

A Healthy Community PERSPECTIVE ON AGING WELL

New Ideas for an Older California



CALIFORNIA is about to undergo an unprecedented change. It will affect every aspect of community life—from the jobs we hold to the public transportation we use to the neighborhoods we live in. In a sweeping demographic transformation, the over-65 population will skyrocket over the next 25 years.

While this phenomenon will occur across the U.S., California cities will feel unique pressures. Already home to more older adults than any other state in the nation, California will see its 65-plus population more than double in the next 25 years, from 3.5 million in 2000 (10.6 percent of the state’s population) to 8.2 million in 2030 (17.8 percent).¹

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Cities and other units of local government, as well as nonprofits and the business sector, need to start planning and allocating resources now to avert more costly remedial measures in the future.

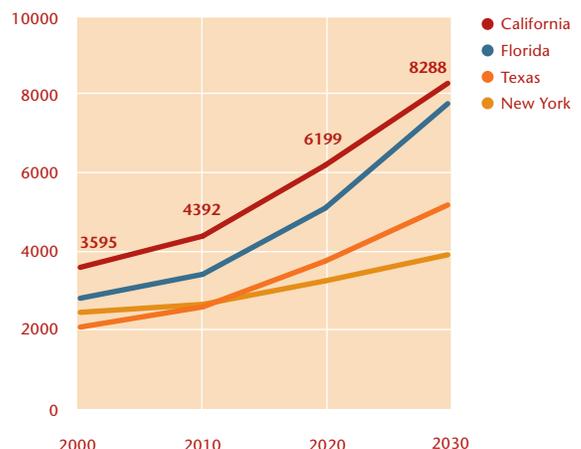
In the past four decades, great progress has been made in the economic situation of California’s older population. While nearly 30 percent of Americans over retirement age lived below the poverty level in the 1960s, today that number

has dropped to 10.5 percent² nationwide—and just 8.1 percent³ for California, where older adults have a higher income than in other states.⁴ While much remains to be done, today’s residents over 65 are less likely to live in poverty than any other age group.⁵

But maintaining—let alone accelerating—this progress will become increasingly difficult in the face of current economic trends. Skyrocketing housing and healthcare costs will outpace Social Security increases at the same time that fewer retirees receive traditional pensions.⁶

“Cities and their partners—both public and private—will really need to rethink how they achieve their mission,” says Dr. Laverne Joseph, President and CEO of Retirement Housing Foundation, which manages Angelus Plaza, the country’s largest low-income housing development for older adults. “A house-to-house delivery of services is not efficient—and may not even be doable.”

States with the Largest Projection of Older Adults, Ages 65+ Population in Thousands



Source: www.census.gov/population/projections/SummaryTabB1.xls



Fortunately, as the aging population presents new challenges to local governments, it also offers a wealth of new resources and opportunities. Many older people will leave longtime careers and look for more flexible and more rewarding work. With the right workforce training and recruiting tactics, local governments and businesses can reap the talents of this experienced labor pool. Governments and nonprofits can also benefit as workers retire and turn to volunteer activities. Already, volunteer work by Americans age 55 and older contributes more than \$160 billion to the economy.⁷ By planning *now*, communities can be better prepared to tap into this valuable pool of wisdom and energy.

THE FUTURE OF AGING

Older adults in the coming years will be very different than their predecessors, forcing policymakers and communities to rethink their assumptions about the needs of the elderly. If current trends hold true:

- Older adults will be healthier and live longer than ever before.⁸ People over age 85 will represent the fastest growing segment of the population. This sector is poised to grow by a whopping 205 percent by 2040.⁹
- Older people, particularly women, will find themselves continuing to provide care for their much older parents even as they themselves age and move to fixed incomes.¹⁰ At the same time, a growing number of grandparents will be caring for their grandchildren.¹¹ These caregivers will need new and better services to help them support their family members.
- As traditional pensions disappear, more older people will rely on their savings plus Social Security for retirement—forcing more workers to seek flexible, part-time jobs to supplement their income once they retire from full-time careers. While workers over 55 now represent 13 percent of the U.S. workforce, they will make up 17 percent of the workforce by 2010 and 19 percent by 2050.¹²

- Older adults will increasingly live on their own due to a higher number of divorced and never-married people in the population. These people will need new ways to stay engaged and involved with social networks to enhance their health and well-being.
- The older population will become more diverse, with increasing percentages from Hispanic and Asian American groups. While today's older people are primarily white (70%), this group will be in the minority by 2040.¹³ By 2050, Hispanics will become the largest older ethnic group.¹⁴
- Older adults will own more homes than ever,¹⁵ with homeownership tripling to 9 million in 2050. Meanwhile, older people will be less likely to live in nursing homes,¹⁶ posing a demand for new in-home services.
- Older adults will favor urban areas as well as the suburbs. The L.A. Basin and the San Francisco Bay Area are already home to about two-thirds of the state's older population, a trend that is expected to continue. But the aging trend will affect every county. Thirty-eight counties, some rural, some suburban and some urban, will see their older population grow by more than 150 percent.¹⁷
- Already the most likely group of Californians to vote and donate money to political causes,¹⁸ older adults will have more impact than ever on local, regional and statewide elections and policies. In addition, if the socio-demographic profile of the Baby Boomers remains consistent, this group will be more outspoken than their predecessors—and highly effective at advocating for change.



