

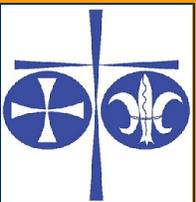
Aging in Place in the Adirondacks

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Educational Forum – Executive Summary

June 24, 2009



Mercy Care for the Adirondacks

Center for Inclusive Design and
Environmental Access



From Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy

God our Creator, our Mercy ministries are expressions of our desire to serve you by serving our neighbor. Through these many expressions of our charism, may we relieve misery, address its causes, and support all persons who struggle for full dignity. We make this prayer through the intercession of Catherine McAuley, who reached out with courage and love to the needy of her time. Amen.

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The Board of Directors and the Mercy Care Community Council will serve as members of the Aging in Place Project Steering Committee

Invitation

Mercy Care invites and welcomes individuals from Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake to volunteer to serve on community planning committees being established for each town. If you wish to serve on a community committee, please contact Donna Beal, Executive Director at 518-523-5581 or dbeal@adkmercy.org

Introduction

This Executive Summary describes the educational forum developed by Mercy Care for the Adirondacks and hosted by Paul Smith's College on June 24, 2009 entitled ***Aging in Place in the Adirondacks: Creating Livable Communities for Older Adults***. Mercy Care is deeply grateful to Paul Smith's College for recognizing the need to participate in intergenerational challenges and opportunities in its community.

Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is a mission sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy to enhance in every dimension the fullness of life of elders living in their community independently. Mercy Care is a renewed mission of the Sisters of Mercy who first came to the Adirondacks in 1895 to establish Sanitorium Gabriels to treat tubercular patients. Its work is carried out through a Friendship Volunteer Program, a Faith Community Nurse Program, and an Education and Advocacy Program. Mercy Care serves any older adult in need. For more information, visit Mercy Care's web site at www.adkmercy.org

Susan Hunter, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate at the IDEA Center, School of Architecture and Planning, SUNY/Buffalo, was the keynote presenter and prepared the full version of this report.¹ The IDEA Center has nationally recognized expertise in community planning, universal design, and Aging in Place communities.

Nearly 100 people attended the forum, including directors of five county Offices for the Aging in the region. Attendees came from communities all over the Adirondacks and beyond to learn about initiating an aging in place approach in their own home towns and regions. This report includes a summary of the presentation, reports resulting from the small break-out group discussions among attendees, and describes the next steps Mercy Care will take to work in partnership with Tri-Lakes communities to develop, over the next year, a ***Community Empowerment Aging in Place Action Plan***.

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¹ The full version of this report may be downloaded from www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea.

Greg Olson, Deputy Director for the Division of Policy Management and Public Information, New York State Office for the Aging, made opening remarks. He brought greetings from Governor Paterson and from Director Michael Burgess.

The New York State Office for the Aging, directed by Michael Burgess, is working to empower communities for successful aging. The Agency administers federal and state funded programs designed to assist the more than 3.2 million elder residents in the state, as well as programs that assist family members and others involved with helping elder residents that are in need of greater levels of assistance.

Director Burgess has taken the State Office for the Aging in a new direction, one that works directly with communities to provide the tools necessary to help local communities identify the strengths of their older population, utilize their skills and expertise to solve local problems and issues, identify the challenges that communities face, and work together to address them. Director Burgess has created a rural issues workgroup within the Office and has focused considerable attention on how to create livable communities in rural areas. In November 2008 a statewide Community Empowerment Conference was held to help communities develop a planning process for aging in the community.

Aging in Place in the Adirondacks: Creating Livable Communities for Older Adults²

Susan S. Hunter, Ph.D.

Senior Research Specialist

IDEA Center, State University of New York at Buffalo

Far more than architecture, Livable Communities for Aging in Place is a broad advocacy perspective that guides the way communities acknowledge and plan for services and facilities for members of all ages. Over the next 25 years, as the American Baby Boomer Generation ages, communities across the country will face growing burdens of care and unmet need for services unless they begin planning for changes that will make their communities enabling environments for lifelong growth. Sadly, a nationwide survey conducted in 2006 shows that the vast majority of communities have failed to confront this challenge. Local governments offer basic health programs but do not have policies, programs or services in place to increase quality of life, independent living, and the ability of aging Americans to contribute to their communities for as long as possible.

The IDEA Center of the State University of New York at Buffalo, an architectural research institute dedicated to improving the design of environments and products, began working with Mercy Care early in 2009 to provide technical assistance for this planning initiative. While the IDEA Center has experience working with large urban communities on aging in place and home modification, it has partnered with Mercy Care because it wants to broaden its experience and develop tools and approaches suitable for use by rural communities interested in planning for aging in place.

The Demographic and Policy Context

² The electronic version of the PowerPoint used in this presentation may be downloaded from www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea .

