their home with personal savings or income can tap into their home's equity. Conventional loans on home equity are available from many financial institutions. A relatively new and emerging loan instrument, called a reverse mortgage, is available as well. Homeowners who are 62 years of age or older, own their home outright or have a low mortgage balance, and live in the home may want to consider a reverse mortgage as a means of converting a portion of their equity in the home into cash. Unlike a traditional home equity loan or a second mortgage, no repayment is required until the borrower no longer uses the home as a principal residence. A U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reverse mortgage is federally insured and is available to eligible residents who have participated in HUD-approved counseling. (For more information, visit www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hecm/rmtopten.cfm.)

Regardless of the type of loan, persons of all ages and incomes should be aware of predatory lending practices, such as being charged an exorbitant fee or interest rate. This may occur, for instance, when borrowers are unsure

Useful Terms to Know

Single-Family Homes: These homes offer an individualized living environment; however, they are often not designed to meet the unique needs of older residents. Some single-family homes are located in age-restricted retirement communities.

Multifamily Housing: These units, including apartments or condominiums, are several connected homes that also offer independent living situations. Some of these facilities are age restricted (e.g., "seniors apartments").

Shared Housing: This involves a group of unrelated, independent older individuals living together and sharing household duties and companionship. In some communities, zoning restrictions in single-family neighborhoods may pose difficulties for these living arrangements.

Accessory Dwelling Units: These take several forms, including independent 600- to 700-square-foot cottages in the backyards of single-family homes. Some elder cottages (ECHO units) are modular units that can be located temporarily in a backyard. Other units can be attached to a home or located over a garage. Accessory units are frequently associated with the home of a relative, offering independence along with nearby care when needed.

Congregate Care: This type of older resident apartment typically offers hospitality services, such as group meals, light housekeeping, social and recreational opportunities, and scheduled transportation to shopping and cultural activities.

Assisted Living Facilities: These facilities offer housing that allows direct personal care along with independence. Residents live in private apartments that include supportive services to help individuals with basic living needs such as personal care and medication management. These facilities also offer the hospitality services found in congregate care facilities.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities: These three-stage facilities provide for life care in a managed community. They provide separate homes or cottages with optional hospitality services, assisted living, and nursing care. Residents can use the services that they need as their lives change. An initial down payment and regular monthly charges pay for the possible use of more costly nursing home care.

Nursing Homes: Nursing homes offer the least amount of independence; their residents often require 24-hour care and need assistance with most or all activities.

about their credit history and loan eligibility. Older owners are sometimes targeted for such practices. Cities frequently offer tips to help avoid unfair loans as part of their materials on home modification, and others have adopted or considered ordinances to help curb such practices.

Residential Property Tax Relief

Older residents on fixed incomes are understandably concerned about property taxes. Most states, and many local areas, offer some form of property tax reduction for homeowners who are over age 65. Some offer homestead credit for homeowners of all ages, while others offer reductions in the amount of assessed property that is subject to taxation for owner-occupied housing.

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia offer what are known as circuit breaker programs under which the tax credit or homestead exemption decreases as income levels increase. Most of these circuit breaker programs are limited to low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters, but income thresholds vary widely. A 1996 nationwide survey conducted by AARP of its members found that two-thirds of the respondents were unaware of these programs, however. A recent AARP Public Policy Institute Paper (AARP, 2003) provides a helpful guide to understanding state laws, practices, and programs to reduce property taxes for owner-occupied households and renters. (For more information, visit: http://research.aarp.org/econ/2003_04_taxes.html.)

Universal Design for Aging in Place

Despite opportunities for home modifications, existing single-family homes are not always appropriate for aging in place. Neither are some of the newly developed communities that focus on attracting active retirees. Adults in their mid-50s or 60s are often uncertain about what housing features they might need in the next 20 or 30 years. This could result in their purchasing a retirement home that does not respond to their changing needs. Therefore, they might need to make another living arrangement later when moving is more difficult.

Adopting universal design principles into current building practices can help mitigate these effects, allowing

older residents to age in place. This design approach incorporates into new buildings attractive and practical features that accommodate persons of a wide range of ages and abilities. These features range from wide, no-step entrances to the home to barrier-free kitchen and bath layouts. Universal design features are particularly helpful to older people who are frail or who have a disability. It is especially important for developers who target the 60 and older population to incorporate these features and make them standard practice. AARP's website (http://www.aarp.org/life/homedesign) discusses these universal design features in detail.

Visitability

Although there are no federal standards for the design of single-family homes, the new concept of "visitability" offers clear accessibility directives for new construction of these homes. Visitability standards are intended to enable everyone to access the main level of a home. They are relatively inexpensive to install when a home is built, allow mobility-constrained neighbors and relatives to visit socially, and allow for some degree of aging in place. Though standards can vary from place to place, they generally include a no-step entry, a 36-inch outer doorway, 32-inch doorways on the first floor, 36-inch halls on the first floor, and a first-floor bathroom. In addition, the thermostat and light switches should be placed no higher than 48 inches from the floor, and the electric outlets must be at least 15 inches off the floor. Several of these state and local requirements also mandate reinforced bathroom walls to allow for future installation of grab bars.

States such as Georgia, Minnesota, and Texas now require compliance with visitability standards for state-subsidized properties. Vermont requires compliance with visitability standards (except for the no-step entrance) for all new home construction except custom homes. Pima County, Arizona and Bolingbrook, Illinois, also require compliance with visitability standards in all new construction, and cities like Atlanta, Nashville, and Urbana-Champaign require compliance for homes that receive local subsidies.

Roll under countertops (above) and easily reachable outlets and light switches (below) are among universal design ideas

Accessible Multifamily Homes
Since 1973, section 504 of the HUD Rehabilitation Act has had accessibility requirements for multiple-family homes built or substantially rehabilitated by recipients of federal funds, including affordable housing providers. At least 5 percent of the housing units in these properties must be accessible to people with mobility impairments and at least 2 percent accessible to people with hearing or visual impairments. These enhancements include doors with a minimum clearance of 32 inches with the door open at 90 degrees. The entrance door should have a handle that is easy to grasp with one hand and does not require twisting the wrist to operate. If ramps are used, the slope cannot be more than 1:12, and at least one bathroom should have a clear area to the right or left of the toilet and architectural reinforcements to allow installation of grab bars.

The Fair Housing Act of 1988, Section 6a made it illegal for landlords to refuse to let tenants make reasonable modifications to their house or apartment if the tenant is willing to pay for the changes. The law also requires new construction of dwellings with four or more units to include features such as wheelchair accessibility, reinforced walls to accommodate later installation of grab bars in bathrooms, and accessible electrical outlets and thermostats.

Housing Types
Older adults now have a variety of housing options that support differing levels of independence, including single-family homes, multifamily housing (such as apartments or condominiums), shared housing, accessory dwelling units, congregate care, assisted living facilities, continuing care communities, and nursing homes. This variety of housing types accommodates varying physical abilities and changing capabilities to manage home maintenance. Ideally, a community will include a full range of housing types, allowing older people to find appropriate housing while remaining in the community where they have

friends. The proximity of these housing types to shopping and community services is also very important for those who want to maintain their independence. The availability and affordability of each of these types of housing will differ among communities.

Housing Affordability

In addition to a variety of housing types, older residents should have access to a sufficient supply and range of affordable housing options. Surveys show that as many as 55 percent of older renter households have "excessive" expenditures for housing, which is generally defined as housing costs (including rent/mortgage, taxes, utilities and maintenance) that exceed 30 percent of income. Local housing agencies help match low-income individuals with affordable housing, but waiting lists can be long, and the range of affordable options is sometimes not sufficiently diverse.

HOUSING SURVEY

Preparing to Conduct the Survey
As a crucial part of conducting a survey of housing options in your community, your group will need to do some preliminary research. Here are some offices you will want to contact:

The Local Planning and Zoning Department can give you a map noting specific zoning districts in the city, along with information on the types of housing in those zones. You can also get information on legal requirements regarding shared housing and accessory housing units.

The Building Permit Office will know whether the community or the state has visitability requirements for subsidized single-family homes or whether specific multifamily housing developments include accessible housing units. You can also contact the local public housing authority that administers HUD programs and ask to see a consolidated housing plan. These may be available online at (http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd).

The local government Assessor's Office is the place to go with questions about property tax exemptions for older adults. Members of your group also may have personal experience in this area.