SQUEEZED FROM BOTH SIDES

While the over-50 population explodes, California will also see its younger population grow, with the number of children increasing faster than the number of adults ages 20-50.¹⁹

“Unlike the rest of the country, California will be in the unenviable position of providing services to a population that is becoming concentrated at both ends of the age spectrum,” wrote Sonya M. Tafoya and Hans P. Johnson in *California Counts: Population Trends and Profiles* in November 2000.

As the growth of older and younger populations outpace the growth of working-age adults, there will be fewer taxpayers to support the retired population. In 2036, there will be roughly half as many working-age adults to support each person 65 or older as there are now.²⁰

The sheer number of older adults and their changing needs, combined with the demand for culturally relevant services to a younger, more diverse population, will put pressure on local officials to balance the needs of two very different constituencies.

LOOKING AHEAD

Preparing for the age explosion doesn't just mean adding a few senior centers. Local governments will need to revisit all planning processes, especially general and capital improvement plans, in light of the graying of California. Resource allocations in the general fund or redevelopment dollars will need to reflect the aging population. Progressive leaders will need to look both internally and externally for ways to finance innovative programs and services.

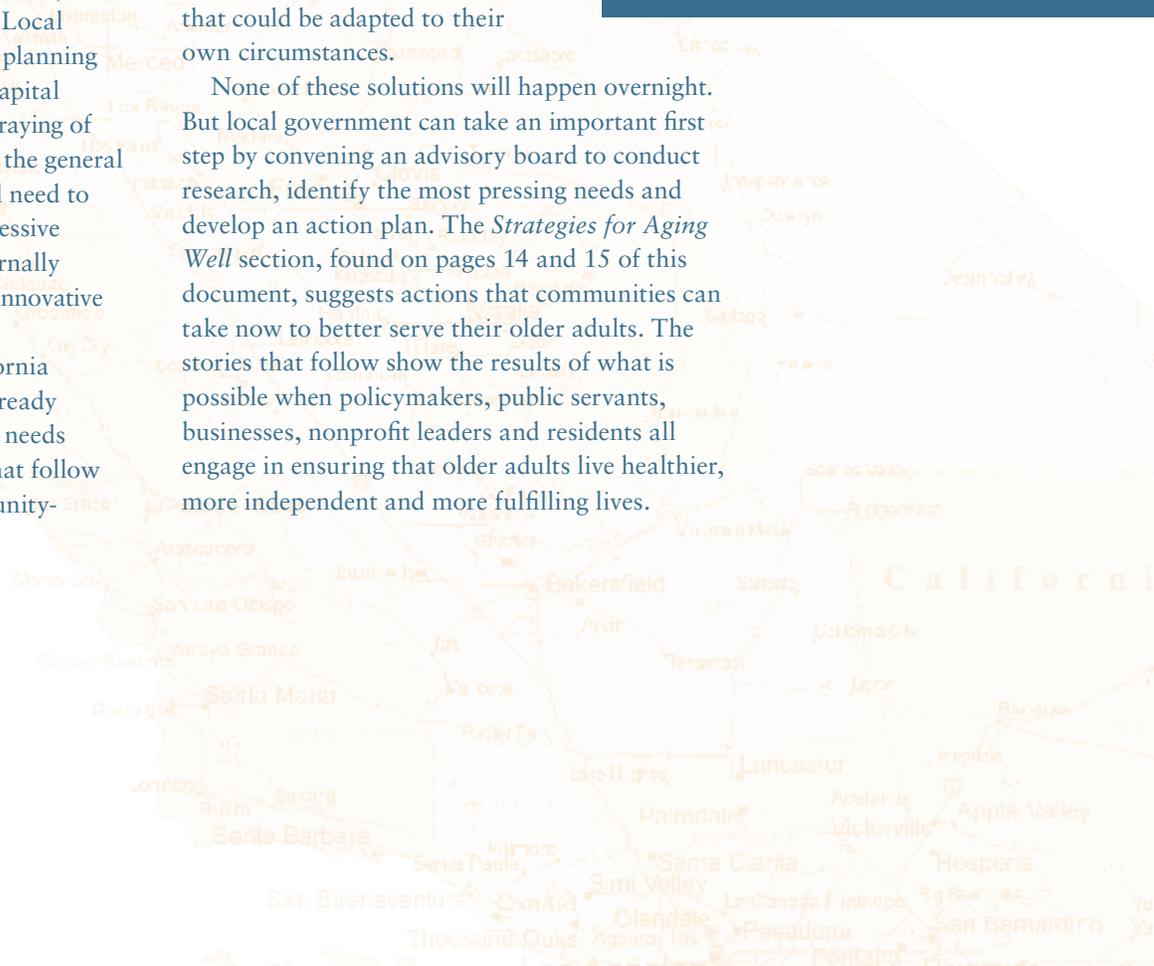
Fortunately, cities around California and throughout the country are already finding ways to meet the changing needs of older adults. The case studies that follow offer inspiring examples of community-based programs.