About two weeks before Mercy Care's educational forum, on June 8, 2009, the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (AATV) and its collaborators³ issued the report on the Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project (APRAP).⁴ Park residents' current average age is 41.3 and will increase to somewhere between 42 and 43 by 2020, older than any statewide average according to APRAP projections.⁵

With a decline in the number of younger people, schools are shrinking. Household incomes are among the lowest in New York State. The Park's sheer size, geography, and weather create challenges for the delivery of services. Park communities are generating creative solutions, including sharing services and seeking lower cost service solutions. The report provides a wealth of information for planning livable communities for aging in place, but it must be placed in the context of wider aging trends and supplemented by additional data.

Communities must plan for the future, and in this context, planning for Aging in Place and the "Grey Gold" of retirees is an essential part of anticipating a rich and successful future for the Park. The goal is to make our Tri-Lakes communities friendlier to residents and visitors of all ages, a process known as planning Livable Communities for Aging in Place.

Planners must recognize that older adults bring resources, talents, and abilities to the table that cannot be overlooked. Their voices, attitudes, and opinions must be sought to ensure that as valuable and viable community members, their needs are met. **These are the most important themes of successful planning efforts for aging in place: they are framed as positive, appreciative inquiries, and they must be driven by, involve and engage older adults as fully as possible.** In addition, planning for aging in place recognizes that the education, aspirations, and attitudes of the up and coming generation of older adults are substantially different than those who are already in older age groups.

The Aging in Place Concept

An aging in place assessment looks at the real situation of older adults and avoids subscribing to myths of aging. Older people are getting healthier and maintaining function longer than at any time in the past, enabling them to work longer if they must or please. While disability rates increase with age, the proportion of older adults with disabilities is going down. Treatments for chronic conditions like heart disease and cancer have improved, in addition to treatments for osteopathic conditions. Our understanding of physical and occupational therapy interventions and pain management has also improved markedly, and it will probably continue to improve, stretching our healthy years even further into the future.

Aging in Place

The ability to age successfully, to grow up, mature and grow old as a viable member of your community in a residential setting of your choice.

³ The report may be ordered from the AATV at www.aatvny.org.

⁴ *Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project (APRAP)*, May 2009, website address

⁵ The average age was provided by Greg Merriam of the LA Group, and is not cited in the report.

The typical person will spend most of their older years *not* disabled. So we are planning for an aging population that will stay well and active until their late 70s or early 80s. ***This suggests that activity, not dysfunction, must be the focus of our work and our imagination.***

At the same time, many older adults and their caregivers need assistance or accommodations by their communities to remain independent for as long as possible. Almost three-quarters of informal caregivers are female, more than half are employed full time, and almost half have children under 18 at home. Some 12% are over age 65, typically caring for a spouse. In addition, over 40 percent of older adults are caring for grandchildren who reside with them.

- Key Precepts**
- Aging is not just a health care issue, but a question of quality of life and livability
 - Age should not be a barrier to safety and enjoyment
 - Aging is a transaction between the individual and society
 - Universal design encourages an “ageless” community
 - Universal/inclusive zoning and housing design are critical to livable communities
 - Community growth and change must be continuously appraised

Creating Livable Communities for Aging in Place

Creating livable communities for aging in place promotes adaptation to the changing needs of a community’s members. Creating livable communities builds on community strengths, so that every community, urban to rural and in between, adapts to the need of their maturing population. The vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age. **Fewer than 5 percent over 65 reside in nursing homes.** Instead, most Americans choose to age in place, within the same communities where they have lived most of their lives. **Aging in place recognizes that many people don’t want to leave their homes and communities as they grow older.**

Aging in Place is what the majority of older Americans are now doing. The movement for livable communities for aging in place is a paradigm shift in public policy that responds to the shifting realities of U.S. demographics. **Livable communities should promote what is known as “successful aging,” or the ability to stay healthy, active, and fully participating as long as possible.** In 2007, *Maturing of America* partners surveyed 10,000 local governments to determine their “aging readiness” and “livability.” The survey found that only 46 percent of American communities have begun to address the needs of the rapidly increasing aging population.

Successful aging depends on two things: individual responsibility and social responsibility. **While individual behavior plays a role in how people age, active community planning is a critical component of successful aging,** The community plays a major role in determining the rapidity and quality of aging processes. **Planning for successful aging entails encouraging healthful behaviors, but it must also encourage healthy social settings.**

Livable Communities (for Aging in Place)

A livable community is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate mobility options, which *together facilitate personal independence and the engagement of residents in civic and social life.*

Many potential quality-of-life improvements can be accomplished with little cost as part of the local governments' regular maintenance schedules, and benefit every resident. Some examples include:

- Providing road signs and markings that are more visible and easily read by older drivers also makes them more visible in adverse conditions, like snow storms, and to new drivers and visitors;
- Adjusting the timing on pedestrian crossings to accommodate mobility-impaired older adults makes it safer for families with children or children crossing on their own;
- Changing zoning ordinances to allow smaller residences on smaller lots or accessory ("mother-in-law") apartments to accommodate empty nesters increases the housing stock for younger renters, seasonal residents, and visitors as well as for older adults unable or unwilling to maintain larger dwellings or those who need additional income.

