Housing and Transportation Options

Community Strengths:
The county has taken important steps to increase accessible and affordable housing and transportation options.

- The county's growth strategy promotes pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with easy access to shopping, recreation and transportation.
- County human services transportation has been consolidated into one agency;
- Awareness has increased about the benefits of using universal design elements when building or retrofitting housing;
- The county has fostered partnerships with nonprofit and volunteer transportation providers to help fill service gaps;
- The county has become more aware of transportation barriers facing older adults who do not drive.

Community Challenges:

- Most new homes are not being constructed with universal design features.
- Most existing housing requires retrofitting for accessible features;
- Transportation options are still limited in many parts of the county, especially for older adults who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices;
- Most suburban neighborhoods are not located close to shopping and services, thus necessitating transportation;
- Apartments for older adults have waiting lists.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop in the Multiple Listing Service database information about accessible housing features.
- Develop a real estate agent educational program that focuses on Universal Design and EasyLiving Homes concepts.
- Educate builders and contractors about universal design features.
- Publically recognize builders who promote universal design in new construction.
- Partner with non-profit groups to provide home modifications for people with disabilities; e.g., installation of grab bars and rails, widening of doorways.
- Publicize the Virginia Livable Homes Tax Credit Program that provides tax credits for the purchase of a new home with universal design features or the retrofitting of a current home.
- Design and implement an online accessible housing registry.
- Establish a Mobility Manager position in the county to coordinate and expand transportation options.

- Establish a transportation webpage that provides information on bus, rail, taxi, paratransit, door-to-door assistance, Metro Access, and volunteer driver groups.
- Advocate for Metro Senior SmarTrip cards to be available for purchase at libraries and some of the community-based organizations that serve older adults. Metro maps and directions should also be available.
- Promote one-on-one travel training and expand the current program by using trained volunteers.
- Encourage the provision of more affordable housing for older adults
- Encourage a partnership between the Northern Virginia Home Builders Association and EasyLiving Home, a national certification program, to provide an EasyLiving Seal of Approval for homes built with basic universal design features.
- Promote and encourage the development of a Shared Housing program, linking those with extra room to rent with an older adult who would benefit from sharing a house.
- Install enunciators and LED visual displays on buses that inform riders of stops and cross streets.
- Support development of a program to subsidize volunteers who transport their neighbors who are unable to drive.

II. Easy Access to Services

Community Strengths:
The county provides an array of services for older adults and family caregivers and uses multiple channels to promote service awareness.

- 70 percent of older adults have computers and county residents have a high level of technological literacy.
- www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults provides information about county services, recreation/wellness activities and community engagement opportunities.
- The county plans across agencies for service delivery.
- Multiple boards, authorities, and commissions act as county advisors.
- County partnerships with community organizations, faith groups and universities are extending services to older adults of all ethnicities.

Community Challenges:

- Caregivers and older adults often only seek service information when there is a crisis instead of pre-planning.
- Older adult knowledge of social media is limited.
- To recruit and retain excellent older workers and/or employees who are family caregivers, local businesses need flexible workplace policies.

Proposed Actions:

- Continue support of emerging community village networks and promote the same concept of Neighbors Helping Neighbors or Volunteer Circles in all areas of the county.
- Recommend that the County join the nationwide Village-to-Village Network. Offer membership to leaders in emerging local Villages so that they may readily share resources and information.
- Promote use of social media and apps for resources for older adults and their caregivers.
- Work with non-profits or private businesses to provide volunteer social media training for older adults in their homes.
- Seek opportunities for homeowners' associations to apply for small grants to benefit older adults in their neighborhoods.
- Working through local Chambers of Commerce, encourage the involvement of local businesses in
    - volunteering in the community,
    - developing initiatives to enhance services for seniors,
    - supporting their own caregiving employees, and

  - developing flexible work policies to retain older workers.
- Develop a social responsibility model for businesses that have a desire to partner with county and community-based organizations around older adult services and programs.
- Promote technology use for health, safety and communication
  - Provide Wi-Fi in all senior centers.
  - Engage volunteers in providing one-on-one in-home instruction in use of social media, email, SKYPE, photo sharing.
  - Promote technology for health monitoring and safety – partner with hospitals and businesses to provide discounts.
  - Promote technology-smart homes.

