



***Masterplan to Create
Community for a Lifetime
in Carver County***

December 2007

**Carver County Health Partnership
Senior Commission
P.O. Box 291
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Dear Fellow Community Members:

On behalf of the Senior Commission, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this ***Masterplan to Create Community for a Lifetime in Carver County***. This project was truly a community effort with more than 60 committed individuals who generously donated their time and expertise over a 15- month period to serve on the design teams. These design teams reviewed research, collected data and crafted the various goals, strategies, and measures of progress. In addition to the work of the design team, the members of the Senior Commission gave freely from their wealth of experience and knowledge to help guide the development of the plan.

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The ***Masterplan to Create Community for a Lifetime in Carver County*** outlines practical pathways for meeting the needs of older adults and their families over the next ten years, as well as for preparing for large numbers of Baby Boomers entering retirement age. As importantly, the plan outlines strategies to tap into the wisdom and expertise of older adults so they become engaged and contribute to the well-being of their community.

No one sector holds the full responsibility for implementing the plan and preparing for the Baby Boomers. If we are to be successfully prepared, all sectors—government, business, nonprofit, faith, healthcare and educational institutions--must work together to implement the plan. Although the hard work is just beginning, we have a plan to go forward.

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What is a *Community for a Lifetime*?

A *Community for a Lifetime* is a community that is first and foremost a community for all. To be friendly and welcoming to seniors is to be friendly and welcoming to all ages. Although there may be great differences in our interests and lifestyles, the elements of welcoming community are the same regardless of age. In a *Community for a Lifetime*, people are:

Valued and Respected

Communities for a Lifetime systematically recognize the value of others by encouraging their leadership, seeking their input, acknowledging their contributions and by considering their needs in planning, building infrastructure and budgeting.

Can Stay Active

A *Community for a Lifetime* is a place where people of all ages can stay active. Bike paths, parks and community centers are a few examples. Placing benches and creating rest areas are simple things a community can do to help people stay active.

Have opportunities for connection and involvement

A *Community for a Lifetime* is a community where people can socialize, connect and volunteer. Churches, civic and nonprofit organizations each provide opportunities and places for connection and service. School districts colleges and other organizations are also places for lifelong learning and skill development.

Have a place to call home

An overwhelming number of Carver County seniors—96 percent according to the recent Residential Survey-- want to “age in place” or continue living in their community, as they get older. Yet housing needs often change with age. Some older adults plan to stay in their single family home, while others no longer want all of the maintenance. Many transition to a single level townhome or an apartment. With increasing age or with disability, some older adults may need assistance — either in the form of help with chores and meals in their homes or perhaps they may need the more intensive services that are provided in an assisted living facility. A *Community for a Lifetime* is one that has affordable housing options for the various needs of older adults as well as multiple services available that help seniors stay in the home of their choice.

Feel safe and cared for

Feeling safe from crime and cared for by friends and neighbors are essential elements of a *Community for a Lifetime*. Being recognized and greeted by others in the community helps people feel part of the community.

Is easy to navigate

A *Community for a Lifetime* is one that has alternative transportation options for people who cannot drive a car. Depending on the size of the community, this might vary from an organized carpool to regular bus service.

Physical access is also a component of a *Community for a Lifetime*. Curb cuts, sidewalks, readable traffic signs and convenient parking all make a community more *senior-friendly*.

Access to goods and services

From information and medical care and prescriptions to groceries and clothing, a *Community for a Lifetime* is one where seniors can access everything they need.

According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the number of seniors in Carver County will almost quadruple over the next twenty years. We all need to work to ensure that Carver County is and remains a *Community for a Lifetime* for all.

The History and Work of the Senior Commission

The Carver County Health Partnership (CCHP) is a collaborative of local businesses, non profits, community groups, concerned citizens, governments and churches working together to make Carver County a healthy place to live and work.

In 2002, the Senior Commission of the Carver County Health Partnership began an effort to make Carver County a great place to live and work for older adults. We imagined Carver County as a community where people can thrive—a community where transportation, education, housing, healthcare, employment, home services, parks and recreation activities, volunteer opportunities and much more are available to all. We also imagined that Carver County is a place where people are valued and feel connected. In short, our vision was:

“Each community in Carver County will be a vibrant and senior-friendly community prepared for an increasing number of older residents—a Community for a Lifetime.”

The Senior Commission employed five primary strategies to begin its work of transforming Carver County into a *Community for a Lifetime*.

- 1. Surveying the landscape and gathering data.** The Senior Commission partnered with Carver County to add an “Older Adult” section to the Carver County Residential Survey conducted in December 2004. In addition, the Senior Commission worked with each city to survey citizens and to assess current levels of “senior friendliness.” Other work included a survey of local congregations around faith community nurses and gathering the opinions of older adults about educational opportunities. Compiled together with local and state demographic information, local studies conducted by other groups and national trend data, we were able to provide a snapshot view of Carver County.
- 2. Sharing our vision by providing information and education to stakeholders, elected leaders and concerned residents.** We started our outreach efforts by providing information and education to stakeholders and community members. We hosted various training sessions and made numerous presentations to civic groups, elected officials and county commissioners.
- 3. Promoting and supporting the development and work of local city-level Senior Advisory Councils.** Over time, it became clear that because people identified more closely with their city than the county, so we determined to begin on a local level. Using a

successful model initiated in Chanhassen, the Senior Commission assisted in the development of city-level Senior Commissions that report to the City Council in Norwood Young America, Watertown, Mayer and Victoria. Waconia, Carver and Chaska have each considered a similar model.

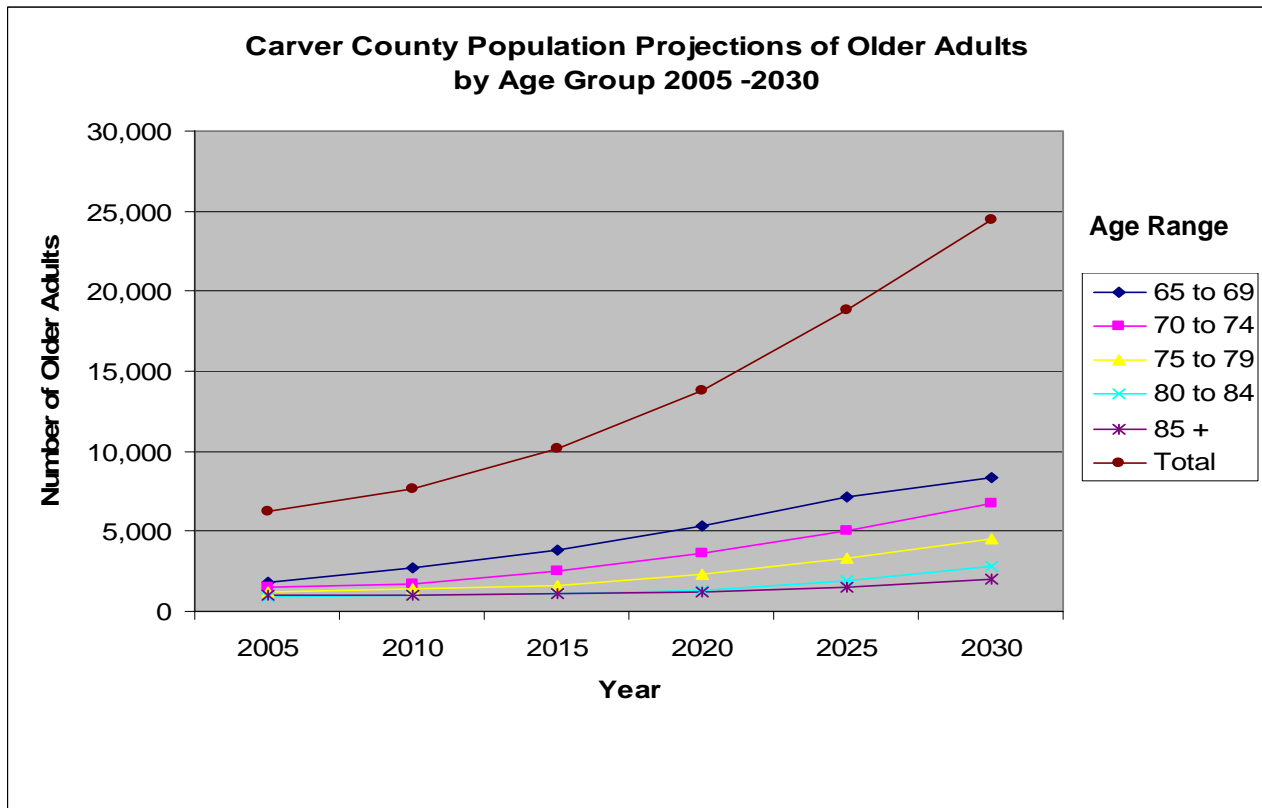
- 4. Creating a county-wide Master Plan to Create Community for a Lifetime in Carver County.** Although our vision for Community for a Lifetime was clear, we understood the need to translate that vision into a comprehensive and tangible plan to prepare the county for the demographic tsunami of Baby Boomers reaching retirement age. In the Spring of 2006, we recruited more than 60 community leaders to serve on eight design teams—Transportation and Mobility; Healthcare and Long-term Care; Parks and Recreation; Civic Engagement and Volunteerism; Education and Learning, Housing and Adaptive Re-use of Housing; Safety and Home and Community-Based Services. Each of these teams worked for many months to define the issues within Carver County and to develop objectives, strategies and metrics. After a process of review and feedback, the work of the design teams was incorporated into the “Master Plan to Create Community for a Lifetime in Carver County.”
- 5. Advocating for a Carver County Office on Aging.** An emergent theme of the work of the design teams was the need for leadership and coordination to anchor and implement the Master Plan. Although there are many fine agencies and numerous county departments providing programs and services to older adults in Carver County, there is not a central source of information nor are efforts coordinated. The Senior Commission proposed the development of a Carver County inter-departmental Office of Aging to serve as an “anchor” and to provide leadership and planning for older adults. As proposed, the Office of Aging would function as a clearinghouse and coordinator of current services—both public and private—as well as a champion for ensuring that older adults in Carver County can remain vital and active in their chosen community. In June 2007, the Carver County Board of Commissioners authorized the establishment of this Office of Aging to begin operations by January 1, 2008.

As the focus of the Carver County Health Partnership is evolving, the work of the Senior Commission will transition to the newly established Office of Aging. Although the county has determined to take a leadership role around aging issues, the work is just beginning. Each sector--business, healthcare, governments, non-profit, faith community, community organizations, and educational institutions-- has a role and responsibility to prepare for the needs and contributions of older adults and to transform Carver County into a *Community for a Lifetime*.