The local Area Agency on Aging may be a good place to begin to check on home repair or weatherization services. That agency might also have information on housing units that are particularly accessible and welcoming to older residents. The team will want to follow up directly as well by contacting various housing complexes for information about rent levels and accessibility.

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Housing survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)
- ❑ Flashlight

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the commu nity with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Contact city officials and other agencies to get information (see above for details)

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Department of public safety
- ❑ Local police
- ❑ Staff or volunteers from a local nonprofit housing provider, nonprofit home repair organization, etc.
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

Available Housing

1. Is each of these types of housing available within your community?

Single-family homes? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Multifamily homes? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Accessory dwelling units? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Assisted living facilities? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Continuing care retirement communities? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Nursing homes? ❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Is affordable housing available in each of these housing types?

Single-family homes? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Multifamily homes? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Accessory dwelling units? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Assisted living facilities? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Continuing care retirement communities? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Nursing homes? ❑ YES ❑ NO

3. Are affordable housing options located near basic shopping opportunities or near a regular transit route?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4. Are affordable housing options located near recreational opportunities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5. Do the legal requirements in your community permit shared housing among a group of older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6. Does your community permit accessory dwelling units in an area zoned as a single-family district?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7. Does your community encourage or require visitability standards for new housing units?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8. Are there multifamily housing units that are accessible to people with varying or changing physical abilities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

9. Are there any special housing complexes or apartment buildings especially for older people in your community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

10. Do public transit routes serve areas of town that offer accessible and affordable housing?

❑ YES ❑ NO

11. Does the land-use plan or zoning ordinance allow multifamily housing to be developed in your community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, in which locations in your community?

_____

_____

_____

12. Are these locations within walking distance of basic shopping and recreational activities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Pebble Creek, Arizona

A homeowner who uses a wheelchair reported at a focus group in this newly developing community that 10 years ago he was able to press for 22 modifications to his new home in order to make it accessible to him. He urged that other homebuyers also be alert to the need to press for modifications in standard models of new homes. Physical abilities change. Homes should be able to respond to those changes. As he pointed out, even a person with a walker would be unable to get through a standard 2'6" door.

13. Are you aware of individuals who are unable to find appropriate housing within your community? For example, do affordable, accessible multifamily housing or assisted living facilities have long waiting lists?

❑ YES ❑ NO

If so, which types?

_____

_____

_____

Property Tax Relief

14. Does your community offer any property tax reductions for homeowners over age 65?

❑ YES ❑ NO

15. If so, are such programs limited to individuals whose income is below a specific threshold?

❑ YES ❑ NO

16. Is this program well publicized?

❑ YES ❑ NO

17. Is the application process easy to complete?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Repairing and Modifying Homes

18. Do lending agencies in your community offer reverse mortgages to homeowners over age 62?

❑ YES ❑ NO

19. Does your community offer a weatherization assistance program?

❑ YES ❑ NO

20. Does your community offer a financial assistance program for home modifications?

❑ YES ❑ NO

21. Does your community offer a financial assistance program for maintenance and repairs?

❑ YES ❑ NO

22. Does your community offer tips on finding appropriate financing through conventional lenders?

❑ YES ❑ NO

23. Does your community offer a list of agencies or qualified individuals that specialize in affordable, reliable repairs for older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

24. In addition to assistance with these activities, does your community have a program that helps older persons evaluate the need for home repair, modification, weatherization, etc.?

❑ YES ❑ NO

25. Does your community have a program to assist with routine or seasonal home maintenance chores (snow removal, yard work, gutter cleaning)?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps

Housing is a very broad category, so you need to focus your efforts to avoid frustration. Start with smaller issues and build to bigger issues. This approach will allow you to learn about available resources and develop important contacts within your community. These contacts will be necessary to mobilize larger projects.

An example of a small project is developing a list of home repair and service professionals who have a proven record of quality service. Simply talking to your neighbors and other older adults can help to create such a list,

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Bowie, Maryland

The National Association of Home Builders opened an innovative demonstration home, called the LifeWise House, to the public in 2002. This 1,900-square-foot home is the product of the combined efforts of the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), the Senior Housing Research Center of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the NAHB Research Center. This house is designed for people who are moving through the later stages of life and would prefer to stay put, rather than move to another place. It is designed specifically to handle the needs of older residents. The house fits easily into this community, but it has some surprising and unusual details. Decorative chair moldings on the wall are actually handrails. Borders on the flooring and around countertops in contrasting colors provide greater definition for those with vision problems. A microwave oven is reachable from a seated position. A doorway has no step-up from the outside entrance. Stair rails are narrower than normal, allowing older people as well as children to grab onto them more easily. Not everything in the house is 100 percent accessible, but the intent is to demonstrate that homebuilders do not have to go to great lengths to erect houses that their owners can remain in for their entire lives. For more information see www.nahbrc.org

which could be made available at senior centers. Local senior centers or social services agencies may also have the resources to start a volunteer repair program.

Another small project to consider could be mobilizing to ensure that any new multiunit housing project meets visitability requirements. A number of communities have been successful recently in incorporating visitability requirements for new single-family housing units. Your group could also host a program for private local housing developers to share and discuss these guidelines.

Once you have completed the survey and identified your focus area, you will need to decide which contacts within your community you will work with. Some of these contacts may be the same ones you worked with before the survey when you conducted your preliminary research. Your contacts will vary depending on your definition of your community and its size, but they should have interests similar to your goals.

Community groups have been very successful in working with neighborhood services or planning departments to advocate for modifications in single-family home zoning regulations to allow accessory housing units. (Visit the Senior Resources website for images of attractive ECHO Housing models: www.seniorresource.com/hecho.htm.)

Some communities have revolving loan or incentive programs to encourage builders to include affordable housing units in their planned developments. Community groups can work together toward that goal.

Resources

The Enterprise Foundation is a leading voice on affordable housing and community development policy issues (www.enterprisefoundation.org).

Success stories related to meeting housing needs in various communities can be found on the Internet. There are also several agencies that can help with this effort. Listed below are just a few of the many resources that are available for housing information on the Internet:

Senior Resource.com offers helpful suggestions for specif-

ic modifications to a home that will make it more livable for an older resident who wants to age in place (www.seniorresource.com/ageinpl.htm).

The National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification offers a number of suggestions on modifications that will make homes more responsive to changing personal needs (see http://www.homemods.org/pages/links.html).

AARP offers information on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (http://www.aarp.org/research/press/currentnews/cn-2003articles). Also see (http://research.aarp.org/consume/d17577_energy.html) for information on the roles of states in providing telephone and energy assistance to low-income households.

AARP also offers information and useful links that can help individuals understand different types of housing options and the factors to consider when choosing housing. AARP also offers a number of helpful home design guides, including a home checklist See for instance: (http://www.aarp.org/life/housingchoices/) and (http://www.aarp.org/life/homedesign).

An AARP resource on tips for finding a loan for home repair, is at: (http://www.aarp.org/money/wise_consumer/financinghomes/). In addition, policy and research on predatory lending is available at: (http://www.aarp.org/research/frauds-scams/predatory/)

The American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging offers a variety of information on housing. Its website includes success stories and funding opportunities, along with a list of different housing options (www.aahsa.org/index.shtml).

The Center for Universal Design provides high-quality information on universal design and includes pictures demonstrating good design practices (www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/).

Concrete Change provides detailed information on vis-

itability standards around the country. (www.concretechange.org)

The HUD website offers useful housing information and links to potential funding sources (www.hud.gov/). In addition, HUD provides a summary of the accessibility requirements for multifamily dwellings at (http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/disabilities/accessibilityR.cfm). HUD also offers steps for renters to find affordable housing at (http://www.hud.gov/renting/index.cfm), and identifies a number of resources for homeowners who are having difficulty making payments for their current home or who are seeking to move to another home at (http://www.hud.gov/owning/index.cfm).

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Research Center maintains an active website on recent developments in older adult housing, including the *Senior Housing E-Review*, an electronic newspaper. The NAHB also recently completed the National Older Adult Housing Survey, which reflects housing preferences of a substantial number of older residents as well as those of aging baby boomers. An executive summary of the findings of that survey is available at www.nahbrc.org.

Additional information on reverse mortgages is available through www.reversemortgage.org or www.aarp.org/revmort.

The Administration of Aging offers a helpful website entitled, "Housing Options for Older Americans: AoA's Programs Enable Older Adults to Remain Independent." It includes criteria for selecting a housing option and a full discussion of housing types (http://www.aarp.org/confacts/housing/housingoptions.html).

