

### Seizing the opportunity:

#### An Expanding Pool of Talent in Your Backyard

“Harnessing the expertise and experience of the aging population is one of the key assets that transforms a vulnerable community into a livable community.”<sup>\*</sup> Across the country, local groups have mobilized seasoned adults to address social needs ranging from homelessness, food deserts and smart growth to early childhood, youth development and health care navigation.

As they enter a new life stage of volunteering or paid work in the non-profit and government sectors, baby boomers and other older adults bring polished leadership and problem-solving to their tasks. By contributing, participants also keep learning and remain engaged.

<sup>\*</sup>Source: *Partners for Livable Communities* website

### What are your community's priorities?

Communities can't do everything, but they can determine their most crucial needs using various methods:

- Incorporating questions on livability and aging into community surveys – or conducting targeted surveys
- Designating a steering committee to hold interviews or focus groups with residents of all ages, knowledgeable professionals and volunteers
- Convening a community conversation of residents and local partners to build consensus on priority concerns and next steps for a more livable community

### How can communities jump-start progress?

- Municipalities don't have to do it all, but they can take a leadership role in focusing the community's attention on the aging of the population and how residents and organizations can become involved.
- Cities and towns of any size can build a local coalition that enlists older adults to create and implement a new approach to a pressing problem.
- Many Connecticut towns have pursued innovative models such as accredited senior centers, intergenerational programs and services delivered by skilled volunteers. Systematic ways to share successes around the state would help everyone.
- Sometimes intercommunity collaboration makes sense. For a small added investment, existing programs may be able to serve residents of more than one town.

The aging of the population will affect us all. The magnitude of the change has the potential to bring people together across generations and geographic lines. All Connecticut's residents will benefit from strengthening cooperation among municipal representatives, state, regional and private partners as we work together toward building 'Communities for a Lifetime.'

### Web resources

- **AARP Public Policy Institute: Livable Communities;** [www.aarp.org/research/ppi/livable-com2/policy/](http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/livable-com2/policy/)
- **City Leaders Institute on Aging in Place including Community Report Card and Livable Communities for All Ages brochure;** [www.livable.org/program-areas/livable-communities-for-all-ages-a-aging-in-place/city-leaders-institute](http://www.livable.org/program-areas/livable-communities-for-all-ages-a-aging-in-place/city-leaders-institute)
- **Communities for a Lifetime: Planning Livable Places for All Ages and Abilities;** <http://lifetimelivablecommunities.org/community%20planning%20model/index.html>
- **Community Innovations for Aging in Place; Technical Assistance Resource Center;** [www.ciaip.org](http://www.ciaip.org)
- **Maturing of America: Communities Moving Forward for an Aging Population; National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Metlife Foundation;** [www.n4a.org/files/MOA\\_FINAL\\_Rpt.pdf](http://www.n4a.org/files/MOA_FINAL_Rpt.pdf)

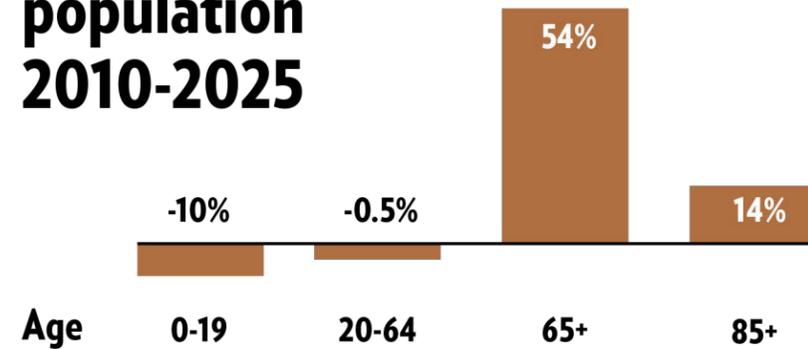
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# Creating Communities for a Lifetime

An Overview for Municipal Leaders

## Projected change in Connecticut population 2010-2025



## Number of Connecticut residents 65+ is expected to increase significantly

Increases in the older adult population – locally, nationally and globally – have been dramatic. Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation and is also home to over one million baby boomers. As more of them turn 65 every day, Connecticut will age even more rapidly.

Will Connecticut's communities be ready? How will the new reality – greater numbers of older residents combined with a shrinking proportion of younger people – impact community life? The goal of this guide is to help city and town leaders determine how they can foster continued quality of life as residents grow older. The good news is that all communities have existing assets they can tap into and that aging-friendly places are also more livable for everyone.