Components of a Livable Community for Aging in Place

According to Mercy Care for the Adirondacks there are eleven core components of livable communities. The first component has been added to ten developed by the Partners for Livable Communities. For each of these components a series of criteria is recommended by which livability can be measured and common challenges identified as well as action steps to address them. These criteria are not exhaustive or mutually exclusive, and the categories may be combined depending on a community's needs.

1. Community is friendly to people of all ages

a. Elders are able to enjoy a fullness of life, living independently in residential settings of their choice, for as long as possible

- Recognition that each person has an immeasurable value and innate dignity that is not diminished by socio-economic factors, mental or physical deficiency, or by age
- Holistic care that addresses the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs is available to each person
- Compassionate and empathetic interest and concern for elders is expressed through companionship, friendship, counsel and assistance as needed

b. Elders are integrated into the life of the community

- Elders and infirm living independently are connected with their community through active supportive relationships with family, friends or friendship volunteers, and are able to participate in and maintain a sense of belonging to the community.
- Organizations provide programs for elders and all organizations make special efforts to include elders in their activities and to foster intergenerational programs that benefit from the interests and talents of elders
- Housing, public and commercial facilities, as well as transportation and services are designed to accommodate the needs of elders.

Common Challenges	Action Steps
A number of elders experience isolation and loneliness	Mercy Care's Program of Friendship Volunteers
In the Adirondacks, long distances from services, cold and severe winters and lack of public transportation isolate elders living in their own homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved public transportation and volunteer drivers to events in which elders participate
There is not sufficient coordination of all local services for elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a coordinated pattern of programs and services
Insufficient understanding of the needs of elders in the community and how they might best be met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct educational forums and a community-based planning project

2. Health and Human Services

a. Coordination and ease of access

- A single entry point or one-stop-shop for resources and services with easily accessible information about health and wellness programs
- Coordination of projects by local government, Area Agency on Aging, other organizations
- Access to a variety of health care options and adequate primary care services (1 primary care physician/1,000 residents of all ages);
- Inexpensive transportation services offered to and from health care facilities

b. Support for independent living through home delivered services

- Home care
- Other support services
- Meals on wheels

c. Prevention and health maintenance

- Preventive screenings (blood pressure, mammograms)
- Exercise and wellness programs (programs for health concerns such as heart disease; local parks and other exercise venues are accessible through several modes of mobility)
- Nutrition programs (nutrition classes geared to specific health and financial needs)
- Communal meals at a recreation/senior center

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Information about community services is not centralized	Raise Awareness about NY Connects, a single point of entry for information about services in each county
Home-based services are provided piecemeal rather than coordinated	Strengthen collaboration among home-based services
Poor diets and physical inactivity increase health risks for many older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support farmers' markets • Raise awareness about exercise and active living programs in the Tri-Lakes tailored to older adults' preferences; identify new opportunities • Provide vaccinations and preventive screenings
Lack of transportation to hospitals and doctors' offices affects access to care	Inventory available services and improve coordination and access to medical transportation

3. Transportation and Mobility

a. Accessibility and ease of use

- Varied types of community transportation options
- Public transportation for senior centers, adult day services, grocery stores, faith communities, cultural events
- Bus stops are enclosed, have seating, and post timetables
- Programs to increase public transit ridership by older adults (travel training, route and service adjustments, low-floor buses, discounted fares)

b. Pedestrian safety, walkability

- Sidewalks and street crossings safe and accessible (bump-outs, crosswalk countdown, island in middle of street)
- Sidewalks link housing and essential services for walking residents
- Streets have larger signage, left turn lanes, and clear road markings
- Residents walk or use public transportation for grocery store, doctor's office, pharmacy
- Community audits its walkability and improves pedestrian and bicycle access accordingly
- Comprehensive land use plans coordinated with transportation planning

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Road design makes walking difficult	Use walkability audits to identify and prioritize pedestrian improvements
Many older drivers experience specific difficulties related to the driving environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve roadway design and signage • Provide safety programs and refresher courses for older drivers
Customer-oriented community transportation options are lacking for older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make transit services more flexible and customer responsive • Support volunteer driver programs

4. Public Safety

a. Safety programs

- Older adults say they feel safe
- Neighborhood Watch programs
- Specialized training for frail elderly
- Plans for evacuation of older adults in a natural disaster or homeland security emergency
- GIS layout/ knowledge of older adult residences in case of severe weather or other situations that prevent residents from leaving their home

b. Abuse prevention

- Elder abuse/neglect identification and prevention
- Police and fire departments actively focus on preventing injuries and threats to older adults
- Law enforcement and fire department employees receive training on how to be sensitive to the changing needs of adults as they age

