

The Town of Davidson



Aging in Place Task Force Final Report

DRAFT

January, 2008

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In the spring of 2006 three Davidson citizens – Sauni Wood, Anne Burney, and Bill Johnson – gathered information for the Davidson Town Board on the Aging in Place phenomenon. They anticipated the rapid escalation of the senior population in Davidson and asked the Board to consider expanding the Town’s resources for seniors. Their presentation to the Board in early summer spurred the formation of the Aging in Place Task Force (AIPTF) which began formal meetings in January, 2007; they have had over 40 meetings to date. The mission of the AIPTF is to “enhance Davidson’s resources as a senior-friendly community.” The Town of Davidson has the spirit of Aging in Place already incorporated into its mission and values statements. The goal of the task force was to illuminate specific areas for improvement to enhance seniors’ quality of life.

The AIPTF identified four necessary steps to pinpoint resources and policies that would enable Davidson seniors to remain in their homes – and in Davidson – as long as possible:

1. **Educate** themselves about aging issues and resources currently available.
2. Conduct a **community survey** to discern the needs and perceptions of Davidson’s older citizens.
3. **Research** options for services and service delivery.
4. Make **recommendations** to the Town Board for enhancement of existing services and policies for additional senior resources.

1. Educate

Numerous aging experts were consulted and made presentations to the AIPTF, including:

- David Segmiller, FreemanWhite Architects
- Gayla Woody, Centralina Council of Governments
- JoAnne Ahern, North Mecklenburg Senior Services
- Andi Carroll, owner of HomeCarolina
- Jennifer Szakaly, Caregiving Corner and Charlotte Observer
- Les Farnham, owner of Home Instead
- Nancy Waite-Kahn, Director of Wellness and Social Services at the Pines
- Beverly Cowdrick, Huntersville Oaks
- Jackie Hayward, Just 1 Call
- Brenda Overcash, CMC Healthy at Home
- Julie Fusilier, Parish Nurse

Several of the experts joined the task force as they continued their work.

The task force also talked with Davidson citizens and Town personnel. There are numerous programs currently available in town for seniors, including:

- The Police Department’s AARP Senior driving course
- Individualized instruction in driving roundabouts
- Park and Rec trips and classes
- Appropriate planning and zoning for mixed-use neighborhoods, accessory units, affordable housing, and walkability
- Park and Rec sponsored health screenings
- Police Department support of Neighborhood Watch programs
- DHC’s HAMMERS program
- Park and Rec Senior Wellness Day on the Green
- St. Alban’s neighborhood volunteer services
- Red Cross medical transportation
- Several private companies offering in-home health care services

2. Community Survey

A Needs Assessment Survey was sent to Davidson citizens in late February, 2007. 650 citizens responded. (See Appendix for tabulation and notes.) The survey showed that Davidson's senior citizens are concerned about:

- Affordable housing
- Healthcare availability and cost
- The ability to do home repairs, yard work, heavy housework
- Mobility, particularly sidewalks and walking paths to destinations they require
- Access to a Senior Center

3. Research

For the research phase of the AIPTF's work, they divided into two committees, the Healthcare Committee and the Physical Environment Committee.

The Healthcare Committee researched the existing health services and programs, including medical transportation, available for the elderly. The Physical Environment Committee focused on general transportation, mobility and walkability, and street and neighborhood design.

The committees overlapped on housing issues, since an older adult's health and housing needs are often indistinguishable. When a living environment is affordable and appropriate, an aging individual is more likely to remain healthy and independent. When an individual maintains good health, he or she is better able to maintain his or her living environment. As the medical needs of an aging individual and the repair needs of an aging house increase, both place demands on the fixed income of a retiree. Housing resources and healthcare supports must work in tandem for older adults to remain in their homes.

The two committees researched issues on the internet and interviewed appropriate experts. Amid an overwhelming amount of information and opinions, they reached conclusions and recommendations for the Town Board.

4. Recommendations

The task force divided its recommendations into five categories: Street Design, Transportation, Housing, Programs, and Facilities. Each recommendation is further defined as short term, ongoing, or long term.

