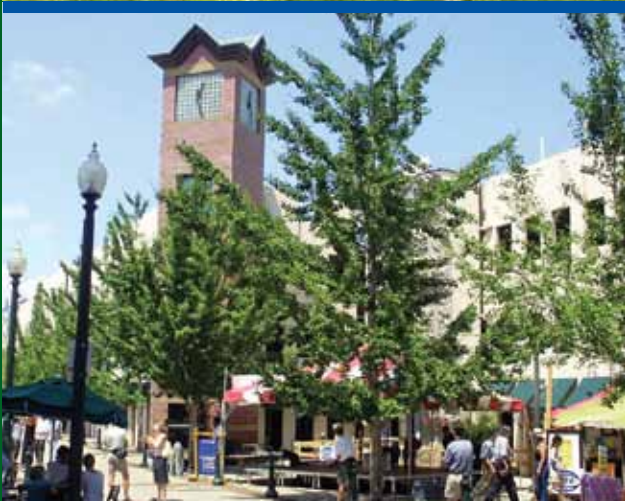


# Making Your Community Work for All Ages



## *A Toolkit for Cities*

**first <sup>KC</sup> suburbs**  
Conserving the Past . . . Creating the Future

**KC Communities**  
*for All Ages*



# Making Your Community Work for All Ages

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## *A Toolkit for Cities*

July 2013



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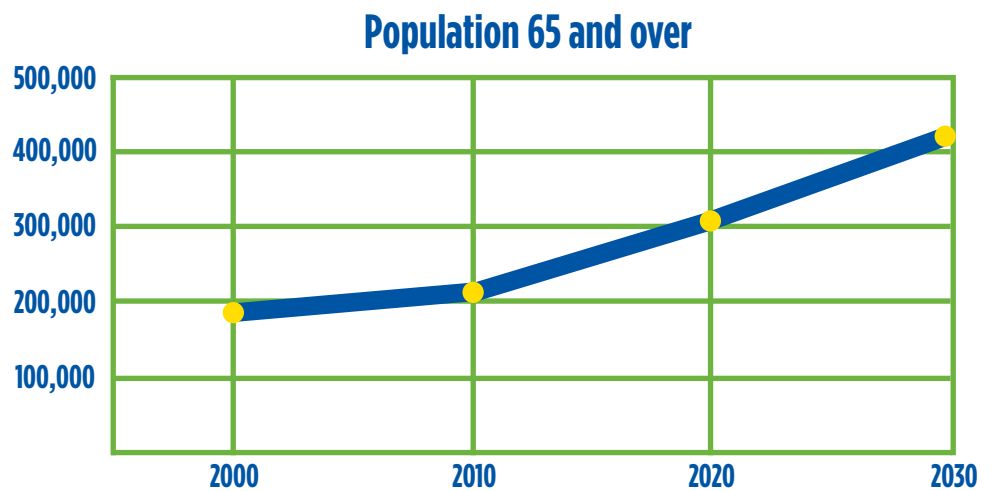




The contents of this toolkit are designed to help local government officials consider measures to improve the quality of life and opportunities for healthy living for older adult residents in metropolitan Kansas City’s older suburbs. The First Suburbs Coalition, a Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)-supported organization of 19 older suburban communities on both sides of the state line, will use this toolkit as a resource to ensure that the needs of an increasingly diverse population are met.

The changes that local officials make to improve neighborhoods, facilities and services for older adults will serve all residents. Improvements to the pedestrian environment, to the local transit system, to recreational programs, and to communication and engagement tools will serve everyone. The changes suggested in this toolkit are intended to strengthen our first suburbs as high-quality communities for all ages.

The demographic trends are clear and compelling — our older adult population is expected to increase as the baby boom generation moves into retirement. Other trends are compelling as well. Many of the baby boomers will remain active and engaged in their communities. Some will want to move to different housing, such as the homes and apartments offered in many older suburbs that are close to family, friends and services.



The Kansas City metropolitan area’s older adult population ages 65 and older is expected to nearly double over the next 20 years.

### 1.1 Communities for All Ages

**M**id-20th century suburbs in America, like Kansas City's first suburbs, came about because of the vast housing expansion that occurred to meet the needs of soldiers returning from World War II. The war had delayed marriages for several years, and new wealth from a post-war boom encouraged larger families. Suddenly, a large mass market for housing emerged. It was cheaper for developers working to meet this demand to build new houses around the fringes of downtowns. Affordable automobiles and an expanding network of roads made it easy for builders to offer homes further away from city centers served by bus, trolley and rail.

For the last 60 years or so, the suburbs did exactly what they were intended to do — provide houses and services for families that raised the generation of Americans we now call the baby boomers. But, as those baby boomers have aged, it is time to reevaluate the role that the suburbs play in housing and serving the American population. We believe that it is possible for Kansas City's first suburbs to evolve, in response to new trends and needs, as communities for all ages.

### 1.2 Achieving communities for all ages in Kansas City's first suburbs

The basic idea behind communities for all ages is to create and foster an active, caring and welcoming community that promotes respect, diversity and inclusion of all ages and cultures. In Kansas City's first suburbs, this approach is intended to improve quality of life for all residents.

The Kansas City region's demographic makeup is changing. Over the next 30 years, the population of the Greater Kansas City region is expected to expand from today's two million to an estimated 2.7 million. Nationally, life expectancy at birth, currently about 78 years, is increasing at the rate of roughly 1.5 years per decade. The number of Americans age 65 or older, a mere 20 million in 1970, is on track to rise from about 40 million today to some 70 million by 2030. The 85+ population will more than triple from 5.8 million in



Atlanta Regional Commission's Lifelong Communities are cities and neighborhoods that provide opportunities for healthy living. These areas appeal to both young and old, include parks and outdoor spaces, meet the needs of individuals who do not drive, and are convenient to shopping and recreational opportunities. (Photo courtesy of ARC)

2010 to 19 million in 2050. In addition, the number of centenarians in the U.S. grew from 2,300 in 1950 to 79,000 in 2010 — and may top 600,000 by 2050.

In 1970, 82 percent of the households in Johnson County were families headed by a husband and wife. In 2010, that number was 56 percent and it continues to drop. The Kansas City region has grown to include more single-person households, more households without children and more households headed by ethnic and racial minorities than ever before.

**By 2040, the proportion of people over the age of 65 will top 20 percent, and people under the age of 18 will make up almost 23 percent of the population. As a result, the oldest and the youngest populations combined will make up almost half of all U.S. residents.**

Multigenerational Planning — Family-Friendly Communities Briefing Papers 02, APA.





First suburbs homes in Independence, Mo.

The Kansas City region's First Suburbs Coalition includes the Missouri cities of Gladstone, Grandview, Independence, Kansas City, North Kansas City, Raytown, Riverside and Sugar Creek, and the Kansas cities of Fairway, Kansas City, Merriam, Mission, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, Overland Park, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Westwood and Westwood Hills.

### 1.3 Greatest Generation, Silent Generation, millennials, boomers and Generations X and Y

A community for all ages seeks to meet the needs of the very old, the very young and everyone in between.

#### The Greatest Generation and the Silent Generation

The Greatest Generation includes people who grew up during the Great Depression and lived through World War II. They were old enough to fight in the war and to lead it. Today, there are approximately 4.5 million people over the age of 85.

Members of the Silent Generation were born between 1925 and 1942 — between World War I and World War II. They are also often referred to as the postwar generation — old enough to participate in the economic boom that following World War II, and to become the parents of the demographic bulge we know as the baby boom.

#### Baby boomers

The baby boomers are the generation of individuals born after World War II between the years 1946 and 1964. During this 18-year period, more than 76.4 million children were born, making up more than 40 percent of the nation's population at the time.

Today, the oldest boomers are in their late 60s. By 2030, one in five Americans will be older than 65. The aging of the population will place a strain on social welfare systems and require us to rethink how we build and manage our communities.

Boomers have redefined what it is to “age.” As many retire, they are more active than previous generations. They have good health care, are mentally and physically fit and are living longer.

#### Millennials

At the younger end of the community for all ages spectrum is the millennial generation. The millennials are those individuals born between 1980 and 2000. Millennials, sometimes referred to as “Generation Y,” are the children of the post-World War II baby boom generation. Researchers have estimated there are around 76 million millennials in the United States.

For the most part, millennials have grown up with the Internet and their interests are much different than those of their parents. Millennials are more progressive than other age groups living today. They're also more progressive than previous generations were at their age. In addition, a number of studies, including one by the Center for American Progress, anticipates millennials will be the first American generation to do less well economically than their parents. This age group also faces economic challenges associated with young families, including housing costs, child care and health insurance.

The millennials are likely to be the motivating force behind future economic growth. This generation prefers to live close to urban areas, places a greater

importance on location than house size, and is concerned about environmental sustainability and “green” practices. Such preferences will help to promote mixed-use, walkable communities that are, in fact, more green. In a 2011 survey by RCLCO, a real estate research firm, one-third of millennials surveyed indicated they would pay more to live where they could walk to shops, work and entertainment. More than half the survey respondents said they would trade lot size for proximity to shopping and work.

### Planning for all generations

The needs of millennials must also be considered when planning for boomers to age. The two generations want many of the same things. Both want affordable housing, jobs, high-quality education, recreation opportunities, high-quality health care and walkable communities. By emphasizing the concepts of communities for all ages, we can meet the needs of boomers, millennials and the generations in between.

**Older citizens, families with young children and the young adult population share many common needs, interests and concerns. The key community components that the elderly need to successfully age in place are the same as those needed by young adults and families with children: safe, walkable neighborhoods, a complete range of services nearby (child care, senior centers, parks, food stores, health care, etc.), an opportunity for civic engagement, affordable and mixed-use housing and adequate transportation options (Lynott et al. 2009).**

Multigenerational Planning — Family-Friendly  
Communities Briefing Papers 02, APA

## 1.4 Aging in place

Baby boomers led to the creation of suburbs around the country, as developers began to buy land outside the cities to build enough houses to accommodate demand. The first suburbs in metropolitan Kansas City are no exception. The G.I. Bill subsidized low-cost mortgages for soldiers and they used the money



Accessible remodeling such as this sloping ramp from driveway to front door accommodates people through all life stages. (Photo used with the permission of KC MASS Services, Inc.)

to buy homes. The houses in the first suburbs are typical of structures that were developed nationwide in the first wave of post-World War II suburban development.

The boomers are now at the front end of a new trend, which is the desire to age in place.

Many older adults prefer to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. As long as they are healthy, can afford to live in their current homes and are able to live with an acceptable level of independence, the idea of aging in place works well. In the first suburbs, some older adults prefer to age in place because they are comfortable in the neighborhoods they have lived in for years.

According to a recent survey by AARP, up to 90 percent of older Americans want to age in place.

[www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys\\_statistics/ii/2012-Boomer-Housing-Survey-AARP.pdf](http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/ii/2012-Boomer-Housing-Survey-AARP.pdf)

Older adults have the option of staying in their homes if there is sufficient support from family, friends and local organizations. Some communities promote the idea of “two left, two right,” meaning that each person in a neighborhood looks out for the two neighbors to the left and the two to the right. For example, one 85-year-old woman has an agreement with her neighbor that if her papers haven’t been picked up from her driveway within a certain period of time, she should be checked on.

Some older adults are forced to move out of their homes because they cannot take care of themselves, do not have a sufficient support structure in place or cannot afford to stay where they are. The inability to keep up with house maintenance is an issue, because it leads to unsafe or unsanitary conditions.

Other older adults don’t have a choice. Those who can’t afford to make the necessary repairs to their homes and can’t afford to move anywhere else wind up aging in place by default. Their neighborhoods and homes are often in disrepair. Property values are low in neighborhoods where properties are in poor condition — the sale of homes in such neighborhoods often does not bring the sellers enough funds for replacement housing.



Recreation and leisure activities are important for individuals of all ages to develop useful skills, mental abilities and creativity, as well as promote feelings of self-expression. (Photo courtesy of Depositphotos.com)

## 1.5 Using this document

Use this toolkit as the starting point for community-level discussion. The goal is to implement proven strategies to meet the needs of all first suburbs’ residents. It is intended for use by community leaders, elected officials, community planners and other groups and individuals involved with promoting Kansas City’s first suburbs as communities for all ages.

Each section includes a brief introduction, a summary of recommended strategies, key questions that need to be addressed, detailed discussions of the strategies and sources of information.

**“We need to think in a completely different way about this new generation of older adults. We tend to treat aging as though it were a disease, rather than a stage of life. We need to work with civic leaders to help them understand the many opportunities that arise from the aging of the population.”**

Ruth Finkelstein, ScD, Senior Vice President for Policy and Planning at The New York Academy of Medicine and Director of Age-Friendly New York City.

### 1.6 Resources

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- The Big Idea in Four Minutes — Coming of Age in America. Vital Pictures. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOA1v4-2Fos&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOA1v4-2Fos&feature=player_embedded).
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- WhatIs.Com. Millennials. <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/millennials-millennial-generation>.



Creating a community for all ages requires local governments to address both the opportunities for residents to engage in community life and the physical environment that enables residents to live, work, play and interact with one another.

## 2.1 Building a Sense of Community

Each of the Kansas City region's 19 first suburbs has its own sense of community. Many residents take great pride in their neighborhoods, as evidenced by well-kept homes and yards and positive comments about the quality of life. Nationwide, however, older adults often feel alienated because it is difficult for them to participate in neighborhood activities, and that trend is also present among some residents of Kansas City's first suburbs.

A common goal for decision makers in the first suburbs is to develop an affordable, livable, sustainable community that meets the needs of all ages. The first suburbs were developed during a time when such issues as walkability, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability were not uniformly addressed during the planning process. This process has been changing to achieve more sustainable results.

In January 2013, KC Communities for All Ages (KCC) and the First Suburbs Coalition (FSC) encouraged older adults to participate in three focus groups to address community-specific issues. Both older and younger participants noted that younger members of the community do not often get engaged in public life. All generations see advantages to organizing community activities so that all ages mix and contribute. The group made recommendations to address these concerns, including seniors helping in schools, students helping in seniors' homes, young families taking leadership roles in neighborhoods and community affairs, and community centers that bring generations together in one place.

"Inclusive planning" is a concept that emphasizes involving people of all ages in decisions about their community and creating ways to encourage all to remain involved in community events and activities. Future planning must consider the needs of families with young children, older adults, young professionals, newcomers and more established residents if the first suburbs are to reach their potential.

## Summary of Chapter 2:

### Building a sense of community

- Strategy 1 Ensure all residents have opportunities to express opinions.
- Strategy 2 Support existence of “third places.”
- Strategy 3 Maintain existing visual and physical character.
- Strategy 4 Implement wayfinding programs.

### Development codes and land use

- Strategy 1 Promote higher-density and mixed use.
- Strategy 2 Implement policies that focus development.
- Strategy 3 Consider altering regulations limiting one home per lot.
- Strategy 4 Promote use of local land banks.
- Strategy 5 Communicate desired development to developers.
- Strategy 6 Promote compact development.
- Strategy 7 Encourage redevelopment and infill development.
- Strategy 8 Use durable materials.
- Strategy 9 Emphasize importance of public space.

### Safety and security

- Strategy 1 Consider reverse 9-1-1 phone systems.
- Strategy 2 Get residents involved to improve safety.
- Strategy 3 Enhance safety and inclusiveness.

## Questions

Key questions regarding community sense of place include the following:

- Does each first suburb have locations that provide community members a sense of place? This may be a public space or private space, such as a downtown, community center, park, or other place identified within the community where community residents gather.
- Does the community celebrate its unique and special qualities?
- Are there clearly defined boundaries or entry points into the community that let people know when they are in one area versus another to build neighborhood identity?
- Is there consistency in design standards that help create visual continuity?
- Do residents have an opportunity to learn about the history of their town and neighborhood?
- Are special events held that allow older adults, young people and other age groups an opportunity to experience the richness of the community’s special places?

“What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.”

Kurt Vonnegut



The Merriam, Kan., farmers market is a busy community destination on Saturday mornings.

## Ways to enhance community sense of place

**Strategy 1** – Ensure that all first suburb residents, including older adults and young families, have opportunities to express their opinions in public decision-making processes so that programs, events and public spaces meet their needs.

- As local communities appoint boards and commissions, appointments should reflect the diversity of the city, including youth, young family members and older adults. Temporary committees may also be among options for structuring community input in less formal ways.
- Web-based community engagement tools, such as MindMixer.com, can be used to raise questions and solicit feedback from the community on issues related to aging and creating an age-friendly region.
- Convene focus groups or conduct electronic or mail-in surveys as necessary to gain the perspectives of older adults or other underrepresented age groups or populations.
- Identify organizations and groups serving older adults within your community that convene on a regular basis, and use these meeting venues to share information and seek input.
- Make sure older adults are regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on how best to meet the needs of older adults in the first suburbs.

**Strategy 2** – Support existence of “third places” in the first suburbs. The term “third places” refers to social environments where participants build relationships. They help build stronger networks, create a sense of community and support grassroots action. “Third places” can be used to share information, enable residents to receive local services, or provide recreational activities. Possible locations are community centers, churches and coffee shops.

- Make publicly owned spaces easier to access for such uses. Nonprofits, private entities, or neighborhood organizations could be encouraged to pursue joint-use agreements with schools, churches, fire stations and public entities.

**Strategy 3** – Maintain the existing visual and physical character of the first Suburbs, especially those neighborhoods that can be considered historic (which now includes many of them that are 50 years or older).



Park Place in Leawood, Kan., offers mixed use spaces — restaurants, retail, entertainment, offices, hotels and residential units — with an inviting and walkable “main street” atmosphere.

- First suburbs should evaluate existing structures in their communities that may qualify as historic and outline a historic preservation strategy for the community. For those structures of particular historic value, the community should take steps to apply for state or national register designation.
- Define policies that govern teardowns of existing, non-historic houses with the intention to build new, larger structures. If teardowns occur, new construction should be consistent in scale, location and appearance to existing residential structures in a given neighborhood.

