

Anticipating the Future

Fairfax
50+

A c t i o n P l a n
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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors'
Committee on Aging

The Committee on Aging of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

“O beautiful for patriot dream, that sees beyond the years...”

This refrain, from one of our country’s most beloved songs, *America the Beautiful*, was the theme of the swearing-in address in 2003. In *Anticipating the Future: A Discussion of Trends in Fairfax County* (March 2006) we opened the report with this same reference and it seems fitting to do so again as we anticipate an aging-friendly county in the future – Fairfax 50 + . We have challenged ourselves as a Board and the community to “see beyond the years,” to look beyond today and to do the hard work together to build our community for tomorrow.

In keeping with this spirit, the Board of Supervisors’ Committee on Aging was formed to look to the future of Fairfax County in light of our increasing older adult population: What steps must be taken to ensure that Fairfax County has the opportunities and services in place to welcome the “silver tsunami” to come?

Why 50 + ? Many of us in our 50s and older are the caregivers of the generations that came before. Many of us 50 and older are actively involved in our community, some retired, some not. More of us want to “age in place” where we raised our children and made our friends. For some of us, age is accompanied by needs we did not have when we were younger. For all of us, the community we are building today must become the community we want to live in as we grow older.

Committee members have taken turns chairing discussions with experts on the impact of this demographic shift on the interdependent issues of housing, community planning, care giving, health, mental health, transportation, technology, and diversity.

This action plan is an opportunity for us to share with the public the key trends, highlight current and planned initiatives, and to set forth our agenda for the future. It is not the completion of our work – it is the beginning. A vital part of our shared success in the future will be the ongoing work of the Commission on Aging to keep this plan a living document. Every county department will also play a role in implementing the initiatives planned for the next three years and beyond that will enhance services for older adults while also tapping the talents of this valuable resource of people. A sampling of these initiatives is included in this report and the full matrix is available online.

Online you also will find an expanded version of this report that includes links to source materials. It can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults. Those persons with specific questions should call the Planning Unit at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging at 703-324-5403. We appreciate the superior staff work of the Department of Family Services’ Area Agency on Aging in supporting the work of our committee.

Gerry Connolly

Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Dana Kauffman

Lee District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Chair of the Board’s Committee on Aging

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Dranesville District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Vice Chair of the Board’s Committee on Aging



Each of us, no matter what age, wants to be as independent as possible. We want to live in the home of our choosing and travel easily throughout our community. We want to enjoy the company of friends and family and be valued for what we know and can do. We want opportunities to contribute. When services are needed, we want them to be appropriate, accessible, and affordable.

As we plan our community's future, we must ensure that the needs and talents of those 50 + are considered and included.

This is our future.

~ Fairfax County Board of Supervisors



Board of Supervisors' Committee on Aging

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50 + *action plan* to ensure a more ag

Plan Today for a More Aging Friendly Community Tomorrow

The communities we plan and build, and those we revitalize, must be livable communities for all ages.

Community design affects how we live. Good design provides opportunities to know and help our neighbors and the pleasure to safely walk to grocery stores, service providers, and recreation sites. It gives us transportation options when we cannot or choose not to use our cars. It provides for affordable housing that adapts to our changing needs. It also facilitates access to technology that enhances our lives and improves our health. While older communities are being revitalized, plans for new developments are underway and more are expected. This presents Fairfax County opportunities to create livable communities for all ages.

Actions

- Create and revitalize communities that enable us to live independently as we age. Apply lessons from the basic Reston design concept, and from other best practices nationwide, that integrate community planning elements including access to a full range of options for transportation, services, recreation, health care, technology and housing.
- Adopt county planning and development guidelines that ensure integration of key elements of community design for all ages. Provide technical assistance and incentives to individuals and developers to promote use of these guidelines. Identify and remove county restrictions that may inhibit use of the guidelines.

Provide Housing Options for Every Age

Universal design concepts will ensure that our housing meets the needs of every age and can easily be adapted.

Much of the housing in our community is Peter Pan housing – built as though we'll never grow old. New design concepts address the reality that housing must be accessible to both visitors and occupants. Visitability design enables all people to enter a home and access the first floor gathering places and bathroom without barriers such as steps and narrow doorways. Universal design takes accessibility further, with designs that adapt to the changing needs of current and future occupants. Visitability and universal design benefit families of all ages including older adults adjusting to mobility limitations and boomers wanting to bring aging parents to live with them. Using universal and visitability design is usually less expensive and less disruptive than retrofitting later. The Fairfax Department of Housing and Community Development has adopted universal design for future buildings.

