

Communities for a Lifetime



Central Minnesota Council on Aging

www.cmcoa.org

Survey Results

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
THE STUDY.....	4
PART I: ONLINE SURVEY FINDINGS.....	6
PLANNING DOMAINS	6
DEMOGRAPHY	7
PREPARATION.....	8
ASSISTANCE.....	8
AREA AGENCY ON AGING	9
SENIOR LINKAGE LINE®.....	9
PART II: INTERVIEW FINDINGS.....	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	10
APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY	11

Executive Summary

The Central Minnesota Council on Aging (CMCOA) is a 501c3 non-profit organization designated as the Area Agency on Aging by the Minnesota Board on Aging to serve the fourteen county central region including the counties of Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, and Wright. CMCOA serves the region through information and assistance services, grants and contracts administration, and administration and planning.

Information & Assistance

Area Agencies on Aging provide seniors, their families, and caregivers with information about services, financial assistance, and health care coverage through the Senior LinkAge Line® (1-800-333-2433), in-person visits, and group education sessions. Senior LinkAge® is a program that helps families, friends and seniors find answers and support that will help older people stay in the community longer and remain independent. With a single call to the Senior LinkAge Line® a person can locate particular services near them or get help evaluating their situation to determine what kind of service might be helpful. A Senior LinkAge® Specialist will research options and automatically transfer the caller to the service provider in their area. Individuals will be connected with a Senior LinkAge® Advocate if more assistance is needed in-person. The Advocate will conduct an in-depth assessment with the individual in their home or community site and help them navigate appropriate community services. As the designated State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), Area Agencies on Aging provide free health insurance counseling to persons receiving Medicare, help prevent and report fraud, waste and abuse in the Medicare system. Area Agencies on Aging provide a critical link to vulnerable or isolated elders through services provided in home such as home delivered meals, chore services and respite care.

Grants and Contracts Administration

One of the primary roles of Area Agencies on Aging is to administer at the local level, the Federal Older Americans Act funding. Using a planning process to review needs and trends, Area Agencies on Aging fund core services to help people live at home. These include meals, chore services, medication management, transportation, caregiver support, and legal services.

Administration & Planning

Area Agencies on Aging collaborate with communities, counties, and health and social service providers to increase local capacity to meet the needs of an aging population. This is accomplished through coordinated development of caregiver support, volunteer-based services, and community resources.

CMCOA utilizes various tools to collect and analyze data to recognize trends in aging issues and determines appropriate development needs. In addition, CMCOA provides planning assistance to communities and assists local governmental units in engaging the community in local initiatives.

One such initiative is Communities for a Lifetime (CFL). CFL is an initiative that is known by many different terms – senior friendly, age friendly, elder friendly, and lifecycle planning. The actual term CFL can be traced to the Florida Department of Elder Affairs who launched an initiative to support local government planning for the aging of the baby boom generation.

CFL is a community planning framework that supports local government initiatives to prepare for the demographic shift occurring as the baby boom generation ages. The philosophy is one that suggests if you plan for and build a community for older adults you will build one for all ages.

In an effort to obtain up-to-date information, CMCOA surveyed local governments in the fourteen county region during spring of 2008 with assistance from students in the Community Studies Department of Saint Cloud State University. Sixty-nine participants completed a short ten question online survey.

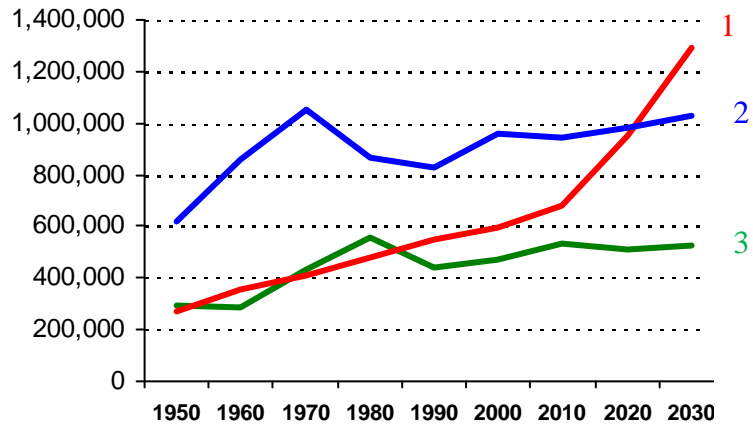
A majority of communities (89%) have initiated some action to prepare for the aging of the population. Examples of such actions included incorporating aging components into a comprehensive plan, creating gathering spaces for older adults, attending educational sessions on the demographic shift, thinking about or developing a plan, conducting a needs assessment of the community, and creating a task force or commission to discuss the issue.

The significant community planning domains examined in this study were: health, nutrition, exercise, transportation, public safety/emergency services, housing, taxation and finance, workforce development, civic engagement/volunteer opportunities, aging and human services, parks and recreation, and policies/guidelines. The planning domains of most importance to local governments included public safety/emergency services, zoning and land use, building codes and taxation/finance.

Introduction

By 2020 in Minnesota there will be more people over the age of 65 (line 1) than children in elementary, middle and high schools (line 2). There will be more people over the age of 65 than young adults 18-24 (line 3).