- Require or encourage developers to use design guidelines with forms, patterns, colors and textures of materials outlined so that proposed projects respect the design quality of existing neighborhoods.

**Strategy 4** – Implement wayfinding programs that provide both residents and visitors with an understanding of the unique features around them. Wayfinding refers to signage and other physical features and graphic communication to help travelers become oriented to a place or find their way to locations. A place name and point-of-interest sign program that is distinctive to a particular corridor or region will better connect people to places and promote a sense of identity for those places.



Neighborhood parks act as gateways to healthy, prosperous and connected communities. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)

## 2.2 Development codes and land use

A basic goal behind communities for all ages is to establish land use patterns that provide safe, affordable, and enjoyable places for all residents to live, work, play and engage in community life. Zoning defines the legal rights and uses for a property that follows from decisions made during land use planning. It is a tool for managing land use generally applied to all properties within a given area.

Land-use decisions help define the basic structure of neighborhoods. These policies determine the layout and location of public infrastructure such as streets, water and sewer lines, parks and other public facilities. The design of neighborhoods also has a major impact on growth patterns and level of density. Local governments typically are responsible for decisions about the type, scale, density and ultimate use of land.

Traditional zoning used by most first suburbs has separated land uses, resulting in limited housing options. Most houses in the Kansas City region's first suburbs are single-family, detached dwellings. As the needs of households become more diverse or change over time, many households have found it difficult to move to another type of dwelling — an apartment or townhome rather than a detached home, for instance — within the community.

It is important for empty nesters and older adults to either adapt their current residence or find a suitable new home as the needs of their households change over time. National studies find that older adults prefer to age in place and remain close to familiar institutions, friends and family. Many older adults desire smaller spaces with less maintenance demands and increased universal design options.

The emphasis of traditional zoning on single-family housing often prevents such options as mixed-use development, shared housing and cottage housing. There are fewer reasons to separate and buffer different uses through zoning, due to the development of more refined tools for identifying and preventing undesirable impacts of development, regardless of use. In fact, there are many advantages to locating different uses near each other.

Communities should address the needs of all residents and seek to improve their quality of life to create more livable neighborhoods in the first suburbs. That means taking into account the needs of a more diverse population — by age, income, household composition, health and other factors.



It also means laying out a street pattern that helps promote walkability, create a sense of community, and moves vehicular and pedestrian traffic most efficiently.

Smart land management promotes the concepts of mixed uses and greater density in developing or redeveloping land. One of the main reasons to allow mixed use is to promote a greater variety of housing choices by including smaller units and more multi-unit options than is typical in new suburban development. Greater density promotes walkability, less expensive housing options and more efficient use of infrastructure.

Mixed use itself is not a new idea. Housing above stores, for example, was common in village centers before the advent of zoning. Mixed use provides easy access for residents within and nearby such developments to a variety of public and private providers of goods and amenities, including banks, post offices, restaurants and pharmacies.

**“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing.”**

Jean Vanier, Community and Growth

Kansas City’s first suburbs are working with MARC to prepare a Model Sustainable Development Code and to conduct code audits to assist local communities to identify ways to modify codes to create more sustainable development. Among the considerations in developing the model code are creating healthy communities and meeting the needs of persons of all ages.

## Questions

Key questions regarding land use and development policy:

- Does a land-use plan take into account the needs of an aging population?
- Do policies encourage private developers to produce adequate amounts and mixes of housing and commercial services?
- Does a zoning code allow mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development?
- Do uses create activity at different times of the day?
- Are key uses within convenient walking distance of each other?
- Do different land uses support each other economically?
- Do buildings visually fit with the neighborhood, and do they complement each other?



The Planning and Development Department in the city of Asheville, N.C., works to promote the orderly, harmonious use of land and improve the quality of life for Asheville’s diverse community and future generations. (Photo courtesy of Dan Burden, PBIC Image Library)

### Ten principles of high-quality development in first suburbs are:

- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
- Foster distinctive, attractive places with a strong sense of place.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective.
- Mix land use.
- Preserve open space, natural beauty and environmentally-sensitive areas.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities.
- Take advantage of compact building design.

### Ways to enhance land use policies

**Strategy 1** – Promote higher-density and mixed-use development of under-used properties or when redevelopment opportunities emerge. Change zoning and land-use policies as needed to encourage diverse uses, diversify housing types and increase densities. Support mixed-use development in residential areas, particularly along major transportation corridors or at key intersections so needed services and amenities are close to where people live and work.

- Most traditional, single-family subdivisions in older suburbs have three to five dwelling units per acre. Residential portions of developments aiming for higher densities would benefit from a modest increase in overall density of four to eight dwelling units per acre, depending upon location.
- When redevelopment allows for a larger mixed-use development project, it is recommended that a variety of housing types be offered. These types of housing could include: single-family detached, single-family attached or multi-unit dwellings.

- Large, mixed-use projects with street frontages greater than 100 feet should incorporate traditional massing and facade techniques, such as dividing the facade into modular bays and creating opportunities for relief and variation in both the vertical and horizontal plane.
- Often, redevelopment projects within first suburbs are smaller in scale. Communities achieve greater housing choices when at least some residential development is located above commercial space (“vertical mixed-use”). Jurisdictions sometimes impose special limits on such development to deal with potential negative impacts, e.g., “residential uses should not exceed 50 percent of the ground floor building space per parcel” (to encourage a sufficient amount of commercial space in ratio to the residences provided); “vertical mixed-use buildings must comply with all standards for non-residential buildings;” “building(s) should have at least one primary entrance facing a major street, or is/are directly accessed by a sidewalk or plaza within 20 feet of the primary entrance” (to encourage lively mixing among uses); or “at least 40 percent of the building’s front facade (measured horizontally in linear feet) should be located within 20 feet of the front property line; windows or window displays are provided along at least



Northgate Village in North Kansas City, Mo., offers many different housing options, from apartments to single-family homes, in a village-style, walkable setting.

40 percent of the building's facade" (to provide a pleasing public realm that reads as a commercial streetscape).

**Strategy 2** – Carefully consider how to mix multiple developments, both existing and new, to reduce distances between residences, shopping sites, recreation, health care facilities and other community features. Public policies and investments can be directed to focus development where it can be served most efficiently and affordably.

- At signalized intersections of major streets, encourage development of such pedestrian-oriented, community-serving commercial uses as a bookstore, coffee shop or local market.
- Create a dynamic, uninterrupted pedestrian zone by avoiding excessive side-yard setbacks between buildings. A zero setback from the side property line(s) can be encouraged in denser developments. Variations in the zero-setback policy may be appropriate when the resulting setback provides greater accommodation for pedestrian circulation, improves the pedestrian realm, or encourages sidewalk dining areas or enhanced building entries.

**Strategy 3** – Consider altering regulations that limit land use to only one single-family home per lot.

- Adopt an ordinance allowing accessory dwelling units, family/caregiver suites and other housing options in single-family zones.
- Permit infill development on vacant lots that resembles single-family homes, but which accommodates two or three small households (this depends on lot size, location and the ability to provide adequate on- or off-street parking).



This high-density housing in Woodstock, Ga., combines part preservation, part new construction to create mixed-use structures that create a strong neighborhood character while respecting architectural tradition. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)

**Strategy 4** – Promote the use of local land banks or other tools that enable local governments to gain control of problem properties and help manage proper redevelopment.

- Missouri and Kansas statutes enable communities to establish land banks as a way to manage properties that have been abandoned or where property taxes are in serious arrears. Communities are able to ensure that the transfer of properties occurs to new owners that will create increased value and remove blighting influences from neighborhoods.
- A land bank could combine individual lots in order to create a larger site that may be of more interest to developers that want to put together alternative forms of housing or mixed-use development.

**Strategy 5** – Work with private developers to encourage the types of developments desired by the first suburbs, such as mixed-use development, affordable rental or for-sale housing.

- Developers may identify financing gaps within first suburbs redevelopment. Local officials should consider the use of incentives, given the financial gap for project feasibility, quality of the development proposal and compatibility with community land-use goals. Potential incentives may include the following: land assembly, increased height (also known as increased floor area ratio, or FAR); increased lot coverage; more units per acre; reduced parking; reduced fees; streamlined permitting; city-funded infrastructure improvements; property tax abatement; tax increment financing (TIF); or additional governmental spending on infrastructure, amenities or services.
- A more frequently used incentive is a “density bonus,” in which a developer is allowed to increase a project’s density if the project responds to community objectives. Developers benefit because they increase the quantity of their product in relation to their highest fixed cost, the acreage to be developed, thus reducing per-unit cost, making it more affordable to a wider market.

**Strategy 6** – Promote compact development that is consistent with traditional development for the first suburbs.

- Compact development means that buildings, parking areas, streets, driveways and public spaces are developed in a way that shortens trips and lessens dependence on the automobile, thereby reducing levels of land consumption, energy use and air pollution.



This first suburb neighborhood in Prairie Village, Kan., offers inviting sidewalks, legacy trees, parks and open spaces.

**Strategy 7** – Focus on encouraging redevelopment and infill development that help create a strong sense of community and promote walkability.

- Orient buildings to minimize blocking sunlight and take advantage of natural light and views to neighboring buildings, walkways and open space. This approach is consistent with the type of development that would have occurred in the early years of the first suburbs.
- Street-facing building facades should incorporate articulation and mix of color and materials to create visual diversity and interest along the streetscape, subject, of course, to a reasonable amount of compatibility with existing structures.

**Concepts of LEED™ for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) and SITES (Sustainable Sites Initiative) should be promoted in the first suburbs. Both are sets of voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices. LEED-ND focuses on location and community pattern, while SITES focuses on site-scale projects. These concepts are similar to those being used for Communities for All Ages.**

- Conduct a visual preference survey to show examples of projects that could be implemented to help create communities for all ages. This type of poll can be used to gather feedback on what residents prefer and provide a basis for guidelines.
- Create design guidelines for new construction for use by developers.

**Strategy 8** – Use durable materials such as concrete, metal, masonry, stone, glass and tile on buildings within the neighborhoods. Use local and regional materials whenever feasible. This strategy and similar approaches are part of a larger focus on implementing sustainable practices and reducing the carbon footprint of buildings — the largest consumer of energy in the American economy.

- Build structures with high-quality designs and materials that allow for changing uses over time (rather than disruptive, begin-again demolition), with safe, walkable streets and sidewalks, and convenient parking choices.
- Building plans, facades and architectural details should create visual interest at the street level (e.g., staggering the frontage of the building, recessing doors and windows, providing awnings and canopies for weather protection and scale, and visually extending interior spaces outside through paving and glazing to create the concept of an indoor/outdoor room, etc.).

**Strategy 9** – Emphasize the importance of parks, open space, public plazas and other public spaces in the first suburbs.

- All residential areas should be within one-eighth of a mile of public open space. “Open space” can consist of such varied places as central open spaces (“village greens”), pocket parks, active recreation facilities, community gardens and passive green space.

- Survey current users of parks, gardens and other public gathering places in the first suburbs in order to establish priorities, amenities and the locations of future facilities.
- Expand programs to encourage development of more small, flexible, close-to-home parks. These could include neighborhood pocket parks, community gardens, informal natural play areas, restored creeks and landscaped rights-of-way with trees, shrubs and flowers.
- Design and orient courtyards and plazas so they allow the majority of the space to have direct sunlight for the duration of the day to eliminate damp, dark corridors for the health and safety of the pedestrian. Shade trees or other sun-screening elements should be incorporated in the design to provide areas of rest and relief from the sun. Focal elements such as sculptures, art or water features should be incorporated into courtyard and plaza design.



MetroGreen® is a planned 1,144-mile interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.

An Age-Friendly Community Checklist prepared by Jefferson Area Board for Aging ([www.jabacares.org/uploads/documents/Livable\\_Communities\\_Checklist\\_9-12.pdf](http://www.jabacares.org/uploads/documents/Livable_Communities_Checklist_9-12.pdf)), located in Virginia, helps a community assess its policies and capacity for making a county, town, or neighborhood livable for people of all ages. Using this assessment checklist on an annual basis will allow cities to chart progress in critical areas such as housing, transportation, health care and community design.

### 2.3 Safety and security

Safety and security are important in every first suburbs neighborhood. These neighborhoods must be perceived as safe (which we will use here to mean that residents are secure from harm in terms of both physical danger and crime) in order to meet the needs of a multi-generational community. Both young families and older adults may voice concerns about the safety of their neighborhoods. Communities should promote features expressly intended to enhance safety for all ages and abilities. One of the best ways to promote the concept of communities for all ages is to improve the sense of physical safety and security, especially at night.

#### Questions

Key questions regarding how to address a neighborhood's safety and security:

- Do older adults say they feel safe living in the community?
- Do families allow their children unstructured play time in the neighborhood?
- Does the community have a neighborhood watch program?
- Does the community offer visits by police and fire officials to assess properties and identify ways to increase crime prevention or fire safety?

- Do first responders receive training on how to be sensitive to the changing needs of adults as they age? Do first responder agencies allow older adults to connect devices that call for assistance to 9-1-1 centers?
- Do police and fire departments actively focus on preventing falls and other injuries and threats to older adults?

#### Ways to enhance safety and security

**Strategy 1** – Consider using reverse 9-1-1 phone systems that notify all residents of an emergency and encourage them to check on their neighbors.

**Strategy 2** – Get residents involved in helping to improve safety in the first suburbs.

- Encourage neighborhood associations to complete surveys noting possible improvements that could enhance safety. For example, make note of shrubs that should be pruned, sidewalks that pose tripping hazards or lighting that should be repaired.



Local police departments often have programs where they visit neighborhoods to talk about safety and security issues in a community.

- Establish a neighborhood watch program, ElderFriends program ([www.elderfriendsinc.org](http://www.elderfriendsinc.org)), or a similar program that encourages residents to help out neighbors as needed. These programs are particularly useful for older adults who don't have families to offer support.

**Strategy 3** – Promote community features expressly intended to enhance safety and inclusiveness for persons of all ages and abilities.

- Provide safe, off-road walking paths and sidewalks designed to be highly visible, with few if any hidden areas that could present safety concerns.
- New homes should be sited and configured to minimize areas of poor visibility from the street or adjacent homes (e.g., maintaining a consistent front yard setback with neighbors).
- Security lights should be used to illuminate a potentially dark or non-secure area. Flood and spot lights should be avoided as they often create glare or light trespass on neighboring properties.

**Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)** is based upon the premise that proper design and effective use of the built environment can reduce crime and improve quality of life. CPTED's goal is to prevent crime by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior. The theory is based on four principles: natural access control, natural surveillance, territoriality and maintenance.

[www.cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e0807391.pdf](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e0807391.pdf)

### 2.4 Resources

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- First Suburbs Coalition / KC Community For All Ages focus groups, 2013. Reports and findings: [www.kc4aic.org/SiteResources/Data/Templates/t2.asp?docid=618&DocName=Current%20Initiatives](http://www.kc4aic.org/SiteResources/Data/Templates/t2.asp?docid=618&DocName=Current%20Initiatives).
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**H**ousing should be accessible, affordable and adaptable to the changing needs of residents of all ages.

### 3.1 Housing choices

Local officials should address the challenge to ensure a sufficient variety of housing choices within the first suburbs to meet the needs of older adults as well as other residents.

Current economic, social and governmental trends will affect housing demand in the first suburbs, including:

- More single-person households.
- More households without children.
- More diverse households.
- More stringent home buying requirements, including larger down payments.
- Increasing property values affecting homeownership affordability.

With the economic downturn that began in 2008, buyers are focusing more on buying homes where they want to live and stay, instead of buying homes as investments and moving frequently. Buyers are also becoming wary of the costs of commuting long distances. This makes the first suburbs attractive to potential buyers who seek well-built, well-maintained homes in convenient, close-in neighborhoods with mature landscaping. Moreover, the market hasn't changed for homes in neighborhoods that offer the kinds of strong schools, public safety, economic diversity and vitality, efficient local government, and recreational and cultural amenities that can be found in the first suburbs.

Home types in the first suburbs are predominantly single-family, detached dwellings. The *First Suburbs Coalition Idea Book* (2010) provides detailed descriptions of the characteristics of each type of housing, as well as recommendations for how to maintain and remodel the typical homes found in the Kansas City region's first suburbs. Collectively, these single-family architectural types, mixed with newer commercial and sometimes more varied housing structures, contribute to the visual character of the first suburbs.

## Making Your Community Work for All Ages

Existing homes in the Kansas City region's first suburbs are expected to maintain their value. There will also be an increased demand for greater housing diversity in form, affordability and design for all ages. The greatest challenge may be encouraging builders who typically provide standard, suburban-style "green field" development (building on previously undeveloped land) to adapt their business model and produce different types of housing products.

### Summary of Chapter 3:

#### Housing choices

- Strategy 1 Ensure affordable, accessible and supportive housing.
- Strategy 2 Highlight homes for older adults.
- Strategy 3 Ensure units support independent living.
- Strategy 4 Institute property tax relief for older homeowners.
- Strategy 5 Expand affordable home repair services for older adults.
- Strategy 6 Encourage "affinity retirement communities."

#### Housing adaptability

- Strategy 1 Promote "visitability."
- Strategy 2 Encourage universal design standards.
- Strategy 3 Reconstruct or renovate an existing house to meet the needs of residents.
- Strategy 4 Distribute educational materials that teach homeowners about potential health issues relating to homes.
- Strategy 5 Maintain, enhance or add porches to houses within the First Suburbs, as appropriate.



Sycamore Green, located in Charlotte, N.C., is a residential development designed to integrate low-income residents into a market-rate apartment complex. (Photo courtesy of Stewart Engineering)

Greater housing diversity could include a full range of long-term living arrangements and community resources to enable older adults to maintain their independence. Smaller homes adapted to the needs of older adults, multi-unit options such as apartments and condominiums and single-level duplexes or multiplexes need to be a part of the mix. Ownership arrangements that include landscaping and maintenance will be increasingly desirable for adults as they age.