HEALTH SERVICES

Introduction

Health is essential for maintaining independent living. It was no surprise, therefore, that the older people who participated in the focus groups and who responded to the Internet survey ranked health facilities and access to health services at the top of their lists. The range of subtopics and concerns in this area is very broad.

Proximity to Health Services

For some community residents, proximity to health care means being physically close to health clinics that can diagnose problems, offer quick relief for acute problems, and refer to more complete medical services. To others, proximity means access to hospitals that house specialists in areas such as heart disease, cancer, and orthopedics. For others still, this concept is wrapped up with concerns about being near doctors who accept Medicare or who are willing to take the time to relate to older residents and discuss positive approaches to their health needs. In rural areas, finding any doctor within a reasonable distance of one's home may be an issue.

Transportation to available clinics, doctors, or dentists offers a real challenge in some communities. When these facilities are located at the fringe of a city or in suburban strip malls, public transportation is important. Those who no longer drive might be unable to make frequent appointments because they must rely on rides from friends and relatives. Some senior centers or other human services agencies and organizations offer van transportation specifically for this population. Locating the clinics or medical offices in close proximity to the areas with large older adult populations would help to reduce this problem.

Access to Health Services

To many older people, access to health services means not only physical proximity but availability of services as well. Restrictions on medical referrals in managed care, restrictions on new patients, limitations of payment through Medicare, and the rising costs of co-payments and medications have a powerful influence on a person's ability to obtain health services.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities
An increasing number of older people with sufficient personal funds are moving into Continuing Care Retirement Communities, an arrangement that includes independent housing, assisted living apartments, and nursing care. For a substantial initial investment and additional monthly charges to cover expenses such as maintaining the grounds, optional meals, access to common facilities, and van services, residents can be confident that their basic health needs and potential long-term health needs are accommodated.

It is important, however, for communities to have stand-alone skilled nursing facilities to meet the needs of those who do not live in continuing care retirement communities.

Care at Home
In many communities, older residents can obtain health and supportive services in their own homes. With the assistance of these services, many people with long-term care needs are able to live independently in their communities. For older persons recovering from surgery, injury, or an illness, skilled services, such as home visits by an RN or a physical therapist, may be available through a Medicare-certified home health agency, usually for a fixed period as specified by a physician. Private health insurance may also cover some of these services. For those with low incomes, Medicaid will cover the costs of skilled care at home through its home health program. Some county or city health services also provide these services for those in financial need.

For personal assistance, such as for bathing and dressing, Medicaid will provide some services for an individual who meets eligibility requirements. However, Medicaid often limits these personal care services to certain areas of a state or to individuals with certain diagnoses, and many states maintain a waiting list because demand is higher than the state's budget for Medicaid can currently meet. Medicare pays for some of these personal care services only in very limited circumstances. Many people pay for these privately, but family and friends who are typically not paid for their help provide the bulk of such assistance. Relatively few individuals have private long-term care insurance policies that cover some of the cost of such services.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Boone, Iowa, Hospital

In Boone, Iowa, a dedicated group of community volunteers were able to press for a community-based funding stream and, over a period of about ten years, managed to transform an older hospital with only four staff members into a vibrant operation with adjoining specialty clinics. That hospital identified an important niche that is not addressed in big city hospitals. After treatment at the specialty major hospital miles away, community residents return to the Boone hospital for a longer period of convalescence, close to family members.

Health care at home may be available through private agencies (both for-profit and nonprofit). Sometimes these agencies are affiliated with local hospitals. Information on such agencies in a community is frequently available from doctors and hospital discharge planners.

Local Clinics

In some locations, community health care is available to low-income older adults as well as to other low-income residents through clinics coordinated by nurse practitioners and supported by public health nurses. The nurse practitioners in these clinics can evaluate medical problems, dispense medication, and refer serious cases to doctors or dentists who donate their services or accept minimal payment. These clinics meet a real need that crosses generational lines.

Assistance with Mental Health or Alzheimer's Disease

A livable community supports not only the physical health of its residents, but also their mental health. Appropriate mental health facilities and support groups are important. Many older residents suffer from chronic depression and loneliness. Sometimes a sensitive member of the clergy or even a friendly community member can help; for others, professional services are urgently needed. Often, what is required is appropriate care at rates that those with a fixed income can afford.

Assisting those with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia offers special challenges, particularly to caregivers who find it increasingly hard to communicate with their loved one and for whom the physical and emotional burdens of caregiving are particularly stressful. It is important that a livable community have a health facility that can offer long-term care to dementia patients within close proximity of friends and relatives.

Many communities offer services that provide day care and activities for affected older adults and a bit of free time for caregivers. In some communities, an adult day care center is located in a building close to a senior center; other communities locate them in a variety of facilities such as older hospitals or nursing homes. Although the number of adult day care centers is increasing, many communities still lack such facilities. Some communities are not aware of the positive benefits associated

with such centers. Your group could provide community education based on the positive experience of other cities, helping residents to make informed decisions on such matters.

The issues surrounding Medicare, Medicaid, and affordable health care benefits are critically important to older residents, and it is essential to have accurate information. Libraries in some towns offer seminars and discussions on these topics as do senior centers. Information needs to be widely circulated. Older volunteers are key people, not only in organizing such programs, but also in disseminating information about them to the broader community. There are helpful websites on the subject as well as printed documents available from AARP, the AoA, or local libraries.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

In a small community at the end of Long Island, New York, a nurse practitioner developed a totally volunteer health care center to serve the low-income, largely migrant population that had been attracted there by the promise of work in the local vineyards. The older members of the community have no income and are not eligible for Medicare. These older patients come to the clinic and are referred to medical specialists who have agreed to volunteer their time. A group of retired Dominican sisters volunteers its time to transport people to the clinic and grocery store.

In Phoenix, Arizona, thousands live below the federal poverty line but do not qualify for the Arizona Health Care Containment System. At the Breaking the Cycle Center, located at Grace Lutheran Church, care is provided by a nurse-managed Arizona State University team that includes a nurse practitioner, community health nurse, and two outreach workers who speak Spanish and English.

CARES, the Senior Health Clinic in Port Richey, Florida, provides health screening and limited health care to low-income and uninsured older persons. Patients seen by the health clinic are referred to local doctors. The center also operates a memory clinic for diagnosing individuals with memory loss.

HEALTH SERVICES SURVEY

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Health Services survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Telephone directory yellow and white pages
- ❑ Transit Route Map
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the community with significant numbers of older residents; note on your map their proximity to health care facilities
- ❑ Use the telephone directory to note addresses of doc tors, dentists, hospitals, and clinics in your communi ty; mark the locations on your map
- ❑ Find out which transit routes access the medical facili ties and note them on your map; check on availability or rural transportation system
- ❑ Check on social services transportation systems that provide services to health care facilities

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Department of public safety
- ❑ Local police
- ❑ Local health department
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create schedule for conducting the survey

Conducting the Survey

1. Does your community have a health clinic or hospital outpatient service that meets the needs of older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Is that clinic available to people with varying incomes?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3. Is that clinic on a bus route, or is it available through a special service van?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4. Are there doctors and dentists who are particularly responsive to the needs of older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5. Are there medical offices that are easily accessible by public transportation?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6. Do medical offices provide information about transportation alternatives for accessing their services?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7. Is access to health care an issue for those in your community with limited incomes?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8. Are there Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) in the community that provide a range of supportive services options for residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

9. Are home health care services available in the community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

10. Are home health care services readily available to those needing help to maintain independent living?

❑ YES ❑ NO

11. Are there adequate mental health services?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12. Are there adult day services and other facilities designed especially to respond to the needs of those with dementia or Alzheimer's disease?

❑ YES ❑ NO

13. Is adequate public information available about health care and Medicare benefits, for instance, through discussion groups and opportunities to talk with professionals?

❑ YES ❑ NO

14. Is information about these sessions broadly distributed?

❑ YES ❑ NO

15. Does your community offer programs for preventative health care, such as flu shots, support groups, nutrition classes?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps

Improving access to health services presents different challenges to urban, suburban, and rural communities, but the issues are very similar. The concerns you have identified in your survey may quickly galvanize your group into action because of the primary importance of continued health in maintaining independence.