Background

Carver County is on the cusp of a demographic revolution. America’s largest generation, the Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1952) are beginning to reach retirement age and will swell the ranks of older adults. Over the next two decades, Carver County’s population of older adults will almost quadruple in absolute numbers (from 6,256 in 2005 to 24,490 in 2025) and will double as a percentage of the population (from seven to more than fifteen percent). Not only will there be more older adults, these older adults are expected to live longer than the previous generation.¹

Figure 1. Projected Carver County Population Ages 65+
 Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center, June 2007.



By 2010, the number of Baby Boomers retiring will increase dramatically. Their retirement will set off a cascade of changes that will challenge every system – transportation, health care, governance, business, volunteerism and more. The following list outlines a few of the anticipated trends and implications.

¹ Minnesota State Demographic Center.

BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE ISSUES

- **Large numbers will be leaving the workforce** at the same time that number of new entrants into the labor force will stagnate. Businesses will have difficulty filling positions and finding qualified workers. There will be critical worker shortages in healthcare and many key service professions.
- **Many Baby Boomers are not ready to admit their age.** On average, Baby Boomers consider themselves about ten years younger than their age and will demand goods and services to keep them looking and feeling younger . They will shun labels, goods and services that they perceive belong to the “real seniors.”
- **Many older adults will choose to continue working—on their own terms.** A growing number of older adults want to continue in the workforce but shift careers to a position that brings meaning and purpose. These same adults will also demand more flexibility. Businesses will need to retain and retrain older adults in the workforce with redesigned, part-time positions.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

- **Income and sales tax revenues will decrease** while more revenues will be needed for infrastructure, health care, home services and transportation. Public officials will need to make difficult decisions regarding allocation of resources.
- **Many Boomers are not financially prepared for retirement**—50% have less than \$50,000 saved and few have purchased long-term care insurance.² A large percent anticipate governmental assistance to pay for long-term care and other services. Currently almost 6 percent of Carver County’s seniors have incomes below poverty levels.³ Many Baby Boomers will need to continue working well past 65 because they are not financially prepared for retirement.
- Even more than the current generation of older adults, **there will be two distinct types of older adults in Carver County—the healthy and active older adult and the frail elderly.** Systems and services will need to be designed to maximize the health and independence of both.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Most older adults intend to continue driving their cars.** The percentage of older drivers on the roads will increase. Roads and signs will need to be modified to accommodate the needs of older adult drivers. Older adults who no longer drive will demand alternative and flexible transportation options.

² Issue Brief 292, April 2006. Employee Benefits Research Institute.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Population Estimates for Carver County.

HOUSING

- **Older adults want to stay in their homes and communities.** Communities will need to develop life-cycle housing to meet the needs of residents according to stage in life. Additional health care and community-based services will need to be available to help older adults stay in their homes. Housing will need to be modified to be more accessible with “smart house” technologies. Cities may need to modify their zoning and housing codes to allow for “mother-in-law apartments” and more group housing.

LEISURE AND VOLUNTEERISM

- **Baby Boomers will want to continue learning and growing.** Many sectors—libraries, colleges, nonprofit organizations, schools and businesses will need to develop innovative and flexible learning opportunities for older adults. Ongoing formal and informal learning opportunities will need to be incorporated into travel, entertainment, volunteerism and work. Technology can be used to help people find and connect to learning opportunities.
- **Baby Boomers want to contribute in meaningful ways** through volunteerism in their community. Civic engagement and volunteerism are critical to the health of older adults and to their community. However, many older adults are looking for episodic projects that will fit their schedule and utilize their skills. Nonprofit agencies will need to restructure their volunteer opportunities to meet the demands and needs of the Baby Boomer generation.

HEALTH AND FITNESS

- **Health will mean managing multiple chronic diseases.** Fewer older adults will die of cancer, heart disease or influenza. However, many or most older adults will need to manage multiple chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Health care will need to transform its focus from acute care to that of chronic care management—helping older adults effectively manage their health conditions. All types of health care providers will need to develop expertise in geriatric medicine.
- **Baby Boomers want to stay active.** Many Baby Boomers will continue to be physically active and will demand parks and recreation activities that meet their needs. Biking and walking are activities that a large percent of older adults will continue into their seventies and beyond.

The implications of the Baby Boomers aging into retirement are profound and far reaching. Due to their sheer numbers, Baby Boomers will redefine what it means to be an older adult. It is essential that the public and private sectors work together to plan for these changes and harness the wisdom and strength of older adults in our community.

Priorities

The ***Master Plan to Create Community for a Lifetime in Carver County*** outlines specific goals and strategies in nine key areas, many of which are overlapping and interdependent (recurring themes in the plan include the need for mobility, affordability and accessibility). In order to focus efforts, four core priorities were identified as first steps in the plan implementation.

1. Anchor Efforts within the Carver County Office of Aging

The newly established Office of Aging will serve as the “anchor” to provide leadership and coordination of services and planning for older adults and to ensure that the vision of the county to become a *Community of a Lifetime* is realized. This interdepartmental Office of Aging will also function as a clearinghouse and coordinator of current services—both public and private—as well as a champion for ensuring that older adults in Carver County can remain vital and active in their chosen community.

2. Build Broad Community Awareness and Create Champions

Individuals, community leaders, businesses, nonprofit organizations and governmental groups all need to become aware of and develop an understanding of the implications presented by the aging of the Baby Boomers as well as the many resources available in the county. These individuals and groups in turn need to champion the issues in their respective arenas.

3. Continue to Cultivate Partnerships and Ownership Across Sectors

Just as the issues presented by the burgeoning population of older adults are not the responsibility of one sector, neither are the solutions. It is critical that each sector – government, nonprofit, business, education, and faith communities take ownership of the issues, partner with others, and provide the leadership necessary to create *Community for a Lifetime in Carver County*. Just as we partnered together to create the Master Plan, now it is time to work together to implement it. Integrating elements of the Master Plan into local city plans and into Carver County’s Comprehensive Plan is one example of plan ownership.

4. Measure and Track Progress

Each strategy outlined in the Master Plan suggests a metric or way to measure progress. Unless we know where we began, we will not know the extent of our progress. Measuring and tracking progress will allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts and make adjustments along the way.

**TABLE I. MASTER PLAN TO CREATE
COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME IN CARVER COUNTY
SUMMARY OF DESIRED OUTCOMES BY AREA**

AREA	DESIRED OUTCOMES
Home and Community-Based Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a continuum of effective and high quality home and community-based services available in Carver County. 2. Carver County residents are aware of and can easily access the range of home and community-based services available in Carver County. 3. Carver County consumers increase their utilization of home and community-based services over 2007 levels. 4. Family and informal caregivers understand their role, are connected to supportive services and are encouraged.
Health & Long-Term Care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Older adults will maintain and optimize their individual health and well-being. 2. Older adults in Carver County will have access to a continuum of affordable, evidence-based healthcare (including medications and supplies), mental health services, dental care, ancillary therapies and long-term care within Carver County. 3. Carver County's healthcare workforce will be trained and prepared to meet the unique healthcare and mental health needs of older adults. 4. Carver County residents will plan and prepare for their long-term care needs.
Housing & Adaptive Reuse of Housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carver County will establish a county Office on Aging to coordinate informational services relating to seniors in Carver County. 2. The public will be made aware of senior housing issues and options and the potential impact of Baby Boomers on senior housing development via the development and dissemination of public awareness messages and human interest stories. 3. Carver County's elected leaders, staff and civic leaders will be aware of senior housing issues.
Transportation & Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safety is emphasized and promoted in all aspects of Carver County transportation including roadways, trails, and sidewalks. 2. Convenience is factored into transportation and mobility planning efforts with the citizens of Carver County having access to information at lowest level of government. 3. Flexibility is a consideration of transportation and mobility planning and design in Carver County. 4. The affordability of transportation and mobility design and implementation is maximized.
Civic Engagement & Volunteerism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An increased percentage of Carver County's older adults will be engaged and volunteer in their community. 2. Carver County's older adults will experience an improved quality of life and increased levels of social connectedness. 3. There will be increased levels of organizational capacity among community, business, faith and other organizations to engage older adults and effectively utilize their skills 4. There will be a measurable community impact from the service contributions of older adults.

AREA	DESIRED OUTCOMES
Parks & Recreation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase awareness of and education about park and recreation outreach efforts and opportunities. 2. Potential barriers to utilization of Carver County parks and recreational programs will be identified. 3. Consistency, coordination and collaboration will be fostered among the local Parks and Recreation departments throughout Carver County. 4. Carver County Parks and Recreational programming will utilize technology to the maximum extent possible.
Education & Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Older adults in Carver County will be aware of and can easily access learning opportunities. 2. Lifelong learning opportunities in Carver County will be designed to be “senior friendly.” 3. Carver County’s older adults will have opportunities to share their wisdom and expertise with others. 4. Older adults in Carver County will interact and connect with others through participation in lifelong learning opportunities.
Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is ongoing education and awareness-building around the multiple safety concerns affecting older adults. 2. Technology resources will be applied to safety concerns to the highest extent possible. 3. The need for new and/or additional program initiatives will be evaluated and considered. 4. Coordination and collaboration will be fostered in the administration of countywide senior-related Safety programs.
Employment & Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carver County employers will recognize the value of older adults as employees and will implement senior-specific recruitment and hiring practices. 2. There will be sufficient flexible and meaningful employment opportunities available to older adults in Carver County. 3. Carver County employers will restructure positions, develop phased retirement options and offer “cafeteria-type” compensation and benefit packages to recruit and retain older adults. 4. There will be multiple training opportunities available for older adults to update and maintain their work-related skills. 5. Higher percentages of older adults will continue in the workforce past age 65-- through a phased retirement plan, bridging employment, job share, work at-home, contract employment or other flexible options.

Section I: Home & Community-Based Services

VISION

Carver County's older adults will have a high quality of life. They will be able to remain in the residence of their choice and will be connected to an array of home and community-based services. These home and community-based services will be developed to complement and support family caregiving.

Caregivers, older adults and providers will be aware of the availability of services. The continuum of services will be readily accessible; effective, affordable, will maximize available technologies and will be designed to meet evolving needs and preferences of older adults. All services will be delivered by family caregivers and/or a well-trained professional in a personal and caring manner that simultaneously helps to meet the social / relational needs of older adults.