Alternative housing models could also be more fully implemented in the first suburbs. These include accessory dwelling units (ADUs, which are self-contained living units built into or attached to existing single-family dwellings), shared housing (co-residence of unrelated individuals within one housing unit) and co-housing that includes older adults. Older adults who wish to remain in their communities close to family and friends will require a wide range of housing choices to include assisted living, continuous care retirement centers (with living arrangements from independent to nursing care) and long-term nursing homes.

Choice is closely related to affordability. Smaller housing units, especially those configured as multiple dwelling units in a single structure, are more likely to be affordable. Federal guidelines say a financially healthy household should have to spend no more than 30 percent of its income on shelter. Families stretched beyond that level are considered “cost burdened.” There is a shortage of smaller homes for both young families and older adults who have limited budgets in some of the first suburbs. The lack of housing options is problematic for older adults wanting to downsize and stay in the same neighborhood.

One concern is that older adults could be priced out of the housing market in the first suburbs. Older adults who are unable to cover their housing costs often have to face leaving their homes and moving into low-cost housing, group homes, a nursing home or co-residing with relatives. Some older adults have paid off their homes but are unable to pay for home maintenance or modifications that are needed for safety and accessibility. First suburbs should pay close attention to the impact of rising property values on fixed-income homeowners who may find it increasingly difficult to cover all costs of homeownership, especially property taxes, and develop long-term policies to address the problem.



A “visitable” house with a zero-step entry can accommodate visitors and residents of any age and ability. (Photo used with the permission of KC MASS Services, Inc.)

The term “visitability” refers to housing designed so that all homes — not merely those custom-built for occupants who currently have disabilities — offer features that make the home easier for mobility-impaired people to live in and visit. The features that make a home visitable are, naturally, also helpful for owners who become disabled or decide to age in place.

## Questions

Key questions regarding housing choices:

- How can the public and private sector work together to reduce the risk in addressing demand for new housing products not yet proven by the market?
- What steps can be taken to keep rents and prices affordable?
- If an older adult were to leave a current home, are affordable housing options available in the same community?
- Are accessibility standards (universal design) being incorporated into new housing construction?
- Are assisted living options available and affordable to residents?
- Does zoning permit a variety of housing types?

**“The needs and expectation of housing change with age. Housing options in our communities should reflect these evolving needs and expectations.”**

*A Blueprint for Action: Developing a Livable Community for All Ages — National Association of Area Agencies on Aging*

### Ways to improve housing options

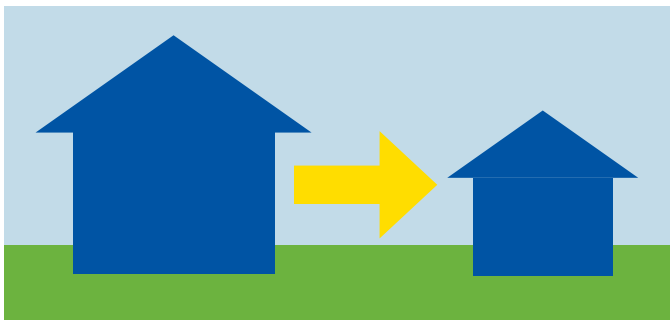
**Strategy 1** – Ensure that a range of affordable, accessible and supportive housing is available that meets the needs of older adults seeking to age in place.

- Discourage “age-restricted communities” that limit flexibility for residents.
- Evaluate the possibility of allowing single-family homeowners to share their homes, including subletting parts of their residence to provide additional income streams, security and companionship.
- Consider cohousing options within the first suburbs. The Cohousing Association of the United States ([www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)) describes cohousing as “a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their own neighborhoods.”



Third Street Cottages consist of eight detached, one-bedroom-plus loft cottages clustered around a garden courtyard with detached parking. The city of Langley, Wash. (pop. 1100), was the first to adopt an innovative “Cottage Housing Development.” (Photo courtesy of Ross Chapins Architects)

- Conduct an audit: (1) list housing types allowed in the jurisdiction in question according to acreage affected (vacant and built) and numbers existing; (2) work with MARC to compare these findings to regional supply and demand; (3) determine if any changes need to be made to zoning and land use ordinances in order to add new housing options or expand existing ones; and (4) if changes are needed, elected officials can add new housing types during updates of comprehensive plans and implementation of the land use element of these plans.
- Change or streamline zoning and building code reviews for senior housing, which can reduce costs and provide affordable housing for seniors.
- Provide both rental and for-sale housing options. On one hand, people are fearful of rental property because of the potential of lowered property values and their perception that they are not as well maintained as owner-occupied homes. On the other hand, they see the lack of



According to the American Housing Survey, between 2010 and 2030, 74 percent of the change in housing demand will come from those who are 65 or older. This age group will be looking to either age in place or downsize. According to Chris Nelson, professor at the University of Utah, speaking of this age group, “If they are unable to age in place, they will be actively down-sizing. Boomers will force the transformation of the urban landscape.”

affordable apartments as a deterrent to younger people moving into the community. The former problem can be resolved by stringent community enforcement of property maintenance and ensuring high-quality design and materials in new construction and landscaping.

- Nonprofits can be used to match parties based on needs and capabilities, pre-screen applicants and follow up afterwards. Most organizations that perform this service are supported by sources other than people seeking their help.
- Promote programs that allow and encourage students to live with older adults. These are particularly effective in areas near local colleges and universities. A Kansas City-based initiative, The Homesharing Program ([www.sccentral.org/aging-in-community/homesharing-program](http://www.sccentral.org/aging-in-community/homesharing-program)), can help both homeowners and students.
- Develop suburban group homes. One response of some suburban communities is fostering the creation of small group homes. These can provide support and community for residents in a familiar suburban setting.



The Jordan is a complex of 90 affordable apartments in Arlington, Va., acquired through land a swap with JBG Companies. Amenities include a community center, water play area for children, a library and a public transit subsidy for residents. (Photo courtesy of Harkins Builders)

**Strategy 2** – Highlight homes that are designed specifically to meet the needs of older adults by ensuring that more information about such homes is available to buyers.

- Develop a rating program similar to the ENERGY STAR program ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)), but for universal design standards instead of energy efficiency.
- Coordinate with the Association of Realtors and its Senior Real Estate Specialist (SRES) program to provide universal design information to buyers and sellers of residential property.
- Invite realtors in the first suburbs to participate in the program.

**Strategy 3** – Ensure that a significantly increased number of new or refurbished housing units in the First Suburbs that support independent living are available to older residents of low and moderate incomes.

- Utilize services such as [www.kcmetrohousing.org](http://www.kcmetrohousing.org) to help first suburb residents find affordable housing. KCmetrohousing.org is an Internet-based housing locator service for those seeking housing and for landlords with properties for rent. The website provides additional services for tenant service professionals, public housing authorities, governments and state housing agencies.
- Preserve and expand rental housing for older adults with limited incomes by encouraging mixed-income housing.

**Strategy 4** – Institute property tax relief programs for older homeowners.

- Offer options to homeowners such as deferred payment of property taxes, which would be paid off when the house is sold. Eligibility and the amounts allowed can be based on a sliding scale determined by income.
- Allow older homeowners to work off a portion of their tax obligation by performing services needed by the community.

**Strategy 5** – Expand current offerings for affordable home repair services for older adults. Some older adults have paid off their homes, but can't afford to maintain the homes because repairs are needed.

- Develop a funding source that provides financial support for older adults who need help paying for repairs.
- Provide a combination of grants and low interest loans for older adults who need to update their homes.
- Defer repayment of a loan until the house is sold; or the loan can be forgiven over time based on a sliding scale reflecting income.

**A cohousing development is typically a group of dwelling units combined with common facilities and a program that encourages social interaction, such as weekly meals cooked and eaten together, common gardens or shared babysitting. These developments are set up legally as either a collection of individually owned units with a homeowners association that owns the common facilities, or as a condominium or housing cooperative. According to the Cohousing Association, more than 200 cohousing projects have been completed or are under development in the U.S.**

**Strategy 6** – Encourage “affinity retirement communities” that target retirees with a common interest or lifestyle. This trend is expected to increase in popularity as boomers begin to retire in greater numbers. Examples of affinity communities include those that emphasize golf, tennis, horseback riding, art and music, the culinary arts, and other interests. The number of university-based retirement communities targeted at alumni has doubled in the last decade.

### 3.2 Housing adaptability

Buying an older house may make financial sense for those looking to purchase a home. In most communities, money goes further when buying an older house instead of building a new one. Lower cost is one reason young families are attracted to homes in the first suburbs. The houses are smaller and more affordable than in many newer developments, plus the neighborhoods have the amenities that young families seek, including high-quality schools and proximity to downtown Kansas City and other employment centers.



Universal design features in a remodeled home can include larger doorways and open spaces that will accommodate a wheelchair. (Photo used with the permission of KC MASS Services, Inc.)

Universal design is becoming an important element of housing choice. This is a practice that seeks to create environments, objects and systems that can be used by as many people as possible and is intended to create places for people of all ages and abilities. For housing, universal design typically features lever faucets and door handles, roll-under sinks in kitchens and bathrooms for wheelchair users, and wider doorways. For owners, such features mean that a wider market may exist when it comes time to sell and, should they choose to stay in the home, that it will accommodate their own changing needs over time.

Elected officials should create policies that require or encourage developers of new construction or restoration to provide universal design or simple visitability, as many houses in the first suburbs don't have these features.



Universal design, integrated into this stylish kitchen, provides lowered countertops at the island, a perfect height for a wheelchair user, as well as drawers and a microwave that are easily accessible. (Photo courtesy of Phil Tauran)



A circular grab bar in a shower is attractive as well as being a safety feature. (Photo used with the permission of KC MASS Services, Inc.)

**According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Americans over age 65 are six times more likely to have an accident at home than at work. Universal design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidents or unintended actions, provides warnings of hazards, errors and fail-safe features. It also provides privacy, security and safety equally to all users.**

The concept of universal design is to plan products and environments to be usable to the greatest extent possible by people of all ages and abilities, as well as promote safety, comfort and convenience.

Universal design is especially important for those who want to age in place, which all too often means continuing to live in homes designed for young, healthy families with children. These homes need things such as stairs, doorknobs, grab bars, counter heights and door widths to be redesigned or replaced.

One option is to repair or upgrade existing homes rather than move older adults. Many older adults moved into the first suburbs years ago and now have to determine if they can — or should — continue to stay in their homes. Some houses can be upgraded fairly easily to accommodate the needs of older adults and allow for aging in place.

### Questions

Key questions regarding housing adaptability:

- Is an older house worth repairing and updating?
- Would it be more affordable to upgrade a home than to relocate?
- Are experienced contractors available to help with house upgrades or repair projects?
- Are contractors properly licensed, bonded and insured to do the work?
- Are the contractors listed, and in good standing, on the government Consumers Affairs Office and the Better Business Bureau?
- How can existing houses be upgraded to be more sustainable and energy efficient?

Purple Heart Homes, based in North Carolina, is helping veterans make home modifications that allow them to remain in their homes. Through its Veterans Aging in Place program, the organization provides funds to widen doorways, renovate bathrooms and create a barrier-free first floor living space.

[www.purplehearthomesusa.org](http://www.purplehearthomesusa.org)

### Ways to improve housing adaptability

**Strategy 1** – Promote the concept of “visitability” as a way for homeowners to make updates needed to improve accessibility for all ages and promote aging in place.

A “visitable” home is built to include the following:

- Route from a public sidewalk, driveway or garage to an entry.
- Entry without steps.
- Doorways wide enough to accommodate most mobility devices (typically a minimum of a two-foot-ten-inch door).
- Living space on the entry level.
- Route throughout the entry level accessible by someone in a wheelchair.
- Toilet and lavatory on the entry level.
- Access to a kitchen on the entry level.
- Outlets and switches at a reachable height.

**Strategy 2** – Encourage development of residential units (single-family or multi-family development) that meet or exceed universal design standards.



In Libertyville, Ill., this 26-home development was built on School Street, an urban, walkable community where front porches are set near the sidewalks and residents are connected to their neighborhood. Each lot was designed with a different plan to avoid the “cookie cutter” look. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)



- Enforce the requirements of the Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act and encourage universal design.
- Coordinate with the Building Industry of America and their Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) program to provide training on universal design for builders, remodelers and property owners. Encourage builders in the first suburbs to become familiar with the CAPS program.
- Maintain a database of qualified CAPS builders and make this information available to first suburbs residents. (An online directory of qualified CAPS professionals is available through the National Association of Homebuilders at [www.nahb.org/reference\\_list.aspx?sectionID=1391](http://www.nahb.org/reference_list.aspx?sectionID=1391).)
- Expedite the permitting process for construction so that residents can easily make changes such as installing wheelchair ramps and updating bathrooms. Implement a streamlined process for approving construction projects related to adapting homes for all ages.

**Strategy 3** – Reconstruct or renovate an existing house to address the individual needs of the residents.

- Emphasize functionality over return on investment (ROI). ROI is a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments. Any home renovation project will return at least one-half its cost and most return over three-quarters of the investment. For older adults, there could be some ROI, but it is unlikely.
- Conduct courses on how to prepare homes for retirement. Homeowners can undertake many upgrades gradually, in small steps, over 10 or 15 years, rather than waiting for retirement.

The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) has identified a 10-step process to guide remodel planning.

- **Step One:** Assess your current situation.
- **Step Two:** Decide how long you intend to live in your present home.
- **Step Three:** Define the areas of the home you want to change.
- **Step Four:** Allow plenty of time for the remodel.
- **Step Five:** Use a reputable contractor.
- **Step Six:** Create a realistic budget.
- **Step Seven:** Get a comprehensive proposal from your contractor.
- **Step Eight:** Have a signed contract in hand before any work begins.
- **Step Nine:** Tie payments to work stages.
- **Step Ten:** Keep your perspective.

- Review zoning setback and other requirements to determine if the lot size accommodates the requirements of proposed housing modifications.

**Strategy 4** – Distribute educational materials that teach homeowners about potential health issues relating to homes including indoor air quality, mold and mildew, gas leaks, asbestos, lead levels, dust, contaminated soils, insects and rodents, radon, and carbon monoxide.

- Provide information on how to assess potential health issues related to a home. The information could be on a website or provided as a simple printed handout.
- Provide materials about how to fix potential health issues in the home, such as installing carbon dioxide sensors to regulate fresh airflow.

**Strategy 5** – Maintain, enhance or add porches to houses within the first suburbs, as appropriate. Front porches enhance opportunities for social interaction between people sitting on the porches and pedestrians walking by.

### 3.3 Resources

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## 4 Transportation

**M**uch of our culture has been influenced by motor vehicles. Roads dominate the American landscape and for the last 70 years or so, we have been building our cities and towns around the automobile. In general, the first suburbs are an example of this auto-oriented development pattern.

We drive everywhere — to work, to school, to stores and to parks. Our modern transportation system has served as the backbone of our economy and provided Americans great mobility, but there have also been negative impacts. Low-density land use is inefficient and expensive, and environmental and cultural impacts have been significant. Local and state governments are challenged with maintaining our current transportation infrastructure.

Maintaining accessibility and livability while meeting the mobility needs of new generations of residents, and a growing number of older residents, requires careful attention to numerous transportation issues. Some of these issues are longstanding — congestion and safety, for example. Others are more recent. Bicycle planners for two generations have dreamed that the bicycle would emerge from purely recreational use to become a major element of the home-to-work commuter pattern. That dream is now rapidly becoming a reality in many cities across the United States. Communities that work to address their mobility needs in imaginative, innovative ways will be well positioned for success in the 21st century.

**“Transportation is the way we physically connect with each other. Having a variety of options that are flexible to meet the needs of the individual is the hallmark of a livable community.”**

Growing Older in Clark County, Wash., Clark County Aging Readiness Task Force. [www.clark.wa.gov/planning/aging/documents/AgingReadinessApril2012web.pdf](http://www.clark.wa.gov/planning/aging/documents/AgingReadinessApril2012web.pdf)

**“The livability of a community depends in part on multiple mobility options that allow residents of all ages and abilities to connect with their communities.”**

Beyond 50.05: A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging – AARP

## Summary of Chapter 4:

### Transportation planning and facility design

- Strategy 1 Ensure transportation plans consider all ages.
- Strategy 2 Coordinate transportation planning with land use planning.
- Strategy 3 Promote bicycle trails, lanes and programs.
- Strategy 4 Slow down vehicle traffic.
- Strategy 5 Modify roads to address potential concerns of older drivers.
- Strategy 6 Provide parking where it is needed.
- Strategy 7 Improve safety at intersections for all users.

### Walkability

- Strategy 1 Conduct a walkability assessment.
- Strategy 2 Promote pedestrian scale.
- Strategy 3 Add sidewalks as needed.
- Strategy 4 Develop multiuse trails.
- Strategy 5 Provide overhead shelter.
- Strategy 6 Add textures and details to site furnishings.

### Public Transit

- Strategy 1 Promote public transportation.
- Strategy 2 Maximize transit effectiveness.
- Strategy 3 Maximize transit riders' positive experiences.
- Strategy 4 Develop transit stops.

### Transportation Services

- Strategy 1 Address boundary issues.
- Strategy 2 Provide personalized transportation.
- Strategy 3 Explore alternative modes of public transportation.
- Strategy 4 Take a holistic look at transportation services.
- Strategy 5 Expand programs to assess driving competence of older adults.

## 4.1 Transportation planning and facility design

Transportation planning is the best way to take positive steps to enhance mobility options, including public transportation, walking, bicycling and specialized transportation for residents of all ages. It is important to develop a range of options and implement the best strategies that will benefit all residents, including older adults.

Transportation planning leads to specific projects that can impact the quality of life in the first suburbs. For example, one strategy is to implement “road diets” wherever possible. A road diet can address a variety of needs such as improving the appearance of a street in a particular neighborhood, discouraging long-distance commuting patterns (and encouraging it elsewhere, or accommodating it through more transit), calming busy traffic, improving pedestrian safety and encouraging greater bicycle use. A road diet could also involve removing one or more travel lanes from an existing roadway and using the additional space for bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks with landscaping buffers, street furniture and other amenities.