Older urban core areas often face problems associated with hospital closures and limited numbers of doctors or dentists. Contacting the county public health service or the visiting nurse home health service would be a good way to begin to explore the possibility of setting up a clinic. Because medical clinics are expensive to establish, one approach you might take is to approach a large hospital to see whether it might consider setting up a remote primary care clinic. Establishing such a clinic

may require a regional approach involving a collaborative effort with a number of communities. A reliable community-based funding stream is also a necessity. One promising strategy you might explore is to work with the trustees of a failed small local hospital in the area to obtain space and facilities for a clinic. Families with younger children can be natural allies in this kind of an effort to attract an urban clinic or reopen a closed emergency room as a clinic. In McCurtain County, Oklahoma, for example, a community action effort succeeded in establishing a primary health care clinic in the town of Idabel to serve military veterans and to reduce the six-hour trip they had to the nearest veterans' hospital in Texas. Local political figures became involved, and the local hospital offered space and indicated a willingness to do all the lab work at no charge.

In suburban areas, transportation to doctors' offices or dentists can be a real issue if no medical facilities or offices operate along a major bus route. This situation is especially burdensome for some people, such as those who need regular dialysis treatments. You may want to address this issue by urging local doctors to consider opening storefronts along bus routes or by contacting social service departments about establishing transit services to doctors' offices. In some communities, senior centers organize regular weekly or bimonthly van trips to major medical centers. Senior centers or faith-based groups may be able to organize groups of volunteers to take older residents to medical or dental appointments.

Finding medical doctors willing to come to remote rural locations can be difficult, and these communities have tried several approaches to solve the problem of limited access to health care services. For example, some rural communities have been able to attract doctors who have recently completed their training by providing a clinic and a ready-made practice in exchange for at least a two-year commitment. If your group is working in a rural area, see whether any of your members can contact the major medical schools in the state about offering such an option to a recent graduate.

Finding appropriate adult day care service facilities may prove to be difficult in a number of communities. These facilities require specially trained personnel who can provide a comfortable, dignified setting for adults with a variety of physical and dementia-related needs.

Volunteers who are interested in establishing such a facility will need to work closely with health professionals in identifying the type of space and personnel that are needed for an effective center.

Resources

ElderNet offers specific updated information on such topics as healthy living, where and how to find medical care, home health care, alternative medicine, managed care, and the relationship between the patient and the doctor (http://www.eldernet.com/).

Information on local agencies that are Medicare certified is located at (http://www.medicare.gov/HHCompage/Home.asp). Additional information on home health care is also available.

For information on physician recruitment and retention in rural areas see (http://www.nrharural.org/dc/issuepapers/ipaper13.htm).

"Revisions" offers guidance on a continuum of services for older residents with mental disabilities in the community (http://www.revisions.net/elderop.html)

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses offers guidance on setting up a clinic for congestive heart failure. (http://www.aacn.org/)

The University of Washington provides a tool box for establishing community campus partnerships for health. (http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/contact.html)

RECREATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Recreational and cultural activities as part of an active lifestyle are important to older adults because they help them maintain health and independence. Some advocates promote the concept of active living, which focuses on maintaining a physically active lifestyle, while others go further in promoting active aging, a concept related to enhanced physical as well as mental activity as a means of promoting personal health. Unfortunately, many of our communities are not designed to facilitate these kinds of healthy lifestyles. Some communities provide limited or no opportunities for older residents to be physically active, or they have few libraries, museums, and other cultural facilities.

Parks and Other Outdoor Exercise Opportunities

A livable community offers parks for walking, jogging, and cycling as well as recreation centers complete with indoor and outdoor active sports. It is important that these facilities provide for personal safety and are accessible to those residents who use mobility devices or are less confident about walking. Some communities offer trails that are surfaced and, therefore, wheelchair accessible.

Many community parks offer dedicated parking for people with disabilities as well as pathways and shelters that are accessible to all. For example, pathways can offer space next to benches for those using wheelchairs, and shelters can provide picnic tables and benches with cut-aways for residents who use wheelchairs. Some communities offer trails with tactile guides for residents with limited or no sight.

Bellevue, Washington, a Seattle-area leader in providing parks and open space, is an example of what can be done to ensure recreational opportunities for older residents. One of the most significant parks built in the city is the Downtown Park, which residents refer to as a "mini-Central Park." The park is immediately adjacent to Bellevue Square, the cornerstone of the community's revitalization effort. The park and revitalized downtown have played a role in the development of new housing in the area, and older residents occupy many of those units. A promenade provides the ideal walking opportunity for

those older residents who seek active living.

Interest in active aging is increasing rapidly. With good design and planning, it is possible to ensure that communities have a safe, attractive, and space-efficient environment that inspires and motivates residents to exercise.

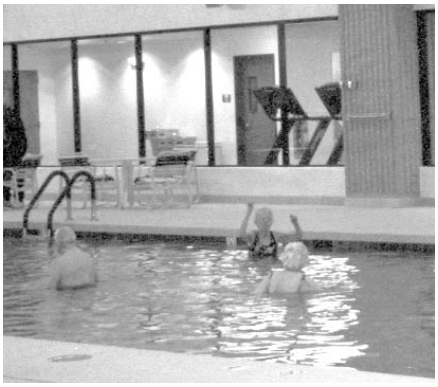
Active Recreation and Leisure Opportunities

Active leisure activities promote physical exercise and continued social interaction. Some age-restricted communities are designed around facilities that offer a wide array of recreational activities ranging from swimming and weight lifting to dancing and lapidary craft and woodworking. As residents age in place in these communities, efforts are increasing to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to leisure activities for residents age 80 and older who are physically unable to participate in active recreation or have withdrawn following the death of a spouse.

Sun City, Arizona, an unincorporated age-restricted community of 250,000, has seven recreational centers strategically located in the various neighborhoods throughout the community. A club of residents champions each activity area and provides support to make sure that the facility flourishes. For Sun City residents, active recreational activities are an important aspect of their lives and their independent lifestyles. Community residents are encouraged to participate, and instructors foster the commitment to being physically active by demonstrating how to use equipment and how to get the most out of a workout. In response to the preference of older residents, swimming pools are kept somewhat warmer than pools in other communities, and they are constructed so that even those in wheelchairs can use them. Golf courses link to other facilities in the city, making golf carts a viable means of transportation. Other leisure communities are similarly built around golf courses and pride themselves on offering a variety of recreational activities.

Some traditional communities that are home to all ages and groups have focused on providing recreational opportunities for older residents by building senior centers. In other communities that are not served by fully equipped senior centers, groups of older adult volunteers have joined others in the community, established a program in a temporary space, and later moved ahead with plans for a dedicated building or a renovation scheme. For example, a recreation center that serves all ages could offer a shared gymnasium, weight room, and swimming pools as well as rooms for less active recreation. YMCAs and YWCAs offer similar opportunities in other communities.

A Bellevue, Washington, senior center allows older residents to become heavily involved in pickle ball, a form of indoor tennis played with a square wooden racket and a Wiffle ball. The center has increased the number of weight rooms it offers as well. Communities like Mesa, Arizona, and Sarasota and St. Petersburg, Florida, offer an impressive list of recreational and educational activities in large, multipurpose facilities. Even in locations with no central senior center, residents in older adult facilities have organized their own parties.



Communities with cold winters or very hot summers have tried other creative solutions, such as mall walking, in which shopping malls open their doors before business hours to provide a safe place for exercise. Bowling and bowling leagues offer other opportunities for indoor recreation. Tai chi and dance have also proven popular in many communities.

Senior Centers: The Efforts of Determined Volunteers Yield Results

In Carnation and Renton, Washington, the senior centers represent the work of generations of older volunteers who were determined to establish a place for older residents to enjoy recreational and educational activities.

In Carnation, Washington, the senior center also serves as a central social gathering place for residents of all ages in this small community and is used for monthly

steak dinners that serve as fund-raisers. The community financially supports the facility through additional fund-raisers that are run by volunteers age six to 90. The historic building that houses the senior center has been improved and upgraded through the efforts of the community. The building also houses a historical museum on the second floor, managed and maintained by older volunteers.

In Renton, Washington, a determined group of older volunteers pressed the city for a bond issue to establish a much-needed large senior center, after its members had outgrown an earlier facility. Despite being turned down at several city council sessions, they persevered and eventually prevailed. The center they were able to build now hosts a full range of programs, including active recreation, educational classes, health assessments, healthy lifestyle classes, and on-site lunches as well as a meals-on-wheels service. As in many other senior centers, older volunteers provide most of the services.