BACKGROUND

Community-Based Services include everything from chore services and home-delivered meals to assistance with activities of daily living and congregational nursing programs. Home and community-based services are essential to help older adults remain independent and living in their own home.

According to the 2004 Carver County Residential Survey, fully 96% of older adults in Carver County intend to stay in their community for the rest of their lives—89% intend to remain in their current home for the rest of their life. Yet the ability to stay in their own home is a major or moderate concern for 76 percent of Carver County's older adults.⁴ The top issues affecting the ability of older adults to remain in their homes are 1) having physical limitations; 2) needing help with home maintenance and 3) general health needs.⁵

Providing care in the home and community helps to keep people out of nursing homes—an option of which zero percent of Minnesota's Baby Boomers would voluntarily choose.⁶ According to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, up to 15 percent of nursing home residents could be cared for in the community resulting in significant cost savings.

The majority of long-term care in Minnesota is provided informally at no expense to public coffers. Family members, friends and neighbors provide most of the assistance to individuals who want to remain in their homes but need help with daily activities because of chronic illness or disability. The importance of these caregivers will increase as the population ages over the coming decades and the number of seniors at risk of requiring help with daily functional tasks grows rapidly. At the same time, however, increasing numbers of women in the workforce, changing family patterns and greater geographic dispersion of family members have put

⁴ Carver County Citizen Survey, 2004: National Research Center Inc.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Ecumen "Age Wave" Study. Ecumen, 2007.

additional strain on family caregivers and contributed to a decline in their availability. Recognizing and supporting family caregivers will become a central component in Minnesota's long-term care system.

A WORKING DEFINITION OF HOME & COMMUNITY- BASED SERVICES

Home and community-based services are any service delivered in the home or in the community that enables older adults to stay in the residence of their choice and may include:

General Home and Community-Based Services

- Case management / Care coordination
- Nutrition programs including nutrition screening and education, home delivered meals, grocery delivery and congregate dining
- Chore services including minor home repair, seasonal snow shoveling, seasonal leaf raking, lawn mowing, major housekeeping(i.e spring cleaning tasks)
- Home maintenance
- Homemaker services
- Companion services
- Personal Care Assistants and home health aides
- Adult day service programs
- Other Respite care programs- in and out of home
- Door to door transportation
- Environmental modifications and adaptations
- Home or "smart house" technologies

- Faith community nursing programs
 - Health insurance counseling
 - Financial Assistance programs
- Caregiver support groups

Health Related Services such as:

- Home nursing services
- Care-related equipment
- Care-related supplies
- Chronic disease management
- Home medication dispensing
- Tele-homecare
- Hospice

Housing with Services:

- 24-hour customized living sites (assisted living)
- Customized living--bundled services with some supervision in one's own home
- Foster Care
- Residential care--board and lodging

HOME & COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

1. **There is a continuum of effective and high quality home and community-based services available in Carver County.**
Metric: Senior Services Provider Survey
2. **Carver County residents are aware of and can easily access the range of home and community-based services available in Carver County.**
Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, Older Adult section
3. **Carver County consumers increase their utilization of home and community-based services over 2007 levels.**
Metric: Senior Services Provider Survey
4. **Family and informal caregivers understand their role, are connected to supportive services and are encouraged.**
Metric: Utilization of respite care, % of Carver County employers with flexible leave policies, other

STRATEGIES:

1. **Increase awareness of services, resources and coordination of home and community-based services.**
 - a) Actively market the MinnesotaHelp.Info website and SeniorLinkage Line to older adults, Baby Boomers, caregivers and adult children throughout Carver County.
 - b) In conjunction with the Public Health Workplace Wellness Center, specifically target marketing efforts to Carver County employers.
 - c) Promote the MinnesotaHelp.info website (“No Wrong Door” initiative) to clinics, hospital discharge planners, employers, senior centers through both high tech and low tech mechanisms (mass e-mails, training sessions / employers / internet / phone / etc.).
 - d) Explore the feasibility of developing a single point of entry case management/ coordination system for all older adults in need of home and community-based services, regardless of income.

2. Encourage and support family caregivers.

- a) Clearly define and promote the importance of family caregiving so that Carver County residents are aware of the vital role of family caregivers and family caregivers begin to identify themselves as a caregiver.
- b) Encourage all family caregivers to develop a “caregiver plan” using the “No Wrong Door” planning tool or other.
- c) Ensure that there is adequate availability and use of respite care. Encourage faith communities and other community groups to develop respite care programs.
- d) Work to raise their awareness and use of available services and assistance through the “No Wrong Door” initiative (See Strategy #1)
- e) Advocate for tax incentives that assist caregivers to provide care.
- f) Advocate with private industry and policymakers to allow family caregivers to be compensated through long-term care policies.
- g) Work with Carver County employers to develop more flexible leave policies for family caregiving and work with employer sponsored Employee Assistance Programs to assist employees to develop caregiving plans.
- h) Provide caregiver information at locations they frequent such as physician offices and pharmacies.

3. Encourage and support informal caregivers.

- a) Encourage, resource and support local faith communities to develop Faith Community Nursing programs.
- b) Encourage and support local organizations to develop community “check-in” type programs as well as home visiting and companionship programs.
- c) Promote informal caregiving by friends and neighbors through a media campaign and via local organizations.
- d) Facilitate partnerships across sectors and providers to ensure that informal caregivers are encouraged and recognized.

4. Assure use, availability, accessibility, and quality of home and community-based services and encourage the development of innovative, new consumer-driven services.

- a) Advocate through the Carver County Senior Services Provider Networking Group to develop/reformat home and community-based services to complement and support family and informal caregiving.
- b) Working with the Carver County Seniors Services Provider Networking Group, provide feedback and data to providers to encourage providers to develop/restructure current and new home and community-based services to meet the changing needs and desires of the consumer and make use of new technologies.
- c) Advocate for policies that ensure that home and community-based services are of high quality and provided by qualified, well-trained staff.
- d) Work with trade associations / MN Board of Aging and or other groups to develop a quality assurance or certification mechanism for quality service providers.
- e) Advocate for policies and insurance products that are flexible and provide self-directed payment mechanisms.
- f) Encourage home and community-based service providers to train their staff to intentionally “connect” with clients and to develop trusting relationships.
- g) Work with the Carver County Workforce Center to develop strategies to encourage workers to enter the field of home and community-based services.

HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES DESIGN TEAM

Chair

Bonnie Mohr, *Senior Commission and Public Health Nurse, Retired*

Members

Bob Anderson, *Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging*

Paula Borer, *Ridgeview Medical Center*

LaVonne Gilbertson, *Carver County Social Services*

Keith Juliar, *Carver County Public Health*

Joan Lynch, *CAP Agency*

Luayn Murphy, *City of Mayer*

Consultant

Renee Wixon

Section 2: Health and Long-Term Care

VISION

As they age, adults in Carver County will remain healthy and active. Each individual will take responsibility for his/her health, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and seeking preventive care and services. Declining physical and cognitive health and/or disability will no longer be considered the normal process of aging.

A continuum of effective, affordable outpatient and inpatient healthcare services (mental and physical) will be available to older adults in Carver County. These services will be integrated and provided by professionals specifically trained in geriatric care. Carver County will be known for its geriatric healthcare expertise and services.

BACKGROUND

Mental and Physical Health

- The prevalence of mental illness among the growing elderly population is very high. According to some estimates, more than 50% of older adults have depression and/or another mental illness.⁷ Depression is not a normal part of aging and can be treated.
- There are very limited resources for mental health care in Carver County
 - The only inpatient program – Nightingale Center—recently closed.
 - Few outpatient facilities are available and these do not specialize in geriatric mental health.
 - Physicians are not sufficiently trained to identify and treat mental illness and/or chemical dependency among older adults.
- There is an acute shortage of qualified mental health providers for older adults—in particular, psychiatrists who can bill private insurance and Medicaid for their services
- Although there is a sufficient number of primary care providers in Carver County there are few, if any, certified geriatricians.
- Primary care physicians and providers are not sufficiently trained to provide geriatric assessments, depression assessments / treatment or medication management.
- Few mid-level providers, nurses, nurses aides, home health care workers, dentists and mental health providers are specifically trained and/or certified in geriatric care.
- About 9.9% of Carver County’s older adults live in poverty. Many more struggle with meeting their day to day needs. At present, there are no clinics or facilities that provide low-cost care to uninsured or underinsured older adults.
- There is very little coordination between mental health providers, primary care providers and social service providers.

⁷ Mental Health and Aging, Clinic Geriatrics, Volume 11, Number 5, May 2003.

Long-Term Care

- Only 27% of Minnesota's Baby Boomers have long-term care insurance. Many mistakenly believe that Medicare will pay for long-term care
- Very few adults have sufficiently prepared and planned for their retirement.
- Carver County does not have sufficient staff to meet current, much less future needs
- Currently there are not enough elderly waiver units available in Carver County and out-of-county nursing home referrals are common
- At current reimbursement rates, local long-term care providers are struggling for survival and need to supplement reimbursements with fundraising events.
- Long-term care facilities struggle to find qualified dentists, psychiatrists and other professionals to provide on-site care—particularly to patients with Medicaid coverage.
- Local providers say that it is difficult to recruit qualified staff on all levels due to reimbursement rates and worker shortages.

HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

HEALTH & WELLBEING

1. **Older adults will maintain and optimize their individual health and well-being.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

2. **Older adults in Carver County will have access to a continuum of affordable, evidence-based healthcare (including medications and supplies), mental health services, dental care, ancillary therapies and long-term care within Carver County.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey

3. **Carver County's healthcare workforce will be trained and prepared to meet the unique healthcare and mental health needs of older adults.**

Metric: Percent of healthcare workforce (Physicians, nurses, aides, mental health professionals) with geriatric certification from healthcare workforce survey

LONG-TERM CARE

4. **Carver County residents will plan and prepare for their long-term care needs.**

Metric: Percent of Carver County residents with long-term care insurance—proposed new question on the Carver County Quality of Life Survey

STRATEGIES:

1. **Promote actions that support individual and community health in Carver County.**

- a.) Foster, advance and develop innovative health promotion, health education, connectedness and physical activity programs targeted to older adults throughout the community. Encourage all programs to intentionally create an expectation of personal responsibility for health.
- b.) Encourage health care payers, restaurants and other private sector agencies to implement market-driven strategies, incentives and rewards that encourage personal responsibility and healthy lifestyle choices.
- c.) Promote city and county efforts for walkability and other infrastructure that supports exercise and healthy lifestyle options.