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Older adults commonly voice concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs

Common Challenges	Action Steps
about the safety of their neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create mail carrier alert programs
Elder abuse is an increasingly recognized problem	Train law enforcement officials to detect and report elder abuse

5. Housing

a. Housing options

- Subsidized housing facilities
- Zoning allows for accessory apartments
- Most housing is accessible or visitable and accommodates the needs of aging adults
- Housing codes that meet the needs of an aging community
- Assisted living options available and affordable

b. Home modification and repair services

- Skilled, reasonably priced home modification services available to residents
- Home maintenance and repair assistance available

c. Public services

- Service modification for older adults (snow shoveling, backyard trash collection)
- Impact on local property taxes of high percentage of fixed income citizens addressed

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Affordable housing options are limited ⁶	Institute property tax relief programs for older homeowners
Home and building design is tailored to a narrow range of physical abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute home modification and repair programs • Encourage universal design and visitability in new housing construction
Housing and services are not coordinated	Build partnerships between housing and service provider

6. Financial Services

- Tax relief for older adults with limited incomes
- Education and information about financial fraud and predatory lending
- Discount options for transportation
- Discount options for other public services

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Older adults need to manage their resources wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax relief • Discounts on transportation and public services
Older adults may need protection from predatory lending and financial fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train older adults • Provide centralized information on abusive practices

7. Workforce Development

⁶ The proportion of households headed by seniors paying over 30 % of their annual income on housing is one measure of accessibility. In many Adirondack communities, housing consumes 28 to 31% of total income in all age groups. Residents report that availability of affordable duplexes, apartments and subsidized housing is limited.

- Job retraining opportunities
- Flexible job opportunities
- Job banks for older adults
- Discounts for older adults who want to take classes at local colleges/universities
- Bi-lingual classes for non-English speaking older adults

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Older adults may need to update their skills and may need more flexible work opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job retraining • Educational discounts • Flexible hiring and work schedules • Job banks

8. Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

- Central clearinghouse for people for volunteer opportunities
- Local community organizations provide volunteer opportunities suited to older adults
- Older adults are surveyed about their volunteer interests
- Intergenerational volunteer opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities for older adults to serve as mentors or share their expertise
- Cultural opportunities reflect ethnic and demographic differences
- Older adults on government advisory boards and other committees

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Older adults are looking for a broader array of civic engagement options than most communities currently provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and job fairs • Support groups for older volunteers
Many NGOs and businesses undervalue the skills, capacities, and resources of older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and job fairs • Data base for skill matching
Older adults are a valuable resource in community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Asset Mapping of elder capacities • Start Senior Academies
Engagement with older adults can provide intergenerational enrichment	Support intergenerational learning programs

9. Culture and Lifelong Learning

- Community library delivers books to people in their homes
- Community centers offer programs on topics of interest to older adults
- Community provides opportunities for lifelong learning
- Low-cost programs in computer skills available and marketed to older adults
- Residents of all ages, backgrounds, and cultural interests can actively participate in the civic and cultural life of the community

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Relatively few community-based arts, culture, and enrichment programs target older adults	Provide a robust range of programs to enable older adults to contribute to the cultural life of the community

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Arts and culture programs often neither appeal to nor engage the talents of the increasingly diverse older adult population	Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning around arts and cultural production
Older adults frequently do not have opportunities to stay up-to-date with advances in technology	Increase technology training opportunities for older adults

10. Public Policy and Zoning

a. Support for housing options in zoning requirements and building codes

- Active older adult communities
- Development of assisted living facilities
- Senior housing options (flexible housing arrangements, shared housing, accessory apartments)

b. Needs of older population met

- Plans to ensure all land use patterns, transportation routes and community facilities meet the needs of an aging society
- Zoning allows mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development in appropriate areas such as town centers
- Comprehensive plan allows needed adjustments in land use to accommodate aging population
- Residents can safely and conveniently get needed goods and services without having to drive

c. Transparency of planning process

- Most residents understand the way local development decisions are made
- Most residents consider the process fair and predictable

Common Challenges	Action Steps
New community design that supports aging in place lacks broad public support	Engage older adults in the planning process
Zoning regulations discourage a broad range of age-appropriate housing options	Incorporate accessory dwelling units and elder-friendly housing in the zoning code

11. A Good Place to Grow Up and Grow Old

- Local leadership strives to promote interaction between all generations
- City understands that universal design concepts not only aid a specific demographic, but society as a whole
- Local government acts as an advocate and catalyst for developing partnerships, new programs and systems to aid and engage their older adult constituents
- Cities and counties are harnessing the talent, wisdom and experience of older adults to contribute to the community at large

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Awareness needs to be raised to understand the positive aspects of aging in place and the potential contributions of older adults to community growth	Leadership is educated and informed about Aging in Place initiatives in other localities

