



Center for Civic Partnerships

California Healthy Cities and Communities

Cities Planning Today for Aging Well Tomorrow

“Doing the garden, digging the weeds, who could ask for more?”

The famous song “When I’m Sixty Four” released in 1967 by the Beatles and written by a sixteen-year-old Paul McCartney was intended as a love serenade. In 2010, considering dwindling fiscal resources and spiraling health care costs, these lyrics may instead elicit feelings of deep anxiety about growing older in a society where youthfulness is treasured and being old is associated only with negative images. We’ve all read the headlines, looked at the statistical charts, listened to the experts and it’s true, more people are, in fact, getting old. And while it may be the last thing on our minds (possibly due to denial or the latest fiscal crisis?), it must be the first on the “to do” lists as civic leaders – specifically planning for aging well in our communities. The benefits, both in terms of enhanced quality of community life, and also from an economic standpoint, are substantial.

Over the past several years, the Center for Civic Partnerships has embarked on research and development projects that have culminated in the production of several resources, starting with the Fall 2002 issue of *Connections* announcing “Baby Boomers Shape the New Older California,” and then publishing the policy brief, *Healthy Aging: Perspective on Aging Well in*

2005. Continuing with the “Healthy Aging in Community” series of articles featured in *Connections* over the past several years and adding the latest resource *Aging Well in Communities: A Toolkit for Planning, Engagement & Action* which was published online in April 2010. The Toolkit is designed to provide a practical, realistic approach to community-based planning for local government, and their partners, such as resident groups, community advocates and others. In order for a city or community to effectively plan, meaningfully engage residents and productively act, a combination of collaborative steps and activities are necessary. The Toolkit provides a comprehensive review of these crucial steps.

Community Collaboration – It Pays

To start, the Toolkit’s *Aging Well in Communities: An Overview* guide is a “must read” before moving on to other sections in the Toolkit. As companion documents to the planning overview, the Toolkit includes additional guides, case studies and resources that exemplify activities that cities and their partners may conduct in order to create a community where older residents feel comfortable living now and into the future.

A recent article in *Public Management* magazine highlighted the economic value of “attracting” retirees, and



Toolkit outlines crucial planning steps needed for successful action.

describes the potential income of “25 retiree households, having an average household annual spending of \$40,000/year” could result in an estimated \$1 million in revenue annually, or “an economic development strategy with a high rate

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of return” (Smith, April 2009). From a civic involvement/human resources perspective, older retirees are excellent candidates for planning commissions and local government advisory boards, bringing years of experience and skills to community development projects.

Planning

When should a community begin the planning process? Given that the year of 2011 ushers in the first wave of “Baby Boomers” (those born between 1946 and 1964) turning 65 years old...the answer to this question is yesterday! According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the state’s population projections reflect that by 2030, one out of five Californians will be 65 years old or older (PPIC, July 2006).

The first major step in planning is the recruitment and development of the planning committee. Most important - the planning committee is a diverse group of individuals comprised of local government, residents and representatives of a broad array of stakeholder agencies and organizations unique to the community. This is the group that will provide oversight and monitor the planning process.

The planning committee will be an integral part of the next step; researching and reviewing secondary data such as population estimates, income levels, ethnic composition and health indicators. Once a local profile is developed reflecting the older adult resident population, specifically those aged 46 to 64 years old, it is time to find out more.

The Toolkit features Conducting Aging Well Resident Surveys as well as information on specialized resources which offer guidance and easy-to-access information on how to proceed with data gathering, where to find data and also about connecting with residents – a crucial activity.

Ideally, aging well planning will coincide with local general planning activities because ultimately the work with the community will inform the overall general planning and updating processes, especially in housing, land use and circulation.

Engagement

It is imperative to find out more about older residents by going to the source. A resident survey is an excellent initial step to find out what residents have in mind about the future, including if they are planning to stay and age-in-place. Asking “now and when” questions are a good way to elicit key quantitative, measureable information especially in the areas of housing, transportation and mobility.

In addition to the Conducting Aging Well Resident Surveys guide, the Toolkit also features two companion publications, Conducting Aging Well Public Forums and Conducting Aging Well Focus Groups both of which are activities that will add qualitative community feedback to the planning process. Some communities convene public forums before conducting a resident survey, while others conduct the resident survey first in order to obtain a baseline of community-level data and inform the public forum process. Focus groups are usually a final activity since they require more concentrated time and outside facilitation expertise.

Action

By taking the critical steps described earlier – communication and engagement with residents is now established and open. The time has arrived to consider the valuable feedback and with the planning committee at the helm, begin the work of keeping the community informed and connected to the process.

Help with the Resident Survey

The Center worked closely with survey experts at Scantron, Inc. to develop a series of questions that will elicit reliable feedback from residents having to do with transportation, housing and other key future planning issues. Please contact Center staff at (916) 646-8680 if interested in learning more about this unique resource.


General Plan Promotes Livability

Through the general planning process, cities determine future action on land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space and safety.

Decisions regarding zoning, development and neighborhood design will contribute to the following outcomes that are conducive to aging well in the community:

- enhanced pedestrian/bicycle travel options
- promotion of physical activity and recreation
- fewer vehicle miles traveled (lowering greenhouse gas emissions)
- increased social opportunities for residents
- better access to transit, services and retail
- environment that fosters civic engagement

“Hours are like diamonds, don’t let them waste.”

No one can deny that the recent years’ worldwide events have generated difficult challenges and unique demands on local government. In spite of these unprecedented times, using the Toolkit to plan in collaboration with aging residents and other partners will result in innumerable community benefits for residents of all ages. 