Actions

- Promote universal design through county sponsored community educational opportunities, events, and on-line resources, available in English and other languages for residents, architects and builders.
- Review housing construction requirements to identify and rectify barriers to universal design.
- Provide educational tool kits for building permit applicants and designate a county universal design information specialist to assist residents.
- Include in the Board of Supervisors' legislative agenda, a proposal to amend the Livable Homes Tax Credit to increase the per capita dollar amount for making homes more accessible.

Affordability

An aging friendly Fairfax must address the affordability of housing programs and services to a segment of the population with limited resources.

Currently there are thousands of older adults in Fairfax County living below the 2007 poverty level of \$10,210 for one person and \$13,690 for two. But the basic cost of living in our community is much higher than the national estimates. Increases in median household income for Fairfax County householders age 65 and older have not kept pace with younger households. Over half of current older renters and one in five older homeowners spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Older homeowners, living in older homes, frequently are faced with major repair and upkeep expenses, such as new roofs and heating/cooling systems. Older women in Northern Virginia are twice as likely as older men to live alone. Fewer older adults in Fairfax County are expected to have guaranteed pensions. Older adults who have not participated in Social Security or federal employment, often have no safety net. In addition, the younger women and men providing direct care services for older adults are often priced out of the housing market as well.

Actions

- Expand education on tax relief.
- Investigate and provide consumer information to older adults on the option of reverse mortgages.
- Promote the needs of older adults, and of direct care workers, in the county's thrust to address the need for affordable housing.
- Provide on-line assessments for older adults to determine basic eligibility for programs to meet their needs.
- Support the development of private affordable assisted living in Fairfax County.

Transportation Options will Ensure Independence

Transportation planning must include a wide range of mobility options and focus on the needs of older adults.

Transportation is what happens between your front door and your destination – sidewalks and trails, cars and cabs, buses and bus stops combined. Transportation planning has focused on moving the greatest number of employees to and from work via roads and public transport but our changing demographics require broadening this focus to include the needs of older adults. Transportation issues include driver education and pedestrian safety. Many older people rely on specialty transportation services that have limited capacity, can be less reliable, and are more expensive. Unless we integrate the needs of older adults into mainstream transportation and community planning, there will be even greater reliance on specialty transportation services.

Most of us rely on our cars – we are a car centered culture. Unfortunately, the average man will have 6 years when he can no longer drive and the average woman will have 10 years. The loss of driving ability dramatically affects older adults. It reduces independence and accessibility to services. It eventually can isolate older people from the rest of society. In addition, family members and their employers are affected when older people rely on family for medical and other appointments.

Actions

- Integrate transportation needs of older adults in all mainstream transportation planning – roads, trails, sidewalks, buses, bus shelters and in decisions that impact driving (size of signage, etc.).
- Establish a one-stop transportation information center available online and by phone. The center should provide information on bus, rail, taxi, paratransit, door-to-door assistance, MetroAccess, and volunteer transportation. The center should also be able to

make reservations for the various transportation options.

- Increase the use of technology (swipe-cards, etc.) to improve the transportation experience for older adults.
- Have the multi-departmental Fairfax Transportation Coordinating Committee review recent transportation studies, including The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission's "Meeting the Transportation Needs of Northern Virginia's Seniors," to develop next steps in transportation planning and services.
- Make summary information available at Board of Supervisor offices, libraries and other community sites with materials on transportation options available to older adults in our community.
- Increase the role of faith communities in providing transportation for older adults.
- Host education seminars to promote familiarity with and use of our transportation systems.
- Include public transportation information (closest stop, bus line number) in all public meeting announcements, and location information about public buildings.

Engaged Older Adults Benefit Us All

Fulfilling opportunities for engagement will ensure a vibrant community.

The growing number of older adults means the growth of a significant pool of talent in our community – as employees, entrepreneurs, volunteers, and community activists.

The job growth in Fairfax County is expected to out-pace labor force growth during the next two decades. Within Fairfax County government, almost one in four employees will be eligible to retire within the next five years. Many boomers plan to continue working. Many are interested in non-traditional work arrangements such as part-time work with benefits, project work rather than permanent employment, and greater flexibility for pursuing other interests. Some are interested in becoming entrepreneurs.

Volunteers are essential to many county programs and community service organizations. While more volunteers are clearly needed, it is not yet evident whether boomers will be as willing to volunteer as the older adults who preceded them. Recruitment and retention of boomers may require new approaches, more options for time commitments, benefits and incentives, and new and challenging opportunities.