Not every case study is appropriate for every city. Each community must consider its own unique needs, resources and vision for the future. Many of these examples come from large cities which are already home to substantial numbers of older adults. However, the dramatic growth of the older population will impact communities of every size, and cities both large and small will need to study promising practices that could be adapted to their own circumstances.

None of these solutions will happen overnight. But local government can take an important first step by convening an advisory board to conduct research, identify the most pressing needs and develop an action plan. The *Strategies for Aging Well* section, found on pages 14 and 15 of this document, suggests actions that communities can take now to better serve their older adults. The stories that follow show the results of what is possible when policymakers, public servants, businesses, nonprofit leaders and residents all engage in ensuring that older adults live healthier, more independent and more fulfilling lives.

The *Strategies for Aging Well* section, found on pages 14 and 15 of this document suggests actions that communities can take now to better serve their older adults.



Not only do onsite services make life easier for residents but it provides an easier, centralized way to serve older adults.

When Eva Plasencio moved into Angelus Plaza, she didn't realize she was moving into a whole new phase of life.

For 30 years, Eva had worked as a hairdresser in the Silver Lake area of Los Angeles. Shortly after she retired, her husband died and she was suddenly unable to afford her own home. Supported only by Social Security, she lived with one relative after another until her name came up on the waiting list for Angelus Plaza, the largest affordable senior housing development in the nation.

For Eva, 81, Angelus Plaza provided far more than a pleasant, affordable apartment. Once shy and retiring, Eva now spends her days in a flurry of activities. On a typical day, Eva might gather signatures for her state senator, attend a meeting of the Congress of California Seniors or serve lunch at the on-site senior nutrition program.

"I'm not the same person I was before I retired," she says. "All the activities have made me grow."

Angelus Plaza is home to some 1,300 low-income older adults like Eva. With an average age of 78, most residents pay about \$260 to live in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, within walking distance of the new Disney Hall, the Museum of Contemporary Art and numerous other amenities. The success of Angelus Plaza can be seen in its waiting list (some 1700 people vie for about 100 vacancies a year), and more importantly, in the vibrant, active lives of residents like Eva.

"What made Angelus Plaza a success from the beginning is the great support that the City of Los Angeles and the Community Redevelopment Agency put into it," says Dr. Laverne Joseph, President and CEO of Retirement Housing Foundation, which built and manages Angelus Plaza.

The complex, which opened in 1981 with 761 apartments, was the product of a close collaboration between city, federal and nonprofit entities. The City of Los Angeles donated the land through its Redevelopment Agency/Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project, which also provided a \$10 million loan for initial site work (the loan has since been repaid). The City Housing Authority issued tax-exempt bonds to finance construction; the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided Section 8 subsidies; and Retirement Housing Foundation built the initial three residential towers and a five story multi-purpose senior center. HUD provided mortgage insurance and the City Housing Authority issued more tax exempt bonds to finance an additional 332 apartments in a fourth residential tower which opened in 1982.

On the open market, an apartment like Eva's in the historic Bunker Hill district would cost nearly \$1,000 a month. But Angelus Plaza residents—who must be at least 62 or handicapped or disabled to qualify—pay no more than 30 percent of their income in rent. HUD Section 8 subsidies make up the difference.

While the subsidies ensure decent housing for residents, it takes more than affordable apartments to foster a thriving community.

"What makes Angelus Plaza a success today is its ability to serve not only residents but seniors throughout downtown," says Dr. Joseph.