A related strategy is “livable streets,” also referred to as “complete streets,” which are roadways designed to allow for safe and convenient travel by all users, including motor vehicles, pedestrians (including those with disabilities), transit vehicles and bicyclists, both along and across the corridor. Implementing the complete street concept is one way to help ensure walkability. As the name implies, streets can be regarded as serving all users, not simply drivers of automobiles, and become attractive, safe open spaces. Policies and infrastructure changes to accomplish complete streets are guided by three principles:

1. Reducing vehicle travel speeds, particularly in areas used by both automobiles and pedestrians.
2. Improving the physical layout of streets to make it easier for drivers and pedestrians to navigate.
3. Enhancing visual cues and information for drivers and pedestrians.

Transportation planning also enables the up-front adoption of other best practices used increasingly in progressive strategies. In addition to complete streets, a similar approach is “context sensitive solutions” to balance the needs for travel with surrounding land uses and respect for community character. The term “green streets” is used to describe environmentally sustainable practices, which use native plantings in green buffers to address stormwater management. The use of bioswales, retention areas and street plants benefits water quality, improves visual appearance of the roadway and reduces the need for expensive culverts. If maintained, native plantings reduce the need for expensive operations, including watering. Green street solutions are integral to traffic-calming devices like roundabouts, pedestrian refuge islands and curb extensions, all of which are consistent with a complete streets approach.

## Questions

Key questions regarding transportation planning for communities for all ages:

- Can most residents walk or use a community transportation option to get to a grocery store, doctor’s office and pharmacy?
- Are there roads designed for safe driving, with clear and unambiguous signage, traffic stops and pedestrian crosswalks?



Issaquah Highlands, Wash., combines access to woods, trails, open space and parks with an urban-village lifestyle of convenience. As the city features a network of sidewalks and trails, residents find it easy to walk or to bike. (Photo courtesy of Chris Overdorf)

- Does transportation planning involve collecting input from residents of all ages?
- Do upcoming transportation projects include practices such as complete streets, context sensitive solutions and sustainable design?

## Ways to improve transportation planning

**Strategy 1** – Ensure that transportation plans for the first suburbs consider the needs of all ages and abilities, while also taking into consideration cultural, natural and visual resources.

- Consult Transportation Outlook 2040, the Kansas City region’s long-range transportation plan, which describes how the region will manage, operate and invest in its multimodal transportation system for the next several decades. This plan is updated every five years.
- Consider the special needs of older adults by consulting the Framework for Senior Mobility ([www.bloch.umkc.edu/mwcnl//initiatives/documents/Kansas-City-Framework-for-Senior-Mobility.pdf](http://www.bloch.umkc.edu/mwcnl//initiatives/documents/Kansas-City-Framework-for-Senior-Mobility.pdf)) The framework describes the strategies and goals needed to address the mobility needs of seniors. The report was prepared by the Mr. Goodcents Foundation and Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership, with funding from the Jewish Heritage Foundation.
- Partner with MARC to support the implementation of the Regional Older Adult Transportation and Mobility Action Plan (estimated completion Fall 2013).
- Analyze crash and injury data involving local older adults. This can identify trouble spots and priority areas for redesign in the first suburbs. Initiate research to identify best practices and local priorities to reduce crashes involving older motorists and pedestrians.



There is a growing need for accessible, safe trails to accommodate bikers and connect parks, points of interests and neighborhoods. (Photo courtesy of Harris County Flood Control District)

**Strategy 2** – Coordinate transportation planning with land-use planning and other planning that focuses on neighborhood improvements.

- Coordinate land-use planning, community development, urban revitalization, open space planning and transportation planning efforts to ensure that all of the pieces “fit” with each other.
- Encourage interconnected streets, which disperse traffic, reduce trip length and connect neighborhoods. Maintain existing street grids, which encourage walking and biking by offering direct routes and travel alternatives parallel to high-volume streets. This type of street system also disperses traffic more equitably among all streets, gives drivers alternative routes to reach their destinations and establishes a sense of community by allowing all streets to lead to community focal points.
- Minimize the use of cul-de-sacs and avoid dead-end streets within new developments. Ensure that new streets are interconnected with each other and with streets on abutting properties in a grid or modified grid pattern.

- Use a “street connectivity index,” which is derived by dividing the number of links (straight stretches or road) by the number of nodes (intersections). For example, a development with 36 links and 21 nodes would have a connectivity index of 1.71 (36/21). For new developments greater than 15 acres or more, new streets should have a street connectivity index of 1.40 or more.
- Review the American Planning Association’s Model Street Connectivity Standards Ordinance, which is part of its research on smart land development. ([www.dcat.net/workshoptoolkit/Workshop\\_Toolkit/Smart\\_Growth\\_files/chapter4.pdf](http://www.dcat.net/workshoptoolkit/Workshop_Toolkit/Smart_Growth_files/chapter4.pdf))

**Strategy 3** – Promote bicycle trails, lanes and programs.

- Safe, comfortable, convenient bicycling facilities provide a cost-effective way for the first suburbs to improve mobility, livability and public health, while reducing traffic congestion and carbon dioxide emissions.
- Include bicycle parking at public facilities and require private development to accommodate safe bicycle parking for employees, customers and others.



Angled crosswalks not only provide a safety refuge for pedestrians, but also encourages pedestrians to look for oncoming traffic before crossing the roadway. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)

#### Strategy 4 – Slow down vehicle traffic and make neighborhoods safer for biking and walking.

- Include traffic-calming devices such as medians, traffic islands, traffic circles, roundabouts, narrow lanes, double teardrop interchanges and chicanes (horizontal lane shifts requiring cars to weave slightly from the standard straight line). Some traffic calming has already been introduced in Kansas City's first suburbs.
- Extend length of crossing signals at selected crosswalks to ensure adequate time for older adults, disabled and slow pedestrians to cross streets safely.
- Construct pedestrian islands as refuges in the medians of selected multi-lane streets. These pedestrian islands should be used where there are crosswalks connected to parks, community centers and other public gathering places. Construct benches or other seating options if the median is wide enough.
- Pedestrians should have a clear and direct route from on-site parking to building entries and public sidewalk systems. The circulation path should be direct, continuous and free of barriers.



The Atwood Linear Park Greenway is a trail 0.9 miles in length in Huntsville, Ala. It is a multi-use walking and biking trail that connects Jones Family Park to the Valley Hill Country Club. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)



There are currently 11 active B-Cycle stations in downtown Kansas City where members can rent a bike for a small fee.

#### Strategy 5 – Modify road geometry and features to address potential concerns of older and inexperienced drivers and to improve pedestrian safety.

- Convert two-way-stop intersections to four-way-stop intersections in busy areas. Four-way stops are safer and easier to navigate.
- Provide brighter stop lights and pavement markings throughout the first suburbs.
- Increase the size of lettering on street-name and directional signs to make them more readable.
- Provide protected left-turn signals at busier intersections. Left-turn signals make it easier for drivers of all ages to turn safely. (A U.S. Department of Transportation study is needed to determine if a left-turn signal is appropriate for a given location.)

#### Strategy 6 – Meet parking demand where needed, but reduce the physical and visual impact of parking to create a more pedestrian-friendly community.

- Allow on-street parking in more urbanized areas where slower speed limits are implemented, streets are wide enough to accommodate the parking, and the parking



Pedestrian crosswalks should be easily accessible and visible, making it safer and easier for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers to share roadways. (Photo courtesy of Dan Burden, PBIC Image Library)

**Strategy 7** – Address intersections to improve safety for all users, including design and marking of crosswalks, use of island refuges and signal crossing timing.

Promote midblock crossing treatments recognized as Federal Highway Administration Proven Safety Countermeasures, specify medians and pedestrian crossing islands in urban and suburban areas, ([http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa\\_sa\\_12\\_011.pdf](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_011.pdf)) and incorporate pedestrian hybrid beacon, also known as the High intensity Activated crossWalK or HAWK ([http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa\\_sa\\_12\\_012.pdf](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_012.pdf)).



The “zebra” crosswalk is an adaptation of the ladder design, created to keep pedestrians together where they can be seen by motorists and cross the street more safely. (Photo courtesy of Dan Burden)

can be implemented safely and efficiently. Address the configuration of on-street parking and allowable credit toward off-street parking requirements during site/design review.

- Corner lot developments should be accessed by vehicles from a side street.
- Parking should be located to the rear of the site in a parking lot, within the building or in a separate structure.
- Require attractive landscaping (fencing, hedging, street trees, flower beds, etc.) along the edges of parking lots where they meet the sidewalk, to reduce the visual blight caused by bare parking lots and to improve the pedestrian experience.
- Reduce or waive minimum off-street parking standards. Allow applicants to request a reduction to or waiver of parking standards based on a parking impact study.
- Permit valet parking where a valet parking plan is approved with the site/design review application. This approach will reduce the demand for large parking lots in front of restaurants and stores.

- Upgrade pedestrian signals to make it easier for all ages to cross the road. Increase the size of text, use larger buttons and add audible tones.
- Increase traffic signal cycle length for older adults, children and those with mobility disabilities.
- Evaluate the use of leading pedestrian intervals or (LPI) to establish pedestrian right-of-way in advance of turning vehicles.



- Evaluate the use of “bulb-out” curb extensions at intersections to reduce the turning radius of vehicles while shortening crosswalk distance.
- Address low light conditions with improved lighting.

Endorse the practice of Pedestrian Road Safety Audits at high pedestrian crash locations ([http://katana.hsrrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/PedRSA\\_reduced.pdf](http://katana.hsrrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/PedRSA_reduced.pdf)).

### Effects of aging on pedestrian travel

Local communities should consider whether infrastructure changes are necessary as the population of older adults increases. The aging process causes a deterioration of physical, cognitive and sensory abilities. They are listed below as indicated by the following research organizations: Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center.

- Decreased visual acuity, poor central vision, reduced ability to scan the environment.
- A reduced range of joint mobility.
- Reduced ability to detect and localize different sounds.
- Reduced endurance.
- Reduced tolerance for extreme temperature and environment.
- Decreased agility, balance and stability.
- Inability to quickly avoid dangerous situations.
- Slower reflexes.
- Excessive trust that other motorists will obey traffic laws.
- Impaired judgment, confidence and decision making abilities.

Source: Walkinginfo.org, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.

## 4.2 Walkability

First suburbs can be enhanced by improving opportunities for residents to walk from neighborhoods to services. Walking improves health for both young and old, promotes social interaction, reduces dependency on cars and reduces energy demands.

Many neighborhoods, however, were not designed for pedestrians. Many of the neighborhoods in the first suburbs were designed with a greater emphasis on vehicular circulation. The focus on the automobile after World War II resulted in many neighborhoods with wide streets and no safe sidewalks for pedestrian travel. Older adults in neighborhoods that do not promote walkability have fewer opportunities to be physically active — an important element to remaining independent. Many sidewalks in the first suburbs are narrow and in need of repair. Uneven sidewalks or those with physical barriers are responsible for many outdoor falls among older adults. Falling is a specific indicator of the health of older adults, and one of the greatest endangerments to their long-term quality of life.

Sidewalks have not been constructed in some neighborhoods because of narrow rights-of-way. In other neighborhoods, small front yards are fronted by stormwater culverts that further reduce available space and complicate sidewalk installation. Specific infrastructure changes to improve walkability include sidewalk repair, widening existing sidewalks to improve accessibility for those who use wheelchairs or strollers, new pedestrian pathways or sidewalks, improved street lighting, installation of public benches and traffic-calming measures.

Homeowners in the first suburbs are often responsible for maintenance of the sidewalk associated with their property. This is a long-standing practice in many jurisdictions, established to minimize public costs of sidewalk maintenance. This

can discourage neighborhoods from supporting the development of comprehensive pedestrian circulation. That policy is changing, particularly in modest-income neighborhoods or along roadways leading to schools and other community facilities.

Within the Kansas City area, some examples of walkable neighborhoods and communities include Brookside and Westport in Kansas City, Mo., North Kansas City, Mo., Fairway and Prairie Village, Kan. Some of the walkable areas were developed by J.C. Nichols, who believed in including grocery stores and other services within walking distance of residential development. He called his method “planning for permanence.” His objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.”

### Questions

Key questions regarding walkability:

- Does a given neighborhood have safe, well-designed sidewalks that can take its residents where they want to go, such as a nearby grocery or drugstore?



Residents benefit from walkable communities, where sidewalks, trails and street crossings are safe, accessible and comfortable for people of all ages and ability levels. (Photo courtesy Kevin Robert Perry)

- Is the community dedicating local transportation funding to walkability projects?
- Are ideas promoted for mixed-use development that allow for compact projects that emphasize pedestrian connectivity?

### Ways to enhance walkability

**Strategy 1** – Conduct a neighborhood walkability assessment to determine how easy it is to walk in the first suburbs.

- A walkability assessment is an evaluation of the walking environment to identify improvements to increase pedestrian access and safety to important destinations. For communities that have already done walkability assessments, these should be updated if they are more than five years old. A walkability assessment can also be part of a neighborhood asset inventory that pinpoints parks, trails, bike lanes, grocery stores, restaurants, community gardens, farmers’ markets, coffee shops, faith centers, schools, medical services, libraries and transit services.

One example of a walkability assessment tool is Walk Score, ([www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)) an interactive website that helps users find a walkable place to live by calculating a walk score for any address. Walk Score uses data from Google, Education.com, Open Street Map, ([www.openstreetmap.org](http://www.openstreetmap.org)) and Localeze ([www.neustar.biz/infoservices/solutions/localeze](http://www.neustar.biz/infoservices/solutions/localeze)) to calculate a score, ranging from 0 to 100, based on the location of five categories of amenities: education, retail, food and entertainment

The Walkability Checklist is another tool for determining the walkability of a neighborhood. The tool provides both immediate answers and long-term solutions to a neighborhood’s potential problems. (<http://drusilla.hsrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/walkabilitychecklist.pdf>)

**Strategy 2** – Promote the pedestrian scale of the first suburbs.

- Much of the existing built environment in the region's first suburbs was designed at a human, pedestrian-oriented scale. Local officials should promote development of height of buildings to street width ratios to create a streetscape that is consistent with a pedestrian scale when proposing reinvestment for residential and commercial structures. A ratio somewhere around 1:2 to 1:3 is considered ideal. Width is measured horizontally between opposing building fronts. Height is measured from the sidewalk to the building's eaves, minus dormers. For example, a typical street (60-80 feet wide) would have buildings about 35 feet tall (two to three stories) next to sidewalks, 35:60 or 35:80, which converts to about 1:1.7 to 1:2.3.

**Strategy 3** – Sidewalks are already included in some sections of the first suburbs, but not in others.

- Pedestrian walkways or sidewalks should connect primary building entrances to one another along commercial corridors.



In order for a street to draw large numbers of pedestrians, large concentrations of people must either live within walking distance, or the street must encourage public gatherings, such as street festivals or public markets. (Photo courtesy of Dan Burden, PBIC Image Library)

- Clearly marked pedestrian walkways should also connect all on-site common areas, parking areas, open space and recreational facilities.
- Sidewalks within a private development should connect to existing public sidewalks on abutting tracts and other nearby pedestrian destination points and transit stops.
- The number of curb cuts for vehicular entry into the site should be minimized so that pedestrian and bicycle areas are safe, secure and passable.
- As new infill homes are constructed, a walkway should connect the main entrance of the house to the public sidewalk or street.

**Strategy 4** – Develop multi-use trails that link residential areas and public gathering spaces with parks and public open space.

- Many communities have local trail systems to complement the MetroGreen regional system, which enables safe travel for pedestrians to local destinations.
- Stream corridors, utility easements and old railroad corridors offer opportunities to create greenway corridors and offer trail linkages.

**“Only 40 years ago, almost half of our children walked or biked to elementary school. Now, just 13 percent do. Half of the remaining 87 percent are driven to school in a car, the remainder in buses (school-provided or sometimes city buses).”**

Susan Piedmont-Palladino. “Walking the Walk.”  
National Building Museum.



Street signs not only give wayfinding information, but can also be complemented by architecture, placemaking and other factors. (Photo courtesy of Dave Alden)

**Strategy 5** – Provide overhead shelter for shade and protection from weather. These structures could be associated with bus and transit stops, recreation areas or other public gathering spaces in the first suburbs. Provide seating along walkways to enable pedestrians to rest at intervals.

- Transit operators have added bus shelters and benches at many locations to improve comfort for transit riders.
- Seating and covered areas within parks could be located in areas closer to street frontage so those walking have a shorter distance to travel for shade and rest.

**Strategy 6** – Add textures and details to site furnishings to add visual interest at the pedestrian scale. This could include public art, wayfinding kiosks and other site amenities.

### 4.3 Public transit

Every community needs transportation that is affordable, accessible, flexible, reliable and safe. State and local areas should work to expand transportation choices and evaluate the impact of state and local regulations and land-use policy on transportation systems. Community leaders should help create and adapt public transportation systems to meet the needs and preferences of residents of all ages.

Public transit is important for older adults who no longer drive. For some, it is no longer safe to drive. Others may prefer not to own an automobile or can't afford one. Still others prefer to minimize their driving, even if they still retain access to an auto. Accessibility of transport to families and children is also important to maintain community mobility.

In Kansas City, 43 percent of the region's residents have access to transit within one-half mile of their residences. Most public transit services are limited in terms of routes, hours and frequency of service. There are numerous special transportation services for older adults and those with disabilities, yet services are often limited due to demand, geography and trip purpose.

The first suburbs will benefit from providing reliable, well-used transit. Mixed-use projects that offer high value to host communities in terms of service, commerce, population growth, housing, property tax revenues and ridership will be stimulated by transit-oriented development.