Actions

- Make Fairfax County government a model for recruitment and retention of talented older workers.
- Support initiatives to recruit boomers and older adults into volunteering such as Ventures in Volunteering, the recent multi-department recruitment events held at public libraries.
- Encourage intergenerational opportunities in both employment and volunteering.
- Expand communication about opportunities to learn and contribute in the community.
- Promote community leadership training for older adults and encourage incubator support for retirees interested in starting small businesses that address unmet community needs.
- Ensure full participation of older adults in decision-making initiatives for the full range of community planning activities such as transportation, housing, and community revitalization.

Diversity

Build on strengths of our diverse population to enhance the cultural richness of our community and services.

If trends continue through 2010, approximately 45 percent of the county's total population will be racial and ethnic minorities and 39 percent may speak a language other than English at home. The percentage of ethnic and cultural minorities among the county's older adults is less than the general population but will increase as the boomers grow older. People of language or cultural minorities are dispersed throughout Fairfax County. The percentage of older adults speaking a language other than English at home doubled between 1980 and 2000 and continues to grow. There can be significant challenges for older adults isolated by language and/or culture. They often face loneliness and depression, often are unaware of opportunities and services, and sometimes find services culturally inappropriate or difficult to access. Some of our older residents are also dealing with the effects of war and torture in other lands. Older adults from diverse cultures, and the generations that follow, bring significant strengths to our community.

Actions

- Tap the perspectives and talents of our culturally diverse older population as an integral part of all community planning, service development, and service delivery.
- Increase availability of culturally appropriate services for older adults through public/private partnerships and support of non-profit initiatives.
- Create a non-profit grant writing service that employs skilled older adult volunteers as grant writers for community non-profits. This would enable the organizations that serve older adults, and that have staff for whom English is not their first language, to expand services by more effectively competing for grant funding.
- Increase opportunities for members of our diverse community to learn English.

Caregivers

Support caregivers so they can keep giving.

Family members, many of whom are part of the sandwich generation caring for both young and old, provide the greatest amount of care giving to the elderly. The average American woman can expect to spend 17 years caring for a child and 18 years caring for an elderly parent. Often, older people are the caregiver for their elderly spouses. Nearly one out of four U.S. households (23 percent or 22.4 million households) contains at least one caregiver for a relative or friend at least 50 years old. If the work of unpaid family caregivers was replaced by paid home care providers, it would cost an estimated \$196 billion dollars. Two additional caregiver issues in Fairfax County are grandparents raising grandchildren (kincare) and aging parents caring for adult children with developmental disabilities. Family care giving often has a major impact on the finances, health and well-being of the caregiver.

Actions

- Develop more respite for caregivers of older adults and adults with disabilities, making it a continuum of available, accessible and affordable options for our diverse community. Increase the number of respite workers to meet these growing needs.
- Increase and promote caregiver training and support services.
- Increase caregiver awareness of technology that can enhance care and reduce stress (assistive technology, monitoring, and more).

Technology

Technology savvy boomers are coming and they're carrying iPods.

Fairfax County is one of the country's preeminent high-tech centers. Researchers and marketers are developing everything from simple gadgets to complex computer systems to

report that includes report source materials, speakers at Aging Committee and resources is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults.

ease boomers into old age. A boomer turns 50 every seven seconds. December 31, 2064 the last of these boomers will turn 100 – and many will! Their familiarity and comfort with technology will likely affect their expectations and opportunities to improve health and mobility, delay service needs, and stay connected. It will also impact what services are needed and how they are delivered.

Actions

- Promote technology options by creating an information technology template for community planners, new home builders, and renovators.
- Incorporate technology and include private health monitoring as service options in county senior housing projects.
- Increase consumer knowledge about products and services designed to increase and promote independence. Increase opportunities to learn about these by inviting vendors to display products at county fairs, technology fairs, and other county events.
- Increase the percentage of older adults who are comfortable with technology through training and promotion.

Health

Our health care and mental health care systems must keep pace with the aging of our population.