Common Challenges	Action Steps
Identification of avenues need to be created to harness the capacities of older adults	Older adults are viewed as assets to community growth
Broaden understanding that aging in place benefits all community members and can be used as a drawing card for visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of ways in which aging in place and universal design benefit all community members are provided to local leaders • Projects that benefit all community members are initiated first so the benefits of aging in place are realized by all

Summary

Many of these criteria, challenges, and action steps were developed by community planners, Partners for Livable Communities and the National Area Agencies on Aging in six major metropolitan area pilots. The results of this initiative are captured in the Partners planning guides, *Blueprint for Action* and *Aging in Place Technical Assistance Guide*. **The guides detail innovative projects and approaches in each subject area, which can be adapted to rural circumstances.**

Traditional planning for elders has emphasized healthcare and institutional services for end-of-life care. New approaches emphasize adaptation of existing residences for independent living and connection of community members to services through transportation and electronic innovations. As a result, community services developed over the past several decades are often not aligned to meet new aging trends and current preferences of aging and older adults.

This misalignment is reflected in Adirondack communities, according to the findings of a preliminary assessment “score card” which educational forum attendees completed prior to the June 24 event, reproduced at the end of this report. They scored their communities on the ten aging in place components, rating their communities on a series of criteria under each category corresponding to the elements listed above. The results reported below show the average proportion of items that the participants indicated were present in each area. **For example, on average, Adirondack communities represented at the conference had in their communities 49% of the health care items listed as important for aging in place.** Results for the ten aging in place categories, arranged in descending order of availability, are as follows:

Aging in Place Component	Percent of Items in Adirondack Communities
Health Care	49%
Civic/Volunteer	38%
Culture/Learning	36%
Public Safety	23%
Aging in Place Component	Percent of Items in Adirondack Communities
Housing	23%
Financial	22%

Good Place	22%
Transportation/Mobility	18%
Employment	14%
Policy/Zoning	8%

While the findings of the assessment are very preliminary and do not represent a scientific sample in any sense of the term, conference attendees included aging experts from around the Adirondacks. **The scores provide community committees undertaking an aging in place planning process with an indication of what services need priority attention.** This preliminary assessment, however, is not definitive, and respondents reflected communities with a broad range of experiences. **A more thorough assessment of community opinions and services should be made as the first stage of planning in any community.** Findings from such an assessment can be compared with some of the findings of the Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project report and with other sources of data to provide a more complete picture of the current situation.

Rural Examples are Few

Although national models have been developed in densely populated urban areas, there are a few rural success stories. **Rural communities are challenged by the need to deliver services over distances to less densely settled communities, and in reducing the isolation of community members who are living on their own.** The cost of delivering services may be higher in rural areas and skilled personnel hard to find.

In rural communities, the bulk of the affordable housing stock is likely to be old and in need of major modifications to be suitable for aging in place and independent living. Contractors with experience in home modification are often scarce. Housing options are more limited than in urban areas, and zoning doesn't accommodate a broad range of housing options.

Transportation can also be an issue for older residents of rural communities who don't drive, limiting social contact, procurement of basic supplies and food, and access to services. Typically, rural communities are designed for automobile travel. Even where housing is clustered, density may be too low to maintain shops and public services. Fortunately, studies indicate that in most cases, older rural populations are in better health and maintain their functional abilities longer than their urban counterparts.

Aging Well: An Example from the Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurses Association

Population: 6,000 to 7,000 people over the age of 55 spread over an area about the size of the State of Connecticut, with a total population of about 35,000 people. The total population density is 5 persons per square mile, one third that of the Adirondacks.

Mission: To support older adults to age in place.

Funding: Receives foundation and business as well as state support.

Services: Public health services, classes, activities and social spaces in rural communities. Services include fitness and nutrition classes, foot care, health screening clinics, intergenerational programs through schools and colleges, art classes, workshops, and physician referrals.

The Aging Well service area was formerly a mining and ranching area, but is now primarily a tourist area for skiing and mountaineering. Growing old in this environment – all above 7,000 feet in elevation and most often many miles from the nearest small town – is challenging in the

extreme. For the elders who reside in this region, staying at home presents monumental issues around transportation, communication, and access to services. As a consequence, elders move to larger cities for services that are affordable and accessible, or end up in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, even those whose functional abilities are still quite high. Aging Well creates connections to communities where services are available and creates services where there are few.

Aging Well makes a fundamental argument for creating intentional communities or natural gathering spaces that engage elders physically, psychologically and socially to sustain their functional levels and independence for as long as possible. In that regard,” says the director, “we are no different from many of our urban counterparts, but our strategies have to be different. Programs and services are offered to all people over the age of 50, and the program’s cornerstone philosophy is to provide wellness and prevention services to forestall the chronic health conditions so often associated with older age and to empower older adults to stay active and engaged in community life: to remain healthy, safe and independent at home for as long as possible.”