California Healthy Cities and Communities Speakers' Forum

On April 22, 2010 the California Healthy Cities and Communities Program held its first ever speakers' forum highlighting the work of Jason Corburn, Ph.D., M.C.P., Associate Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. The forum allowed for greater interaction between speakers and audience members in a more personal setting.

Dr. Corburn discussed his work bridging planning and public health and highlighted his new book *Toward the Healthy City: People, Places, and the Politics of Urban Planning*. His research and practice focuses on the connections between city planning, public participation and population health in urban areas across the United States and in cities around the world.

“We need to pay more attention to history... Healthy Cities, Healthy Communities, Healthy Places is not a new concept...we are reinventing it today but it comes out of 100 plus years of work in public health and planning.”


Jason Corburn, Ph.D., MCP

Following Dr. Corburn's presentation was a reaction panel including Dr. Rajiv Bhatia, Director of Occupational and Environmental Health, San Francisco Department of Public Health; Dr. Jeff Ritterman, Vice Mayor, City of Richmond, CA; Joan Twiss, Executive Director, Center for Civic Partnerships, Public Health Institute; and Diane Aranda, Program Manager for Richmond, The California Endowment (moderator).



Reaction panel at CHCC speakers' forum. From L-R: Rajiv Bhatia, Jeff Ritterman, Joan Twiss, Jason Corburn, and Diane Aranda.

Panelist described their work and how it related not only to Dr. Corburn's work but to the greater topic of moving toward a healthy city. Audience participation was encouraged throughout the reaction panel presentation and a networking lunch allowed for more in-depth conversations for all those who attended the event.

You can listen to the entire forum on the Center's website: http://www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/services/california_healthy_cities.htm 

The five main points Dr. Corburn emphasized were:

1. Improve community conditions and care;
2. Policy history informs the present;
3. New partnerships are essential;
4. A new evidence base – where science serves the cumulative health needs of urban populations; and
5. A healthy city is not a destination, but is on-going, requiring transparent monitoring and meaningful participation and democratic practices.


Congratulations El Monte!

The City of El Monte, incorporated in 1912, is the 10th largest city in Los Angeles County and the “hub” of the San Gabriel Valley located at the intersection of two major freeways. With a dense urban environment and physical challenges related to the bifurcation of the community by a major interstate and rail corridor, El Monte has recently embarked on several major initiatives that build on the strengths of its diverse population to create a healthy community.



City of El Monte staff (from L-R): Steve Schuster, Minh Thai, Rene Bobadilla, Marian Last, Carl Brown, Alex Chan, Arpine Shakhbandaryan and Deborah Moraza.

In August 2009, El Monte became the newest California Healthy City! El Monte received a grant from the California Healthy Cities and Communities (CHCC) Program, supported by the California Department of Public Health and administered by the Center for Civic Partnerships, to increase physical activity and encourage use of the newly improved walking path by organizing walking clubs targeted at Latino adults and older adults (55+ years old).

Trained walking guides facilitate and support participants' efforts to increase their level of physical activity and improve their health. Nutrition education, cooking classes and defense lesson components enhance the walking clubs and sustain participation rates. Watch for updates in upcoming issues. 

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California Healthy Cities and Communities (CHCC) assists cities and communities with developing, implementing and evaluating inclusionary, community-driven programs, policies and plans, which address environmental, social and economic determinants of health. CHCC advocates a broad definition of health: a shared vision; widespread community participation; system reform; collaborative partnerships; engaging local assets; and a means to measure progress and base improvements upon results.

Executive Editor	Editor	Guest Writer	Designer
Joan Twiss	Nicole Hara	Clare Smith	Jade Chin

California Healthy Cities and Communities
Tel: 916/646-8680 Fax: 916/646-8660
Email: chcc@civicpartnerships.org

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Connections

Center for Civic Partnerships
California Healthy Cities and Communities
1851 Heritage Lane, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95815



A Center of the Public Health Institute

Events & Resources

Events

Special Complimentary Webinar for Planning and Community Services (staff and commissioners) and Redevelopment Officials

Tuesday, July 13, 2010
9:30 - 10:30 a.m. PST

Don't miss this overview of the Center's latest resource, *Aging Well in Communities: A Toolkit for Planning, Engagement & Action*. Copies of an abbreviated version plus CD (containing all the components) were mailed to cities in May. Online versions are accessible at <http://www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/services/CHCC/aging-well.htm>

Sessions will include an overview of this turn-key set of resources and an opportunity for exchange with colleagues around the state.

To register, please visit:
<https://cc.readytalk.com/r/fkvuqwk8unmg>

Resources

The Power of Collaborative Solutions: Six Principles and Effective Tools for Building Healthy Communities by Tom Wolff. For more information, please visit: <http://www.tomwolff.com/healthy-communities-tools-and-resources.html>

Healthy Community Design - A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention illustrates the importance of considering public health factors such as physical activity, respiratory and mental health, social equity, and healthy aging when creating the built environment. For more information visit: http://www.cdc.gov/healthypaces/healthy_comm_design.htm

Climate Change Indicators in the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) This report presents 24 indicators, each describing trends related to the causes and effects of climate change. EPA will use these indicators to collect data and generate analyses to monitor the effects/impacts of climate change in the United

States, assist decision-makers on how to best use policymaking and program resources, and assist EPA in evaluating the success of their climate change efforts. For more information, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/indicators.html>

Web Sties

Healthy Counties Database - National Association of Counties (NACo)

This database allows you to search for model policies, programs and initiatives that counties nationwide have enacted to promote wellness and prevent childhood obesity. http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=New_Technical_Assistance&Template=/cfiles/healthycounties/search.cfm

Food Environment Atlas-United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS)

The Food Environment Atlas is an interactive tool that provides a spatial overview of a community's ability to access healthy food and its success in doing so. <http://maps.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/>