To encourage physically active lifestyles among their older residents, communities can offer softball leagues, tennis facilities, bowling leagues, and senior-friendly swimming pools. Community facilities can encourage older residents to participate: swimming pools can be made more comfortable for older persons by heating the water to a warmer temperature and by providing handrails and ramps to help with entering and exiting the pool. Dressing rooms should be accessible to those with physical disabilities. Municipal golf courses can offer golf at a fairly reasonable cost and ensure the availability of golf carts. Communities also can ensure that jogging and bike trails are safe and usable by older residents.

Libraries

Libraries play an important part in lifelong education. They serve as community centers for a broad spectrum of older residents -- those who enjoy interacting with groups in senior centers and those who prefer not to engage in organized social activities. Libraries offer books, periodicals, videos, and Internet access. An increasing number of them also offer large print and audio books for those

who find it difficult to read. In many communities the library and its community room become a type of intellectual community center with lectures and discussions on topics of special interest to older residents and others. Most libraries also have a community bulletin board listing events and activities in various venues throughout the city.

Some libraries also include cafés where older residents and others can meet while enjoying coffee and reading a book. In many communities, older residents volunteer in local libraries and can help to shape programs and activities. Public libraries are now required to be accessible to those with disabilities, and many are adjusting their lighting so that it does not create glare for persons with visual impairments. Many libraries are also improving acoustics to make them more welcoming to people with hearing impairments.

Theater and Sports

Many communities offer other varied opportunities that provide cultural enrichment and foster community pride. Small college towns are particularly attractive because residents can take advantage of musical and theater productions as well as visiting speakers. Local high schools also can be a wonderful place for older residents to take advantage of drama and musical productions as well as sporting events such as football or baseball games. Regular involvement in school activities also fosters links between older residents and other significant parts of the community.

Museums and Art Galleries

In some communities, local residents work together to establish a community theater or art gallery. Not only do these efforts add to the intellectual stimulation of the whole community, but they also offer opportunities for older residents to volunteer as part of an active "Friends of" group that helps to maintain the facility and its programs.

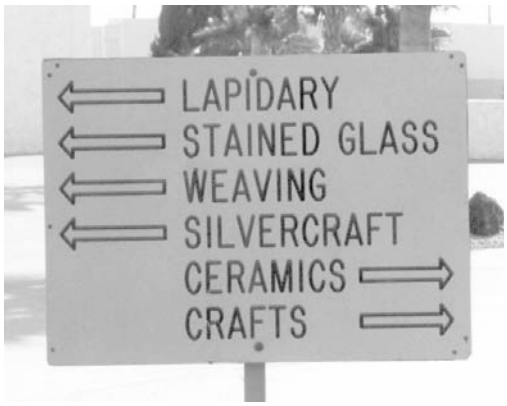
In Renton, Washington, the local historical museum is located in an art deco building that was a former fire station and is the last building remaining in the area that was built under the Depression-era Works Program

Administration (WPA). Older residents continue to play a major role in updating and maintaining this museum as well.

On the Shinnecock Reservation on Long Island, New York, a group of tribal elders and other volunteers worked together to establish a museum honoring the tribe's historical roots and cultural traditions and assembled numerous historical photographs and representational exhibits. The facility itself is a beautiful wood structure that was acquired from a Canadian tribe with the aid of a federal grant and was reassembled by local tribal members.

Older residents of the small rural community of Gowrie, Iowa, felt that their town needed a focus for cultural activity. They joined with others in the community to raise funds to construct a band shell in the local park. The band shell has become a symbol of community pride, so much that it is featured on a welcome sign on the main highway. Once the band shell was in place, older local residents took the lead in inviting prominent musicians to come to town to perform. For example, a renowned opera singer came to town on two occasions to offer concerts in the band shell, a significant event for a small community. A Gowrie community holiday concert has even been aired on a network of 300 television stations across the nation.

RECREATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES SURVEY



Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Recreation and Cultural Activities survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the community with significant numbers of older residents
- ❑ Gather information on current recreation and cultural options in the community from library, senior center, local parks and recreation department, and local arts groups.

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ City planning staff
- ❑ Local parks and recreation department staff
- ❑ Local arts groups
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

Conducting the Survey

1. Do the parks in your community offer walkways and benches in an atmosphere that is safe and inviting?

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Do public parks provide trails and picnic facilities that are accessible to older people and people with disabilities?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3. Is there a public swimming pool with water warm enough to be comfortable for older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4. Are there public golf courses with golf carts?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5. Are there public tennis courts?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6. Are there safe walking and jogging trails?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7. Are there safe recreational bicycle trails?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8. Does your community have a senior center or other recreational center with a variety of active and passive recreational and leisure activities for older residents?

❑ YES ❑ NO

9. If your community does not have a dedicated senior center, do its recreation centers have space or programs designed for older people?

❑ YES ❑ NO

10. Is there a mall or other facility that offers comfortable indoor walking for exercise?

❑ YES ❑ NO

11. Is there a bowling ally with older adult bowing leagues?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12a. Does your community have a public library?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12b. Does the library offer community-based programs, such as book discussion groups or speakers' programs?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12c. Does the library have audio books or other services that can assist those with limited sight?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12d. Is the library fully accessible?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12e. Is the library's lighting adequate for the needs of older persons with visual impairments?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12f. Are the acoustics suitable for those with hearing impairments?

❑ YES ❑ NO

13. Does your community have additional facilities for recreation, cultural events, and intellectual stimulation in your community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Note the additional facilities available

_____

_____

_____

14. What type of additional recreational and cultural facilities do you think are needed in your community?

_____

_____

_____

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps
Older residents are frequently the best advocates for recreational and cultural opportunities. They often have representatives on the planning council, homeowners' groups, or tenants' councils. Older resident volunteers are also regular participants on library or museum boards. These active participants can sound out a broader group of older as well as younger residents.

Alternatively, an active group of older adults who share a common interest in some type of recreational activity can seek out others in the community who share that interest. Allies can be found in any age group, in recreational organizations, within nonprofit organizations, or even among businesspeople. Starting small is wise; successful programs grow themselves.

Recreational and Leisure Activities
Recreational and leisure activities are the responsibility of a number of different agencies and groups in the community. The specific agency or group where you will want to discuss your findings and concerns will vary. For example, you will want to go to your city or county recreation or parks department to discuss the temperature of the city swimming pool and whether it can be changed at certain times to accommodate older swimmers.

Talk to the city park or public works department about issues related to the safety, maintenance, and accessibility of park trails. Safe, off-road bicycle trails also are an issue to take before the city parks department or, possibly, to the city public works or transportation departments. If your community has abandoned rail lines, suggest that the agency consider transforming them into bicycle or walking/jogging trails. The grounds surrounding a public housing facility for older residents may even offer the potential for a safe walking/jogging trail. This kind of project will likely entail working with several agencies, including the public housing authority and the

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Outdoor Recreation near Pittsburgh

Allegheny Trail Alliance's Older Adult Project Coordinator, Yvonne Merrill, holds seminars for seniors and distributes information about the trail's recreational opportunities. The focus is on the health benefits of walking or cycling on the trail, as well as the camaraderie that develops among enthusiasts. The Alliance, a coalition of seven trail organizations in southwestern Pennsylvania and western Maryland, is working on a guidebook on trail walks in and around Allegheny County. The manager of a local bike rental facility introduced older residents to recreational trails through courses at the local community college. The result was a steady growth of interest and the creation of a bike club called the Cycle Paths. The program that began with six riders now includes more than 80 people.

More information is available at www.atatrail.com

parks and recreation department. Because efforts to create and preserve biking and walking/jogging trails and other recreational opportunities benefit everyone in the community, from teens to young parents pushing baby strollers, to adults of all ages, you will want to seek out alliances with other community groups that are interested in promoting safe and attractive venues for physical activity. An organized, multigenerational appeal will get the attention of local officials. Think of other potentially helpful allies as well. It may be that your local medical association, public health department, or community health facility will want to join you because of the obvious health benefits of physical activity.

You should present the possibility of mall walking to the management company of the mall. Costs for maintenance and security must be considered if the mall is opened early. The management company needs to be convinced that these costs are offset by goodwill and the potential that a mall walker may see items on display in a store window and return to make a purchase.