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

2. **Ensure that there is a continuum of affordable, evidence-based healthcare services available for older adults in Carver County.**

- a.) Ensure that every older adult has a primary care provider, a health care plan and access to a care coordinator.
- b.) Develop partnerships with existing agencies to develop and/or expand healthcare services into Carver County—in particular psychiatric and dental care.
 - Establish/re-establish inpatient psychiatric services for older adults in Carver County.
 - Partner with Appletree Dental or other provider to bring additional mobile dental services into Carver County.
 - Encourage current healthcare providers to develop a “Center for Geriatric Health” in Carver County.
- c.) Encourage primary care providers / insurance providers to provide integrated case management / care coordination to all older adults ages 75 and above and/or all older adults with a chronic disease or disability and to implement routine recall systems for all older adults.
- d.) Increase awareness of current services and choices through the ADRC / No Wrong Door Initiative.
- e.) Encourage the development of Faith Community Nursing programs and other community-based health programs.
- f.) Advocate for adequate reimbursement rates for long-term care and other care providers.

3. **Partner with healthcare providers, schools, professional associations and other groups to ensure that Carver County’s healthcare workforce is trained and prepared to meet the unique healthcare and mental health needs of older adults.**

- a.) Promote the development of a **Center for Geriatric Health** by a Carver County healthcare provider or a consortium of Carver County providers.
- b.) Create a workgroup to identify ways to increase knowledge and understanding among service providers in the aging, mental health and medical systems about providing care to older adults.
- c.) Encourage Carver County healthcare and other geriatric service providers to provide incentives or reimbursement for additional training in gerontological care.
- d.) Train all health care personnel in the normative processes of aging.

- e.) Partner with established University, college and/or professional associations to provide additional training in geriatric care and case management for Carver County providers.
- f.) Encourage and promote training and certification in gerontological nursing for nurses working and/or living in Carver County through Geronurseonline.org or other programs.
- g.) Encourage local healthcare providers, colleges, universities, post-graduate programs and professional associations to develop and provide flexible (on-site, online, in Carver County) training opportunities and certification in gerontology for nurses aides, dentists, pharmacists, primary care physicians, home health aides, etc.
- h.) Partner with Crown College Nursing Department to integrate gerontological nursing into their core curriculum and to add an additional gerontological nursing certification program.
- i.) Encourage local providers / hospitals to host training events for physicians and other health care professionals around:
 - Recognizing the signs of depression and chemical dependency among older adults
 - Medication management for older adults
 - Providing Brief Therapy for depression and chemical dependency
 - Integrated case management for older adults

LONG-TERM CARE

4. Partner with the public and private sector to increase the percentage of Carver County residents with long-term care insurance.

- a.) Work with private industry to plan and implement a social marketing campaign targeted to Baby Boomers about the necessity and financial payoffs of a long-term care insurance policy.
- b.) Host a forum with United Health Group, other insurance plans, state, county, AARP & more to discuss strategies for encouraging innovations in long-term care insurance and partnerships.
- c.) Encourage industry to package health care together with disability and long-term care together both for group health and individual policies.
- d.) Carver County will partner with the insurance industry, financial planners and long-term care / health care / disability providers to develop innovative products / solutions for long-term care insurance.
- e.) Encourage employers to offer disability and long-term care insurance.

- f.) Encourage the County / State to offer incentives for individuals and/or businesses who purchase long-term care insurance.
- g.) Change the perception of long-term care from simply nursing home care to a variety of options for care.

HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE DESIGN TEAM:

Chairperson

Abbie McDonald, *Elim Home of Watertown*

Team Members

Marilynn Boorsma, *Victoria Senior Commission*

Christine Dasher, *Emerald Crest of Victoria*

Rick Ford, *Community Insurance Advisors*

Jenny Hissam, *Presbyterian Homes, Summerwood of Chanhassen*

Keith Juliar, *Carver County Public Health*

Ginny Karki, *Community Volunteer*

Lynn Rosenberg, *Ridgeview Medical Center*

Wayne Ward, *Moravian Care Ministries*

Consultant

Renee Wixon

Section 3: Housing and Adaptive Reuse of Housing

VISION

Carver County residents of all ages will have access to diverse, life cycle housing options and locations that meet individual preferences and provide opportunities for active living and intergenerational neighborhood and community growth, regardless of physical, social or financial status

BACKGROUND:

It is not surprising that community attachment is highest for those who have lived in their community the longest. According to a recent AARP housing survey, 83 percent of older Americans want to stay in their current homes for the rest of their lives. They find their homes comfortable and convenient and feel secure and independent there.

In fact, nearly 100 percent (96%) of the County's older adults intend to remain in their community for the remainder of their lives. This reflects the desire on the part of many to remain close to family, friends, neighbors and/or church. Eighty nine percent indicate their intention to remain in their current home, while at the same time, 76 percent indicate that the ability to do so presents major or moderate concern.⁸

There are several ways in which the home is a key to personal independence and engagement in community life. Home design, for instance, can affect how an individual is able to conduct everyday activities, ranging from personal care to hobbies and household chores. It is where residents prepare to conduct their lives in the surrounding community, and it is a setting for socializing with family, friends, and neighbors. Further, the affordability of the home influences how residents, especially those with low or moderate incomes, are able to continue living and participating in the community in which they have established social and economic ties. Under the right circumstances, the home as a financial asset can even be tapped to fund supportive services, finance home modification, or supplement monthly income. All of these facets are integral to residents' ability to remain independent in the community of their choice and to enjoy their quality of life and continued engagement in that community.

Yet, a number of factors threaten the ability of residents to enjoy the benefits and full use of their homes. This is true for persons of all ages, but it may become more pronounced as people age. Some of these influences were summarized in a 2004 study by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies:

⁸ Carver County Citizen Survey 2004: National Research Center

“The Nation’s 35.6 million seniors aged 65 and older face a quadruple threat. First, many have inadequate incomes to pay for housing costs. Second, mounting healthcare needs compete with other basic expenditures. Third, most live in single family homes that require maintenance and that are expensive for caregivers to reach because they are geographically dispersed. And fourth, many have physical limitations or cognitive impairments that must be addressed by in-home care or structural modification. In the 2000 census, for example, 9.5 million seniors reported a physical disability.”

Home and community features and social and civic life are strongly linked with one another. Features and services in the home and community affect residents’ ability to participate politically and socially, and their participation (or their absence) influence how that community changes over time. For example, neighbors who band together are able to influence how a local government responds to their needs, and neighborhood associations can provide opportunities for neighbors to meet socially and to establish rules and procedures for use of common areas (and even architectural standards, and design review). In the larger community, land use and zoning decisions not only affect housing stock, but they also have implications for how readily residents can use their community’s features. For instance, sprawl and segregation of residential and commercial areas can make it difficult to get places. Neighborhoods with safe, well-designed sidewalks can affect the abilities of people to leave their homes on errands and to interact with neighbors. The availability of supportive services influences not only whether a person can remain in the community, but also the types of activities that person can engage in. Community safety influences property values and personal security as well as the activities that residents are willing to conduct, especially in the evening.⁹

Transform 2010

In less than four years, in 2011, the baby boom generation—born between 1946 and 1964—will begin to turn 65, and for the next 25 years the aging of the population will dominate the demographic landscape. The number of Minnesotans over age 65 will double, rising to 1.3 million, and by 2030 older people will represent over 20 percent of the state’s population. This “age wave” will usher in a permanent shift in the age of our state’s population. Such a major shift in the age of our society has never happened before, and policymakers here and around the world are preparing for both the opportunities and the challenges that this dramatic change represents.

In order to prepare Minnesota for this demographic shift, in 2006, the Department of Human Services launched **Transform 2010** in partnership with the Minnesota Board on Aging and the Minnesota Department of Health. The purpose of Transform 2010 is to identify the impacts of the aging of our state’s population and to transform our policies, infrastructures and services so that Minnesota can survive and even thrive as this permanent shift occurs. The year “2010” was chosen as the target for action because it is the year before the large baby boom generation begins to turn age 65.

⁹ AARP Public Policy Institute, Independent Living/Long-term Care

Findings Regarding Housing Options: The Boomer Perspective

Current and future housing for boomers was a big topic at the 2010 meetings. Some commented that the state's current housing stock, which is nearly all single family homes, is not accessible for persons as they age, and this will cause problems for boomers as they grow old. Participants spoke of the challenges faced by housing providers as boomers being to shop for retirement housing. When boomers move, they are not "downsizing" as their parents did. Instead, they are looking for options that relieve them of home maintenance but give them more and different space, often in age-integrated communities. Many participants felt that the current stock of senior-only housing and assisted living options will not meet the needs and wants of boomers as they retire.¹⁰

¹⁰ A Blueprint for 2010, Preparing Minnesota for the Age Wave, Report on Transform 2010, Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Board on Aging

HOUSING & ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HOUSING

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- 1. Carver County will establish a county Office on Aging to coordinate informational services relating to seniors in Carver County.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, user surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Countywide House Study (Maxfield Research, Inc.), Countywide Economic Development Capacity Study (McComb Group)

- 2. The public will be made aware of senior housing issues and options and the potential impact of Baby Boomers on senior housing development via the development and dissemination of public awareness messages and human interest stories.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, user surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Countywide House Study (Maxfield Research, Inc.), Countywide Economic Development Capacity Study (McComb Group), media readership surveys

- 3. Carver County's elected leaders, staff and civic leaders will be aware of senior housing issues.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, user surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Countywide House Study (Maxfield Research, Inc.), Countywide Economic Development Capacity Study (McComb Group), pre and post test results of elected leader training participants

STRATEGIES:

- 1. Build on and define existing relationship between Carver County CDA and Carver County Public Health/Office on Aging to increase awareness and utilization of housing information and resources.**

- a.) Convene and conduct inter-agency key finding informational sessions on topics such as:
 - Population projections
 - Projected Senior Housing Demand
 - Projected Senior Housing Demand by Service Level
 - Projected trends in economic development
 - Role of Carver County Office on Aging
 - Overview and implementation of Carver County Master Plan on Aging

- b.) Develop information, assistance and referral protocols.
 - c.) Explore opportunities for joint grant applications and other joint ventures.
- 2. Increase public awareness of senior housing issues, senior housing market conditions and potential impact of aging Baby Boomers on Carver County senior housing market.**
- a.) Partner with Carver County CDA and local Senior Commissions to review local demographics, housing findings and recommendations from the 2007 Carver County Housing Study and jointly develop awareness-raising materials.
 - b.) Partner with Carver County Office on Aging to present 2007 Carver County Housing Study to local Senior Commissions.
 - c.) Partner with Carver County CDA to convene builders and developers interested in Carver County senior housing trends.
 - d.) Link with other Carver County Health Partnership Senior Commission Design Teams to obtain input, anecdotal items and review awareness message content.
 - e.) Convene focus group(s) to obtain input regarding awareness message content.
 - f.) Survey senior consumers/adult children as to awareness message content and clarity.
 - g.) Clarify and finalize arrangements with Carver County media outlets for regular coverage (currently underway).
- 3. Invite elected officials, builders, developers, city planners, building and zoning code administrators, et al, to attend Elected Leaders Training/Workshop on senior housing.**
- a.) Consider inclusion of following training topics:
 - Key findings of Carver County Housing Study by Maxfield Research, Inc.
 - Awareness of Chaska Community Land Trust
 - Dakota County model and associated costs for senior housing
 - “Mobile model” of assisted living in subsidized housing settings
 - Elements of senior-friendly homes: New construction / Rehab / Design and Adaptations/Modifications
 - Implications of senior housing and economic development
 - Innovative approaches to housing development
 - b.) Plan workshop and solicit qualified presenters and facilitators.