**MARC's Smart Moves Transit Plan articulates a vision for how transit should serve the Kansas City metropolitan area. It proposes a primarily bus-based system, including bus rapid transit (BRT) along priority corridors that connect people to employment and activity centers.**

MARC. Creating Sustainable Places. March 2011

## Questions

Key questions regarding public transportation:

- Can most residents walk or use a community transportation option to get to a grocery store, doctor's office or pharmacy?
- Are accessible, affordable, senior-friendly and dependable transportation options available to reduce dependence on single-occupancy car travel?
- Are bus stops within walking distance of housing and community facilities for older adults? (Defined as approximately one-third mile.)
- Is the bus system well used?

## Ways to improve public transportation for communities for all ages

**Strategy 1** – Promote public transportation that meets the needs of all first suburbs residents.

- Continue working with the region's public transit providers — KCATA, Johnson County Transit, Independence Transit and Unified Government Transit. These providers have worked with other transit providers to improve public and special transit services for older adults. Work with special transportation providers to ensure residents of first suburbs are aware of specialized services.
- Educate the public about the benefits of mass transit in order to get past the stigma and misunderstandings associated with riding the bus. The more ridership these systems can attract, the greater the likelihood of public support of investment for further improvements in the efficiencies and experiences of the system — a virtuous cycle.



A transit stop for Kansas City's ATA MAX, a bus rapid-transit line that runs on two well-traveled corridors.

The city of Decatur, Ga., recently implemented a shuttle program for residents age 50 and older. The program runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays and brings older adults to the downtown community center. Older adults can call and reserve a spot. Decatur is looking to expand the program to include more days and a wider range of times.

**Strategy 2** – Maximize transit effectiveness.

- Ensure that public transportation is reliable and frequent, including nights and weekends.
- Give individuals financial and other incentives to use alternative modes of transportation. For example, taxi cabs, limos and other personal forms of transportation could receive subsidies for transporting older adults.
- Provide connections between major residential and employment centers.
- Ensure key attractions and services are accessible by public transportation.

- Place transit stops close to public gathering areas to make them as accessible as possible to those who do not drive. Work with the local transit agency to adjust routes so older adults have direct access to health care and social services.

**Strategy 3** – Maximize transit riders’ positive experiences.

Work with public transit providers to plan routes that meet residents’ needs. The considerations should include strategies to reduce riders’ wait time and provide information to avoid long waits at the transit stop or missed rides. KCATA’s WebWatch is one program that provides real-time bus monitoring. ([www.kcata.org/maps\\_schedules/webwatch/](http://www.kcata.org/maps_schedules/webwatch/))

- Work with transit providers to post the route number, stop number and phone contact number at all stops and shelters to enhance rider security and planning.
- Work with transit providers to offer frequent travel cards and discounted fares for use by older adults.

**Strategy 4** – Develop transit stops so they are an integral part of the community.

- Ensure each transit stop includes shelter, benches, security lighting, wayfinding signage, landing pads and other site amenities as appropriate.
- Locate transit stops adjacent to pedestrian-oriented amenities, such as courtyards and plazas.
- Include drop-off zones near entrances of public facilities to make it easier for older adults to be dropped off and picked up.

### 4.4 Transportation services

Transportation providers should be encouraged to market their services to older residents and private retailers. Medical providers should be encouraged to help arrange for transportation service for older customers. Many older drivers experience specific difficulties related to the driving environment and these issues need to be addressed, as well.

#### Questions

Key questions regarding transportation services for older adults:

- Do state and local areas promote a range of affordable transportation and mobility options that meet diverse needs and preferences?
- For those that have difficulty walking or driving, are there other safe and convenient transportation options available (in addition to rides from friends or family, or public transportation)?

#### Ways to improve transportation services for communities for all ages

**Strategy 1** – Address boundary issues that serve as obstacles for providing transportation services.

- Address laws and ordinances that are restrictive in nature.



The Kansas City area offers several local services that provide transit for older adults who need extra help. See Resources on p. 42 for a list of local older adult transit providers.

- Work out an agreement that allows transportation services to cross boundaries. Many public transit efforts are limited by city, county or state boundaries. There are several different agencies, each covering a slightly different area.

**Strategy 2** – Provide personalized transportation to enable users to go where they need to go, when they need to go, car-free — to shop or dine, meet friends, get to the airport, see a doctor, etc.

- Work with transit providers to offer paratransit transport services for frail older adults and disabled residents.

Support and promote volunteer driver programs, such as Catholic Charities’ Senior Express Transportation Program ([www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/honoring-older-adults-with-care-and-dignity/senior-express-transportation-program-kansas-city-and-st-joseph-](http://www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/honoring-older-adults-with-care-and-dignity/senior-express-transportation-program-kansas-city-and-st-joseph-)), Jewish Family Services’ Jet Express ([www.jfskc.org/services/older-adult-services/jet-express-2/](http://www.jfskc.org/services/older-adult-services/jet-express-2/)) and ITN Greater Kansas City ([www.itngreaterkansascity.org/](http://www.itngreaterkansascity.org/)), which were created to offer safe, affordable transportation alternatives to older adults no longer able to drive.

**Strategy 3** – Explore alternative modes of providing public transportation.

- Encourage vehicle sharing among health institutions, human service providers and other organizations with fleets that may be used at different times.
- Support the use of neighborhood electric vehicles as an alternative to using a traditional automobile or walking. Peachtree City, Ga., uses electric golf carts for circulation within the community.
- Promote bike-sharing programs within the first suburbs. Include three-wheeled bikes to provide greater stability for older adults.
- Promote car-sharing programs such as ZipCar, Hertz on Demand and Greenwheels.



Car-sharing programs like Zip Car, “the car for people who don’t want one,” offer an alternative to both public transit and car ownership. The University of Missouri–Kansas City and Rockhurst University provide access to the Zip Car program on their campuses. (Photo Zip Car)

- Offer incentives to groups and organizations to provide group transportation services for their older adults.
- Provide smaller shuttle buses to serve senior centers.
- Improve access to medical transportation for older adults.

**Strategy 4** – Identify project opportunities that take a more holistic look at providing transportation services.

- Work with local recreation organizations and agencies to integrate transportation services.
- Consider funding a mobility manager to coordinate transportation services for older adults within the first suburbs. This could be a joint position between several organizations or agencies.

**Strategy 5** – Expand programs that provide transportation assistance to older adults, or assist older adults in assessing their competence behind the wheel.

- Coordinate with physical therapists, health experts and providers of aging services in the first suburbs to better understand the challenges facing older drivers.

- Require volunteer drivers for programs that provide transportation to older adults to participate in an annual driving test to ensure they are qualified to provide this service in a safe, effective manner.
- Support state and national efforts to require vision and driving assessments for older drivers. Reward older adults for taking safe-driving classes.

### 4.4 Resources

- American Planning Association's Model Street Connectivity Standards Ordinance. [www.planning.org/research/smartgrowth/](http://www.planning.org/research/smartgrowth/).
- CH2M Hill with EDAW. 2002. A Guide to Best Practices for Achieving Context-Sensitive Solutions. National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 480. Transportation Research Board.
- Complete Streets. [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org).
- Context Sensitive Design Solutions. [www.contextsensitivesolutions.org](http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org).
- Framework for Senior Mobility. Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership, University of Missouri-Kansas City. 2009. <http://bloch.umkc.edu/mwcnl/initiatives/documents/Framework-for-Senior-Mobility-2-3-10.pdf>.
- Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), 2004 Available for purchase from AASHTO, [https://bookstore.transportation.org/item\\_details.aspx?id=119](https://bookstore.transportation.org/item_details.aspx?id=119).
- Guidelines for Residential / Mixed Use Projects in Transit Oriented Developments (TOD). Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, Sustainable Land-Use Committee. <http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/GuidelinesforResMixedUse-rev10.9-18-12.pdf>.
- Harrell, Rodney, Allison Brooks, and Todd Nedwick. Preserving Affordability and Access in Livable Communities: Subsidized Housing Opportunities near Transit and the 50+ Population. Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute, September 2009. Kerschner, Helen, and Joan Harris. "Better Options for Older Adults." Public Roads 70, no. 5 (March/April 2007). Retrieved Sept. 17, 2009, from [www.tfsrc.gov/pubrds/07mar/03.htm](http://www.tfsrc.gov/pubrds/07mar/03.htm).
- Kansas City area older adult transportation providers:
  - Dial-a-Ride (Independence, Missouri) — 816/325-7399.
  - Dial-a-Ride (Kansas City, Kansas) — 913/573-8351.
  - Catholic Charities' Senior Express Transportation Program ([www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/honoring-older-adults-with-care-and-dignity/senior-express-transportation-program-kansas-city-and-st-joseph-](http://www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/honoring-older-adults-with-care-and-dignity/senior-express-transportation-program-kansas-city-and-st-joseph-)).
  - Jewish Family Services' Jet Express ([www.jfskc.org/services/older-adult-services/jet-express-2/](http://www.jfskc.org/services/older-adult-services/jet-express-2/)).
  - The JO - Special Edition, GoodRide, EasyRide — 913/782-2210.
  - ITNGreaterKansasCity ([www.itngreaterkansascity.org/](http://www.itngreaterkansascity.org/)).
  - OATS, Inc. — 573/443-4516.
  - Senior Group Transportation (Wyandotte Co., Kan.) — 913/573-8351.
  - Share-a-Fare (Kansas City, Mo.) — 816/346-0810.
  - The Whole Person, Inc. — 816/561-0304; TTY 531-7749.
- Pedestrian Facility User's Guide: Providing Safety and Mobility, p. 56, [http://katana.hsra.unc.edu/cms/downloads/PedFacility\\_UserGuide2002.pdf](http://katana.hsra.unc.edu/cms/downloads/PedFacility_UserGuide2002.pdf).
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- Transportation Outlook 2040. MARC. [www.marc.org/2040](http://www.marc.org/2040).





One of the major indicators of a healthy community is the presence of well-used community facilities. Community and recreation centers, universities, libraries, museums, parks and other public facilities are important for communities for all ages because they enable people to connect, share experiences and communicate with each other. Chapter 2, Community and Neighborhood Environment, offers insights into physical community design and facilities that encourage social interaction.

The services provided by first suburb communities are also essential to make each community a desirable place to live. When we make choices about where to live, community services such as lifelong learning, intergenerational programs and volunteer opportunities play a large part in how we perceive those places as working. Facilities and programs for recreation, adult learning, art performances, senior day-visit centers, access to the Internet, fitness centers and other programs all enrich community life and help older adults age in place more easily.

Baby boomers are more active and more involved than past generations. They tend to regard

retirement as an opportunity to do something new and different. The first suburbs need to consider facilities, programs and activities to keep boomers involved.

There is a public health aspect to encouraging older adults to participate in community programs. Those not engaged in their communities can feel alienated. Older adults who are socially isolated are at risk for a number of negative outcomes, including depression or chronic illness. Conversely, older adults who have an active social life typically have fewer disabilities, lower mortality risks and better mental health.

Encouraging residents to help make decisions about the services and facilities they have access to or need is an important part of developing and enhancing community services and facilities. People engaged in their communities are more active and more involved with their neighbors and community and take more responsibility for their own lives. The community benefits from having feedback from the programs users that enables identification of service improvements.

## Summary of Chapter 5

### Social services and facilities

- Strategy 1 – Create opportunities for intergenerational interaction.
- Strategy 2 – Encourage organizations to collaborate in using existing facilities.
- Strategy 3 – Provide services geared specifically for older adults.
- Strategy 4 – Encourage programs that promote the social and physical health of older adults.

### Educational services

- Strategy 1 – Ensure that lifelong learning programs are available for older adults.
- Strategy 2 – Develop continuing education programs that focus on aging well.
- Strategy 3 – Support programs that address the learning needs of home-bound older adults.
- Strategy 4 – Address the “digital divide,” with objectives that include enabling all residents (especially older adults) to understand digital data, find information on the web and stay up to date with advances in technology.

### Volunteer and work opportunities

- Strategy 1 – Make it easy for people to volunteer their time and services.
- Strategy 2 – Increase opportunities for meaningful volunteer activities.
- Strategy 3 – Develop an “older adult talent pool” to help older adults in obtaining paid jobs and volunteer positions.
- Strategy 4 – Promote opportunities for older adults to continue working.

### Financial services

- Strategy 1 – Establish programs providing financial information for residents.
- Strategy 2 – Offer educational programs on retirement, social security and financial planning for residents of all ages.

- Strategy 3 – Protect homeowners from escalating property tax bills.
- Strategy 4 – Work with the Kansas City Regional Association of Realtors to ensure that the number of senior real estate specialists who understand housing issues associated with older adults is sufficient for current and future needs.
- Strategy 5 – Think outside the box to consider potential funding and program efficiencies outside traditional approaches.

### Access to Information

- Strategy 1 – Promote existing information and referral services.

## 5.1 Social services and facilities

The types of social services provided by a community have a major impact on quality of life. With changing demographics, one of the biggest issues is demand. For example, demand is rising within the first suburbs for senior centers, because many existing community centers do not have the space or resources to address the specific needs of older adults.

Places, activities and events that promote intergenerational contact are important. A particular value of community facilities is that they enable the sharing of stories from one generation to the next. As such conversations occur and the stories get told, communities for all ages are enriched.

### Questions

Key questions regarding social services and facilities:

- Is it easy for residents of all ages, backgrounds and cultural interests to participate in social activities within the community?
- Do older adults have opportunities to socialize with family, friends and neighbors?

- Are there community centers, recreation centers, parks and other places where older people can socialize?
- Are there specific programs and places where older adults and young people are brought together to share their strengths?

## Ways to enhance social services and facilities

**Strategy 1** – Create opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

- Implement a foster grandparent program. This type of program benefits adults and children and encourages their interaction.
- Encourage interaction of older adults with younger residents at existing community centers within the first suburbs.
- Provide opportunities for older adults to work with school kids and become involved in school activities under the guidance of school officials.
- Provide opportunities for youth community service projects that offer occasions to work with older adults.
- Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning around arts and cultural production.

**In Ithaca, New York, a local Head Start program is permanently housed at a retirement community. Each week, the seniors work with preschoolers on a variety of activities such as reading, singing and crafts. The intergenerational program allows older people to participate in the mentorship of younger community members.**

Family-Friendly Communities Briefing Papers 02, American Planning Association.



Increasing the opportunity for older adults to interact with younger children can help decrease loneliness, boredom and depression while increasing self-esteem. (Photo courtesy of Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas Foster Grandparents program.)

**Strategy 2** – Encourage organizations to collaborate in using existing facilities.

- Promote alternative uses of existing public facilities for use by older adults where appropriate, especially for early-phase response to rising demand for services until more permanent arrangements can be established.
- Collaborate with schools, hospitals and other nonprofit organizations in the first suburbs for potential off-site programming.
- Pursue joint-use agreements with schools, churches, fire stations and other facilities that could be used to provide services for older adults.

**Strategy 3** – Provide services geared specifically for older adults.

- Provide home support services such as home maintenance, meals on wheels, yard care, grocery assistance, library delivery and other services.
- Encourage businesses to provide customer services to accommodate older clients, such as “no rush” supermarket lines, drive-through pharmacies, and shopping and delivery services.



Water aerobics and other physical fitness classes offer older adults the opportunity to stay active and socialize. (Photo courtesy of Agoromedia.com)

**Strategy 4** – Encourage programs that promote the social and physical health of older adults.

- Increase the availability and awareness of opportunities to address issues of older adults' social isolation. Offer access to a variety of activities, including social, educational, cultural or recreational opportunities.
- Encourage and support the development of a neighborhood-based senior peer advocacy program. When people experience frustrations, worries and concerns, they typically turn to their friends for help and support. Trained peers can act as the first rung on the ladder for access to resources from programs and professionals.
- Educate residents, service providers and first responders to watch for and report changes in everyday patterns in the neighborhood.
- Encourage and promote the development of a voluntary, vulnerable-population registry for emergency service providers.
- Establish an “elder justice center” that investigates and supports prosecution of suspected cases of abuse to elder and other vulnerable adults.

## 5.2 Educational services

Learning is a lifelong activity. A robust range of accessible cultural and educational enrichment sites, events and opportunities enables all residents to contribute to the cultural life of the first suburbs.

Training is an opportunity that should be available for all ages. For teenagers and younger adults, training is way to gain valuable skills to augment their formal education. Training can help contractors and builders become familiar with building issues that may impact universal design and aging in place. Educational opportunities are especially important for older adults who desire to keep their minds active by learning new things. They often seek training to learn specific skills associated with a hobby, job opportunity or volunteer activity.

The millennial generation is adept at using the Internet, but older adults are often not as familiar with this technology's capabilities and many tend to use it far less. First suburbs should work to provide opportunities for older adults to gain more technological skills to ensure they are aware of the range of services offered by their communities and have access to information about jobs and volunteer opportunities.

### Questions

Key questions regarding educational services and facilities:

- Are there training courses available for all ages?
- Are there opportunities in your community at which older adults can continue learning?
- Are informational programs about aging well available to older adults?
- Are low-cost programs that teach computer skills available and marketed to older adults?
- Are there opportunities in your community for intergenerational education programs?



Providing opportunities for older adults to learn about technology can open the door to new ways of connecting and exploring the world, as well as encourage the confidence to learn additional skills. (Photo courtesy of Cambridge, Mass., Community Television.)

### Ways to enhance educational services

**Strategy 1** – Ensure that lifelong learning programs are available for older adults.

- Promote online courses that are available to older adults.
- Work with local institutions of higher learning to create “senior academies” with traditional classroom offerings.

**Strategy 2** – Develop continuing education programs that focus on aging well.

- Offer programs at community centers that teach about aging well. These programs could include discussions about health, financing, home repairs, physical activity, social interaction and working after retirement (a change of career or volunteerism opportunities).
- Consider “mobile” programs where trainers go to churches, independent-living housing developments and other community settings to teach about aging well.

**Strategy 3** – Support programs that address the learning needs of home-bound older adults.

- Support services that deliver library books, movie rentals and other recreational materials to home-bound older adults

**Strategy 4** – Address the “digital divide” to enable all residents (especially older adults) to understand digital data, find information on the web, and stay up-to-date with advances in technology.