The centerpiece for that service is the Angelus Plaza Senior Activity Center, which serves all older adults in the surrounding community. The five-story Center includes a 220-person dining room managed by volunteers like Eva, as well as a library, an auditorium and meeting rooms. The weekly calendar includes dozens of activities, from Filipino folk dancing to computer classes. Because Angelus Plaza residents are highly diverse (75 percent are Asian, 14 percent Latino, 9 percent Caucasian and 4 percent African-American), many activities take place in languages other than English. On a stroll through the complex, you might hear Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Korean and Tagalog.

Thanks to an innovative arrangement, the Center also serves as a one-stop shop for essential services that help residents live independently. By providing space at little or no cost to other nonprofits, the Center can offer an onsite health clinic that accepts Medicare and MediCal, a senior nutrition and case management program, a job training center, an advocacy program for older adults in assisted living facilities, and a placement center for volunteer activities such as the Foster Grandparent Program. In 2004-2005, such services were used 171,000 times by residents and 106,000 times by non-resident members of the community.

Not only do onsite services make life easier for residents—especially for the more than 50 percent of residents who are considered frail or who use an assistive device—but it provides an easier, centralized way to serve older adults. “You can’t find enough care workers to meet the needs of the existing senior population. This is a much more efficient way to deliver services,” says Dr. Joseph.

Managing a project of this size takes whole-hearted support from community stakeholders. A local advisory council, which meets quarterly, includes residents, city and state officials, law enforcement, health organizations and local businesses. RHF provides day-to-day management of Angelus Plaza, drawing on its experience with older adult housing in 149 communities across the country. As a faith-based, nonprofit and mission-driven organization, RHF places particular emphasis on improving the quality of life for their residents.

“I’m much more involved with politics and volunteer work than I ever would have imagined,” says Eva. “I never dreamed that I would be so happy in my retirement.”

For more information: www.rhf.org

TAKE THE FIRST STEP

**Contra Costa County, California:
For Every Generation**

For Every Generation (www.foreverygeneration.org) is a nine-month countywide planning process involving 400 diverse stakeholders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors in Contra Costa County, CA, where more than 50 percent of residents are Baby Boomers.

Cleveland, Ohio: Successful Aging Initiative

In 2002, the Cleveland Foundation launched the Successful Aging Initiative: (www.successfulaging.org), a three-year public awareness campaign based on surveys, interviews and focus groups. As a result of its research, the foundation piloted community-based initiatives to develop six elder-friendly communities and life-long learning centers.

There's something special on the menu: dozens of fun, educational activities, from line dancing and yoga to online genealogy classes.

Betty Shipan of Chicago considers herself too young for senior centers. "I've been to a traditional center, but even though I'm 74, it felt a little bit too senior," she says.

That's why she loves a little café around the corner where she spends many of her mornings. Appropriately dubbed "Mather's—More Than a Café," the spacious, colorful restaurant attracts patrons of all ages. But for the 55-plus crowd, there's something special on the menu: dozens of fun, educational activities, from line dancing and yoga to online genealogy classes.

The café that Betty frequents is one of four in the Chicago area. Run by Mather LifeWays, an Evanston, Illinois-based nonprofit dedicated to helping people age well, the cafés are reinventing the traditional senior center and providing an inspiring new model of neighborhood-based wellness for older adults.

"We wanted to design a place that didn't feel like it was targeting any specific age," says Carla Windhorst, Vice President of community initiatives for Mather LifeWays. "We asked what would draw people together, and we realized food is a great social bond. So we designed the café model around a restaurant open to everybody."

The first of four cafés opened in 2000, the most recent in 2004. With large windows, open layout and vibrant color schemes, the cafés call to mind an upscale Starbucks or a Wolfgang Puck restaurant. Designed to serve older adults within a two-mile radius, each café draws between 2,000 – 5,000 older adults a year—as well as many younger people who stop in for a sandwich or coffee. Ethnicity varies depending on neighborhood. The café on Chicago's South Side, for example, draws a mainly African-American clientele. All four cafés target middle-to-lower income older adults.

"There are already some safety nets for people with very low incomes, so we intentionally targeted an economic level not addressed by any kind of service," Windhorst says.

Placing the cafés in pedestrian districts and seeking to serve a small geographic area cuts down on transportation problems for customers, many of whom arrive on foot or via public transportation. In fact, the first café didn't include any parking spaces at all. However, once the staff discovered that many customers wanted to drive, subsequent café planning included convenient parking spots.

The retail model helps customers feel empowered, while generating revenue to help sustain the four cafés. Although meals are inexpensive (from \$2-7) and activities are even more so (\$1-3 for exercise classes), these fees fund 20-40% of the cafés' costs. The balance is provided by Mather LifeWays.

Smaller than traditional senior centers, the cafés are efficient to operate, requiring just five staff members each, including a manager who helps with program activities and a receptionist to welcome visitors. Volunteers like Betty Shipan pitch in to help organize field trips to Chicago museums, service projects with local schools and other activities.