- c.) Evaluate level of effectiveness through pre- and post-testing.
- d.) Facilitate public-private partnerships to ensure that builders, developers and other senior housing stakeholders are part of the dialogues.

HOUSING AND ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HOUSING DESIGN TEAM

Chairperson

Julie Frick, *Carver County Community Development Agency*

Team Members

Sharmeen Al Jaff, *City of Chanhassen*

Steve Duske, *Watertown City Council, Watertown Senior Commission*

Nathan Franzen, *Plowshares Development LLC*

Jim Shermock, *Community Volunteer*

Amy Van Eps, *Carver County Community Development Agency*

Mary Welch, *Chaska Community Land Trust*

Consultant

Maureen Melgaard-Schneider

Section 4: Transportation and Mobility

VISION

Expansion of the built environment and physical infrastructure will be sensitive to the needs of a growing older adult population and will ensure that all people in Carver County have access to safe, convenient, flexible and affordable transportation options and related facilities.

BACKGROUND

Transportation is a lifetime need that profoundly affects the quality of life for all age groups. It is vital for accessing health care, for employment, general shopping, conducting personal business and maintaining social and family contacts. Having a variety of transportation options preserves independence and enhances the feeling of having control over one's destiny. It is also apparent that public transportation options must be reliable, affordable, easy to use and flexible to accommodate seniors and disabled residents of our County.¹¹

Mobility challenges are key to any discussion of transportation. The California Policy Research Center defines mobility as “being able to reach a destination when one wants to; it also means being informed about available transportation services, knowing how and being able to use them, and having the means to pay for them...Shopping for daily necessities, maintaining relationships with family and friends, having easy access to health and dental care, and participating in cultural, recreational, and religious activities all require the ability to travel to a variety of destinations.”¹²

According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the state's most rapid growth in the older population will occur in suburban counties such as Scott, Sherburne, and **Carver**. People who were young or middle-aged adults when they moved to the suburbs 10, 20 or 30 years ago are now passing their 55th or 65th birthdays.¹³ In a January 2005 Older Adult Survey conducted by the National Research Center, Inc., respondents were asked to identify potential services that would help older adults remain in their homes. Sixty-nine per cent (69%) of survey respondents identified **transportation services** as one of the services that would help.

11 Community Planning Report, Rowan County, North Carolina, “Improved Living for Older and Disable Adults,” January 2006.

12 Martin Wachs. “Mobility for California's Aging Population,” CPRC Brief: Strategic Planning on Aging, No. 6, May 2001, page 1. Berkeley, CA: The California Policy Research Center. Accessed April 25, 2005 from www.ucop.edu/cprc/pubsspser.html#sb910 Joining Strength to Strength: Realizing the Potential of an Aging Community Creating Community For a Lifetime

13 Minnesota Department of Administration, Minnesota State Demographic Center, “The ‘Baby Boomers’ are here,” June 8, 2007.

Federal, state and regional dialogues are currently dominated by issues such as the safety potential of aging drivers, citing statistics projecting that “every one of us is looking at a period when we’ll no longer be driving; “and most people will outlive their ability to drive by 7 to 10 years.”¹⁴ Other topics include the design of public thoroughfares that accommodate all members of the public – not just those who drive. For example, Kirkland Washington is in the vanguard of a growing national movement to plan “complete streets,” which allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit riders to share the road safely with automobiles.

“Complete streets” can include resting places, ramps to crosswalks, pedestrian-friendly medians, visible signs, recessed crosswalks, advanced stop lines, bike lands, on-street parking and wide, raised sidewalks.

Clearly, enhancing the transportation options available to all residents and, in particular, older residents of Carver County, will help many to age in place and actively and totally engage in their communities.

¹⁴ Ellen Schold Davis, Project Coordinator for the Older Driver Institute of the American Occupational Therapy Association Older Driver Workshop, Southern Minnesota Area Health Education

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- 1. Safety is emphasized and promoted in all aspects of Carver County transportation including roadways, trails, and sidewalks.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, Internal Quality Assurance Customer surveys, Metropolitan Council, MNDOT ridership surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

- 2. Convenience is factored into transportation and mobility planning efforts with the citizens of Carver County having access to information at lowest level of government.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, Internal Quality Assurance Customer surveys, Metropolitan Council, MNDOT ridership surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

- 3. Flexibility is a consideration of transportation and mobility planning and design in Carver County.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, Internal Quality Assurance Customer surveys, Metropolitan Council, MNDOT ridership surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

- 4. The affordability of transportation and mobility design and implementation is maximized.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, Internal Quality Assurance Customer surveys, Metropolitan Council, MNDOT ridership surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Southwest Metro Transit ridership reports.

STRATEGIES:

- 1. Increase awareness of, and emphasis on, safety considerations in light of growing numbers of older adults in Carver County.**

- a) Consider safety features in roadway design to protect older adults and the community from driving injuries and accidents.
- b) Consider signage and markings as relates to size, font, placement and reflective characteristics.
- c) Offer Driver and Passenger education initiatives geared to aging drivers, walkers and bikers. For example, *55 Alive Program*, aging-friendly vehicles, regulations regarding pedestrian crosswalks, early warning/awareness of dementia and programming to maintain and strengthen senior driving habits, e.g., “Car Fit.”

2. In cooperation with other Carver County departments and agencies, explore the feasibility of:

- a) Single point of contact models (“answer line”, “senior central” or Carver County Office on Aging) for education, information and assistance.
- b) Encouraging aging sensitivity in making transportation-related referrals
- c) Educating potential riders on the convenience of Carver County’s public transportation system.

3. Consider the utilization of local, county and regional transportation alternatives.

- a) Consider senior impact on local community growth in Carver County.
- b) In response to various needs and preferences, offer consumer choice, variety, accessibility and availability.
- c) Encourage *local* planning strategies dealing with accessibility to enhance efficiencies and ease of use.
- d) Increase efforts to enhance use of volunteers when available and appropriate.
- e) Support and encourage ongoing assistance from family members and friends.
- f) Make the connection between transportation and elderly housing and provide incentives for volunteers within senior buildings.

4. Improve transportation affordability through partnerships and advocacy.

- a) Continue to develop and utilize public/private shared arrangements and public/private partnerships, i.e., Southwest Metro Transit express routes and park-and ride- facilities.
- b) Utilize no-cost, low-cost volunteer programs.
- c) Evaluate potential of “Shared Car” concept.
- d) Supplement public funding with grant dollars.
- e) Advocate to local, state, and federal policy makers for increased public funding for public transportation through focused campaigns (e.g., identify and highlight development issues that impact transportation costs and use such as the proximity of health care providers, housing and shopping to available services and the walkability of local communities).

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY DESIGN TEAM

Chairperson

Jim Broucek , *Carver Community County Social Services*

Team Members

Gary Bork, *Carver County Community Social Services*

Roger Gustafson, *Carver County Public Works*

Alan Herrman, *CART Transportation*

William Monk, *City of Chaska*

Jim Sandquist, *Watertown Senior Commission*

Consultant

Maureen Melgaard-Schneider

Section 5: Civic Engagement and Volunteerism

VISION

Carver County excels as a place for all people to feel valued and connected. It provides the best opportunities and has the most people of all ages fully engaged in the life of the community. Plentiful and diverse opportunities are available for all to be fully engaged and make meaningful contributions.

The county, local governments, schools, businesses, faith communities and other organizations all work to remove barriers, facilitate and create opportunities for involvement.

A Working Definition of Civic Engagement¹⁵

Civic engagement encompasses actions wherein adults participate in activities of personal and public concern that are meaningful and purposeful as well as socially beneficial to the community. Civic engagement can take many forms, from informal or individual volunteerism to paid part or full time work to organizational involvement to electoral participation.

BACKGROUND

Civic engagement and volunteerism are essential to the health of older adults and to the vitality of the community. Older people remain physically and mentally fit longer when they participate in their communities, and communities gain valuable resources for addressing social issues when older people engage in volunteer work.

Older adults offer a unique combination of invaluable experience, the desire to make a meaningful contribution and what others in society desperately lack—time. Most communities fail to take advantage of this important social asset because they lack the systems to support a new vision of aging.

Trends in volunteering and civic engagement

A 2002 Survey of Older Adults by Civic Ventures found:

- Three in five (59%) see retirement as a time to be active and involved, to start new activities and to set new goals
- More than half (56%) say civic engagement will be at least a fairly important part of retirement

¹⁵ American Society on Aging

The vast majority (85-93%) of older adults in Carver County regularly socialize with friends, attend religious services or participate in cultural activities. Sixty percent volunteer for an organization—a rate far higher than the national average-- and many more volunteer informally or help to care for a loved one. Whether it's through paid employment, community service, informal volunteering or active civic engagement, it's clear that older adults in Carver County constitute an immeasurable resource with the potential to play a vital role in improving the quality of community life.

Never before have so many Americans had so much experience—with so much time and interest in using it.