Libraries
The community library often has its own board of directors; many also have "Friends of…" groups. A volunteer group of older residents could work with the library to offer programs of interest as well as expand offerings of audio books or video classics. They might also alert the library to concerns about lighting glare and acoustics.

Senior Centers
The role of determined older adult volunteers in establishing and maintaining active senior centers with varied programs cannot be underestimated. Not only do these potential users need to present the concept to city officials and other residents enthusiastically, but they also need to enlist the financial support of a broad base of citizens in the community.

The need for a senior center may ultimately come before the city council, but a lot of volunteer work is needed before that step.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Phoenix, Arizona, provides a half-mile paved trail at one of the trailheads entering South Mountain Park. Not only can people in wheelchairs use the trail, but hikers with baby strollers can also use that part of the trail. A dirt path leading up to the ridgeline continues from the end of that paved section.

The small town of Slater, Iowa, transformed an abandoned rail spur into an impressive bicycle and jogging trail.

Scottsdale, Arizona, transformed a desert wash into a linear park with extensive bicycle and walking trails and opportunities for active recreation.

Cultural Activities
Efforts to establish a community theater or a facility for outdoor concerts are best furthered with other groups in the community that might share those interests. The cost of renovation is high, but with enough enthusiasm, it might be possible to find a suitable space to renovate, perhaps an old church or an old school building. A community theater support group might begin with support from the local high school or college drama club and involve recent graduates and certainly include the local community theater group. Similarly, an outdoor concert facility would require support from school musical programs and those in the community who participate in community bands or choir groups. Full attendance at cultural programs will help to increase enthusiasm, and, if enough interest emerges, a local patron might be moved to offer a lead gift to start a fund-raising effort to build a new facility. With enough interest, it might be possible to propose a ballot initiative that would give the city the right to sell revenue bonds to build a theater.

A museum can emerge, at least initially, in a modest renovated space. The local historical society and the local library may be excellent partners here.

Resources
The Active Living Network (www.activeliving.org) seeks to create places that integrate physical activity into daily life. The mission of the organization is to build and support a national coalition of leaders committed to promoting the connection between built environments and health.

International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)/Life Fitness facility planning and design section provides information gained from planning thousands of fitness facilities over the years (http://www.icaa.cc/aaw.htm).

The National Center for Bicycling and Walking helps create neighborhoods and communities where people walk and bicycle (http://www.bikewalk.org).

Other useful resources include:

National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2001 (www.agingblueprint.org)

Creating Communities for Active Aging, Partership for Prevention, 2001. This, with many other useful resources, is available from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). (http://icma.org/main/topic.asp?tpid=31&hsid=1)

Jackson, R. J., and C. Kochtitzky. *Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health*, (http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplacse.articles.htm). The CDC website includes a section on designing and building healthy places (http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces).

American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org)

Sprawl Watch (www.sprawlwatch.org)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.rwjf.org)

THE CARING COMMUNITY

Introduction

A livable community is a caring community. It is a community where volunteers help each other and offer the kind of support that allows older residents to live independently. Volunteering benefits not only those receiving help but it also gives those who provide the service a sense of worth and belonging.

Organizations and individuals offering care and support include nonprofit agencies, faith-based groups, and service professionals. The range of service opportunities is similarly broad, from an act of kindness to one individual to an effort to right a wrong dealt to the older adult population. This section, therefore, only begins to explore the range of venues for caring and caregiving in livable communities.

Many communities recognize older people's desire to continue living independent, active lives and have instituted programs to support this ability. For example, many communities have established telephone helplines that help people find out about and a range of services, such as transportation, home care, or volunteer opportunities. Some communities distribute similar kinds of information in published resource guides or sponsor various programs to help older people meet basic needs and maintain mobility.

In a caring community, the needs of older adults for continued independence also include the need for social interaction, either with other older people their own age or with younger people who share their interests. These opportunities vary and include community festivals, church socials, community-wide football rivalries, and county fairs. Others find opportunities for lifelong education in book groups or computer classes. Cafés specifically designed for older residents are beginning to catch on in some areas by offering programs, discussions, and conversation to attract older adults.

Meals Programs

For some older residents the challenge is in meeting basic needs. Many communities recognize this challenge and are responding. In others, these needs are still unmet.

For example, meals can be a challenge. Some people find getting to the grocery store and preparing food to be difficult. Others have lost interest in fixing a balanced meal for themselves and resort to eating whatever is available, and many cannot afford well-balanced, nutritious food. Meals-on-wheels programs across the country respond to this need by delivering one balanced meal a day. Depending on the community, the programs may be managed by faith-based groups, senior centers, or other community-based organizations, and volunteers or social service vans deliver the meals. Because this program is well established in most communities, the challenge is reaching all those who need the service. Volunteers are always needed to help deliver meals and offer companionship.

Older residents who are able to travel can congregate at meal sites where they find not only healthy meals but also the opportunity to socialize with others. In some senior center meal sites, the meal is preceded or followed by an informational program or recreational opportunity. For residents in rural areas, social service agencies may provide public transportation vehicles to bring residents to the meal site several times a week. These van rides themselves become an opportunity for social interaction. Food for these meal programs is provided by the elder nutrition program of the area agency on aging, and those attending may make a small contribution, but older volunteers are always welcome to help with cooking, serving, and cleanup. In addition to these publicly subsidized meals, faith-based groups in many communities offer meals and conversation or social programs once or twice a week.

Homemaking Services

For some individuals, house cleaning becomes an increasingly difficult chore. A homemaking service may alleviate this burden. It is important to select a firm that has a strong reputation in the area and has bonded employees. A contract for services is important to establish a common set of expectations. Services provided by these firms might include laundry, running errands, and light housekeeping. In some communities, the helpline can offer suggestions on where to start. Those meeting income qualifications may be eligible for assistance in covering costs of this service.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

"Elderly Transportation and Errand Running," sponsored by North Central Caregivers of Austin, is an Austin, Texas, program in which volunteers use their own cars to take older residents to doctors' appointments, grocery shopping, or to run errands. These volunteers either drop them off and pick them up later or stay with them.

The SAIL (Senior Adult Independent Living) program mandated by the Area Agency on Aging in Maricopa County, Arizona, provided homemaking and chore service for more than 3,000 clients in 2002.

Home Repairs

Home repair is also an important component of independent living. It can be difficult to find reputable repairmen who will do the job without charging fees that are beyond the means of many older residents on fixed incomes. Stories abound of older residents charged for repairs that were never completed or who engaged repair persons who were not qualified to perform the work. In many communities telephone scam artists offering various types of home improvement services have taken advantage of older adult residents. To protect homeowners, some senior centers maintain a list of home repair professionals who have worked effectively with older people in the community. Local home improvement stores also keep lists of reputable repair people. Your group may want to start your efforts in this area by establishing such a list based on your members' knowledge of and experience with reputable and competent repair people.

Support Groups

The number and types of support groups in each community vary. However, many communities have organized groups focused on the needs of caregivers for patients with particular diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease, or diabetes. There are also more general caregiver support groups. In addition, most communities have hospice programs that are managed through the county, nursing homes, or faith-based communities. Medical facilities are usually aware of these various support groups, and in communities with helplines, this information is readily available.

Legal Support

Though most interactions among members of a community are positive and caring, sometimes problems occur that require legal solutions. Elder abuse in nursing homes, victimization by scams, medical care issues, and estate planning issues are just a few examples of areas that require specialized legal assistance. Many older residents do not know where to turn for legal help.

The local Area Agency on Aging can direct older residents to people in the community who provide legal services. This type of information also can be available on a phone helpline. A number of local bar associations provide legal services for the elderly, and law schools often provide legal aid clinics.

Elder Law: A Growing Field to Assist Older People

Elder law focuses on some key concerns of older people. Lawyers who practice elder law handle a range of issues but have a specific type of clients -- older persons. They recognize that an older person's legal problems can be a unique function of the aging process and complex, so they take a holistic approach to older adult issues. The elder law practitioner typically handles

- general estate planning issues and counsels clients about planning for incapacity with alternative decision-making documents;

- planning for long-term care needs, including home care services and Medicaid; and guardianship.

Often, the attorney works with a caregiver and may be able to offer information about home care, nursing homes, and adult day care.

Other Support Opportunities

Communities have many other formal and informal opportunities to support residents and demonstrate the qualities of a caring community. For example, a note left on a library bulletin board requesting help in meeting the special needs of a severely disabled resident in an older adult home quickly caught the attention of a member of a local church, and the church sprang into action. Senior centers and veteran's organizations are similarly supportive of the needs of their members. Some communities see a need for a stronger support base and move to fill in that gap.

