



WHAT PLANNERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AGING FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

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An aging population will be one of the most important changes affecting communities over the next decades. By 2030, nearly 20 percent of the population in the Twin Cities Metro area will be over age 65. Addressing that shift and the societal impacts through comprehensive planning can create environments that work better for everyone.

Planners need to know that:

- Planning for the change in demographics provides an opportunity to create communities that are functional for all residents. Everyone benefits from communities that are livable, age-friendly, and work well for residents whether they are 8, or 80. “Us versus them” thinking is a roadblock to successful planning.
- Older people are assets. For example, many cultures in Ramsey County recognize the worth and value of elders in their communities. Older people mentor, serve in faith communities, provide child care, share knowledge and more.
- The characteristics of the baby-boom generation will drive societal shifts. Baby boomers want to live in their homes longer and remain independent. They are living, working and staying active longer, while they have less wealth and family support than previous generations. Those are trends that will continue with future age groups.

Strategies for planners:

- Create an inclusive design and decision-making process. Make decisions based on the idea “Nothing about me without me.” Engage older people in planning environments that promote healthy aging. Collaborate with community partners. This will increase buy-in and help develop creative solutions.
- Incorporate health and well-being into all policies with a specific focus on healthy aging. Age-friendly environments leverage the contributions of older people, which can reduce the burden on governments.
- Design to eliminate inequities. All individuals deserve access to healthy built and natural environments that provide the opportunity to live to their fullest potential regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, income, age, or location. Planning works best with the understanding that “we all do better, when we all do better.” Any planning approach without that lens will reproduce and enforce disparities. It will further burden populations that have been marginalized, including recent immigrants, those who have lower incomes, are older and/or less educated. Development that doesn’t address inequalities disregards the contributions of millions of people.
- Plan options for people with a wide variety of health and well-being concerns and physical abilities. A rise in chronic illnesses, including dementia, is driving an increased need for services.
- Learn about and influence policies that affect an aging population. Transportation, housing, public space, and other elements of design need to be considered to encourage healthy aging; new solutions and options are required.

The historic demographic change of the baby-boom generation will challenge community planning and provide opportunities for communities to become even better places for everyone to live, work and thrive. To create successful, sustainable communities, all elements of planning will need to evolve to encourage healthy aging. Doing