# 3

reasons for municipalities to plan for the changing population

1. The vast majority of Connecticut residents desire and expect to remain in their own homes and communities as they grow older. To stay independent, they want to receive information and supports locally.\*
2. Municipal services for older adults in Connecticut vary widely among towns and cities. With budgets decreasing just as numbers of older adults and their needs accelerate, even towns with robust programs may be stretched thin.
3. Increasing numbers of older community members are looking for new ways to contribute their skills and talents to benefit others – often in their own cities and towns. This is the opportunity side of the equation.

<sup>\*</sup>According to the Connecticut Long-term Care Needs Assessment, University of Connecticut Health Center, June 2007

# Lifetime Communities Checklist

ENCOURAGE YOUR MUNICIPALITY TO CULTIVATE THESE ASSETS THAT HELP RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

## 1. Community design and housing

- Zoning regulations and building codes that support flexible housing options such as shared housing and accessory apartments
- Affordable housing of various types
- Incentives for building housing with universal design features
- Zoning that permits mixed-use development so that shopping, recreation and medical services are accessible for those who limit driving or don't own cars
- Programs offering vetted contractor recommendations or assistance with home maintenance, basic repairs and modifications for accessibility

## 2. Employment

- Partnerships with community colleges, universities and adult education to offer retraining for older adults and others making job transitions while meeting the workforce needs of local employers
- Availability of training programs for home care workers so that people needing help can obtain high-quality assistance

## 3. Health, nutrition and active living

- Exercise programs tailored to residents across the lifespan including safe and accessible parks with multi-use trails
- Availability of health education, preventive screenings and immunizations
- Farmers' markets, community gardens and other efforts to make fresh foods more readily available
- Community partnerships to combat hunger and malnutrition

## 4. Lifelong learning

- Opportunities for adults to continue learning and participate in local cultural activities including partnerships with higher education
- Libraries that offer stimulating programs for residents of all ages

## 5. Local tax relief programs

- Local option property tax relief, tax freeze and tax deferral programs that allow older residents, people with disabilities and low income homeowners to remain in their homes

## 6. Opportunities for all generations

- Community spaces that encourage cross-age interaction
- Programs that build interdependence by bringing all generations together

## 7. Transportation and mobility

- Affordable fixed bus routes that allow residents to meet shopping, health, educational, employment, recreational and social needs without a car
- Door-to-door transit options for older adults and people with disabilities – including service that crosses town lines
- Volunteer transportation programs for medical and grocery trips
- Road design that addresses the needs of older drivers such as larger signage and dedicated left-turn lanes
- Walk-ability including sidewalks that link housing with essential services, safe crosswalks and streets planned for the needs of all types of users
- Mobility management programs that help older adults and others learn about transportation options and make the most of them

## 8. Public safety

- Voluntary registry programs to locate and assist older adults and people with disabilities during severe weather and disaster situations
- Neighborhood watch programs
- Collaboration among police, fire, aging services and adult protective services for safety education and prevention of physical and financial elder abuse
- Community policing tailored for special safety needs including those of older adults

## 9. Civic engagement

- A range of opportunities for all residents to contribute their time and talents to local and neighborhood organizations
- Active recruitment of older adults to serve on municipal boards and commissions

## 10. Help for caregivers

- Information, training and support for family caregivers including grandparents raising grandchildren

## 11. Access to information

- Local point of entry for information about public and private services to help residents age in place and maximize participation in the community
- One-to-one help to assess needs and navigate the larger service system
- Group informational sessions to educate residents and families about options for home- and community-based supports

### Who are the local partners?

Adapting to the coming population changes can seem daunting – especially with local budgets stretched thin. Potential collaborators can help chart a course and become part of the response. A partial list of potential collaborators follows:

- Aging services and social services departments and organizations
- Senior, community and recreation centers
- Libraries
- Health departments or districts
- Police and fire departments
- Town/city planners
- Hospitals
- Visiting nurse and home care organizations
- Faith communities
- Service clubs
- Retiree and employee groups
- Student service organizations
- Transit providers
- Businesses
- Arts and cultural groups
- Housing managers
- Schools
- University and college researchers
- Funders and foundations
- Local media
- Chief elected officials, town councils, legislators
- And more

### How can local communities prepare?

The demographic changes will impact all generations and can most productively be viewed as an issue for the full community's attention. Successful adaptation will demand a broad-based response. Looking at the community with a 'livability lens' and identifying potential partners will help make the most of existing resources. Analyzing priority needs can help pinpoint one or two initial areas for action that will have the greatest impact.

### What are your livability assets?

According to Partners for Livable Communities, "Livability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life." A valuable first step is to map existing assets that help residents of all ages participate fully and older people age successfully.