The café concept has been so successful that more traditional centers are interested in the model too. Mather LifeWays recently partnered with a large new senior center that will incorporate a similarly styled café.

One of the secrets to the cafés' success, Windhorst says, is close ties to the community. "The key ingredient is being there in the community six to eight months prior to opening, to work with community organizations and churches, to do interest surveys to find out what people would like there, and to develop leaders to get the word out," she says. "So by the time you open your doors, you're a partner in the community. People already know you and are all lined up to come in."

By serving as a neighborhood hub, the cafés offer a valuable outlet for information and services for older adults. For example, the City of Chicago has included the cafés in two of its programs for older adults—a home renovation program and a roommate-matching service; and the State of Illinois has used the café setting to launch sign-up programs for Medicare D. "We've worked closely with elected officials and they've been very supportive," says Windhorst.

The cafés have attracted so much interest from other regions that Mather LifeWays is now working to replicate the program. "It's so nice for people my age to have a place to go," says Betty. "I hate to see anybody in retirement who's not enjoying life."

For more information: www.matherlifeways.com



The program has been an enormous success—for kids and adults alike.

As director of the Westminster Senior Center, Betty Goyne watched young school-children walk by the center on their way home from school. Most lived in a nearby apartment complex known for its high crime rate. Many were children of Vietnamese or Mexican immigrants.

"I looked around and realized there wasn't much happening at the senior center in the afternoon," says Goyne. She had an idea. Why not invite the children to the center for homework help? Better yet, why not pay some of the low-income elders for their time?

"We really started small," she recalls. "But it was an idea whose time had come, because it filled so many needs."

That was 1992. Today, the program—called Project S.H.U.E. (for Safety, Health, Understanding and Education)—is still going strong, with 11 paid employees, plus 20 or so volunteers working with about 50 kids Monday through Thursday. More than 500 children have been through the program, and many of those have become leaders in their schools and gone on to college.

Early on, Goyne decided that at least some of the elder volunteers should be paid. "I realized if we hired low-income seniors, it could really help them meet their financial needs," she says. Plus, she wanted to ensure that children saw the same faces all week—and she knew that most unpaid volunteers wouldn't come every single day. She sought out elders who spoke Vietnamese or Spanish who could teach the children in their native languages.

"Some of these elders had never worked outside of their homes or had not been able to obtain employment in America," Goyne says. For these older adults, the program boosted their self-esteem while providing valuable work experience and increasing their income—something Goyne sees as increasingly important to the aging population.

In order to pay the tutors, Goyne applied for grants from public and private institutions. She won support from the City of Westminster, which provides community development block grants of \$10,000-\$20,000 every year, plus two meeting sites with free maintenance and utilities. Hitachi Corporation was another early supporter, providing an \$80,000 grant over three years. Current donors include Soroptimist International of Westminster, the Westminster Senior Center Foundation and several local businesses. The program's current budget is \$70,000.

The program has been an enormous success—for kids and adults alike.

"I'm impressed with how much material the kids cover through Project SHUE," says Pete Vella, 74, a retired computer consultant and volunteer. On a typical afternoon, Vella will work with a small group of third-graders, helping them memorize multiplication tables or learn the parts of speech. On some days, the program sends donated food or clothing home with parents. On other days, they have games or holiday celebrations.

"Project SHUE isn't just a homework place, it's a fun place," Vella says.

For more information: Greta Jameson, GMJameson@CI.WESTMINSTER.CA.US

WORKING IN RETIREMENT

Senior Employment Services

Owners of a startup online business in the New York area needed customer service operators. Instead of looking overseas, managers turned to an underused labor market right here in the U.S.: older workers.

"They told me what they wanted and I said, 'You don't have to go too far for that,'" says Maria Serrano, Director of Senior Employment Services for the New York City Department for the Aging. Her office already offered a 10-week customer service training program. She added an online service unit to the program, and before long, the warehouse had filled all its openings. "Most of the people they hired were mature workers we had trained," she says.

Success stories like this aren't unusual in Serrano's office. The program trains and helps find jobs for some 800 low-income older workers every year. While the program has been in place for 25 years, its focus has shifted from community service placements to job training as demand for older adult employment has grown.

The office, funded by the National Council on Aging and the State Office of Aging, helps older adults find and apply for jobs, but also offers three different 8-10 week training programs—customer service, computer skills or personal care, where workers learn to provide assistance to homebound or disabled people. Workers can also opt for on-the-job training at a community service or public agency.



"So many seniors planning to retire in their 50's or 60's instead find that they're out looking for a job. It's emotionally draining. I see it in their faces when they come in," says Serrano.