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)

Some of the earliest NORCs – naturally occurring retirement communities – were born in New York City. The NORC Supportive Service Program (SSP) works at the individual and community level to maximize the health and well-being of all older adults; foster connections within the community; and empower older adults to take on new roles. There have been Federal grants to nonprofits serving NORCs. New York and other states provide funding for services to help elders age in place (home care, household services, transportation, case management, outreach). By federal definition, NORCs can be comprised of single family houses in rural areas where (1) 40% of household heads are older individuals or (2) a critical mass of older people exists so a NORC program can achieve efficiencies in health and social services. Three year grants are available from the Administration on Aging.

Aging in Place in the Adirondacks: Conclusion

Although the Aging in Place in the Adirondacks Initiative is on the cutting edge of program development, the above example and other rural models prove that programs like this are viable. A planning process to empower Tri-Lakes Communities to Age in Place is needed.

Next Steps

In July 2009 Mercy Care for the Adirondacks was notified it has been awarded a Community Empowerment grant from the New York State Office for the Aging to work with Tri-Lakes communities to develop an *Aging in Place Action Plan*. The grant period is September 1, 2009 – August 31, 2010. The IDEA Center at University of Buffalo will provide technical assistance.

Mercy Care's role is to serve as a catalyst and coordinator to empower the people in each community of Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake to develop an action plan to better meet the needs of their residents to age in place successfully. It will build on the planning work done by local governments, planners, and community leaders and organizations. It will encourage and invite elders and their family members to engage in developing an aging in place action plan for their community.

Work Plan

1. Orient Local Government Officials, Community Leaders, Steering Committee, and Community Planning Committee Members to project and work plan; seek input; define roles.
2. Using the 11 core components of ageless communities, undertake a service analysis and needs assessment by surveying local government officials, town/city planners, fire departments, emergency squad members, police departments, zoning officers, and agencies serving elders to identify the services and programs available to persons aging in place in the Tri-Lakes and identify unmet needs.
3. Host focus groups in each community to include elders, present survey findings, identify unmet needs, seek input, and create a "blue print for action" to age in place successfully for each community.
4. Present each draft "blue print" in a community-wide public meeting to seek input and identify changes needed to finalize the action plan for each community.
5. The Steering Committee will review all three action plans to identify "Tri-Lakes Commonalities" needed to age in place successfully.
6. Publish a report containing the action plans for each community including a "Tri-Lakes Commonalities" section.
7. Subsequent to the grant period and working with stakeholders, follow up with applications for follow-on funding for implementation.

Appendix

Small Group Reports Mercy Care for the Adirondacks Educational Forum Aging in Place in the Adirondacks Paul Smith's College – June 24, 2009

Approximately 100 individuals, including elders, family members, religious, healthcare and social service professionals from throughout the Tri-Lakes and Adirondack region attended Mercy Care's *Aging in Place* educational forum. They broke out into four groups of about 25 people each to answer and discuss four topics selected from the Partners for Livable Communities components discussed above. Their reports are below:

Group 1 Report: Transportation and Mobility

Question 1: What things could a community do to ensure that residents can safely and conveniently get needed goods and services without having to drive?

- Public transportation
- Delivery systems—home delivered meals, library, grocery store, pharmacy, order out (deliveries)
- Visiting Nurses or health care services in the home
- Picking up individual services for socialization including getting to veterinarian's, church, doctors' appointments
- Colleges give credits to those who help improve socialization of individuals
- Programs to keep people mobile – physical therapy and low impact exercises, group exercises
- Services tailored to the elder's needs and likes
- Walking programs in schools
- Raising awareness of existing services
- Walk a hound lose a pound program
- Case management and evaluation to determine individual needs for services
- Better biking trails and education of motor vehicle operators
- Transportation should be accessible for persons with disabilities
- Snow/Ice tends to handicap all people—clear ice and snow-covered sidewalks and driveways
- Self-advocate or join with others to improve transportation services in your community
- Build robust Community Centers from Senior Centers

Question 2: In an ideal world, if you could make one change to improve transportation and mobility in the Adirondacks, what would it be?

- If we could fly!
- Improve public bus system
- This would be a big help in winter
- More flexibility with the bus schedules

- Expand services that deal with long distance needs for medical care
- Improve train system
- Ability to go off route to pick someone up
- There is a need for ambulettes

Question 3: Please identify three steps Adirondack Communities need to take to improve transportation and mobility.

- Provide meaningful incentives for those who volunteer their time
- Regulation Changes
- Employers offer time off for those who volunteer.
- “Pods” in neighborhood “helping” each other locally; community centers

Group 2 Housing, Public Policy and Zoning

Question 1: How might communities assist older residents to get trustworthy advice and qualified assistance for home modifications and repairs?