Street Design

To improve visibility for senior drivers:

1. Install overhead street name signs at signalized intersections - long term
2. Install street signs with larger fonts as signs are replaced or new signs installed - short term and ongoing
3. Increase width of lane and pavement edge markings (from 4" to 6") - short term and ongoing
4. Increase use of reflective pavement markers - short term and ongoing
5. Install Stop, Yield, and warning signs designed for 20/70 vision - short term and ongoing
6. Install warning – e.g. “stop ahead” – signs - long term
7. Educate Planning Department and LUESA on standards for senior-friendly streets - short term

To improve safety for pedestrians:

1. Include AIPTF member on steering committee for Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan - short term
2. Boldly stripe crosswalks - short term and ongoing
3. Increase walk time for slower walk speeds on some pedestrian signals - short term

4. Use walkability audits and budget \$'s for additional sidewalks and paths - long term

To improve safety for elder bicyclists:

1. Bikeways on larger roads to be physically curbed from traffic and walkers - long term

Consider "street legal" golf carts on specific town streets - long term

1. Research other municipality's ordinances

To improve the Greenway experience for seniors:

1. Incorporate amenities for seniors (benches, etc.) - short term and ongoing

Transportation

Support a variety of transportation options:

1. Village Rider

- Greater publicity and training on its use for seniors, teenagers, and preteens - short term and ongoing
- Include The Pines on its route - long term
- Encourage CATS to allow Village Rider to stop at any corner along the route when a person flags them down - short term

2. Davidson Public Transit

- Davidson Dash (local only bus/van) - long term

3. Volunteer Transportation

- Work with Red Cross for medical transportation - long term
- Davidson Drivers program - long term

Housing

1. Support development of "virtual" retirement communities - long term

2. Participate in the development of affordable independent living units - long term

3. Investigate potential for "Greenhouse"- type skilled nursing facility and assisted living units in Davidson - long term

4. Support a Homesharing program - long term

Intergenerational housing program that carefully matches homeowners with people looking for a place to live. Tenants receive reduced rents for doing chores, heavy housekeeping, etc. for the homeowner.

5. Zoning for cohousing and group homes - short term

6. Encourage senior services and housing in mixed-use neighborhoods and near commercial areas - short term and ongoing

7. Universal Design (See Appendix for definition and ideas) - short term and ongoing

- Incentives to builders to include universal design in new homes
- Encourage contractors to become certified to retrofit homes
- Educate citizens
- Include in all town facilities

Programs

1. Institute Tele-Care volunteer phone calls - short term and ongoing

2. Institute Vial of Life program - short term and ongoing

3. Expand/support Just-1-Call as single point of entry for information and referrals - short term and ongoing
Mecklenburg County program staffed by social workers 8 to 5 weekdays. Can converse in 140 languages and direct callers to resources throughout the county.

4. "Chores R Us" program - short term and ongoing

Group of teens willing to help seniors with programming DVD players, heavy housekeeping, yard work, changing hard-to-reach lightbulbs, teaching computer skills, etc.

5. Consider property tax reduction/exemption, perhaps in exchange for volunteer work - long term

6. Use the Town's website to communicate with seniors and disseminate information on resources, etc. - short term and ongoing

Facilities

1. Encourage Adult Day Care, located in walkable neighborhoods and commercial areas - long term
2. Support Davidson and Mecklenburg County Senior Centers - short term, long term and ongoing
3. Encourage co-ordination between centers - ongoing

Many of these recommendations require a regional approach; many can be jointly instituted with other non-profit and/or faith-based organizations. Coordination between the North Mecklenburg municipalities and Mecklenburg County will be essential for cost-effective solutions.

Next Steps

In order to facilitate their recommendations, the task force will become the Senior Coalition. The purpose of the Senior Coalition will be to enhance Davidson's resources as a senior-friendly community. To this end, the Town of Davidson will create a physical and emotional environment that celebrates positive aging, encourages self care, and engages seniors in a variety of activities. This organization, which could eventually be a 501(c)3, would be governed by a Board of Directors and have three initial goals:

- Implement short term and ongoing changes/ideas
- Plan long term changes/ideas
- Give seniors a unified voice in Davidson

The AIPTF recommends that the first step taken by the Town Board is the allocation, in the FY09 budget, of funds to hire one part-time staff for the Senior Coalition:

Position: Executive Director

Reports to: Senior Coalition Board of Directors

General Description:

The Executive Director will facilitate/coordinate the activities of the Senior Coalition which are directed to the recommendations made to the Davidson Town Board. The Executive Director will serve as the Coalition's spokesperson to the Town of Davidson, non profits related to senior activities, other governmental organizations and churches in the region. The Executive Director is to assist in developing strategic direction, managing funds, overseeing the communication process and serving as a resource, when applicable.

