

I. Executive Summary: Condensed Version

A. Mission and Vision

Unless concerted community-wide action is taken, the rapidly increasing number of older adults in Washtenaw County will add overwhelming demands on support services and programs for seniors in the County. A 2002 report from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments projects that Washtenaw County is at the beginning stage of sustained rapid growth in the number of older adults. Between 2000 and 2030 the 65-plus population in the County is projected to nearly triple in size. Preparation for this new demographic provides a clear and mission-driven sense of purpose to the Blueprint for Aging.

1. Who We Are

The Blueprint for Aging evolved from a six agency senior service coalition that in 1998, with grant funding from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, created a senior unmet needs fund for medications, in-home care, utility bills, and other emergency needs.

A larger coalition, the Blueprint for Aging Services Partnership, created a vision for meeting the needs of older residents, emphasizing long-term care systems change. More than 40 community agencies and 70 individuals participated in this effort over two years. Their 125-page consensus report can be found online at <http://csswashtenaw.org/basp/>

Today the Blueprint is one of only a few projects selected as a part of the prestigious Community Partnerships for Older Adults, a national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. With endorsement from Washtenaw County's Human Services Community Collaborative and major support from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, the Blueprint provides a structure to:

- Test new ideas and efficiencies
- Bring greater visibility to the priorities, concerns, and experiences of seniors
- Provide seniors with meaningful ways to effect decisions about community issues that ultimately impact their lives
- Facilitate collaborative decision-making with consideration to overall systems improvements
- Build a community that is prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of Washtenaw County's rapidly growing older adult population

2. Mission

The Blueprint for Aging builds community with healthy, independent, and honored seniors.

3. Vision

All segments of the older adult population and their caregivers experience a consistently high quality of life.

B. Assessment of Key Issues

A. Demographic Trends

Between 2000 and 2030, the 65-plus population in Washtenaw County is projected to grow three-fold, from about 26,000 to nearly 73,000, representing 16% of the population.

B. Advocacy

As many solutions require action by elected officials, the need is clear for a concerted advocacy effort to inform and educate decision-makers. This effort must include a mechanism to encourage and empower providers and older adults to advocate on aging issues.

C. Community Awareness and Education

Lack of awareness and understanding of both the nature and extent of problems facing seniors as well as the lack of available resources and/or funding support for needed services, demands that improved public awareness and education form the foundation for success of any concerted initiative to fundamentally address major aging issues in the County.

D. Health Care Availability (including prevention)

Community forum recommendations include access to coordinated, comprehensive health care. Appropriate preventive measures addressing the major causes of chronic conditions and diseases must be incorporated into the lifestyles of older adults.

E. Support for Family Caregivers

Informal family caregivers are an essential underpinning of home-based services. Focus group and survey results indicate the need for an actual "system" of care, one that is coordinated and affordable as well as supportive and respectful of caregivers.

F. Housing Access/ Affordability

Focus groups reinforce the need for affordable senior housing, including maintenance, upkeep, and public policy/regulation. A survey of senior priorities identifies affordable housing among the top concerns of many seniors.

G. Trusted means of Access to Programs and Services

Community forums reveal senior utilization issues regarding referral and service agencies. Older adults and their families have concerns about reliability and trustworthiness of referral sources in both the public and private sector.

H. Access to Community Services that Support Independence and Safety

Seniors desire more options to help them age in place in their homes and forestall, as long as practical, the loss and disruption of moving to unfamiliar or unwanted settings.

I. Affordability/ Funding

Consumers reinforce the importance of affordability, placing highest priority on health services, prescription drugs and housing. Sustainable funding is a critical concern.

J. Access to Transportation Services

Community forums in all areas of the county validate that access to transportation is a critical factor in seniors' ability to retain independence and continue living in owner-occupied homes.

**BLUEPRINT FOR AGING
OVERALL STRATEGIC APPROACH
MAY 2006**



The Blueprint for Aging builds community with healthy, independent, and honored seniors.
All segments of the older adult population and their caregivers experience a consistently high quality of life.

Core Values
Employ Consumer Centered Approach
Incorporate Social Networks
Utilize Neighborhood Systems
Promote Sustainability
Build Trust
Demonstrate Efficiency

Key Issues
Recognition of demographic trends
Advocacy
Community awareness and education
Health care availability (including prevention)
Support for family caregivers
Housing access/affordability
Trusted means of access to programs and services
Access to social services that support independence and safety
Affordability/funding
Access to transportation services

Strategic Initiatives

Utilizing Technology

- Develop person-centered efficiencies in accessing and utilizing information with a Shared Point of Access website and database

Aging in Place

- Increase awareness and use of older adult resources in Washtenaw County among older adults and their families
- Increase media coverage of older adult issues and resources
- Increase utilization of services by at-risk seniors through the Community Volunteers Program
- Increase appropriate, affordable transportation services for seniors
- Increase the ability of family-caregivers to provide, secure, and coordinate supportive resources through empowerment and skill-building

Senior Leadership

- Increase seniors' ability to effect policy decisions that reflect their needs
- Ensure a system of quality assurance related to long-term care services in Washtenaw County

Foundation-Building

- Obtain financial resources to support long-term work of partnership

The strategic approach selected by the Blueprint was shaped by our current cultural attitudes on aging. Our social service system has been unable to educate consumers on prevention strategies. There are significant gaps between the availability of a needed service, its usefulness to consumers, and the knowledge, willingness, or ability of the consumer to utilize it. Our community also struggles with prioritizing a long list of critical services when only a small portion can be subsidized with local financing.

1. Key Strategic Goals

- Develop person-centered efficiencies in accessing and utilizing service information through a Shared Point of Access website and database
- Increase awareness and use of older adult resources in Washtenaw County among older adults and their families
- Increase media coverage of older adult issues and resources
- Increase use of services by at-risk seniors with the Community Volunteers Pilot Project
- Increase appropriate affordable transportation services for seniors
- Increase the ability of family-caregivers to provide, secure, and coordinate supportive resources through empowerment and skill building
- Increase seniors' ability to effect policy decisions
- Ensure a system of quality assurance for long-term care services in the County
- Obtain financial resources to support long-term work of the Blueprint partnership

2. Key Strategic Outcomes

- Seniors receive more comprehensive formal and informal care
- Community recognizes the broad continuum of long-term care
- Community recognizes its investment in issues of aging
- Providers improve services; seniors consistently rate services positively
- Elected officials, policy makers, and providers are well-informed about the needs and preferences of older persons and make decisions with consideration to them
- Seniors and their families have more timely, accessible, and accurate information and services due to coordinated technological information and referral systems

3. Community Impact

- A collaborative voice for aging
- An effective structure to deal with ongoing aging issues
- Community accountability for service provision with senior-decision making bodies
- Enhanced visibility of aging issues and their effects on everyone in the community
- A model for sustainability and best practice demonstration projects
- Increased quality and quantity of formal and informal care available to older adults
- Blueprint leadership for successful decision-making bodies, workgroups, and collaborative relationships:
 - Core Leadership Team
 - *Third Age Civic Council*, the Blueprint's Senior Implementation Council
 - Senior Implementation Council,
 - Topical Workgroups
 - Community At Large