Most of Serrano's clients fall under the federal Senior Community Service Employment Program (known as Title V), which subsidizes employment for low-income older adults. But the secret to the program's success, she says, is getting the message out to employers and workers alike.

"We promote the benefits of the mature worker. We call a lot of employers, send them literature and invite them over to see our programs," says Serrano. "Mature workers are responsible. They really want to work and offer their experience. They're very excited when they learn a new skill. "Selling" them is not very difficult. More and more employers are willing to try them out."

Her office also works hard spreading the word. A community coordinator makes regular visits to each part of the city, visiting senior centers, community centers or other programs that reach out to older adults.

"Our commissioner is committed to promoting opportunities for older people to share their leadership, knowledge and skills," she says. "What better place to do this than in the work environment."

For more information: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/employ.html>

“It changed the dynamics of downtown by cleaning up a beautiful historic hotel and making the downtown a more viable place to live.”



The City of Redding had a problem. The glory days of the beautiful Hotel Redding, built in 1927, had long since passed. By the late 90s, the building had converted to single-room occupancy and become a magnet for drugs and crime. Even worse, the hotel was smack in the middle of downtown Redding, which several organizations were struggling to transform into a vibrant civic center for the city’s 88,000 residents. And the hotel was right across the street from the historic Cascade Theater, a stately restored cinema that served as the centerpiece of the downtown revitalization effort.

“Everyone knew it was a problem, but no one was really sure what to do about it,” says Shawn Tillman, Senior Project Coordinator of the Redding Redevelopment Agency.

Then Willie Smith came along. The manager of two successful housing ventures for low-income older adults in town, she’d visited the Hotel Redding and been appalled by the conditions. “It was deplorable,” she says. “There were drugs, prostitution, mice, rats, cockroaches, you name it.”

Smith began a campaign to transform the Hotel Redding into a housing facility for low income older adults. She lobbied her employer, Oakland-based Christian Church Homes (CCH) of Northern California, and talked to city officials. Although everyone loved the idea, carrying it out proved a massive challenge. The hotel wasn’t up to current seismic standards and its electricity and plumbing had never been updated.

“It would have been easiest to tear it down and start from scratch, which we proposed, but because it was a historic building, that wasn’t possible,” Smith says.

In the end, the Redevelopment Agency and CCH struck a unique partnership that allowed them to save the landmark

building and create 48 apartments for low-income older adults. CCH agreed to buy the building, and applied for Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits¹ to fund a portion of the \$7.4 million project. During the lengthy tax credit application process, the Redevelopment Agency and the City of Redding loaned CCH a total of \$2.6 million. Once CCH was awarded the tax credits, the Agency and City loans were converted to permanent financing as residual receipts loans. Other funding included an award of \$150,000 from the Federal Home Loan Bank’s Affordable Housing Program.

“This project required CCH and the City to work closely together,” says Kurt Starman, City of Redding City Manager. “The agency made a significant investment in this project because of the crime problem and our focus on downtown revitalization.”

The completely renovated hotel reopened in March 2003. Limited to adults ages 55 and older, the building charges from \$188 for a studio to \$357 for a two-bedroom apartment. The diverse mix of Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic and African-American residents earn an average annual income of \$9,000. Designed to foster independent living,

¹ The Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program is contained in the federal tax code and administered by the Internal Revenue Service. States allocations are awarded and managed by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee. For additional information: www.treasurer.ca.gov/ctac



laundry facilities are provided on each floor, a spacious community room supports social interaction, and security features keep residents safe. The building has no dedicated parking and most of the residents do not have cars. Connections to the Redding Area Bus Authority Downtown Transit Center are within half a mile. Additional door-to-door transportation is available through county and nonprofit service providers.

The project has helped Redding's low income older adults, but has also benefited the entire community by replacing an undesirable building with a good neighbor, says Smith.

"It changed the dynamics of downtown by cleaning up a beautiful historic hotel and making the downtown a more viable place to live."

For more information: Shawn Tillman, stillman@ci.redding.ca.us

HOW WILL THE VOTERS CHANGE?

What will the changing voter population mean for your community? There's no simple answer. While older and younger voters all rank the wellbeing of children, education and healthcare among their top issues, older voters are more concerned than younger voters about the state budget crisis, the economy and illegal immigration, while younger voters express more concern about crime and the cost of living.

However older adults vote in the future, every city in California will need to attend to their interests as their numbers swell. The following resources can help you understand how your population will change in the next two decades:

- http://www.censusscope.org/us/chart_age.html
- www.aging.state.ca.us/html/stats/map_narrative_2.html
- www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/DRU_Publications/Projections/P3/P3.htm.

