

Citizens League Regional Policy Workshop Session III: “Communities for a Lifetime”

Aging and Disability:ⁱ The elderly population of the United States is large and growing rapidly. Since disability rates increase with age, population aging will bring substantial increases in the number of disabled persons and have a significant impact on the nation’s housing needs.

It is projected that in 2050 there will be at least **one physically disabled resident in:**

- 21% of all households
- 60% of newly built single-family detached units over expected lifetimes
- 91% of newly built single-family detached units if use by visitors is accounted for

It is also projected that in 2050 there will be at least **one resident limited in self care in:**

- 7% of all households
- 25% of newly built single-family detached units over expected lifetimes
- 53% of newly built single-family detached units if use by visitors is accounted for

The high public cost of nursing home care and the civil rights of people make housing accessibility a critical issue for planners and policymakers.

Questions

1. What are the opportunities for homebuilders to develop and market products that meet our needs as a population?
2. In what way does current planning include accessibility of the housing stock?
3. How much is accessibility integrated into the design of new homes?

The Generational Housing Bubble:ⁱⁱ The 78 million baby boomers have driven up housing demand and prices for three decades since beginning to buy homes in 1970 and continuing up the housing ladder. We are coming to the end of a generational housing bubble.

- Sellers of existing homes provide 85% of the annual supply of homes sold, and seniors are the segment of the population who are net home sellers. In Minnesota, homebuyers become net sellers in the 60-64 age range. Minnesota will become a net sales state after 2031.
- The ratio of seniors to working-age residents will increase by 70% in Minnesota from 2010-2030.
- The recent housing boom has created an affordability barrier for younger generations.

The retirement of the baby boomers could signal the end of the postwar era for planning, and reverse several longstanding trends, leading decline to exceed gentrification, demand for low-density housing to diminish, and new emphasis on compact development.

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Question

What will happen when boomers begin to sell off their high-priced homes to relatively smaller and less-advantaged generations?

Mobilityⁱⁱⁱ and Travel Patterns:^{iv} In the coming decades, there will be a huge increase in both the absolute number of older people and in their percentage of the U.S. population.

- It is clear that the elderly currently do and will want to retain the ability to drive for as long as possible.
- Older people's need for activities outside the home will not drop as fast as skill levels or mobility resources, leading to a large gap between what seniors want to do and the transportation resources they have.
- No single policy program will overcome the growing access barriers older people will encounter.

Trends in travel patterns suggest that conventional transit's potential is limited to niche markets in the core of large metropolitan areas; hence transit alternatives of the future must mimic the car to some degree. Efforts to develop viable forms of paratransit have been in progress for more than 25 years. There have been two main barriers:

- Trying to serve sparse, dispersed travel demand patterns in a cost-efficient manner.
- The array of regulatory and institutional barriers that prevents jitneys, shared-ride taxis, or other privately provided paratransit services from operating within the service areas of conventional transit operators or in competition with local taxi services.

Status of Minnesota Communities for a Lifetime:^v A majority of communities (84%) have initiated some action to prepare for the aging of the population. Examples of such actions include:

- Incorporating aging components into a Comprehensive Plan,
- Creating gathering spaces for older adults,
- Attending educational sessions on the demographic shift,
- Thinking about or developing a plan,
- Conducting a needs assessment of the community, and
- Creating a task force or commission to discuss the issue.

Some have specifically addressed **senior housing** and provide lifecycle housing. Many communities are currently evaluating **senior transportation** programs and investigating methods to increase usability and efficiency. Ideas have included transporting persons throughout communities and counties and integrating transportation options for all ages.

Several communities are redeveloping "downtowns" and are increasing access to retail services. Many communities are developing a "community center" versus a senior center.

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Many communities have developed senior advisory boards, commissions or senior center boards. Communities reported working with and relying on county and local non-profit agencies as service providers. Many communities have not yet included aging components into their Comprehensive Plan. However, some communities have taken a holistic approach to their planning which is resulting in livable community characteristics.

Age Friendly Cities:^{vi}

The World Health organization through its Global Age-Friendly Cities project has identified the eight domains of an age-friendly city. They are:

- **Respect and social inclusion** - To what extent are public services, media, commercial services, faith communities and civil society respectful of the diversity of needs among older adults and willing to accommodate older adults in all aspects of society?
- **Information and communication** - To what extent are older adults aware of the diverse range of programs and services available within their community? And is information readily available, appropriately designed and delivered to meet the needs of older people?
- **Civic participation and employment** - To what extent do older people have opportunities to participate in community decision-making? And do older people have ample opportunities to contribute their experience and skills to the community in paid or unpaid work?
- **Social participation** - To what extent do older adults have opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful social networks in their neighborhoods? And do older people have ample opportunities to participate fully in their preferred events and activities?
- **Housing** - To what extent do older people have housing that is safe and affordable and that allows them to stay independent as their needs change?
- **Transportation** - Do older people have ample opportunity to travel (conveniently and safely) wherever they want to go in the community?
- **Public spaces** - To what extent does the natural and built environment help older people get around easily and safely in the community, and encourage active community participation?
- **Community support and health services** - To what extent do older people have access to the social and health services they need to stay healthy and independent?

ⁱ **Aging and Disability: Implications for the Housing Industry and Housing Policy in the United States**, Stanley K. Smith, Stefan Rayer, and Eleanor A. Smith

ⁱⁱ **Aging Baby Boomers and the Generational Housing Bubble: Foresight and Mitigation of an Epic Transition**, Dowell Myers and SungHo Ryu

ⁱⁱⁱ **Mobility of the Elderly: Good News and Bad News**, Sandra Rosenbloom, The Drachman Institute, University of Arizona, Tucson

^{iv} **Land Use and Travel Patterns Among the Elderly**, Genevieve Giuliano, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

^v **Communities for a Lifetime Survey Findings**, The Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging

^{vi} **Toward an Age-Friendly New York City**, The New York Academy of Medicine

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