Blueprint for The Next Chapter, May 2005, Civic Ventures

According to the Metropolitan Council, a major demographic shift is beginning as the Baby Boomer's begin to retire. Carver County's aging population will more than double by 2020. Multiple studies show that people do not automatically volunteer in greater numbers just because they have the time, even though lack of time is often cited as an excuse for not volunteering. Instead volunteering in mid-life seems to be associated with having more, rather than fewer, obligations and commitments and with being actively engaged in other aspects of life, such as working and parenting. Although the majority of Baby Boomers intend to be involved in their community, at present they tend to

volunteer less than the older generation but also intend to work longer. In order to engage them in community life, organizations will need to develop meaningful opportunities structured to meet the needs and wants of the Baby Boomer generation.

In addition, our communities need to take advantage of this population shift and to change the paradigm that an older adult is a burden to families, human services or the health care system to a new view of older adulthood, one where older adults represent a solution waiting to happen—a vast windfall for our communities if we can effectively capitalize on their experience, wisdom and time.

Older adults are seeking:

- **Opportunities to explore options for the next stage of life**
- **Opportunities to retool skills, obtain new training, or pursue educational interests**
- **Flexible work or service opportunities that use their skills and experience in meaningful ways**
- **Opportunities to make meaningful connections with others their own age and throughout the community**

Blueprint for the Next Chapter, May 2005, Civic Ventures

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM

DESIRED OUTCOMES: *(adapted from RespectAbility in America: Promising Practices in Civic Engagement among Adults 55+ Final Report, National Council on Aging)*

1. An increased percentage of Carver County's older adults will be engaged and volunteer in their community.

- a. Increased number and quality of volunteer opportunities
- b. Increased awareness of opportunities

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey

2. Carver County's older adults will experience an improved quality of life and increased levels of social connectedness.

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey

3. There will be increased levels of organizational capacity among community, business, faith and other organizations to engage older adults and effectively utilize their skills

Metric: Survey of participating organizations / reporting from participating organizations.

4. There will be a measurable community impact from the service contributions of older adults.

Metric: Survey of participating organizations / reporting from participating organizations. Drill down of data from Carver County Quality of Life Survey such as voting rate, etc.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop and anchor a Carver County civic engagement center or initiative within an institution

- a) Determine an appropriate institution to develop a comprehensive civic engagement center or initiative.
- b) Cultivate a public-private collaborative to promote civic engagement between Chambers of Commerce, Rotaries, non profits, government, schools, business and other civic groups.
- c) In collaboration with other Carver County civic groups and agencies, develop an award program to systematically acknowledge and reward innovative programs. Awards could be for development of intergenerational programs, development of meaningful new roles or other accomplishments.
- d) Host an interactive website for volunteer activities and available volunteers (similar to Match.com or other sites). Provide links to participating organizations and agencies.

2. Increase availability of quality opportunities for engagement

- a) Use the team model developed by the Vital Aging Network for training and deploying teams of volunteers to address community issues of their choice.
- b) Work with area organizations to increase their capacity for effectively training and utilizing volunteers for a variety of roles.
- c) Partner with existing programs such as RSVP or Senior Corps to expand into Carver County and market their opportunities.
- d) Develop intergenerational volunteer opportunities with local schools and other organizations.
- e) Work with local organizations to develop volunteer opportunities for homebound and/or less mobile volunteers.

3. Increase awareness of current opportunities for civic engagement and volunteerism

- a) Create a centralized internet clearinghouse for volunteer and learning opportunities as well as social and employment opportunities.
- b) Implement an ongoing media strategy to publish volunteer opportunities, stories and articles about volunteerism in local papers, e-mails, etc.
- c) Develop and implement an innovative public information campaign aimed at changing our mental models of aging and altruism with the purpose of developing a “culture of service.”
- d) Market a countywide “get involved” campaign to promote a vast array of volunteer opportunities to include churches, schools, libraries, health care organizations, other non profits, etc. Use both high-tech and low-tech marketing techniques.

4. Prepare and equip older adults for volunteer service and civic engagement.

- a) Develop and provide materials to help older adults plan for volunteer work and engagement as they age. (Refirement training guide).
- b) Work with area transportation providers to develop transportation options for volunteers.
- c) Train and deploy “personal navigators” to help older adults plan for retirement activities, obtain necessary training and place them into volunteer or work activities.
- d) Work with local government and nonprofit organizations to develop volunteer training programs for older adults.

- 5. Prepare and equip non profits and businesses to deploy and utilize older adults in volunteer or non traditional work activities**
- a) Provide training and information for businesses to develop more flexible work options for older adults and to recognize the value of volunteers.
 - b) Provide education to reframe existing programs to view older adults as healthy contributors with many assets.
 - c) Encourage and/or incent businesses to release their staff for volunteer activities.
 - d) Provide technical assistance and training to nonprofits, schools and government agencies to develop flexible and meaningful volunteer roles designed to meet the needs of older adults.
 - e) Provide technical assistance and training to local governments and nonprofits to develop innovative volunteer opportunities for homebound older adults.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM DESIGN TEAM

Chairperson

Sue DeGolier, *Ridgeview Medical Center*

Team Members

Linda McNulty, *Victoria Senior Commission*

Craig Peterson, *Chanhassen City Council*

Mary Riley, *CAP Agency*

Curt Robinson, *Chanhassen Senior Commission*

Robert Roepke, *Chair, Senior Commission*

Jim Weygand, *Mayor, City of Carver*

Consultant

Renee Wixon

Section 6: Parks and Recreation

VISION

Carver County supports well coordinated, affordable, readily accessible park and recreational opportunities/services offering mental, physical and social interaction that is consistently available to persons of all ages.

BACKGROUND

Community life for all populations and age groups is greatly enhanced by the availability of a diverse range of social, recreational and leisure resources. Recreational outlets that are specifically geared towards older adults can be a key factor in keeping them safe, healthy and engaged in their communities.

The benefits of regular physical activity are undeniable. Research studies have shown that regular physical activity can help the human body maintain, repair and improve itself to an amazing degree. And most older people – even those with illnesses or disabilities – can take part in moderate activity.

If exercise could be packed into a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed, and beneficial, medicine in the nation.

Robert N. Butler, M.D.
Director, National Institute on Aging

Sedentary Life Can Be Deadly

New studies are showing that sedentary lifestyles can result in muscle loss and significantly lower aerobic activity.

Researchers at the Department of Physical Education at San Diego State University recently completed a 23-year old study involving two groups of middle-age men. One group exercised regularly for 23 years. The other exercised approximately five years and then stopped.

When researchers tested the fitness of the men at the end of the study, they found those who hadn't exercised had lost 41 percent of their maximal aerobic power while those who exercised lost just 13 percent. These results were interesting since decreased aerobic power has long been thought to be a natural product of aging.

Additionally, the researchers found that none of the men in the exercise group developed high blood pressure, although two men in this group had high blood pressure initially. In contrast, 60 percent of the men who didn't exercise developed high blood pressure.

Brain Power

Research has also shown that exercise is good for the mind. In a recent study at Scripps College in Claremont, California, researchers compared 62 exercisers, ages 55 to 91, with an equal number of people in the same age bracket who didn't exercise to determine the possible effects regular activity might have on cognitive skills. Both groups were given a one-hour series of tests assessing memory, reaction time and reasoning. Results indicated that the exercisers performed significantly better in all reaction-time tests, all reasoning tests and in two of the three memory tests. "I think this study strongly suggests that exercise is important in preserving our mental abilities as we grow older," said Louis Clarkson Smith, Ph.D., who conducted the research with Alan A. Hartley, Ph.D.

The Independent Life

By far the biggest difference regular exercise can make in an older person's life, however, is in increasing their chances of remaining independent and able to care for themselves says Mark Fenton, a member of the "Partnership for a Walkable America," a coalition of private, state and federal organizations.¹⁶

It is clear that opportunities for physical and recreational opportunities are high on the list of attributes of a "Community for a Lifetime." As stated by Hank Pluster, Planning Manager for the City of Chandler, Arizona, "One of our planning goals over the years has been to develop a complete, diverse, family-oriented city. While retirement communities have not been at the very top of the list, it may be that the very qualities of *family living* – well-designed neighborhoods, parks, open space, greenbelts for walking, recreation and education programs, plus attractive neighborhood centers and commercial areas – are the same things that induce current residents to age in place."¹⁷

¹⁶ Excerpted from "Walking as a Way of Life" written for the Partnership for a Walkable America by Emily Smith of the University of North Carolina Safety Research Center.

¹⁷ www.AARPmagazine.org September and October 2007, italics mine

PARKS & RECREATION

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- 1. Increase awareness of and education about park and recreation outreach efforts and opportunities.**
Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey
- 2. Potential barriers to utilization of Carver County parks and recreational programs will be identified.**
Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey
- 3. Consistency, coordination and collaboration will be fostered among the local Parks and Recreation departments throughout Carver County.**
Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey
- 4. Carver County Parks and Recreational programming will utilize technology to the maximum extent possible.**

STRATEGIES:

- 1. Increase awareness of recreational programming and opportunities countywide.**
 - a) Design a generic “Senior-Friendly” symbol to denote events that offer transportation and other “senior-friendly” amenities (the criteria for this designation still need to be determined and ideally will be consistent across the Master Plan on Aging). Example: “Geared For Seniors.”
 - b) Support concept of a one-stop information resource center/office on Aging as a resource which raises awareness of opportunities for seniors and is coordinated in cooperation with existing senior programs both in and out of the county.
- 2. Design overcoming strategies to address identified barriers to elders’ participation in recreational programs as listed below:**
 - a) Barriers
 - Lack of awareness
 - Transportation needs
 - Location/proximity
 - Connection/community connectedness
 - Fear/unknowns
 - Cultural diversities
 - Ageism
 - Financial concerns
 - Lack of senior inclusion in programming ←(age 55)→

- b) Prioritize above list, as follows:
- #1. Need for increased awareness and public education
 - #2. Need for inclusive programming and activities
 - #3. Need to address fear/unknowns/financial concerns

Potential Overcoming Strategies

Priority #1: Awareness and Public Education – Support recreation service providers within the county to improve awareness. Where possible, collaborate on public awareness opportunities through:

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Internet | i. Link clinics to health promotion efforts |
| b. Bulk mail | j. Build awareness/advocacy through County Long Term Care Coordinators and Public Health |
| c. Various sites within community | k. Distribute information through churches and faith communities |
| d. Local cable TV | l. Distribute information through local Senior Commissions |
| e. Signage | |
| f. Press release | |
| g. Specialty flyers mailed to seniors | |
| h. Health/Prevention programs such as “Silver Sneakers” | |

Priority #2: Inclusive Activities

- Address hearing and sight impairments.
- Support and develop opportunities for physically challenged individuals.
- Address language barriers.