COMING OF AGE

Tapping into Talent

"People are undergoing a huge amount of change as they enter their 50's," says Dick Goldberg, Director of Coming of Age, an initiative to promote volunteering, learning and community leadership in the Greater Philadelphia area. "Many find they want to have much more civic engagement in their next phase of life."

To help that happen, four institutions banded together in 2002 to launch the *Coming of Age* initiative. Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning, the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, AARP Pennsylvania and WHYY (the region's public broadcasting station). The plan: to promote civic engagement among the over-50 crowd.

The partners quickly realized that simply encouraging individuals to volunteer for community service wouldn't be enough. Instead, they would also have to work with nonprofits to create volunteer opportunities that were more substantive than stuffing envelopes. So, in addition to a successful lecture series called "BoomerVision!"™ designed to help individuals explore their next phase of life, the group sponsors workshops and conferences to train nonprofits to develop compelling paid and unpaid opportunities for older volunteers.

"People want to feel they're using their talents and contributing in a meaningful way," Goldberg says. In April 2005, *Coming of Age* hosted a conference called "50-Plus Volunteering: The Wave of the Future," which drew nonprofits from four states. The 250 attendees overflowed the conference hall. Some had to watch plenary sessions on a video monitor outside the main conference room. The group has also offered standing-room only workshops to local nonprofits on subjects such as marketing to older adults.

"We have 1.5 million people age 50 plus in the Greater Philadelphia area, and nonprofits want to take advantage of that vast resource," Goldberg says.

Chester Heights Camp Meeting Association, for example, maintains a 31-acre religious retreat site that includes hiking trails, public buildings and 60 Victorian cottages. In the past, the organization has called mainly on church youth groups to help maintain the buildings— but since attending a *Coming of Age* workshop, vice president Gary Koerner is recruiting older volunteers.

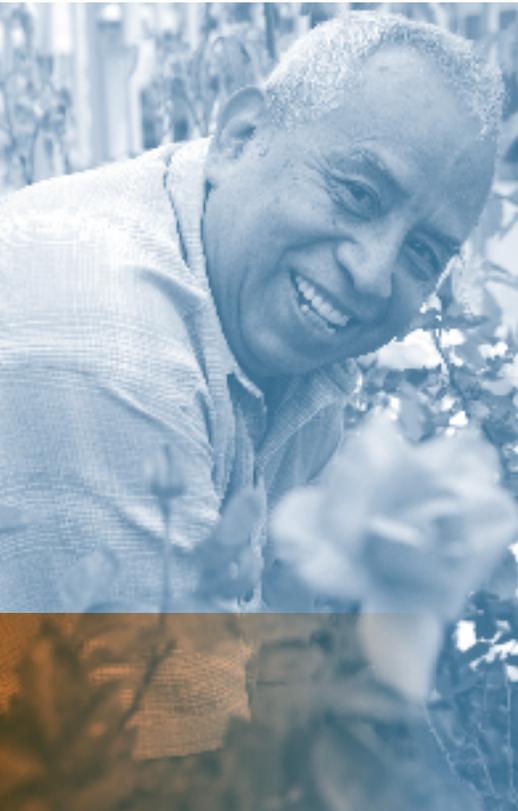
"We're soliciting people who used to own their own home, but now live in a 'work-free' housing development, and who may miss puttering around," Koerner says. He plans to target active adult housing projects, retirement villages, senior centers and VA hospitals.

"I'm hopeful we'll reach an untapped market," he says.

Coming of Age is housed at Temple University and funded by a variety of sources, including a three-year grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, plus grants from Verizon Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies and a public awareness program funded by AARP. The group has worked closely with community foundations in the area as well as with the Corporation for National and Community Service, which sponsors Senior Corps, a national volunteer program for people 55 and older.

"One thing that makes this initiative unique is that we're trying to complete the equation," says Goldberg. "We know people want to do something more, so we're not just working with the individual: We want to make sure the nonprofits are utilizing the talents of older people in a way that benefits the community."

For more information: www.comingofage.org





STAYING MOBILE

Communities need new transportation solutions that accommodate the changing abilities of older adults. Just a few ideas already in use around the country:

Community-Wide Planning. The San Mateo County Office of Aging and Adult Services, for example, received a grant from the California State Department of Aging to assess the transportation needs of underserved communities, including older adults and people with disabilities. The study, completed in August 2002, reached out to community members through more than 20 focus groups and a well-attended Open House at SamTrans, the local transit agency. Additional research included interviews and surveys. The project also produced a Strategic Plan recommending improvements in transit service, education for older adults on public transportation, and other measures. In 2005, the county received a grant to produce a Senior Mobility Plan that builds on the county's earlier studies: A draft of the plan is available at http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/DRAFT_ACT_PLAN.pdf.