- Develop programs that lend or sell modestly priced laptop computers or other digital technology to older adults with limited funds.
- Look at creative ways to partner with organizations to offer digital technology classes, such as at community centers, at libraries, or as part of potluck dinners that combine food with learning opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for older adults to check out digital tools, or use them in public settings such as the library or community center.

## 5.3 Volunteer and work opportunities

Residents in the first suburbs should have opportunities to be actively involved in their community. Young families and older adults need to be involved in order to help shape their communities. Older adults are often interested in taking classes, volunteering their time, participating in social organizations and clubs, and signing up for physical fitness activities.

For older adults who don’t necessarily need to be paid for their efforts, volunteer programs are a good way to stay active. Research has found that volunteerism among older adults can reduce the risk of mortality and increase measures of physical and mental health. The quality of life of all residents is enhanced by the many volunteer activities of older adults, and their continued involvement in the social and civic life of their communities. Volunteer opportunities for older adults should be widely promoted and easily accessed in the first suburbs.

Some older adults prefer to keep working, but opportunities may be limited because employers often do not regard adults over retirement age as part of the workforce. For some, working is a way to stay busy and be a productive member of society. For others, working is a necessity to help pay bills.

- **The Colorado Employer Toolkit: Engaging the Mature Workforce** offers examples of best practices for older workers and state-specific resources to assist employers.
- **The California Employment Development Department's Employer Toolkit** offers age-neutral strategies that businesses can use to maximize the skills and expertise of older workers.
- **The Pennsylvania Department of Aging** developed an employer toolkit for health care providers that contains information on recruiting and retaining older workers.
- **The California State Personnel Board** launched **Boomerang** in 2008 to better connect public sector retirees to job opportunities and help meet state workforce needs.

### Questions

Key questions regarding work and volunteer opportunities:

- Is there a central clearinghouse that people can visit or call to learn about volunteer opportunities?
- Are older adults aware of volunteer opportunities within their community?
- Have older adults been surveyed about their volunteer interests?
- Has the city evaluated the full range of opportunities for volunteers within city government and identified a volunteer coordinator to help ensure a quality experience for the volunteers and added value to the city?

- Do local nonprofits and other community organizations provide meaningful volunteer opportunities suited to older adults?
- Are the important contributions of older residents to the city's economy recognized?
- Are employment practices and benefits supportive of older adults?

### Ways to enhance volunteer and work opportunities

**Strategy 1** – Make it easy for people to volunteer their time and services.

- Establish a single review process for volunteers to gain approval to work on selected projects offered by multiple programs or organizations. This combined approach will help streamline the process, saving both time and money.
- Simplify forms that are required for someone to volunteer and save the information as part of a central database, so an application only has to be submitted once.
- Establish one website where potential volunteers can find out about the review process and the forms to complete for various volunteer



Volunteering in the community can lead to a more active lifestyle, both mentally and physically, which leads to more socialization, a boost in self-esteem and reduced stress. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)



Older adults have a great deal of knowledge and experience to share. Being able to share their skills with others is beneficial for everyone.

opportunities. This could involve working with local technology experts or a local startup company to implement a web-based application that presents volunteer opportunities.

Maintain a list of volunteer opportunities. In some cities and towns, a municipal department such as a community services department maintains this type of list. Organizations such as the United Way ([www.uwgkc.org](http://www.uwgkc.org) and [www.unitedway-wyco.org](http://www.unitedway-wyco.org)), Corporation for National and Community Service ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)) and Volunteer Match ([www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)) maintain searchable databases of volunteer opportunities. Shepherd's Center Central's Coming of Age: Kansas City website provides a list of volunteer opportunities for the 50+ population ([www.comingofage.org/kansascity](http://www.comingofage.org/kansascity)).

**Strategy 2** – Increase opportunities for meaningful volunteer activities.

- Campaign to get local organizations to commit to making volunteer positions available. Address organizations' needs for volunteer recruitment, coordination and supervision, perhaps through a volunteer services coordinator, who can serve several organizations or obtain grants for organizations' costs.

- Develop volunteer opportunities that encourage families, neighbors and friends to volunteer together. This has the extra benefit of adding to the sense of community already existing among participants.
- Take advantage of programs such as Coming of Age, developed by Temple University that trains nonprofits about how to work with older volunteers.

**Coming of Age: Kansas City is a metro-wide initiative led by Shepherd's Center Central that promotes civic involvement, lifelong learning and community leadership in the 50+ population. The program offers an interactive website for older adults that connects them to personal growth opportunities, community service and paid/unpaid work; Explore Your Future workshops for community and corporate groups to help people envision the next phase of life; and Learning Labs training for nonprofit professionals to prepare high impact opportunities for engaging those 50+ in their organization's mission.**

- Provide opportunities for individuals to exchange services and receive "credit" or a stipend for their volunteer work. This approach is being used in a number of cities that have limited budgets, but need help. It provides older adults an opportunity to stay busy while also earning something of value, and it helps communities obtain extra help in an affordable way.

**Strategy 3** – Develop an "older adult talent pool" to help older adults obtain paid jobs and volunteer positions.

- Survey older adults about their specific talents and interests and share this information with potential employers or organizations seeking volunteer help.

- Coordinate with businesses and organizations and encourage them to rethink existing opportunities and how they could be filled by older adults.

**Strategy 4** – Promote opportunities for older adults to continue working.

- Increase awareness among organizations about senior-friendly employment policies.
- Provide incentives for businesses to hire older adults.
- Keep older adults informed about existing and upcoming job opportunities.

### 5.4 Financial services

Financial issues for residents typically fall into two distinct categories: affordability and investment. Concerns about affordability revolve around managing rising costs on fixed incomes, including tax increases, and the high cost of health care and housing. Retirees must consider cost-of-living expenses when making decisions about whether to move into independent living properties, nursing homes or to secure nursing services at home. On the investment side, older adults see a need for reliable, financial advice that is trustworthy and offered with their best interest at heart. Their concerns are fueled by a volatile financial environment, scams that prey on older adults and housing affordability issues.

Policies implemented by first suburbs community leaders can have a large impact on the financial resources of their residents. Special funding can be provided to retrofit homes to make them more usable as residents' mobility needs change. Services that require little or no driving reduce the large drain on limited incomes represented by residents' use of an automobile for transportation (true for residents of all ages). Simply providing reliable information that allows residents to manage their concerns can be helpful.

Meeting the costs of care as older adults become infirm is a financial issue for families. The impact on both older and younger generations can be considerable, and there are profound economic and societal costs involved as well.

The average duration of caregiving exceeds four years, and requires an average of 25 hours per week. The Metlife Report on the Health Status of the 40+ Population estimates total wage, Social Security and private pension losses due to caregiving could range from \$283,716 for men to \$324,044 for women, and average of \$303,880.

Divided by 4.5 years (estimated average duration) and multiplied by the 9.7 million people age 50+ caring for their parents, the amount lost every year by these caregivers is estimated at more than \$655 billion.

### Questions

Key questions regarding financial resources:

- Is it easy to get information about programs and training to address residents' financial concerns?
- Are property taxes a major concern for fixed-income homeowners?
- Are agencies and organizations that provide financial services working in the most coordinated way possible?

### Ways to enhance financial services

**Strategy 1** – Establish programs providing financial information for residents.

- Present information to homeowner associations, retiree groups and similar organizations about financial options and opportunities.
- Promote the availability of credible information on websites to help residents find detailed information about financial issues.



**Strategy 2** – Offer educational programs on retirement, social security and financial planning for residents of all ages.

- Inform older adults about the availability of such courses.
- Work with libraries and community organizations to promote financial security among residents, particularly older adults. Encourage working adults to participate in such courses long before they reach retirement age. Offer an introductory short course that packages the most critical information in menu format to encourage deeper exploration in later courses as participants become interested.

**Strategy 3** – Protect homeowners from escalating property tax bills.

- Work with state and county officials to examine different property tax incentives to help older homeowners maintain financial security in their homes. Evaluate property tax “homestead” exemptions for older adults and, where available, educate residents about how to access such exemptions.
- Work with state officials to identify ways to enable older workers to gain some tax advantage for their employment or volunteer service. Massachusetts offers a senior property tax work-off program that allows older adults to “volunteer” for a public realm job and get compensated by abatement on property taxes instead of a salary. The Senior Tax Worker Program in Boulder County, Colo., is a good example of a program where senior workers are assigned to nonprofit organizations and gain a tax benefit.
- Work with the state to implement property tax caps that limit or freeze the growth of the assessed value of a person’s property. This approach prevents increases in the amount



The NewHolly neighborhood in Seattle provides approximately 1,400 units of affordable housing to individuals or families with a wide range of incomes. (Photo courtesy of EDAAW)

paid in the future. Review states that have adopted property tax caps that may offer model legislation, including Maryland, California, Iowa, Arizona, Florida, Washington and Texas.

**Strategy 4** – Work with the Kansas City Regional Association of Realtors to ensure that the number of senior real estate specialists who understand housing issues associated with older adults is sufficient for current and future needs.

**Strategy 5** – Think outside the box to consider potential funding and program efficiencies outside traditional approaches.

- Work with businesses in the first suburbs to make vouchers or discounts available to older adults in need of services that can be provided locally.
- Coordinate application processes among agencies that provide financial services to income-eligible older adults. Encourage agencies to offer sign-up times at city hall or other locations within easy access of older adult communities.

### 5.5 Access to information

One goal of a community for all ages is to ensure that information about services, programs and opportunities is widely available to all residents in the first suburbs.

#### Questions

Some of the key questions about access to information:

- Is critical information available to all residents in the first suburbs in a wide range of formats?
- How can outreach efforts be improved for older adults and other residents in the first suburbs?
- Do older adults receive critical information in a timely manner?
- Do older adults know how to access support services?

#### Ways to enhance access to information

**Strategy 1** – Promote existing information and referral services.

- Promote the availability of information on services through United Way's 2-1-1 service and the Area Agencies on Aging information and referral services.
- Survey residents to determine if their information needs are being addressed and offer this feedback to information and referral services.

### 5.6 Resources

- Area Agencies on Aging — There are three Area Agencies on Aging serving older adults in the the greater Kansas City region.
  - Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) serves the region and is the home for the Area Agency on Aging for Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri. [www.marc.org/aging](http://www.marc.org/aging).

- Johnson County Human Services & Aging is the home of the Area Agency on Aging in Johnson County, Kansas. <http://hsa.jocogov.org/aging/aging.shtml>.
- Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging serves older adults in these two counties in Kansas. [www.wycokck.org/aging](http://www.wycokck.org/aging).
- Coming of Age. [www.comingofage.org](http://www.comingofage.org).
- Coming of Age: Kansas City. [www.comingofage.org/kansascity](http://www.comingofage.org/kansascity).
- Executive Summary — Genworth 2012 Cost of Care Survey. Genworth Financial 2012 Cost of Care Survey. [www.genworth.com/dam/Americas/US/PDFs/Consumer/corporate/Key\\_Findings1.pdf](http://www.genworth.com/dam/Americas/US/PDFs/Consumer/corporate/Key_Findings1.pdf).
- MASS Resources. Massachusetts Real Estate Tax Exemptions. [www.massresources.org/real-estate-tax-exemptions.html](http://www.massresources.org/real-estate-tax-exemptions.html).
- Multigenerational Planning — Using smart growth and universal design to link the needs of children and the aging population. Family-Friendly Communities Briefing Papers 02, American Planning Association.
- The Senior Tax Worker Program, Boulder County, Colo.
- Shepherd's Center — There are four Shepherd's Center organizations in the Kansas City metropolitan region:
  - Shepherd's Center Central [www.sccentral.org](http://www.sccentral.org).
  - Shepherd's Center of Kansas City, Kansas [www.shepherdscenterkck.org](http://www.shepherdscenterkck.org).
  - Shepherd's Center of the Northland [www.shepherdscenternorth.org](http://www.shepherdscenternorth.org).
  - Shepherd's Center of Raytown [www.shepherdscenterraytown.org](http://www.shepherdscenterraytown.org).
- United Way of Greater Kansas City Volunteer Center [http://unitedwaygkc.org/volunteer/volunteer\\_Indg.html](http://unitedwaygkc.org/volunteer/volunteer_Indg.html).
- United Way of Wyandotte County Volunteer Center. <https://community.unitedway-wyco.org/comm/Article.jsp?ArticleID=126>.



## 6 Health Care & Healthy Living

**F**irst suburbs should evaluate their infrastructure and services to create healthy communities for residents of all ages. Opportunities for physical activity, safe travel, healthy homes and healthy eating are elements of a healthy community. Rising health care costs and increases in chronic health conditions require communities to focus attention on public health.

Access to health care is necessary for older adults, who are more likely to live with multiple chronic conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and dementia. According to research by the National Institutes of Health, around 80 percent of older Americans have a chronic health condition and half have two or more.

### Summary of Chapter 6

#### Recreational services and facilities

- Strategy 1 – Provide parks and public open space in the first suburbs within walking distance of residential areas.
- Strategy 2 – Develop creative ways to use parks as meeting places for community groups or neighborhood associations.
- Strategy 3 – Develop physical fitness classes targeted toward older adults.

#### Health care services and facilities

- Strategy 1 – Ensure there are adequate health care facilities within the first suburbs for older adults and others who need care.

- Strategy 2 – Ensure that older adults in the first suburbs have access to health care services that address varying levels of need.
- Strategy 3 – Help establish guidelines that make it easier to provide affordable, effective health care.

#### Healthy eating

- Strategy 1 – Work with community organizations to support a healthy food network that includes all of the first suburbs.
- Strategy 2 – Develop a “healthy food store” incentive program.
- Strategy 3 – Promote opportunities for older adults in the first suburbs to purchase groceries online.
- Strategy 4 – Explore the possibility of creating and sustaining local urban agriculture through community gardens in the first suburbs.

### 6.1 Recreational services and facilities

Research has shown that physical and mental well-being is directly related to physical activity. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, local park and recreation opportunities play a critical role in creating a healthy and vibrant community for all ages. Growing evidence indicates a strong link between park and recreation systems and physical and mental health, youth development, social well-being, economic vitality and opportunities for aging in place. Access to recreational services and facilities help promote a healthy lifestyle.



Community programs that offer sports-oriented activities not only improve energy levels for participants, but can also increase mental alertness and logical or tactical thinking. (Photo courtesy of the city of Alpharetta, Ga.)

### Questions

Key questions regarding recreational services and facilities:

- Do residents of the first suburbs have nearby access to recreational services and facilities?
- Are there sufficient parks and public open spaces?
- Do residents have opportunities to participate in exercise and wellness programs?
- Are there recreational programs geared specifically for older adults?

The Trust for Public Land has launched ParkScore, a program rating the park systems of the 40 most populous U.S. cities. (It scores cities, not metropolitan areas.)

Ratings are based equally on three factors: park access, which measures the percentage of residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park (approximately one-half mile); park size/acreage, which is based on a city's median park size and the percentage of total city area dedicated to parks; and services and investment, which combines the number of playgrounds per 10,000 city residents and per capita park spending.

“We hope that city leaders, park providers and park advocates will use the information at [www.parkscore.tpl.org](http://www.parkscore.tpl.org) as a valuable tool to help plan park improvements,” says Peter Harnik, director, Center for City Park Excellence, Trust for Public Land. “Over the long run, a rising ParkScore will mean healthier people, higher property values, and more vibrant and livable communities.”

Source: [www.parkscore.tpl.org](http://www.parkscore.tpl.org) as reported by the National Park and Recreation Association, <http://parksandrecreation.org/2012/July/Briefly-Noted>

### Ways to enhance recreational services and facilities

**Strategy 1** – Provide parks and public open space in the first suburbs within walking distance of residential areas. Design parks and open spaces to be inviting to persons of all ages and abilities.

- Ensure that public spaces are clearly defined and function as gathering areas that are safe for all users.
- Incorporate public open space into neighborhoods. Many urban and suburban developments lack sufficient parks and open space; limited vacant land and tight budgets make it difficult to acquire more land for parks, but even small “pocket” parks add value to neighborhoods.
- Protect valuable cultural and natural resources by incorporating them into public open space.

- Evaluate current parks to ensure that facilities are inviting and appropriate for older adult users, including seating, shade, walking paths, signage, parking, water and restrooms.

**Strategy 2** – Develop creative ways to use parks as meeting places for community groups or neighborhood associations.

- Install shelters, gazebos and lighting for evening gatherings.
- Work out partnership agreements with groups that want to use parks and public open space. For example, these groups could help maintain public facilities in exchange for being able to use the facilities.

According to the National Council on Aging ([www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)), the most effective physical activity programs for older adults encompass the following 10 principles:

1. Set a specific goal for increasing older adult participation in physical activity.
2. Encourage physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.
3. Promote everyday tasks as opportunities for physical activity.
4. Offer a variety of group-based physical activity programs and self-directed opportunities that are suitable for older adults.
5. Offer physical activity programs that feature one or more components of physical activity (cardiovascular, strength, flexibility, balance).
6. Conduct a census of active aging programs in the community or city.
7. Ensure that programs are safe and effective and are tailored to meet the needs of individual participants.
8. Offer instruction in proper technique and provide adequate supervision.
9. Include behavioral support strategies to increase motivation and promote retention.
10. Address risk management and injury prevention.



Physical fitness classes for older adults can include walking programs, gardening, hiking, swimming, aerobics — or tap dancing classes such as this one at an Independence, Mo., senior center.

**Strategy 3** – Develop physical fitness classes targeted toward older adults.

- Advance awareness of the benefits of regular physical activity and promote the availability of recreational and exercise opportunities for older adults.
- Teach physical fitness courses at local community centers or other local public facilities.
- Offer physical fitness classes in association with neighborhood organizations and activities.