The volunteer hours that older residents offer to their communities are large in number and varied in nature-in hospitals where they staff the reception desk and the gift shop; in senior centers where they coordinate most of the programs; in faith-based groups where they offer a help-

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

The Area Agency on Aging in Maricopa County manages an Eldervention program to support and reassure lonely or secluded older adults who are at risk of depression or suicide.
The Glendale Human Services Council (Arizona) has partnered with other social service groups to coordinate the Domestic Older Victims Empowerment and Safety (DOVES) program, which offers a transitional housing program for victims of late-life domestic violence and elder abuse.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

In a type of reverse foster grandparent program, a group of youths from Hempstead, New York, who have mild developmental disabilities assisted residents of an elder housing facility once a week. Each of the youths has adopted a grandparent who is unable to get out to the grocery store. With the help of their teacher, the youths do the grocery shopping for their adopted grandparent and at the same time learn important skills of personal self-reliance.

ing hand at dinners, rummage sales, and in educational programs; and in age-restricted communities where they take on responsibility for social and support services.

Intergenerational programs can be a particularly rewarding way for people to support their communities. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and foster grandparent program are nationally known for involving older residents in helping schoolchildren with reading and a sympathetic ear. Coordinated through the Area Agency on Aging, RSVP is closely affiliated with school districts all over the country, and older residents play a valuable role as teacher's aides. These programs do far more than offer children help with their reading-they help to build bonds between the generations.

COMMUNITY SERVICES SURVEY

Getting Ready Checklist
(see pages 9-14 for more details)

Review and Define

- ❑ Review the sample Caring survey
- ❑ Define the community to assess

Gather Materials

- ❑ Street maps
- ❑ Clipboards
- ❑ Note paper or handheld voice recorder (if desired)
- ❑ Pens, pencils, highlighters
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and clothing
- ❑ Camera (if desired)

Collect Useful Background Material

- ❑ Get census information on sections of the commu nity with significant numbers of older residents

Enlist Allies and Partners

- ❑ Local library staff
- ❑ Local Area Agency on Aging staff
- ❑ Local social support commmunity organizations (e.g., meals-on-wheels programs)
- ❑ Faith Communities
- ❑ Law firms with elder law practices
- ❑ Other:

Complete Other Tasks

- ❑ Form survey teams
- ❑ Ask for volunteers to carry out specific jobs
- ❑ Create schedule for conducting the survey
- ❑ Make sure volunteers are familiar with survey area

1. Does your community have an information hotline or a directory of services for older persons?

❑ YES ❑ NO

2. Are programs that are offered for the older adult population well publicized?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3a. Does the community offer a meals-on-wheels program?

❑ YES ❑ NO

3b. How do people in need get access to that service?

_____

_____

_____

3c. How do people find out about opportunities to volunteer?

_____

_____

_____

4a. Are there opportunities for congregate meals for older residents in the community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

4b. Are they widely publicized?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5a. Is there a reliable source of information about home care, cleaning services, and maintenance services for older adults?

❑ YES ❑ NO

5b. Where is this information available?

_____

_____

_____

5c. Is it widely publicized and updated regularly?

_____
_____
_____

6a. Does the community have specialized support groups for older residents and their caregivers?

❑ YES ❑ NO

6b. How is information about those groups shared ?

_____
_____
_____

7a. Are there easily accessible opportunities for informal sharing and social interaction that would appeal to older residents (e.g., cafés, bookstores)?

❑ YES ❑ NO

7b. How do new people in the community find out about these and get involved?

_____
_____
_____

8a. Is there a hotline or other communication system to help potential volunteers learn about the type of services needed?

❑ YES ❑ NO

8b. Where is this information available?

_____
_____
_____

9a. Does the community offer intergenerational programs?

❑ YES ❑ NO

9b. How do residents find out about them and get involved?

_____

_____

_____

10. Is there a legal services program for older persons in the community?

❑ YES ❑ NO

11. Is a listing of elder law attorneys available from the local or state bar association?

❑ YES ❑ NO

12. Does the senior center, library, or other group in your community offer programs or seminars on legal issues of interest to older populations?

❑ YES ❑ NO

13. Is there a hotline to report abuse or neglect of older individuals?

❑ YES ❑ NO

Planning and Carrying Out Next Steps

Having inventoried current services and support networks in your community, discuss whether there may be an area of concern that has not yet been addressed. Review information on the Internet or materials provided by the local Area Agency on Aging to consider options for responding to that need. Identify and approach the agency or association in your community that is responsible for this issue to discuss your findings and explore how you can work together to respond to newly uncovered needs.

If your community does not have a directory of resources or a hotline, consider volunteering to assemble an initial data bank. Establishing an interactive hotline is a major task and requires funding to maintain it. However, even a community resource page at the senior center and the library would be a good place to start. Even better would be adding this information to a community page on the

Internet that could be updated continually.

If you do not have an elder lawyer in the community, consider hosting a workshop and inviting an elder lawyer to participate. Most helpful would be a series of workshops in which a lawyer could point out the major issue in the first session followed by a discussion of areas of particular interest to participants in a second session. A legal clinic would be a logical follow-up if there is a law school in the area that would be interested in participating.

Resources

The range of resources available to the caring community reflects the breadth of the subject itself. Each group of volunteers will need to prioritize community needs and build on the interests and expertise of individual participants. The following resources can help you learn about resources in your community.

The U.S. Administration on Aging (www.aoa.gov) has a comprehensive website and the National Aging Information Center, which can provide a series of fact sheets (http://www/aoa.gov/factsheets/enp.html).

The Aging Network developed by the Florida office of the Administration on Aging has a helpful list of organizations that provide services to older persons (http://www.mfaag.org/techinfo/agingnetwork).

The Senior Resource Center (www.seniorresource.com) provides a wide variety of resources specifically helpful for aging in place. The center focuses on naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) in contrast to continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs).

The Area Agency on Aging in some individual communities and counties offers helpful resource directories on available services. For example, Pasco and Pinellas counties, Florida, offer a comprehensive guide to services (available through the Area Agency on Aging). In Santa Cruz, California, a complete directory of services for older adults is available on the Internet (http://www.seniornetworkservices.org/directory). In Maricopa County, Arizona, the Area Agency on Aging distributes a guide with commentary for caregivers titled, “Caring for Loved Ones."

Telephone helplines offer an efficient, effective way to find out about service providers and can be found in the telephone book.

Some communities have published resource directories specifically tailored to the needs of older adults. For example, the *Elder Resource Guide* distributed by the Maricopa County AoA, lists the public and private organizations that provide specific services to people who need them. (http://www.aaaphx.org/main/guide/default.asp)

The AoA in Pasco and Pinellas counties, Florida, distributes a directory that lists all types of available services, including services for people with Alzheimer's disease, and a section answering frequently asked questions, such as: How do I resolve consumer problems? How do I apply for disabled parking? How should I select a home care provider? How do I select an Elder Law Attorney? (http://www.agingcarefl.org/caregiver/howTo)

Some sources of information are directed to specific regions. For example, the range of services in the mideast directory includes everything from Alzheimer respite support to transportation. It even includes names of appropriate speakers from a local speakers' bureau (http://www.mid-eastaaa.org/guide.html).

In more rural areas, a common directory may list resources available in a multicounty area. For example, Huntingdon, Bedford, and Fulton counties in central Pennsylvania maintain a common website (http://www.nb.net/~hbfaaa/).

The Senior Corps website includes links to individual states with information about volunteer opportunities for older adults (www.seniorcorps.org). Senior Corps sponsors the Foster Grandparent Program, in which older volunteers tutor and mentor children at risk; RSVP; and the Senior Companion Program. These programs involve older adults in helping young schoolchildren learn how to read.

Legal Resources
The National Senior Citizens Law Center, Washington, D.C. (202-887-5380) offers a broad range of links (www.nsclc.org).

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (www.naela.org)

Senior Cyborgs: Legal Resources on the web (www.online96.com/seniors/legal.html)
Meals-on-Wheels Information

The Meals on Wheels website includes information on eligibility and services as well as information on opportunities for volunteering (http://www.mowaa.org).

Health Care Resources
The National Association for Homecare and Hospice Communities maintains a website at Homecare Online (www.nahc.org).