The incidence of disability among older adults doubles every five years after the age of 65.. More than a third of adults 65 and older fall each year. Twenty to 30 percent of fall victims suffer moderate to severe injuries. Alzheimer's disease afflicts one in eight adults over age 65 and almost half of adults over age 85. The incidence of mental health needs is increasing in older adults. By 2030, nearly one in five persons over 65 will have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. Today, our regional state psychiatric hospital does not admit people over age 65 and nursing homes are reluctant to accept older adults who also have mental health needs. A regional geri-psychiatric model that includes stabilizing people in the community, increasing outreach, and purchasing inpatient beds in Northern Virginia has been developed and is now partly funded by the state. When health fails, most older men have a spouse for assistance, and most older women do not. In fact, most older women will have no relatives or family members to provide support or assistance because people who will be 85 and older in the upcoming decades will have fewer adult children than before. Staffing shortages in both health and mental health care, from professionals to direct care workers in facilities and at home – are acute. The shortage of workers is magnified by the shortage of medical faculty to train new workers.

Actions

- Increase recruitment and training of health and mental health direct service workers and faculty members through innovative partnerships in the community.
- Develop incentives such as workforce housing.
- Seek full funding by the General Assembly for the geri-psychiatric program in Northern Virginia.
- Increase multicultural and multi-lingual health and mental health staffing to meet the changing needs in our community.
- Further explore the benefits of electronic medical records.
- Advocate for improved staffing levels in assisted living to enhance care and to reduce staff turnover.

- Promote the benefits of recreation and continuing education for physical and mental health, increase affordable options, and build partnerships with community groups such as ElderHostel, and promote both public and private options.
- Build on the aging related recommendations of the recently released Governor's Health Reform Commission Report/Roadmap for Virginia's Health and the county's Long Term Care Task Force Report.

Safety and Security

Increasing consumer fraud targeted at older adults, the devastating impact of emergency situations on our most vulnerable residents, and the loss of life due to fires are frequent topics in the media and in our own homes. Between 2002 and 2004, adults 65 and over accounted for 37 percent of fire deaths in Fairfax County but comprised only 8 percent of the total population.

Actions

- Increase education about consumer fraud tactics and what older adults need to know to avoid and report these scams.
- Support an ongoing promotion of Fairfax County's emergency preparedness efforts for special populations, including older adults. These initiatives include emergency communication, transportation and sheltering plans.
- Build upon Fire and Rescue's Every Step of the Way/ Seniors Life Safety Education Program.

Service Capacity

Planning is crucial to support the increased demand for specialized services for older adults.

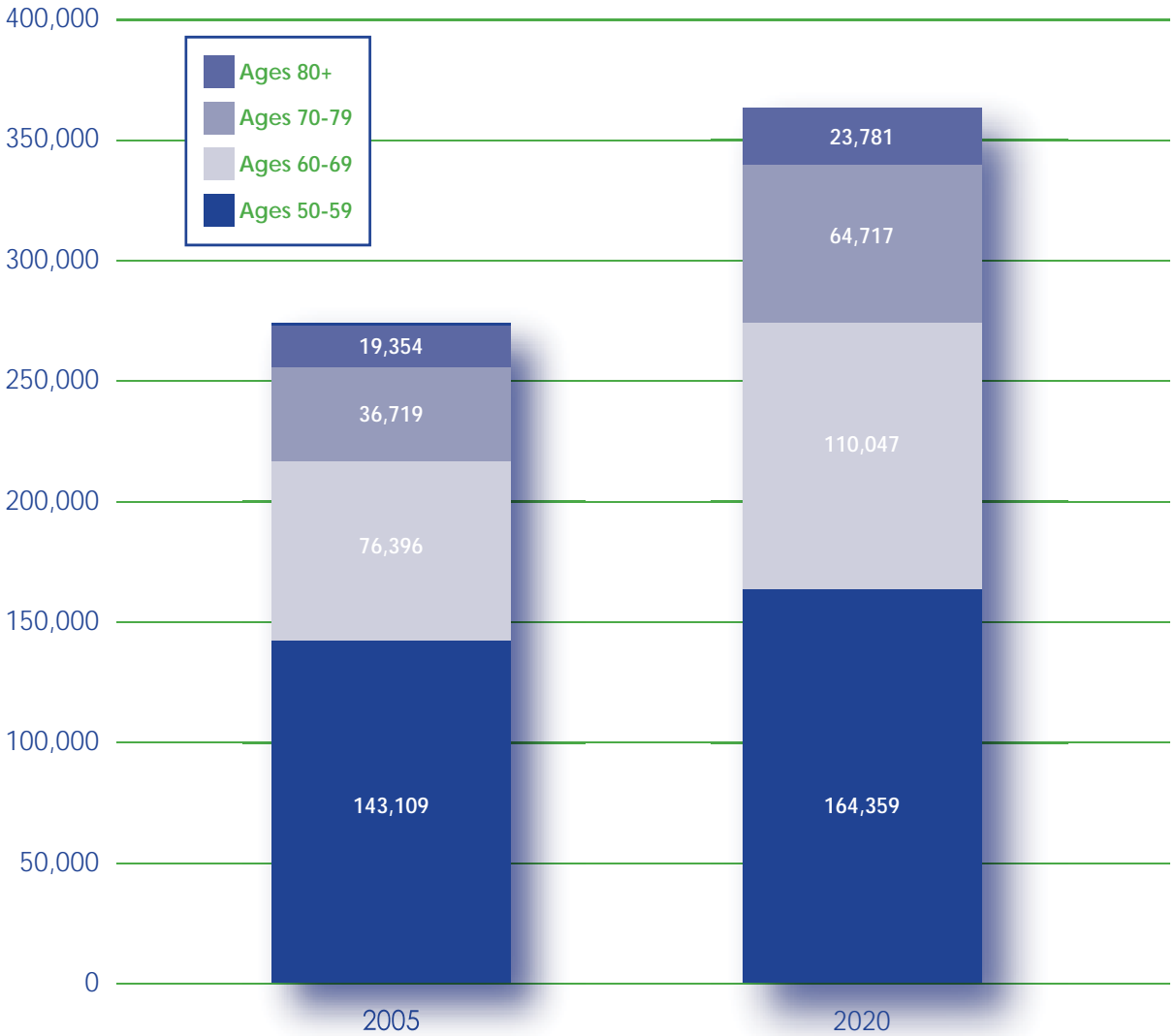
Fairfax County and its partners in the community have developed a strong range of streamlined services to meet the growing needs of older adults. Nevertheless, many services are at or nearing capacity. Even though we take care of ourselves, take care of our loved ones, and find private options, it is anticipated that the increasing numbers of older adults will strain the community safety net. Currently, Fairfax County spends less than 2 percent of its budget on specialized services for seniors (4.2 percent if school funding is excluded). Of the \$10.7 million in funds awarded by the Consolidated Community Funding Pool in 2007, about \$144,000 was targeted specifically to services for seniors. Of the \$300,000 in the Fairfax County Incentive Fund, about half of the funds are for senior focused services. The \$500,000 Care Fund, not yet awarded, will be used to leverage funding for affordable assisted living. A number of Beacon Hill Village type programs (neighborhood groups developing service networks to make life easier and increase the independence of their residents) are being developed throughout the county. We will be learning from these.