Philadelphia has developed an “age-friendly parks checklist” to ensure its parks are inviting and accessible to people of all ages and abilities. This checklist includes the following:

- Sidewalks are wide, free of obstructions, with curb cuts.
- There are shaded areas, structures and paths in shade.
- Outdoor seating is well designed, abundant and maintained.
- Pavements are non-slip and pervious.
- Stairways have railings and stair tips are painted.
- Bike paths are separate from pedestrian walkways.
- Public toilets are clean, well-maintained and accessible.
- Crosswalks feature visual and audio cues, with adequate crossings.
- Paths can accommodate a wheelchair.
- Buildings are well-signed and accessible.
- Safety is promoted by good street lighting.
- Safety is promoted by emergency call boxes.
- Safety is promoted by patrols and community education.
- Drivers yield to pedestrians at intersections and crossings.
- Food services are accessible and have healthy foods.
- Designated quiet areas are well-respected and monitored.
- Programming is designed with particular age groups in mind.
- Water fountains are sufficient in number.
- There is accessible, sheltered, well-marked public transit.
- There is a designated drop-off and pick-up area.
- All signage in the park is large with a clear font type.
- There is available parking near the park entrance.
- Prominent signage about properly leashed animals is present.
- If the park is big, there is accessible, sheltered, well-marked public transportation around the park to different sections.

## 6.2 Health care services and facilities

It is important to have adequate health care services and facilities to meet the needs of first suburb residents. Residents of all ages need ready access to adequate health care.

### Questions

Key questions regarding health care facilities:

- Are health care facilities available?
- Are there affordable modes of transportation to get to health care facilities?
- Are assisted living facilities for older adults within your community or nearby? Do hospitals and medical centers include geriatric, Alzheimer's and rehabilitation facilities?
- Are an adequate number of geriatric-trained physicians, nurses and allied health professionals available to treat older community members?



Because the number of older adults who desire to live independently at home is increasing, the demand for qualified health care professionals with adequate training to serve the needs of older adults is also increasing.

## Ways to enhance health care services and facilities

**Strategy 1** – Ensure there are adequate health care facilities within the first suburbs for older adults and others who need care. These facilities include intermediate care (nursing) homes, skilled nursing homes, personal care homes and residential care facilities. Nearby facilities preserve family connections and reduce costs of care when family assistance can take place in association with health care professionals' guidance.

- Encourage the location of health facilities in close proximity of the first suburbs.
- Work with local ambulance services to ensure services are adequate to meet the needs of a growing older adult population.
- Ensure that transportation services are available for trips to and from health care facilities, hospitals and medical centers.
- Encourage opportunities to provide technologically advanced health care in homes, such as video conferences between medical providers and patients, to deliver virtual “house calls.”

**Strategy 2** – Ensure that older adults in the first suburbs have access to health care services that address varying levels of need.

- Encourage health care institutions and businesses to offer services to assist those in need with activities of daily living, including personal care, licensed home healthcare, cooking, cleaning and light housekeeping.
- Work with local public health departments to improve the rate of adult immunizations by broadening access points and improving coordination and communication between providers and the community.



Offering older adults on-site health care support, such as home health nursing, transportation and home-delivered meals, can increase the number of older adults who remain in their home while they age.

- Work with area health care organizations to offer certain health services at community facilities, such as hearing tests, hearing aid cleaning and blood pressure checks.
- Work with area health care organizations to provide a range of accessible education and outreach programs on healthy choices and preventive services.

**Strategy 3** – Establish guidelines that make it easier to provide affordable, effective health care.

- Increase advocacy for improving cost and coverage for health care.
- Support policies and practices that enable family caregiving by employees, such as allowing pooling of leave to aid co-workers, and flex-time schedules.
- Provide adult day health care and other respite programs to assist families.
- Encourage employers to provide on-site adult day care facilities for employees' family members. The programs would provide care for adult dependents that need minimal intervention services.

### 6.3 Healthy eating

Access to affordable, healthy foods is a basic necessity for all ages, including older adults. Poor diets and physical inactivity increase health risks for both children and older adults. Conversely, research has shown that people who live in neighborhoods with easy access to grocery stores, farmers markets and other healthy food providers have healthier diets, lower rates of obesity and are healthier in general.

#### Questions

Key questions regarding healthy eating:

- Do people of all ages have access to healthy food choices?
- Is it easy to make healthy food choices?
- Do older adults have access to healthy food?
- Do local neighborhoods provide farmers markets, community gardens or other opportunities to obtain fresh food?

#### Ways to enhance healthy eating

**Strategy 1** – Work with community organizations to support a healthy food network that includes the first suburbs.

This network could help ensure that older adults and other residents have access to healthy, fresh foods and understand the role of nutritious foods in preserving health.

- Provide community dinners and pantries to ensure everyone has enough to eat.
- Encourage the expansion of senior meal programs to meet the needs of those that need the service. This includes home-delivered meal programs.
- Work with organizations such as KC Healthy Kids and its Food Policy Coalition to encourage healthy eating by addressing enhanced local

production, improved school and institutional healthy food options, and addressing food deserts (those areas where full-service grocery stores are lacking) and access to healthy foods.

- Assess your community’s retail food stores to ensure that all parts of the community are served. If food desert areas are identified, work with developers to encourage the location of new retail stores.

**Strategy 2** – Develop a “healthy food store” incentive program.

- Develop a program to encourage existing liquor stores, convenience stores and ethnic markets to stock fresh produce and other healthful foods.
- Identify stores willing to participate in the healthy food program.



Initiatives such as MARC’s Healthy Corner Store program bring fresh and healthy foods into neighborhoods where it’s difficult to find nutritious options.



- Collaborate with the Mid-America Regional Council and its Healthy Corner Store program to expand healthy food in older neighborhoods that do not have full-service groceries.
- Target key neighborhoods that have high concentrations of liquor and convenience stores and lack fresh and healthful food options. Identify stores willing to participate.

The Food Trust (<http://thefoodtrust.org>) is a nationally recognized nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. The Food Trust has developed a comprehensive approach to improving food access, which combines nutrition education and increased availability of healthy, affordable foods. The organization is located in Philadelphia, and is a key partner of Get Healthy Philly.

**Strategy 3** – Promote opportunities for older adults in the first suburbs to purchase groceries online.

- Work with older adults to make sure they have access to the digital tools needed to do online grocery shopping.
- Provide training classes about the basics of online grocery shopping, including a cost comparison with more traditional grocery shopping.
- Provide financial help for those that need to use these types of services. This could include coupons, vouchers or other approaches that can be redeemed instantly to lower costs.

**Strategy 4** – Explore the possibility of creating and sustaining local urban agriculture through community gardens in the first suburbs.

- Promote urban agriculture as an opportunity for older adults and the younger generation to work together for the benefit of the community. This could include community gardens, orchards and farmers’ markets.

- Develop a volunteer, nonprofit or supportive organization that works with parks departments to improve, advocate for and expand local community gardening and farmers’ markets.
- Concentrate efforts on fundraising, securing land and organizing educational activities and events.



Community gardens not only encourage healthy eating, but also foster a sense of community identity, ownership and stewardship. (Photo courtesy of Chris Overdorf)

### 6.4 Resources

- American Community Garden Association. How to Start a Community Garden. <http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php>.
- Building a Healthier Heartland. [www.healthyheartland.ning.com](http://www.healthyheartland.ning.com).
- The Building Healthy Community for Active Aging Steering Committee. Ten Strategies for Ensuring Commitment to Active Aging. [www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/pdf/2007-0512-ten-active-aging-strategies.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/pdf/2007-0512-ten-active-aging-strategies.pdf).
- Food and Nutrition Information Center. Older Adults General Nutrition Resource List. National Agricultural Library, USDA. May 2010. [www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/olderadults.pdf](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/olderadults.pdf).
- The Food Trust. <http://thefoodtrust.org>.
- Healthy People Toolkit. [www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Healthy\\_People\\_2010\\_Toolkit.aspx](http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Healthy_People_2010_Toolkit.aspx).
- Kansas City Community Gardens. [www.kccg.org](http://www.kccg.org).
- KC Food Policy Coalition. [www.kcfoodpolicy.org](http://www.kcfoodpolicy.org).
- KC Healthy Kids. [www.kchealthykids.org](http://www.kchealthykids.org).
- Mid-America Regional Council. Creating Sustainable Places. March 2011, [www.marc.org/sustainableplaces/RPSD032111.pdf](http://www.marc.org/sustainableplaces/RPSD032111.pdf).
- Philadelphia Age-friendly Parks Checklist. [www.pcacares.org/Files/age-friendly\\_checklist\\_June\\_2011.pdf](http://www.pcacares.org/Files/age-friendly_checklist_June_2011.pdf).
- Piedmont-Palladino, Susan. "Walking the Walk." National Building Museum. [www.nbm.org/intelligentcities](http://www.nbm.org/intelligentcities).
- University of Missouri Extension. <http://extension.missouri.edu>.



This toolkit suggests a wide array of actions to enhance the first suburbs as communities for all ages. There are many ideas to pursue and it may be difficult to determine where to start. Not all recommendations in this toolkit can be implemented at one time, so it is important to set priorities. This concluding chapter suggests a community action process for addressing the opportunities and challenges in a holistic, integrated way.

Communities for All Ages is an example of a cross-cutting goal or filter — a lens through which every program, policy, budget line, staff decision and other action of a first suburb can be examined. At every turn as decisions are made, community leaders in the first suburbs should ask, “How can this decision support our vision of creating a community for all ages?”



Open communication is critical among community leaders, residents, organizations and agencies that support the concept of communities for all ages. Without open communication, it is not possible to develop a community that reflects the wants and needs of its residents.

One goal of a community for all ages is for residents to participate in making decisions about the community. In particular, the participation of older residents can be beneficial in ensuring that decisions about changes to neighborhoods, facilities and programs are suited to the growing population of older users.

## Summary of Implementation Strategies

### Engage: Make a plan for civic engagement and dialogue

- Step 1 – Establish a community advisory group or coalition with broad representation from community interests.
- Step 2 – Task this group with helping to define and guide specific steps.
- Step 3 – Provide leadership for continued collaboration needed across a wide array of partners.
- Step 4 – Maintain open lines of communication.

### Assess Needs, Opportunities and Constraints: Develop a good base of information

- Step 1 – Develop an understanding of the community's key characteristics.
- Step 2 – Review existing ordinances and policies, and seek information about planned and proposed projects.
- Step 3 – Identify existing community services.
- Step 4 – Ask community leaders and residents what they need.
- Step 5 – Develop a simple, documented assessment.

### Set Goals: Establish clear goals and obtainable objectives for achieving a community for all ages

- Step 1 – Discuss the findings and conclusions from the needs assessment.
- Step 2 – Write broadly stated goals.
- Step 3 – Consider how to measure the goals and write objectives supporting them.
- Step 4 – Seek community buy-in for goals and objectives.

### Analyze and Act: Identify and set priorities for projects and strategies

- Step 1 – Develop a list of candidate ideas for action.
- Step 2 – Set priorities.
- Step 3 – Incorporate the advisory group's guidance into the community's comprehensive plans and the plans for existing services and programs.
- Step 4 – Collaborate among all players involved in communities for all ages.

### Inform the Public

- Step 1 – Create a communications plan.
- Step 2 – Continue to seek public input as the work evolves.
- Step 3 – Identify volunteer opportunities for all ages.
- Step 4 – Encourage interaction among residents to help build a community for all ages.
- Step 5 – Market existing and new community services and promote successes within the community.
- Step 6 – Create programs in the first suburbs promoting the concept and enhancing public communication about communities for all ages.

### Evaluate

- Step 1 – Establish a formal, periodic evaluation process.
- Step 2 – Report to the public on progress.

## 7.1 Planning for a Community for All Ages initiative

### Engage: Make a plan for civic engagement and dialogue

The first task in establishing a first suburb as a community for all ages is to develop a plan for engaging civic leaders, residents, experts and other stakeholders. Following are suggested steps to engage residents:

**Step 1** – Establish a community advisory group or coalition with broad representation from community interests — neighborhoods, nonprofit and civic organizations — and a variety of age groups.

The advisory group need not be large. In fact, a lean and nimble group dedicated to open communication with the community may be more effective.

The advisory group needs the support of elected officials and administrative leaders. Residents are more likely to pay attention when the group is appointed by elected leaders and when elected leaders routinely engage with the group.



Public workshops provide an opportunity for local residents to participate in the planning process. (Photo courtesy of EDAW)

- Establish informal committees to focus on topics or projects. Revolving participation builds community awareness and brings to light individuals with leadership potential for undertaking further work as the program grows.
- Provide staffing for advisory groups. While it is possible to create an all-volunteer effort, volunteers are far more effective when “powered” by someone charged with the logistics of keeping the group moving. The staff can be a first suburb employee or someone with whom the first suburb has contracted specifically to guide the group.
- Assign a volunteer leader with executive or administrative experience who is willing to dedicate substantial time to fulfill this role.
- Hire a consultant with expertise in such issues as housing, community health services and other topics.

**Step 2** – Task this group with helping to define and guide the following steps:

- Assess needs and gather other information; identify opportunities and constraints.
- Set goals and objectives.
- Analyze possibilities for strategies that will achieve the goals and objectives.
- Decide on top priorities for action and lay out work programs.

**Step 3** – Provide leadership for continued collaboration needed across a wide array of partners:

- Meet on a regular basis to check progress of goals and programs.
- Inform the public; a key part of the role of coalition members should be to generate enthusiasm about communities for all ages.

## Making Your Community Work for All Ages

- Build leadership.
- Identify options for funding to support project implementation.

### Step 4 – Maintain open lines of communication.

Community residents should believe they are part of the process and share thoughts with the advisory group and community leaders. Residents of all ages need to have an opportunity to get involved and share their opinions.

Part of the role of this coalition is to impart the sense that “we’re all in this together.” Holding informal meetings, giving presentations to community groups and attending community events will help build community dialogue and awareness of the goals and strategies to build a community for all ages. The following points may also be useful in making a plan for civic engagement and dialogue:

- Conduct open meetings with notice and agendas provided well in advance, using a media release and email announcements.
- Advertise for volunteers for the revolving committees, with each individual having well-defined responsibilities and a willingness to stay committed. Let residents know they are being heard. Document what residents are saying and,

when appropriate, indicate how specific issues are being addressed. Communicate ultimate results to residents, so they will know how community leaders responded to concerns.

**Research shows a positive association between engaging in civic activities and better health in later life.**

Multigenerational Planning – Family-Friendly Communities Briefing Papers 02, APA.

### Assess needs, opportunities and constraints: Develop a good base of information

Another critical task is to understand existing needs, opportunities and constraints. What are the demographic characteristics of the community’s population in terms of age, income, neighborhood characteristics, distribution of different neighborhoods across the community and services that residents already use or need? What policies continue to shape your community’s growth and enhancement?

As information is gathered, take notice. Are there good ideas and projects at work already? Is there something missing? Does someone express a need or note a mismatch in service, target population or available information? Nothing is too small to record and discuss, although ultimately, the aim is to produce a simple overview and analysis.

Some of this information might be organized to support periodic evaluation of progress in creating a community for all ages, a process that is discussed in a later task. The Jefferson County Board for Aging in Virginia has created an annual checklist that suggests key ideas to track on a continuing basis, which can also guide development of the initial needs assessment. ([www.jabacares.org/uploads/documents/Livable\\_Communities\\_Checklist\\_9-12.pdf](http://www.jabacares.org/uploads/documents/Livable_Communities_Checklist_9-12.pdf)).



Discussion forums such as this one in Gladstone, Mo., encourage older adult residents to participate in local planning efforts.

**Step 1** – Develop an understanding of key characteristics in your first suburb.

Develop a comprehensive inventory of existing features that are consistent with concepts of a community for all ages.

- Enable the mapping of places where a high proportion of seniors are aging in place (naturally occurring retirement communities, or NORCs). It can also be helpful to determine their financial stability. For example, federal guidelines say a financially healthy household should have to spend no more than 30 percent of its income on shelter; families stretched beyond that level are considered “cost burdened.” To what extent are NORCs indicative of cost-burdened residents unable to move, and to what extent are there desirable characteristics of these NORCs to imitate?
- Map locations of health care facilities, schools and other community facilities (public or nonprofit, including faith-based), and commercial areas providing for residents’ daily needs.
- Include places where public gatherings and events occur and “third places,” areas where residents socialize outside of home and work, such as coffee shops and parks.

**Step 2** – Review existing ordinances and policies to understand how they already or could promote communities for all ages and seek information about planned and proposed projects that may have an impact.

- Have community leaders, elected officials and city planners collaborate on this task, working through an advisory group subcommittee or other well-advertised process that also enlists public participation.
- Utilize existing resources. To help first suburbs get started with this step, MARC is currently developing a model development code and



Farmers markets and community gardens not only provide healthy food options, but provide an opportunity for social interactions. (Photo courtesy of Depositphotos.com)

conducting reviews of existing land-use ordinances in several first suburbs which correlates strongly to communities for all ages (see Chapter 2). Combining sustainability concepts with communities for all ages is a useful way of building a broad coalition for community initiatives that, overall, will improve quality of life. The results of this study are available from MARC and can provide the basis for a more in-depth look at issues community by community.

**Step 3** – Identify existing community services being offered in the first suburbs.

- Establish an electronic database of local, regional and state organizations and agencies providing services within your community to gather information about services provided and populations served. Ask these providers about their needs and gaps in service of which they are already aware.
- Ensure older adults are regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on how best to meet the needs of older adults in the first suburbs.

**Step 4** – Ask community leaders and residents what they need.

Ask community leaders and residents to help define what is important in the first suburbs and how best to maintain or improve existing neighborhoods. There is a wide variety of ways to collect this information; the best approach is to consider a combination of several:

- Use web-based community engagement tools, such as MindMixer.com, to raise questions and solicit feedback from the community. Dialogue can also be encouraged through such other tools as email, Facebook, Twitter, texting, smartphone applications and other means, plus websites geared specifically for selected age groups.
- Convene focus groups or conduct electronic or mail-in surveys to gain the perspective of older adults or other under-represented age groups or populations.
- Hold small group meetings in neighborhoods or seek public input at neighborhood gatherings.
- Encourage residents to attend public meetings organized by the advisory committee to receive public input. Use traditional communication approaches to get the word out since not all residents — especially older adults — have access to digital technology. This includes the telephone, hand-delivered flyers, announcements at public gatherings, bulletin boards and other traditional approaches for public outreach.