Faith-based groups are often a primary source of information about local assistance with health issues and home care. For example, the Catholic Church maintains a website, Ministry Home Care, focused on furthering wellness and healthier communities in the Oshkosh, Wisconsin, area (www.ministryhomecare.org).

Home Repair Resources
A national directory of assistance programs lists contacts for the weatherization program, low-income energy assistance, and contacts regarding assistance programs in various states (www.seniorcitizens.com).

The New York Foundation for Senior Citizens offers information on repair and safety services that are generally of interest as well as a description of the Home Safety Audit Program available to older residents in New York City (www.nyfsc.org/services/repair.html).
The National Association of the Remodeling Industry offers a site highlighting community efforts to rehabilitate homes of older, low-income residents (www.nari.org).

Of particular note are two sites on community volunteer efforts: Rebuilding Together in Tampa Bay, Florida (www.buildingtogethertampabay.org) and a major volunteer involvement program in Cincinnati and northern Kentucky (www.pwchomerepairs.org).

PART 4

MORE INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

An increasing number of agencies and groups are focusing on livable communities; each brings a slightly different perspective to the subject. Together, however, they offer valuable insight into and perspective on how communities can achieve the quality of life that we all need and desire.

Organizations

One organization that is involved with assisting in creating livable communities is the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. This organization has published a series of papers that focus on the practical aspects of how to create smarter, more livable communities. A series of papers, Livable Communities @ Work, highlights successful strategies. The Funders' Network can be contacted at www.fundersnetwork.org.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (http://www.NACCHO.ORG) recently held a series of focus groups among local public health agencies that addressed the link between environmental health and land-use planning and chronic disease and land-use planning. This involved making communities more amenable to walking, bicycling, or other forms of daily recreation.

The International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) is the professional and educational organization for city managers and administrators, and helps serve the training and research needs of communities of all sizes. The ICMA website provides the public with a variety of information on community development, active living, and aging-in-place.
(http://www.icma.org/main/sc.asp)

The U.S. Department of Transportation provides a National Transportation Enhancements clearinghouse to share information on projects that have been funded through the Federal Transportation Acts. Types of eligible projects include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and safety activities, acquisition of scenic or historic easements, landscaping and scenic beautification, and preservation of abandoned railway corridors (possibly as scenic trails) (http://www.enhancements.org). To find your state coordinator contact information visit the above website or call 888-388-NTEC.

The Area Agency on Aging, Center for Communication and Consumer Services, has a website that includes a full directory of programs and services available for older adults and caregivers (http:///www.aoa.dhhs.gov/). For those without access to the Internet, the Information on Aging Elder Locator is available at 800-677-1116.

The State of Florida's Department of Elder Affairs coordinates an Elder Ready Community Program that mobilizes residents to take a closer look at their own community by collecting a variety of documents and assembling key information. Data collected notes such key aspects of a community inventory as demographics, tax base, shopping opportunities, and housing types. A group of older volunteers assembles the information and sends it to a representative of the Department of Elder Affairs for review. Communities with adequate resources are then certified as "elder ready." The assumption is that areas of concern will surface during the inventory and become a focus for community action. (http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us)

Partners for Livable Communities provides technical assistance to cities, counties, and states to help them address the needs of community growth and an aging population. Their website discusses a number of issues and programs, and provides several valuable case studies. (http://www.livable.com/index.htm)

The Visiting Nurse Service of New York, through the AdvantAge Iniative, offers valuable data on the needs and preferences of older persons, as well as case studies and best practices on addressing the physical health and well being of older persons.
(http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/index.html)

Resources to Assist Groups to Organize for Advocacy

FirstGov for Seniors, maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, serves as a consumer gateway for federal government agencies, programs, and policies. It offers advice on such issues as nutrition, disease prevention, and health care

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Hempstead, New York

In Hempstead, New York, several serious car-pedestrian accidents occurred during the spring of 2002 as older residents tried to hurry across a major four-lane street to get to the grocery store on the other side. The president of the tenants' association at the senior public housing facility decided to take on the issue. She mobilized others and invited a representative of the local media to visit the site and interview local residents. The story was covered in the local press, and the tenants' group pressed on. They visited directly with the county supervisor, again pointing out the safety issue, and the untenable situation of stranding a large senior population on one side of a busy street and preventing them from accessing basic needs. Their efforts paid off. In May 2002, a traffic light with a pedestrian walking signal was installed at the intersection adjacent to the housing facility.

(http://www.seniors.gov). Another site (http://www.elder-care.gov) serves as a directory of the Older Americans Act state and local information and assistance network.

The Center for Community Change is committed to reducing poverty and rebuilding low-income communities by helping people to develop the skills and resources they need to improve their communities as well as change policies and institutions that affect their lives adversely. (http://www.communitychange.org)

The National Neighborhood Coalition (http://www.neighborhoodcoalition.org) serves as a crucial link to Washington, D.C., for neighborhood and community-based organizations and community leaders. It serves as an important networking resource for representatives of regional and national organizations involved in community development, housing, and a wide range of other community livability issues.

Issues such as changes in Medicare benefits or improved health insurance may require allies well beyond an individual community. A number of states have senior legislatures or senior legislative days that can be very effective in furthering this type of issue.

AARP Public Policy Institute
The AARP Public Policy Institute makes available a number of papers on key housing, transportation, and community services issues. Publications are listed at http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/ or can be ordered through IL/LTC Team, Public Policy Institute, 601 E Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20049 or fax 202-434-6402.

Beyond 50: Livable Communities, Creating Environments for Successful Aging
This report is the fifth in AARP's Beyond 50 series. This report explores the connections between a livable community and community engagement among its residents and shows how both affect the "successful aging" of its residents. (May 2005)

Beyond 50: A Report to the Nation on Independent Living and Disability
This report, the third in AARP's Beyond 50 series, takes an in-depth look at the roles of supportive services, fami-

ly and community, and our social and physical environments in enhancing the independence of age 50+ persons with disabilities. (Apr 2003)

Accessibility and Visitability Features in Single-family Homes: A Review of State and Local Activity
This paper reviews the methods that various state and local jurisdictions are using to promote accessibility features in new single-family homes. (Mar 2002)

Adding Assisted Living Services To Subsidized Housing: Serving Frail Older Persons With Low Incomes
This study documents the potential need for supportive services among the older residents in federally subsidized housing and reports on 17 case studies of housing projects for older persons that offer assisted living services. (Jan 2002)

Serving the Affordable Housing Needs of Older Low-Income Renters: A Survey of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Properties
This paper presents the results of a survey of nearly 1,600 owners of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit rental properties, and addresses important topics related to the provision of affordable and appropriate rental housing for older persons. (Apr 2002)

The Impact of Federal Programs on Transportation for Older Adults
This report describes federal programs and activities with the greatest direct impact on transportation and community mobility of older individuals. (Dec 2004)

Understanding Senior Transportation: Report and Analysis of a Survey of Consumers 50+.
This report examines how older individuals travel in their communities, how much they travel, and the problems they perceive with their various transportation mode choices. (Mar 2002)

Transportation and Older Persons: Perceptions and Preferences - A Report on Focus Groups
This report presents the results of focus groups and interviews that explored the perceptions and preferences of persons age 75 and older about transportation. (Jul 2001)

Coordinated Transportation Systems
This report provides examples of transportation programs that pool their resources in order to provide efficient and affordable community mobility. (Sep 2000)

Other Resources
The Urban Land Institute has published several books that are particularly relevant to issues associated with livable communities, including:

> Brecht, Susan. *Analyzing Seniors' Housing Markets*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2002.
>
> Suchman, Diane. *Developing Infill Housing in Inner-City Neighborhoods: Opportunities and Strategies*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1997.
>
> Kulash, Walter. *Residential Streets*, 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute and National Home Builders Association, 2002.

An Inventory of Canadian Programs for the Prevention of Falls and Fall-Related Injuries Among Seniors Living in the Community.
Division of Aging and Seniors
Health Canada, Address Locator 1908 A1
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4
(http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/pubs/inventory/intro_e.htm)

National Senior Citizens Law Center (NSCLC)
1101 14th Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20005
(http://www.nsclc.org)

National Council on Aging (NCOA)
409 3rd Street SW, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20024
(http://www.ncoa.org)

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A)
927 15th Street NW, 6th Floor
Washington, D.C. 2005
(http://www.n4a.org)

601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
http://www.aarp.org/ppi

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