Specific Functions:

- Facilitate the strategic direction of the Senior Coalition
- Assist with the recruitment of members to ensure appropriate skill sets are represented on the Coalition.
- Schedule meetings for the Coalition and related committees to ensure business is conducted efficiently and effectively.
- Oversee fund raising activities and the preparation and submission of grants.
- Manage the financial resources of the Coalition in accordance with current accounting standards.
- Develop a communication plan that will ensure all audiences know the purpose of the Coalition and have an opportunity to support its mission.
- Serve as liaison to key support organizations such as the Town of Davidson, Davidson College, neighborhood associations, the Pines, local churches, senior related organizations including churches and other regional and state bodies.

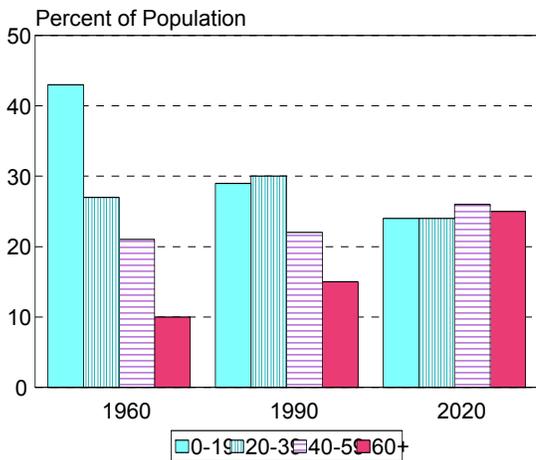
First Year Goals;

- Form the Senior Coalition
- Develop mission and vision statements
- Develop a strategic plan, including funding options

- Obtain approval of this plan from the Town of Davidson
- Implement plan in accordance to an approved schedule
- Research funding sources for the potential of forming a 501(c)3 organization

Background Information

- By 2010, 30% of the population in North Mecklenburg will be over 50, 10% will be over 67.
- Davidson’s senior population will certainly be higher, due to our progressive planning.
- North Carolina ranked 11th nationally in total population
- North Carolina ranked 4th nationally in the increase of persons age 65+
- North Carolina ranked 3rd nationally in persons sixty plus moving into the state
- About 28,000 persons age 65 and above entered our state in 1990.



North Carolina population distribution

A major shift in population is the baby boomers (those individuals born between 1946 and 1964). The older population (represented by the red column) will double between now and 2030 . What is significant is the distribution of the population into age groups.

In 1960, close to half of our state’s population were children and adolescents (shown by the solid blue column) up to age 19. In 1990, the differences grew smaller, and by 2020, we will see a flattening of the age distribution. This movement of the population from stair steps in 1960 to a rectangle in 2020 affects the way generations relate to each other privately and publicly, whether we are talking about:

- caring for a disabled loved one at home
- paying into Social Security or
- what the workforce will be like.

North Carolinians sixty years of age today can expect to live an additional 20.8 years. In some ways, aging becomes a “women’s issue” because in the 85+ age group 74% will be women and 76.5% of the women will be unmarried. In addition, those women over age 75 will be twice as likely to live in poverty as men of the same age. 45.7% of the non-institutionalized population age 65+ report one or more disabilities

Specifically, Mecklenburg County can expect a growth in older adults. In fact, based on the 2000 Census 11.9% of the population will be older adults by 2025.

The 45-59 age group is over one fourth of the workers in our county. As these baby boomers retire:

- Mecklenburg County may face a challenge to fill the needs of the workforce.
- Older adults who own homes may need more support with home maintenance and
- public transportation continues to be an issue for many communities.

25% of renters aged 50 and older spend 50% or more of their annual income on rent.

One in 5 Americans over age 65 does not drive.

Nursing home care costs between \$30,000 and \$60,000 per year. 82% of care in nursing homes is paid by Medicaid. The tax burden on future generations will be immense if nursing home care is the standard. Aging at home, with services available, is more cost-effective and is preferred by seniors.

Davidson's progressive planning has made us a magnet for seniors. Our walkable neighborhoods allow mobility beyond the automobile. We need to integrate senior services into our neighborhoods, including adult day care, recreation facilities, and medical services.