Fairfax County's approach to services is consistent with the goals of the landmark federal Older American's Act to keep older adults as independent as possible through good community planning and community involvement. In the spirit of this act, we strive to enhance the lives of our residents (not to reduce the need for services); support informal caregivers of older adults through information, education, and respite care; identify encourage, and incentivize the development of needed services within the community; and develop those services not otherwise available.

Actions

- Increase availability of seed grants through corporate partnerships for the development of needed services by non-profits or small businesses.
- Explore and promote appropriate community networking projects.

Anticipating the Future: Fairfax County Forecast for Ages 50 - 80+



The expected rate of growth in Fairfax County between 2005 and 2020:

- Age 0 - 19.....11 % increase
- Age 20 - 49.....7 % increase
- Age 50 - 69.....25 % increase
- Age 70 +58 % increase

A Sampling of Current County Activities and Plans

Responding to a request from the Board of Supervisors' Committee on Aging, county departments developed a list of more than 60 initiatives planned to address the changing demographic of an increasing older adult population. They include: programs welcoming or targeted for older adult and boomer volunteers; expanded respite options and caregiver support; multicultural outreach; a Senior Law Day; emergency planning; expanded life safety education; PACE (Program for all Inclusive Care of the Elderly); community health assessment; education about sub-prime lending practices; improved web access to Park Authority programming; increased training for key staff to identify and report elder abuse; and much more. The full compendium is available on line at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults.

Continuing the Momentum

The Board of Supervisors' Committee on Aging created this report as a guiding document for the county. The committee will continue to build on this and will discuss emerging issues. To assist them in this process, the Committee has requested an annual score card of the Action Plan and of the departments' initiatives from the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging and invites input from the community.

Current Community Options and Services

To learn more about current resources and opportunities available to older adults in Fairfax County, both public and private, go to the following Web sites:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/seniors

www.seniornavigator.org

To speak directly to an information specialist, call

703-324-7948; TTY 703-449-1186 or 711

or e-mail **dfsaaaplanning@fairfaxcounty.gov**



Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. For information call, 703-324-7948; TTY 703-449-1186. To request this information in an alternate format, call 703-324-5870; TTY 703-222-9452.