- Office For The Aging
- Housing assistance
- Community Action
- Town Office-Listing of “qualified” contractors
- Pick time of year to make repairs--off season
- Elks Club--outreach to give info
- 211 call in for info
- Chamber of Commerce-References/friends/neighbors/hardware store/lumber yard/people who open & close homes
- New York Connects--Provides Link--Mercy Care can be a starting point

Question 2: What improvements are needed in community planning and zoning to accommodate aging residents?

- Affordable Housing
- APA zoning simplify/expense
- Local rezoning
- Use local existing houses
- Housing Trust
- Sewer/roads/water
- Sidewalks/resting points
- Ramps
- Parking

Question 3: Identify three actions Adirondack communities should take to promote and develop opportunities for suitable housing for lifelong occupancy.

- Retired experts advise town/village trustees of needs
- Local coordination of info regarding services, i.e., Town Clerk
- Town/County surveys of residents

Group 3 Civic Engagement, Culture & Lifelong Learning

Question 1: How can Adirondack Communities provide opportunities for lifelong learning?

- Churches--provide opportunities for study of other religions and history; need to be held in accessible place for elders
- Libraries--provide local history, educational programs, book clubs; distance learning on computers via the internet, computer literacy programs
- Connect young students to teach elders computer skills
- Try to integrate elders into the community as a whole--not as elders but as contributors to the educational opportunities in the community
- R.S.V.P. programs help to integrate elders
- Elder education at colleges and Universities--use transitional programs for elders to integrate into the college class rooms; give college students another perspective
- Senior Living residences take residents out to community; bring community to senior living residences with educational "open to public programs"
- Make musical, educational programs available. Bring generations together for music such as Barber Shop groups, learn to sing harmony. Have choruses that are intergenerational.
- Bring adults together with children to share in child care. Build Senior Housing next to Child Care business.

Question 2: How can Adirondack communities be more inclusive and encourage residents of all ages to actively participate in the civic and cultural life of the community?

- Encourage people to bring friends to existing activities. Use word of mouth.
- Must be accessible/affordable and known.
- Advocate one to one contact for promoting opportunities.
- Accessibility of transportation.
- Educate civic and service groups about what is already available.
- Address problem of elder programs in the day and younger people programs at night.
- Address people power issues that are barriers to transportation and connection.
- Engage baby boomers and allow them ownership and self determination of a project.
- Address obstacles caused by overwhelming paperwork and lack of resources to make opportunities happen.
- Create satellite groups in the smaller communities (ex. Child care provided by seniors).

Question 3: Identify three actions communities can take to encourage older adults to serve on government advisory boards, other committees, and local community organizations.

- Ask them to be involved--one on one request for participation.
- Community needs to take an inventory of what groups exist. Go to places seniors gather to invite them. Use a hook "wine & cheese" to get them to come. Host more volunteer fairs for Elders at places they already go.
- Provide transportation for seniors to get to the community activities, call on them to be there. Ask them repeatedly to come, create top of mind awareness.

Group 4 Good Places to Grow Up and Grow Old, Public Safety

Question 1: How can Adirondack Towns, Villages, and Counties harness the talent, wisdom and experience of older adults to contribute to the community at large?

- Core group has always been involved--have them reach out to the people on fringe
- Encourage schools to recruit elders
- Demystify the aging process--teach lost skills--knitting, sewing, story telling
- Grandparent school programs-4H skills-maple syrup/planting/cheese making
- Intergenerational engagement--Our Town Project--writing elders' life stories--this year young people are interviewing individuals and then will write stories that have been told to them.
- Encourage age diversity with both ends of the spectrum-wisdom/experience vs. vitality and spirit.
- Reciprocity--when one is cared for, he begins to care for others

Question 2: What might local government do to improve public safety for older adults living in their communities?

- Better transportation--quality education of the people serving others, fixed points of pick-up and drop off, transportation that has wheel chair accessibility. LP to SL is \$20 cab ride. Old Forge has Wheelchair accessible van run by volunteers, pay by donation only, medical transport everyday, grocery shopping
- Heat program--plans to contact people of a certain age group during power failures.
- Public Health teaching regarding medications

Question 3: Identify three actions local leaders can take to promote interaction between all generations.

- Civic committees should have all ages--especially youth. Go into schools and invite students to come to meetings
- Multi-generational Center
- Recreational area that serves all ages and disabilities--educational placards within the area
- Senior volunteers to educate young people regarding mortgages, etc...

Community Aging in Place Score Card

1. Community is friendly to people of all ages

- Elders are able to enjoy a fullness of life, living independently in residential settings of their choice, for as long as possible
- Community recognizes that each person has an immeasurable value and innate dignity that is not diminished by socio-economic factors, mental or physical deficiency, or by age
- Holistic care is available to each person and addresses their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs
- Compassionate and empathetic interest and concern for elders is expressed through companionship, friendship, counsel and assistance as needed
- Elders are integrated into the life of the community
- Elders and infirm living independently are connected with their community through active supportive relationships with family, friends or friendship volunteers, and are able to participate in and maintain a sense of belonging to the community.
- Organizations provide programs for elders and all organizations make special efforts to include elders in their activities and to foster intergenerational programs that benefit from the interests and talents of elders
- Housing, public and commercial facilities, as well as transportation and services are designed to accommodate the needs of elders.