Priority #3: Fear/Unknown/Financial Concerns – Encouraging recreational service providers to:

- Consider free trial activities.
- Offer discount coupons.
- Consider “portable” programming, e.g., Waconia Parks and Recreation brings programs to children who are hospital patients at Ridgeview Medical Center.
- Consider value-added, dual branding, “buddy up” concept.

3. Encourage the effectiveness of parks and recreational programming countywide

- a) Evaluate opportunities for and explore the feasibility of joint programming.
- b) Utilize cross-bulletin (brochure) communication whenever feasible to promote and strengthen cross-community involvement.
- c) Evaluate and address complexities of resident and non-resident participation.
- d) Consider countywide Parks and Recreation sponsored events, taking into consideration reach, appeal, special populations and age specific activities. Event ideas could include marathons, triathlons, Independence Day fireworks displays, 5K run and senior games.

4. **Evaluate and encourage the use of technology applications for parks and recreational programming throughout Carver County.**
 - a) Foster, advance, and develop electronic awareness building and education, interdepartmental coordination, registration, etc.
 - b) Post information regarding upcoming Park and Recreation events on the Carver County website.
 - c) Develop capacity for and promote electronic registration.
 - d) Develop capacity for utilizing e-mail to send advance information regarding upcoming events to consumers.

PARKS AND RECREATION DESIGN TEAM

Chairperson

Marty Walsh, *Carver County Parks and Recreation*

Team Members

David Boorsma, *Victoria Senior Commission*

Todd Hoffman, *City of Chanhassen*

Julie Kuenzel, *Norwood Young America Schools District*

Kristy Mock, *City of Victoria*

Tom Redman, *City of Chaska*

Craig Sinclair, *City of Waconia*

Consultant

Maureen Melgaard-Schneider

Section 7: Education and Learning

VISION

Easily accessible opportunities for lifelong learning will be available to all residents of Carver County, regardless of age, race, culture or current levels of education.

Background

Lifelong learning is the process of keeping mind and body engaged by actively pursuing knowledge and experience, regardless of age. According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), almost half of the adult population in the United States (43 percent for men, 49 percent for women) are enrolled in some form of lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning—whether it's learning how to dance, speak a foreign language, write a newsletter, learn history through guided travel, learn improve to a golf swing, or repair a car—has many benefits for older adults to include:

- Keeps the mind sharp and improves memory
- Increases self-confidence, sense of accomplishment and purpose
- Offers an inexpensive way to try something new
- Provides an interest or skill that can be shared with others
- Can meet the need for socialization and connection with others
- Builds on existing skills and/or develops new ones
- Offers opportunity to learn a new skill or trade and increase income

Baby Boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964, are facing retirement and are changing the definition of aging. Laura Wilson, Director of the University of Maryland, Center on Aging, has been studying the boomer generation for years. She states, "Boomers want to continue to learn, they want purposeful social networks and meaningful roles."

The challenge in the future will be to design learning opportunities that are flexible and meet the variety of needs and preferences of older adults. From informal classes to learning new skills for employment, older adults will want to continue learning and growing through a variety of opportunities and experiences. They will also want more opportunities to share their skills with others and to socialize and network while learning.

EDUCATION & LEARNING

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- 1. Older adults in Carver County will be aware of and can easily access learning opportunities.**

Metric: Older adults section of the Quality of Life Survey.

- 2. Lifelong learning opportunities in Carver County will be designed to be “senior friendly.”**

Metric: Survey of continuing education programs, senior centers, faith communities and other providers.

- 3. Carver County’s older adults will have opportunities to share their wisdom and expertise with others.**

Metric: Survey of continuing education programs, senior centers, faith communities and other providers.

- 4. Older adults in Carver County will interact and connect with others through participation in lifelong learning opportunities.**

Metric: Older adults section of the Quality of Life Survey.

STRATEGIES:

- I. Increase awareness and accessibility of current learning opportunities**

- a.) Develop a centralized website that will list all learning opportunities with descriptions and ability to register online. Website should also be “smart” to lead people to opportunities that meet their interests. Website should also send out e-mails about upcoming events. This website could be an extension of the library system’s site.

- b.) Community Education, Parks & Recreation, Chambers of Commerce, Library and other private, faith-based organizations will all list their opportunities on the centralized website.

- c.) A “Senior Friendly” symbol will denote all classes that have transportation and other “senior-friendly” amenities (the criteria for this designation still need to be determined and should be consistent across all Design Teams).

- d.) Develop written materials to supplement the website.

- e.) Learning opportunity e-mails are sent out to all county residents who register via their driver’s license or utility bill.

- 2. Ensure that Carver County educational and cultural opportunities are “senior-friendly”**
 - a.) Develop a definition for senior-friendly cultural opportunities.
 - b.) Host a forum / dialogue with educational providers such as Community Education, Parks & Recreation Departments, Senior Centers, Arboretum, Ridgeview, Three Rivers Park District, Libraries and the University of Minnesota Extension Service.
 - c.) Develop a series of symbols to be used to denote senior /family friendly/disability friendly (symbols for affordability, daytime, transportation, etc).
 - d.) Adopt value / policy across all agencies.
 - e.) Get commitment from providers to develop senior-friendly opportunities.
 - f.) Train educational organizations and others about what senior-friendly learning opportunities will look like.
- 3. Tap into the wisdom and expertise of older adults**
 - a.) Develop a centralized website where older adults can list their expertise and willingness to share (need to screen) to be matched with opportunities and schools and other community settings (Volunteer Match.com).
 - b.) Develop a speaker’s bureau.
 - c.) Develop mentoring opportunities.
 - d.) Ensure that learning and teaching opportunities are cross-generational.
- 4. Foster socialization and networking through learning experiences.**
 - a.) Schedule interactive learning opportunities such as art crawls, book clubs, political groups, music clubs.
 - b.) Develop countywide networks and learning opportunities.
 - c.) Intentionally schedule socialization time into learning opportunities.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING DESIGN TEAM

Chairpersons

Tari Clay, *Carver County Libraries*

Barbara Colhapp, *Senior Commission*

Team Members

Diane Johnson, *Watertown Mayer Community Education*

Keith Juliar, *Carver County Public Health*

Gay Mattson, *Watertown Mayer Community Education*

Dan McInerny, *Dan McInerny P.A.*

Pat McGough, *Carver County Senior Services Advisory Committee*

Bob Wittman, *Robbinsdale School District*

Consultant

Renee Wixon

CRITERIA FOR “SENIOR FRIENDLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES”

Scheduling / Registration

- A variety of courses and opportunities to meet a range of interests are offered.
- Course information and registration is available with human interaction either in-person or over the phone.
- Bulletins and class materials are printed on white or light-colored non-shiny paper in large font.
- Learning opportunities for older adults are scheduled during daylight hours.
- Online registration is easy to navigate, available in large size font and requires a minimum of “clicks.”
- The learning opportunity is reasonably priced and affordable.

Access

- Transportation options are available.
- Adequate disabled / senior parking spots are available.
- There is handicapped accessibility.
- Snow and ice are aggressively removed.
- There are handrails into the building entrance.
- There are no or limited steps on the way to the classroom.
- There is adequate signage directing the senior to the classroom location.
- The learning opportunity is located in a classroom that is close to the entrance of the building so walking requirements are limited.
- The classroom or learning space has seating that is appropriate for adults – adult sized tables and chairs--not child size desks.

Instructor / Facilitator

- The Instructor / Facilitator speaks and annunciates clearly.
- The Instructor / Facilitator speaks loudly enough to be heard and/or there is a sound system for amplification.
- The Instructor / Facilitator arrives at least 15 minutes prior to the start time.
- Handouts and course materials are printed in large type font (14 pts. or above) on non-glossy paper.
- The Instructor / Facilitator is respectful.

Social Interaction

- Social interaction between learners is encouraged and fostered.
- Class sessions and outings are designed to promote social interaction between learners.

Section 8: Safety

VISION

In partnership with county and local agencies, Carver County offers a safe and secure environment for all populations by working to reduce criminal victimization, inform and address personal safety preparedness and provide advocacy crisis assistance.

BACKGROUND

Regardless of one's age, all individuals desire to live in safety. While they are sometimes called the "golden years," a time for older adults to enjoy retirement and the fruit of the hard-earned labors, individuals at this stage of life have a new set of safety issues. Family and friends can provide help, but elders must be able to protect themselves from a myriad of safety-related concerns, such as scams, fraud and identity theft, personal home safety, medical safety and wellness and emergency preparedness planning.

With the subject of emergency and disaster preparedness at the forefront of frequent discussions in today's culture, all residents of Carver County should be encouraged to learn about and prepare, not only for themselves and their families, but also for large scale events that could require community-wide efforts to lessen the impact of a disaster.

Individuals 60 years and older have a higher proportion of persons losing at least \$5,000 in Internet frauds than victims in any other age category. According to the National Fraud Information Center, more than 25% of telemarketing victims reporting to the Center in 2002 were older adults. Elderly victims often don't report fraud and exploitation because he/she believes that they are to blame, feel a sense of shame and embarrassment, or fear that they will not be believed.

Carver County residents are fortunate that the County is actively involved in a national **CASE** (Counties Against Senior Exploitation) Partnership Program. This program was piloted in 2002, and Carver County was one of 20 sites in America selected as a replication model. It includes monthly fraud alerts, "Power Against Fraud Seminars" which are presented to various groups, and Fraud Prevention Assistance. A "**CASE Assistance Line**" is designated at the County District Attorney's office to encourage reporting of elder fraud and exploitation to the prosecutor's office as well as to provide assistance with fraud prevention. If warranted, a referral for further investigation is made to the Carver County Sheriff's Department or the Chaska Police Department.