When local residents are asked about what they want in their communities, most indicate a preference for trails, sidewalks and other elements that improve walkability.

**Step 5** – Develop a simple, documented assessment.

Collecting this information is an ongoing process. In start-up phase, however, it is best to define a process, a product and a deadline and move on to other tasks in order to gain momentum and get results.

Aim for sufficient information for an adequate baseline — data that the community can continue to track, year after year. Have a discussion about implications and record the advisory group's sense of needs, opportunities and constraints.

- Hold a series of advisory group meetings in public settings to consider findings, offering the public and stakeholders one last round of opportunities for input.
- Finalize the document and use this “milestone moment” to raise public dialogue in local media about findings and conclusions.

**Set goals: Establish clear goals and obtainable objectives for achieving a community for all ages**

Setting goals clearly follows from the previous task. An advisory committee should be eager to get to this point, after gathering information and reaching conclusions about needs, opportunities and constraints.



What are clear goals and attainable objectives?

Some planners use the “SMART” acronym, adapted from Paul J. Meyer’s book *Attitude is Everything*, to describe the characteristics of good goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

A goal might be less measurable than its related objectives, particularly in the short run. For example, a goal might be “create a fully walkable community.” An objective helps to define what’s meant by “fully walkable,” for example, 75 percent of the community’s entire population can reach 75 percent of community services needed by walking less than one-half mile via sidewalks and trails.

**Step 1** – Discuss the findings and conclusions from the needs assessment.

Keeping discussion at a broad, visionary level, imagine what a community for all ages would look like. Who lives there? How do they live? What do their homes look like? How do they participate in community life? How do they shop? What’s fun to do and where do they play? How do new (and old) residents learn what’s going on? How do they get around? If progress is made, what will be the good things that happen as a result? How will individuals and the community benefit?

Watch out for the premature “eureka moment,” in which participants leap to a solution or strategy before adequately defining the problem or the vision. This can short-circuit the idea-making and consensus-building qualities of dialogue that should enrich abilities to identify and design strategies later.

Sometimes communities write down their vision before writing out goals and objectives. This exercise can be helpful when there are widely varying views and experiences represented within a group. A wide-ranging dialogue permits an exchange of views and allows everyone to be both teacher and student. Perhaps in this case “make our town a community for all ages” is sufficient as guidance, and thus the advisory group can proceed to writing goals that

make such a visionary statement come to life in more specific ways.

- Consider facilitation. If the group remains small, eight or fewer, it may be possible to conduct this discussion without the help of a facilitator — someone who knows how to manage a group discussion and help the group reach conclusions. Otherwise, consider getting such help for this step.
- Consider inviting other stakeholders to participate in this advisory group exercise. Examining the needs assessment and the process of input to date, what skills and insights would be beneficial that the advisory committee itself may not be able to offer?
- Ask elected and appointed officials to nominate extra participants or participate themselves (e.g., city manager, city planning director, city council).

**Step 2** – Write broadly stated goals.

Consider developing at least one goal for the topics treated in this toolkit: community and neighborhood environment; housing; transportation; community services (educational,



This Raytown, Mo., neighborhood offers attractive front porches that invite social interaction.



Sylvester Powell, Jr., Community Center in Mission, Kan., offers physical fitness facilities, classes and meeting spaces for community forums and other events.

social, financial); health care and healthy living; and recreation. Write them in ways designed to help community leaders and residents envision the changes and benefits of undertaking the work needed to achieve the goals.

- If a facilitator is brought in to help with the visioning step, consider building into the process an exercise for writing draft goals.
- Ask a small subcommittee to finalize the goals and bring them back to the advisory group for refinement into a final draft for public review. Do not take time to “wordsmith” final goals as a group exercise unless the group is small (eight or fewer).

**Step 3** – Consider how to measure the goals and write objectives supporting them.

When will it be known that significant progress has been made in meeting goals? As discussed above in the example of a goal and objective for a “walkable community,” bring visionary goals down to reality by writing measurable objectives.

In general, goals remain more fixed from year to year (although these, too, should be open to adaptation); objectives can be altered as the community gains experience and makes progress.

Objectives should be attainable within a reasonable amount of time; it can be discouraging for both leaders and followers to miss the mark — but beware also of constraining ambitions too greatly.

- Assign a small subcommittee to draft objectives and bring them back to the advisory group for refinement and public review; as with the goals themselves, it is inadvisable to “wordsmith” final objectives as a group exercise unless the group is small (eight or fewer).

**Step 4** – Seek community buy-in for goals and objectives.

- Hold a series of advisory group meetings to consider goals and objectives in public settings, offering the public and stakeholders opportunities for input.
- Include a presentation before the city council during public review.
- Finalize goals and objectives and use this second “milestone moment” to raise public dialogue in local media about them.

### Analyze and act: Identify and set priorities for projects and strategies

The advisory group is ready to decide on positive action when there is sufficient information about goals and objectives firmly in hand. A process is needed for identifying projects, strategies and priorities, since it is not possible to implement all recommendations in this toolkit.

**Step 1** – Develop a list of candidate ideas for action.

The needs assessment, goals and objectives will reveal issues faced by the community. Discussions will undoubtedly already have exposed potential projects, strategies and priorities. In addition, begin a structured review of the strategies throughout this toolkit and note the ones most suited with alterations as needed.

It may be important to identify the most efficient and cost-effective ways to provide new or enhanced community services. Emphasize long-term financial stability for new projects and services — how will the community maintain these projects and services over the long term? On the other hand, do not allow a concern about cost to prevent developing a full list of candidates. It may be that cost will affect how the advisory group sets priorities, but an idea deserves fair consideration during the first pass in developing options.

- Identify needed community projects. This could include new facilities, such as community centers, senior centers, schools, museums or other structures.
- Identify needed new or improved programs or educational opportunities. Identify services geared specifically for older adults, if community assessment suggests the need.
- For each idea, develop a simple statement of need. Why is this idea important, what benefits could this idea deliver or what problems could it solve?
- Develop a one-page work plan and estimated budget for how best to achieve each project or strategy.

- Categorize the final list according to the topics in this toolkit: community and neighborhood environment; housing; transportation; community services (educational, social, financial); health care and healthy living; and recreation.
- Review policy and programmatic ideas in public settings, offering the public and stakeholders opportunities for input on the ideas, and gain a sense of how these audiences would choose among them for top priorities.
- Include a presentation before the city council during public review.
- Finalize the candidate list and use this to raise public dialogue in local media about ideas for action.

Below are the seven types of project collaborations developed by Age-friendly Philadelphia.

- Make parks more age-friendly.
- Help public transportation become more accessible.
- Increase opportunities for flexible housing.
- Improve walkability.
- Enhance neighborhood social capital.
- Improve access to fresh foods.
- Educate the next generation of leaders.



The Colorado pedestrian/bicycle bridge improves pedestrian and bicycle access between Colorado Station and adjacent neighborhoods. (Photo courtesy of Colorado Department of Transportation)

### Step 2 – Set priorities.

There are several ways to decide priorities. Following solid dialogue through committee and community processes, sometimes a group might decide there is clear choice for one or a few projects that can be done in a short period given existing funding and sufficient focus. These “early action” and/or “first phase” strategies would receive the community’s immediate attention. The advisory group might allow the remaining list to stand, or it could adjust the list as appropriate to indicate which ideas would be “on deck” for next, mid-term

action. The remainder would provide guidance for longer-term action, to be reviewed periodically to see if it is time to turn the community's attention to accomplishing additional work.

If the advisory group and city leaders agree, it may be desirable for the city council to make the final choices. They are, after all, in control of city resources — the funding and staffing needed to accomplish many (although presumably not all) of the ideas on the list. In other cases, the community's elected and appointed leaders may wish the advisory group to carry out the final priority-setting, but reserve the right to make their own adjustments once the group has done its work.

**Step 3** – Incorporate the advisory group's guidance into the community's comprehensive plans and the plans for existing services and programs.



Community parks provide accessible and inviting spaces that meet the recreational and social needs for people of all ages. (Photo courtesy of James Sipes)

While the ideas and priorities identified by the communities for all ages initiative are important, they are only advisory until they are adopted by the agencies and organizations responsible.

**Step 4** – Organize the long-term effort of collaboration among all players involved in communities for all ages.

In a “cross-cutting” visionary program affecting numerous players, it is helpful to create a structure or forum for creating a continuing culture of collaboration and accountability in working toward established goals — what we will call “the collaborative body.” The advisory group could remain constituted and permanently in charge of encouraging responsible agencies and organizations to adopt the ideas of the planning process and take action accordingly, or a different group might be charged with this task. That existing or new group might also be given responsibility and resources for accomplishing some of the ideas for action.

No matter what approach is chosen, the role of that body should include enlisting public support and maintaining some level of accountability by informing the public.

### Inform the public

Each preceding task has included recommendations for public outreach to ensure that everyone is informed of the planning process. The responsibility of informing the public continues once the planning process is complete and implementation is underway.

This task calls for seeking public support by “getting the word out” about creating a community for all ages. It also creates tools and approaches for informing residents about services that will improve their choices and quality of life. It will engage them in ways that will benefit the neighborhood or the community at large. Ideas for such general information sharing and civic engagement are also found in Chapter 5.



Alderwood Court Senior Apartments in Lynnwood, Wash., participates in a program that provides affordable rental apartment homes for senior residents. (Photo courtesy of EDAAW)

Some ideas offered here might be undertaken individually by city agencies or nonprofit organizations that are drawn into collaboration with the communities for all ages initiative. Those responsible for such implementation would report routinely on their work to the continuing collaborative body described above.

### Step 1 – Create a communications plan.

An effective, robust communications and outreach plan is needed to help “sell” the idea of communities for all ages in each of the first suburbs. Traditional strategies, creative ideas and modern technology should combine to inform, update, educate and actively refer residents, businesses and organizations to services and programs available for older adults and their families.

All planning follows a process similar to the one described here for creating an action plan: assess the need, including inventorying existing programs; analyze options; and set priorities for action. In the case of a communications plan, the collaborative body or other responsible party would first look at what communications are already being undertaken by contributing parties, then look for ways to improve those efforts and address gaps and, finally, document the actions to be undertaken in priority order or groupings.

- Communications plans also have an element of marketing to them: they should identify messages and audiences, and specify the media best suited to convey those messages to each audience.
- Consider branding: adopting a logo, “tag line” (short saying), graphic design and other consistent, identifying elements will support the messages and aid public recognition. The branding led by MARC could pave the way for more specific efforts in each community.
- Performance measures should be specified in the plan, so that over time adjustments can be made to stretch limited dollars as effectively as possible.

*Note: The remaining steps are not necessarily in priority order — the communications plan would help to guide final decision-making.*

**Step 2** – Continue to seek public input as the work evolves.

- Use web-based community engagement tools to raise questions and solicit feedback from the community. Other tools such as email, Facebook, Twitter, texts, smartphone applications and other means, plus websites geared specifically for selected age groups and neighborhoods may also be useful to encourage dialogue.
- Many cities are in the process of adopting applications that allow citizens to contribute information in an ongoing fashion. Monitor them and consider the potential of developing something similar for a community for all ages initiative. Applications include: [www.codeforamerica.org](http://www.codeforamerica.org), [www.shareabouts.org](http://www.shareabouts.org), [www.localdata.com](http://www.localdata.com) and [www.seeclickfix.com](http://www.seeclickfix.com).
- Convene focus groups or conduct electronic or mail-in surveys as necessary to gain the perspectives of older adults or other under-represented age groups or populations.

## Making Your Community Work for All Ages

**Step 3** – Identify volunteer opportunities for all ages.

Chapter 5 emphasizes the importance of encouraging volunteerism in first suburbs — it not only helps the organization receiving the services, but also benefits those participating and the community at large.

- Find opportunities to match older adults to with volunteer opportunities that match their skills and desires.

A “virtual village” provides a place for members to obtain basic services, such as rides to the doctor, referrals to local service providers and maintenance of homes. More than 60 such virtual villages have been organized in communities around the country and new ones are in formation. One of the pioneer villages is Beacon Hill Village in Beacon Hill, Boston, now celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> year.

**Step 4** – Encourage interaction among residents to help build a community for all ages.

- Use nonprofit groups to help create “virtual villages” that serve as a network of support for older adults and other residents in the first suburbs. Support existence of “third places” in the first suburbs. The term “third places” refers to social environments where participants build relationships. They can be used to share information, enable residents to receive local services or provide recreational activities. Possible locations are community centers, churches and coffee shops.

**Step 5** – Market existing and new community services and promote successes directly within the community.

- Inform residents about existing and new services and facilities.
- Prepare weekly notices to be shared via television, newspapers, Internet and other media.
- Encourage Internet bloggers to post information that would be beneficial to older adults in the first suburbs.

**Step 6** – Create programs in the first suburbs supporting public communication about communities for all ages.

- Promote and participate in Older Americans Month in May of each year.
- Incorporate booths, activities and programs as part of local events, festivals and celebrations within the first suburbs that are targeted specifically to recognize, engage and celebrate older adults.



Farmers markets are held in public spaces, usually on a particular day of the week, where local farmers can sell produce to the public. (Photo courtesy of Depositphotos.com)

- Develop an annual region-wide senior resource guide that provides important community-based information for older adults. This could be a companion piece with local newspapers or magazines, or it could be uploaded onto locally operated Internet sites. Deliver the resource guide door to door — perhaps through Meals on Wheels to older adults who have limited mobility.
- Coordinate weekly “aging well” media segments available to older adults in the first suburbs. Work with local television and radio stations to air weekly shows geared toward making life easier for older adults in the first suburbs and Kansas City region.

## Evaluate

The “SMART” acronym mentioned earlier in this chapter, concerning qualities of effective goals, has been updated in recent years to “SMARTER.” In addition to Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound, E and R stand for Evaluate and Re-evaluate. No plan is perfect. The best support for a plan is the ongoing consideration of progress, with as much measurement of performance as possible.

**Step 1** – Establish a formal, periodic evaluation process.

- Consider including residents in evaluation and program leadership positions; fine-tune community programs to match community needs as they evolve and change.

**Step 2** – Report to the public on progress.

- Provide periodic updates to the public. It is important for the process itself to be highlighted occasionally through well-publicized public reminders. Many organizations routinely issue annual reports. Perhaps the first suburb could issue a special annual report on this topic alone, or all participants in the continuing, collaborative body might agree to devote two pages in each of their annual reports to a collectively developed annual report.



Providing bike trails not only encourages physical activity among residents of all ages, but can decrease traffic congestion.

## Securing funding for building communities for all ages

No community can afford to undertake all of the ideas identified in this toolkit at one time. Affordability is likely to weigh heavily in the determination of priorities in the community action plan. Partnerships are also critical. Not all funds to achieve a community for all ages need be raised directly by the first suburb.

Key questions to ask when exploring funding options:

- Is there adequate funding to help implement goals for creating a community for all ages?
- Are all potential funding sources being explored?
- Are there opportunities for public/private partnerships?

As each first suburb makes its budget over the years, small course corrections in local spending can gain two-for-the-price-of-one advantages, as suggested in the preceding section. Ideas in this toolkit will require special funding, to be voted through use of the first suburb’s general revenues or through creative local financing such as bonds, business improvement districts, tax increment financing and other special taxing authorities.

Raising funds can be accomplished through grant applications to regional, state and federal agencies and foundations, or through collaboration with such regional funding agencies as United Way and community foundations. Corporations and businesses in the community may also be interested in supporting certain initiatives in the first suburb's final plan. Creative ways of attracting local support are also possible — for instance, a “gift catalog” for donations to make improvements in a park or community facility.

This toolkit cannot provide a manual for fundraising, but there are many resource books, training opportunities, networks and sources of expertise available within local government and among partners. Three key actions are recommended:

- As actions are identified for the communities for all ages action plan, include budget estimates and sources of funding.
- Using these identified sources of funding as one building block, undertake a “resource development plan;” that is, a plan listing actions and priorities for how the community will build the relationships and resources needed to support the additional costs of creating a community for all ages. Set specific goals and designate the resources needed, such as staff or volunteer time for grantwriting.
- Tap into existing first suburb budgets to understand trends and find ways to leverage this spending to cover the costs of ideas in the communities for all ages action plan.



Some communities have dining centers, where older adults can come together to enjoy a meal, meet and talk with friends and find out about community services and programs.

## 7.2 Leadership development

A broad vision and the elements of a plan for a community for all ages are crucial for leadership, but leaders themselves are also necessary. A robust public process for enlisting participants is one way to identify and cultivate such leaders. Deliberately planning for leadership development and informing community leaders is another way.

Leadership development activities could be undertaken on a regional basis. Training can be expensive to develop and offer, but finding ways to collaborate on a regional basis would stretch limited dollars. Moreover, community leaders would find their training experience enriched by meeting their peers from across the region.

**Step 1** – Appoint advisory boards that reflect the diversity of the city, including youth, young family members and older adults. This gains crucial multiple perspectives and enlarges the leadership pool.

**Step 2** – Develop training courses specifically for community leaders that focus on communities for all ages.



- Offer a series of courses for community leaders about issues facing older adults and communities for all ages. These could be short courses that focus on a specific subject, such as home renovations for aging in place, creating age-friendly playgrounds or creating a walkable neighborhood. Such courses could be developed in collaboration with existing institutions of higher learning.
- Create a certification program for community leaders who take a specific number of courses and make certification a requirement for regional recognition of high-performing communities for all ages initiatives. Or, extend certain resources to enable communities to carry out such initiatives, such as grants or technical assistance. Require certification through continuing education to strengthen and ensure ongoing education of community leaders. The series of courses described in the first bullet could be adjusted as appropriate to enable certification maintenance.
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