III. Healthy Lifestyles and Community Engagement

Community Strengths:
The county has made significant progress in promoting older adult safety, healthy living, and opportunities for participation in community activities.

- An ongoing diverse community group is planning initiatives to improve the health of all age groups for the Partnering for a Healthier Fairfax grant.
- The county's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is growing exponentially.
- Older adults participate in recreational and educational programs, volunteer, share their creativity, and use their skills and talents to benefit the community.
- More seniors remain employed beyond 65.
- The Police Department and Fire & Rescue Department offer crime prevention and fire safety programs for older adults.

Community Challenges:

- The number of health and mental health providers specializing in geriatrics who accept Medicare or Medicaid is inadequate.
- Communication of healthy lifestyle choices to our diverse community requires the active engagement of ethnic community organizations.
- The county needs more opportunities for older adult participation in social, educational, and civic activities.

Proposed Actions

- Promote the integration of primary health care and mental health services within health clinics, particularly those serving older adults.
- Unleash the knowledge and leadership of retired and semi-retired older adults to address community service needs by supporting the Positive Aging Coalition and other efforts.
- Encourage a community nonprofit to establish a social media platform that provides a *virtual community* for the county's older adult community. The site will provide comprehensive information about services provided by the county and nonprofits, a 50+ calendar of activities and community engagement/volunteer opportunities; a forum allowing for communication of ideas and opinions; *and* interactive web space for large and small organizations, particularly those addressing community needs and opportunities, to post their programs, services, initiatives and engagement opportunities.

- Encourage development of programs in senior housing that offer creative activities, lifelong learning and intergenerational activities such as EngAGE in California. www.engagedaging.org/
- Partner with the Fairfax County Arts Council and other organizations for more art opportunities for older adults.
- Develop county-wide plan for new senior centers and, based on that plan, encourage their inclusion in new developments.
- Expand the Center Without Walls programs and opportunities to underserved communities
- Expand the NCS Building Director Program that allows community groups to use the senior centers off-hours and helps expand the availability of the centers for working seniors.
- Promote multigenerational engagement opportunities; e.g., multigenerational community garden projects adjacent to community centers and senior centers
- Seek community partnerships for activities in private eateries and coffee shops.
- Promote opportunities for older adults to audit classes at George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College.
- Promote intergenerational activities in partnership with the Fairfax County Public Schools by advertising student performances to older adults; developing classes for teens to teach seniors about social media and apps for communication with others; developing programs for teens to teach seniors about social media.
- Develop senior playgrounds at county parks. www.naturalnews.com/030891_seniors_playgrounds.html
- Develop partnerships for senior discounts at private fitness centers and county recreation centers.
- Encourage a partnership between county recreational centers and senior centers to allow water exercise classes for participants at a discount.
- Provide trainers in county recreation centers that specialize in older adult fitness;
- Provide ongoing senior exercise programs on Channel 16.
- Encourage community groups to provide more public benches alongside pedestrian walkways for rest stops.
- Develop public service announcements through Fairfax County's Cable and Consumer Services Department to encourage better nutrition.
- Encourage corporations who have a large number of caregiving employees to co-locate adult day care centers at work sites.
- Expand nutritional education and wellness programs at senior centers, community centers, and shopping malls.
- Encourage more community organizations to provide fall prevention and Chronic Disease Self-Management classes to their members.
- Establish a volunteer-staffed consumer fraud hotline at the Police Department.

- Promote elder abuse, domestic violence, and crime prevention activities.
- Promote safe driving through education, older driver events such as CarFit, and analysis and updating of local roads and intersections with bigger signs, left-turn arrows and other safety measures.
- Investigate the possibility of the "Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management opting into "Smart911", a technology database system that provides emergency responders with vital information provided voluntarily in advance by individuals who may call 911 on land lines or cell phones.
- Develop a media campaign to promote the idea of a Lifelong Community where neighbors help neighbors.