2. Health and Human Services

- Access to health care options that meet a variety of needs
- At least one primary care physician for every 1,000 residents (of all ages)
- Exercise and wellness programs, including programs for health concerns such as heart disease
- Free preventative screenings
- Nutrition classes for specific health/financial needs
- Communal meals at a recreation/senior center
- Meals delivered to homes
- Local parks and other exercise venues are accessible through several modes of mobility
- Inexpensive transportation services offered to and from health care facilities
- Information about health and wellness programs is easily accessible
- A single entry point or one-stop-shop for resources and services
- In-home support services (e.g., home care) enable older adults to live independently
- Projects coordinated by local government, Area Agency on Aging, other organizations

3. Transportation and Mobility

- Streets have larger signage, left turn lanes, and clear road markings
- Varied types of community transportation options
- Public transportation for senior centers, adult day services, grocery stores, faith communities, cultural events
- Sidewalks and street crossings safe and accessible (bump-outs, crosswalk countdown, island in middle of street)
- Sidewalks link housing and essential services for walking residents
- Residents walk or use public transportation for grocery store, doctor's office, pharmacy
- Bus stops are enclosed, have seating, and post timetables
- Programs to increase public transit ridership by older adults (travel training, route and service adjustments, low-floor buses, discounted fares)
- Community audits its walkability and improves pedestrian and bicycle access accordingly

- Comprehensive land use plans coordinated with transportation planning

4. Public Safety

- Most older adults say they feel safe living in our community
- Elder abuse/neglect identification and prevention
- Neighborhood Watch programs
- Specialized training for frail elderly
- Plans for evacuation of older adults in a natural disaster or homeland security emergency
- Police and fire departments actively focus on preventing injuries and threats to older adults
- Law enforcement and fire department employees receive training on how to be sensitive to the changing needs of adults as they age
- GIS layout/ knowledge of older adult residences in case of severe weather or other situations that prevent residents from leaving their home

5. Housing

- Home maintenance and repair assistance available
- Skilled, reasonably priced home modification and repair services available to residents
- Service modification for older adults (snow shoveling, backyard trash collection)
- Subsidized housing facilities
- Most housing is accessible or visitable and accommodates the needs of aging adults
- Impact on local property taxes of high percentage of fixed income citizens addressed
- Housing codes that meet the needs of an aging community
- Assisted living options available and affordable
- Many households headed by seniors paying over 30 % annual income on housing

6. Finance Services

- Tax relief for older adults with limited incomes
- Education and information about financial fraud and predatory lending
- Discount options for transportation
- Discount options for other public services

7. Workforce Development

- Job retraining opportunities
- Flexible job opportunities
- Job banks for older adults
- Discounts for older adults who want to take classes at local colleges/universities
- Bi-lingual classes for non-English speaking older adults

8. Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities

- Opportunities for older adults to volunteer
- Intergenerational volunteer opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities for older adults to serve as mentors or share their expertise
- Cultural opportunities reflect ethnic and demographic differences
- Central clearinghouse that people for volunteer opportunities
- Older adults on government advisory boards and other committees
- Local community organizations provide volunteer opportunities suited to older adults
- Older adults been surveyed about their volunteer interests

9. Culture and Lifelong Learning

- Community library delivers books to people in their homes

- Community centers or other public facilities offer programs on topics of interest to older adults
- Community provides opportunities for lifelong learning
- Low-cost programs in computer skills available and marketed to older adults
- Residents of all ages, backgrounds, and cultural interests can actively participate in the civic and cultural life of the community

10. Public Policy and Zoning

- Zoning requirements and building codes support the development of active older adult communities
- Zoning requirements and building codes support the development of assisted living facilities
- Zoning requirements, subdivision regulations or building codes that promote/support other senior housing options (flexible housing arrangements, shared housing, accessory apartments)
- Plans to ensure all land use patterns, transportation routes and community facilities meet the needs of an aging society
- Zoning allows mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development in appropriate areas such as town centers
- Comprehensive plan allows needed adjustments in land use to accommodate aging population
- Residents can safely and conveniently get needed goods and services without having to drive
- Most residents understand the process by which decisions about development are made,
- Most residents consider the process fair and predictable

11. A Good Place to Grow Up and Grow Old

- Local leadership strives to promote interaction between all generations
- City understands that universal design concepts not only aid a specific demographic, but society as a whole
- Local government acts as an advocate and catalyst for developing partnerships, new programs and systems to aid and engage their older adult constituents
- Cities and counties are harnessing the talent, wisdom and experience of older adults to contribute to the community at large