SAFETY

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- 1. There is ongoing education and awareness-building around the multiple safety concerns affecting older adults.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, consumer surveys and presentation evaluations, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan

- 2. Technology resources will be applied to safety concerns to the highest extent possible.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey

- 3. The need for new and/or additional program initiatives will be evaluated and considered.**

Metric: N/A

- 4. Coordination and collaboration will be fostered in the administration of countywide senior-related Safety programs.**

Metric: Carver County Quality of Life Survey, user satisfaction surveys, Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan

STRATEGIES:

- 1. Continue to build awareness of criminal victimization of elders.**

a.) Continue involvement with CASE (Communities Against Senior Exploitation Partnership).

b.) Consider development of Speaker's Bureau with availability of speakers qualified to address senior-related safety issues. Suggested topics could include enhanced awareness of home security (low to high level, e.g., locking residential doors, lockable mailboxes, personal use of shredders, security systems, alarm-vs.-alert, cell phone safety, clarifying senior safety options, debunking safety myths, et al).

c.) Interface with Carver County Sheriff's Department, local fire departments, Carver County Safety Officer, Carver County Risk Emergency Manager, and First Responders to ensure that senior issues related to personal preparedness planning are addressed and met, and determine outreach programs currently in place e.g., smoke detector check-ups, et al. Potential topics include small weather-oriented watches and warnings, fire safety and evacuation, family communication planning in disasters, and personal emergency planning.

2. Tap into and maximize available and emerging technology resources and applications.

- a.) Develop where needed and ensure that web-based materials regarding senior safety, fraud and abuse issues and personal preparedness are available on the Carver County website.
- b.) Interface with Carver County Office on Aging to post electronic resource guide on County website to include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Ready Carver www.readycarver.org
 - Department of Homeland Security www.ready.gov
 - American Red Cross – Disaster Preparedness for Seniors www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/seniors.html
 - Minnesota State Council on disability <http://www.state.mn.us/portal/mn/jsp/home.do?agency=MSCOD>
 - Minnesota Department of Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery www.health.state.mn.us
 - Older & Wiser: Home Fire Safety Check for Family & Friends of Older Adults. www.firesafetycouncil.com

3. Evaluate and develop new Safety initiatives.

- a.) Consider development of a **TRIAD** (The Right Information and Direction) Program in Carver County.
- b.) Be intentional regarding development of intergenerational programming.
- c.) Provide a conduit for education and awareness of Adult Protection issues through partnership with Carver County Community Social Services.
 - Focus on: Exploitation of Seniors, physical and sexual abuse, abuse within institutional facilities
 - Consider potential partners such as: Ridgeview Medical Center, Waconia, St. Francis Regional Medical Center, Shakopee, et al.
- d.) Explore **Banks Information System** (BITS) Program to focus on banks and financial exploitation interventions, education on protocols, policies and procedures regarding bank safety boxes.
- e.) Explore need for safety initiatives in Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) to focus on provider safety and safety training, criminal background checks, victimization awareness, disaster planning and emergency preparedness.

5. Promote collaborative partnerships among county agencies responsible for the administration of Safety programming.

- a.) Partner with “Carver County Office of Aging” as vehicle for coordination of above programs/initiatives.
- b.) Provide Carver County seniors a direct link to law enforcement assistance by incrementally moving toward restoration of “Victim Assistance Program Coordinator” position to Carver County Sheriff’s as well as Chaska Police Department. Functions of Victim Assistance Program include advocacy and crisis intervention.

SAFETY DESIGN TEAM

Chairperson

Mike Fahey, *Carver County Attorney*

Team Members

Kelley Archer, *Prime Therapeutics, LLC*

Chris Capaul, *Mayor, City of Mayer*

Scott Knight, *Chaska Chief of Police*

Bud Olson, *Carver County Sheriff*

Consultant

Maureen Melgaard-Schneider

Section 9: Employment and Work

VISION

Employers in Carver County understand the benefits of older workers and structure their employment practices to attract and retain older adults. Every older adult who chooses to or needs to work can find flexible and meaningful employment in Carver County.

BACKGROUND

The Carver County workforce is aging with the first wave of Baby Boomers beginning to reach average retirement age (62 to 65 years). Soon, large numbers of Baby Boomers will be leaving the traditional work force, while fewer younger workers will be entering--creating critical worker shortages in many industries. These trends have dramatic implications for our economy. Income tax collections will be lower and fewer workers will be in the workforce to support the retiring Baby Boomers. Going forward, it will be critical to change the equation: keeping Baby Boomers in the work force longer will be central to any solution.

Many, if not most of the Baby Boomers have 10 to 20 more healthy years ahead after retirement, as Americans now measure retirement in decades rather than years. However, it is doubtful that ever-longer retirement will continue to be beneficial or affordable—either for individuals or our communities. For most Baby Boomers, several additional years of work in some form, not necessarily full-time career employment, will be both desirable and necessary. Many older adults (65-80 percent) expect and want to continue working past the traditional retirement age for both financial and personal reasons.

A truly win-win solution is for the Baby Boomers to continue in the workforce (in some form) past traditional retirement age. Work helps people to maintain a sense of meaning and purpose; helps to maintain connections with others and is associated with better health. Retaining Baby Boomers in the workforce will be beneficial to employers as it will help to resolve critical worker shortages while maintaining top talent. Multiple studies have documented that older adults are of great benefit to employers as they bring a wealth of experience, are more productive and committed, stay in their positions longer (reducing turnover costs) and are not significantly more expensive than younger workers. Clearly, a compelling business case can be made for retaining older workers in today's workforce.¹⁸ Keeping older adults in the workplace will also serve to benefit the economy and as they will continue to pay taxes and receive income and other benefits.

While many of the Baby Boomers want or need to remain in the workplace, few want to continue in traditional, career full-time employment. Instead, the Baby Boomers want more

¹⁸ The Business Case for Workers Age 50+ Planning for Tomorrow's Talent Needs in Today's Competitive Environment. A Report for AARP Prepared by Towers Perrin, December 2005.

flexibility and meaning in their work. According to the New Face of Work Survey by Civic Ventures and the Met Life Foundation, Baby Boomers don't view retirement as freedom **from** work, rather freedom **to** work. A new phase of life between the middle years and true old age is emerging where older adults can begin a new stage of work with flexibility and purpose.

Despite the intentions of many Baby Boomers to continue working, older adults still face multiple barriers, including financial disincentives to work, workplace discrimination, lack of training opportunities, pension rules that penalize work, inflexible federal regulations, union contracts, mandatory retirement and other disincentives.¹⁹ Businesses need to proactively modify their policies and practices to encourage rather than discourage older adults from staying in the workforce.

In the future, in order to recruit, retain and engage older adults as workers, employers will need to offer flexibility in work schedules (part-time and/or job share positions, bridging employment, work at home options, contract positions and phased retirements), as well as a mix of rewards and innovative "cafeteria-type" compensation and benefit packages. Companies will also need to intentionally promote a workplace environment that values older adults and creates positive work experiences. Companies that fully position themselves for the coming demographic shifts in the workforce will have a competitive edge.

The Baby Boomers must also play a key role. It is essential that older adults keep up with the latest technologies, learn new skills and perform new functions. Continuous learning and training needs to be available to and availed upon by the aging Baby Boomers. In addition, Baby Boomers need to plan for the future by developing realistic financial plans and preparing for future or continued employment.

¹⁹ New Opportunities for Older Workers. Committee for Economic Development, 1999.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORK

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- 1. Carver County employers will recognize the value of older adults as employees and will implement senior-specific recruitment and hiring practices.**

Metric: Carver County Employer Surveys

- 2. There will be sufficient flexible and meaningful employment opportunities available to older adults in Carver County.**

Metric: Older adult section of Carver County Quality of Life Survey

- 3. Carver County employers will restructure positions, develop phased retirement options and offer “cafeteria-type” compensation and benefit packages to recruit and retain older adults.**

Metric: Carver County Employer Surveys

- 4. There will be multiple training opportunities available for older adults to update and maintain their work-related skills.**

Metric: Carver County Employer Surveys, Data from Carver County Workforce Center

- 5. Higher percentages of older adults will continue in the workforce past age 65—through a phased retirement plan, bridging employment, job share, work at-home, contract employment or other flexible options.**

Metric: Older Adult section of Carver County Quality of Life Survey

STRATEGIES:

- 1. Increase awareness among Carver County employers and older adults about the benefits and value of employing older adults.**

- a.) Make presentations about the implications of baby boomer retirements to the Chamber of Commerce, professional associations and other business groups.

- b.) Host town-hall meetings or similar forums to help older adults understand new employment possibilities and creative ways to phase their retirement.

- c.) Working with the Carver County Workforce Service Center, Chambers of Commerce, professional associations and other groups, promote the benefits of hiring older adults to meet critical worker shortages.
- d.) Disseminate information to Carver County employers about the value of hiring and retaining older adults as workers and provide technical assistance to help develop innovative recruitment practices and compensation packages designed to meet the needs of older adults.

2. Encourage Carver County employers to restructure positions and to develop phased retirement options for their workforce.

- a.) Advocate for changes in federal and state laws to allow greater flexibility in hiring older workers for contingent and part-time work.
- b.) Call on employers to rethink practices and policies that encourage traditional retirement and/or discourage continued employment for older adults. Provide technical assistance to workplaces to assist them in redesigning policies and practices to encourage older adults to remain in the workforce and to develop flexible work options such as phased retirement, contract work, job sharing, work from home, etc.
- c.) Advocate for the development of flexible “cafeteria-type” compensation packages that allow older adults to opt out of benefits and/or be compensated with innovative incentives.
- d.) Showcase model programs and employers.
- e.) Encourage employers and/or groups of employers to develop supportive services for older adults in the workplace such as van-pooling or other transportation options.

3. Ensure that job training and work-skills development programs are available and accessible to older adults.

- a.) In partnership with local employers, identify specific training needs.
- b.) Develop partnerships with the county, local colleges and technical schools, continuing education programs, professional associations and employers to offer flexible work-oriented and life-long learning opportunities to older adults.
- c.) Design and market training opportunities to older adults through the Carver County Workforce Service Center, senior serving organizations, employers, professional associations and other venues.
- d.) Work with local nonprofit and government agencies to design transitional internship, mentoring and quasi-volunteer positions for older adults to gain necessary skills.

4. Assist older adults in obtaining employment that meets their needs.

- a.) Ensure that job placement programs and local job search programs designed to meet the needs of older adults are in place and up-to-date.
- b.) Provide individualized assistance to older adults seeking work through the Carver County Workforce Service Center, employee assistance programs and other venues.

AD HOC EMPLOYMENT AND WORK DESIGN TEAM

Chairpersons

Sue Degolier, *Ridgeview Medical Center*

Bob Roepke, *Senior Commission Chair, Klingelutz Corporation*

Team Members

Neil Anderson, *Security Bank and President of the Chaska Chamber of Commerce*

Gwen Jansen, *Carver County Workforce Services Center*

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Please contact Katy Boone, Carver County Office of Aging with comments and questions about this plan.

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