Door-through-Door Service. For many older adults, door-to-door service isn't enough. They may need help from their chair to the front door, from the door to the van, from the van to the doctor's office and back. Metro Mobility (<http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/paratransit/intro.htm>) in Minneapolis-St. Paul provides a shared-ride door-through-door service for people with disabilities, who can call and schedule a ride for any purpose—from doctor's appointments to dinner dates.

Travel Training. Since 2003, Special Transit (<http://www.specialtransit.org/>) of Boulder, CO, has offered free, comprehensive, one-on-one training that teaches individuals how to use public transportation safely and confidently.

For more ideas: Visit The Beverly Foundation at www.beverlyfoundation.org and the Center for Civic Partnerships at www.civicpartnerships.org.

Healthy Community STRATEGIES FOR AGING WELL



Community Involvement

- Appoint a resident commission to conduct research and develop a multi-year action plan.
- List volunteer opportunities on city and community publications, web sites and in other public venues.
- Develop public and private resources to promote, recruit, retain and celebrate volunteer work by older adults.
- Optimize participation in public meetings through assistive technologies (e.g. hearing or translation devices).
- Sponsor opportunities (e.g. events, programs) for inter-generational exchange.
- Sponsor meetings at sites where older adults congregate.
- Encourage older adult involvement in policy development and advocacy.

Transportation

- Promote safe, alternative transportation methods beyond the personal automobile (e.g. bicycling, walking, neighborhood electric vehicles).
- Ensure that local transportation services meet older adult needs (e.g. linking van/shuttle services with mass transit, providing transportation vouchers).
- Offer incentives to developers that incorporate smart growth principles into community design.
- Develop infrastructure improvements (e.g. wide sidewalks, benches, good lighting, increased time limits at crosswalk signals) that support safe use by pedestrians and persons who are mobility impaired.

Varied Housing Options

- Review the Housing Element of the General Plan to identify any gaps between current supply and projected older adult needs, based on income, cultural identify and other population-based factors.
- Work with lending institutions, the building industry and others to preserve affordable senior housing.
- Work with lending institutions, the building industry and others to build mixed use affordable senior housing.
- Support development of barrier-free housing by endorsing concepts of universal design¹ and visitability.²
- Build community support for affordable senior housing (e.g. informational campaigns, forums).
- Provide rehabilitation programs for low- and very low-income senior households (e.g. free installation of safety equipment, community paint and yard work programs).
- Cluster city/regional services in senior housing and naturally occurring retirements communities (NORCs).
- Explore housing trusts and other funding mechanisms to fund affordable senior housing projects.

¹ Homes and neighborhoods that are user-friendly for people of all ages and supportive for those with disabilities.

² A set of accessibility features such as zero step entrances, wide interior doors, a wide level route through the main floor, and one accessible bathroom on the main floor.

Employment

- List employment and employability resources for older adults on city and community publications, web sites and in other public venues.
- Develop policies and incentives to retain and recruit older workers (e.g. flexible or reduced hours, transfer to less demanding roles, training to improve skills, phased retirement, flexible benefits packages).
- Recognize businesses and organizations that have policies and practices which are conducive to older adults remaining in the workforce.

Lifelong Learning

- Promote lifelong learning opportunities and resources in city and community publications, web sites and in other public venues.
- Support a range of affordable, culturally appropriate and language-diverse lifelong learning opportunities for older adults (e.g. recreational, educational, arts & culture).
- Co-locate public facilities with non-profits or commercial enterprise to provide easier access (e.g. internet cafés).
- Provide access to, and training on, interactive media technology (e.g. on-line services, video conferencing) through public facilities (e.g. libraries, community centers, kiosks) and through public/private partnerships.
- Collaborate with public entities (e.g. schools, colleges, libraries) to provide lifelong learning opportunities, including degrees and certificates, that meet multiple learning abilities or styles and preferred delivery methods.

Supportive Services

- Support and collaborate with public/private partners to offer an ombudsman program and financial/legal assistance.
- Provide information, and assist with access to self-care, medical and social services (e.g. respite, support groups) and end-of-life care in multiple languages and within cultural contexts.
- Develop inter-generational facilities and services (e.g. co-locate library and other municipal services with community centers).
- Ensure easy access to fresh produce (e.g. neighborhood stores, farmers' markets, community gardens).
- Collaborate with public/private partners to prevent hunger/malnutrition.
- Provide recreational opportunities and physical fitness programs that serve all skill levels and abilities (e.g., include balance and strength training, low impact, etc.).

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Resources

Space prohibited the inclusion of many worthy listings. Visit our web site for a greatly expanded list of resources and web site links: www.civicpartnerships.org

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