This phenomenon is characterized as the Graying of America, as the baby boom generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, ages.



There are other reasons for the high proportion of older adults including the fact that we are living longer, our life expectancy has doubled over the last 100 years thanks to a number of factors including medical and technological advances, labor laws, health prevention, public health interventions, and social welfare programs.

The aging of the population is not a natural phenomenon. It has never happened before. That's not to say it is a negative thing, just a fact. This dramatic shift in the number of older adults will require strategic planning by local government to meet the needs of the population. Some communities have begun planning initiatives related to the demographic shift.

But not enough is being done as a recent national study titled *Maturing of America* estimated that only 46% of U.S. communities have begun planning to prepare for a significantly older population.

The Study

The Central Minnesota Council on Aging (CMCOA) surveyed municipalities (156 cities and townships) in their 14 county planning and service area to learn more about catalysts for planning and how they are including aging in their planning processes. The counties included Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena and Wright. The study also asked how CMCOA can provide assistance to the cities and municipalities. The online survey was implemented in spring 2008. Phone calls to cities and municipalities who did not respond to the online survey were completed in late spring 2008. Participation in the survey was generated using a direct mail letter and a follow-up phone call. Students from St. Cloud State University's Community Studies Department assisted with contacting municipalities as well as conducting qualitative interviews.

Sixty-nine cities were represented in the results, for a 44% response rate. Individuals who responded to the survey were primarily city administrators, clerks or planners while others included representatives from the cities Human Services Division, Parks and Recreation, and Planning Consultants.

Table 1
Number of cities/townships by counties that responded

	Cities Participated	Cities
Benton	2*	Sauk Rapids & Sartell
Cass	8	Backus, Chickamaw Beach, East Gull Lake, Federal Dam, Hackensack, Pillager, Remer & Walker
Chisago	5	Lindstrom, North Branch, Rush City & Shafer
Crow Wing	9	Baxter, Brainerd, Breezy Point, Crosby, Deerwood, Emily, Fort Ripley, Jenkins & Pequot Lakes
Isanti	3*	Braham, Cambridge & Isanti
Kanabec	0*	
Mille Lacs	3	Onamia, Pease, & Princeton
Morrison	6	Bowlus, Genola, Pierz, Randall, Royalton & Upsala
Pine	5	Askov, Bruno, Hinckley, Rock Creek & Sandstone
Sherburne	3	Becker, Big Lake & Elk River
Stearns	11	Avon, Belgrade, Elrosa, Holdingford, Melrose, Richmond, Rockville, Sauk Centre, St. Augusta, St. Martin, Waite Park
Todd	4	Browerville, Burtrum, Clarissa, & Eagle Bend
Wadena	1	Verndale
Wright	6	Buffalo, Cokato, Monticello, South Haven, & Waverly
Unknown	3	
Total	69	

**Cities/townships that responded are located in more than one county. Cities/townships were counted in one county (county that appeared first alphabetically).*

An additional in-depth key informant interview was conducted with select municipalities in each county. Municipalities were selected by CMCOA. In total, seven cities and townships responded to the in-depth survey. In particular, the in-depth interview was concerned with learning who or what was the catalyst in the city for beginning to think about aging issues. With an understanding of the catalyst for change, follow-up questions included city 3-5 year goals and advice cities had for others starting to plan for the aging process. With a high percentage of cities stating that they have incorporated aging into their comprehensive plans further information was obtained to determine what this included. Cities were also asked how CMCOA could assist cities with their planning processes. In-depth responses proved to be very similar to the survey questionnaire, with needs for education, sharing of best practices, and networking opportunities showing up consistently.

Part I: Online Survey Findings

Planning Domains

Cities and municipalities were asked how they rated several domains in their municipal planning process (see Table 2 for results). Public Safety/Emergency Services, Zoning and Land Use, Building Codes and Taxation/Finance were rated very important by most respondents. Other areas that were rated very important were Housing, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and Workforce Development. Overall local governments rated most of the planning domains as very important, somewhat important, or neutral.

Table 2
Participants' Importance Ratings of Planning Domains in Percentages

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Not Important
Building Codes	36	25	2	4	1
Civic Engagement	12	29	18	7	2
Health & Wellness	24	23	16	4	2
Housing	32	24	9	2	-
Human Services	21	30	12	3	2
Library & Education	22	30	12	2	3
Nutrition	16	20	25	4	4
Recreation & Parks	26	34	5	4	-
Safety	47	21	1	-	-
Taxation & Finance	45	19	4	1	-
Technology	17	38	9	4	1
Transportation	26	24	12	1	6
Workforce Development	27	26	9	5	1
Zoning	40	23	2	3	1

Demography

A critical component of planning for the impact of an aging population is to understand demography. Determining communities' estimates of their older adult population helps to assess their aging awareness. To establish individual communities' consciousness of older adults, participants were asked to estimate the current percent of persons 65 years and older who reside in their community. The findings are showing in Table 3. The older adult population was broken down into percentages.

Table 3
Communities' estimates of their older adult population

	# of responses
Less than 5%	2
5-10%	10
11-20%	9
21-30%	13
Over 30%	14
Unsure	22

A significant minority, 31.4% (22 responses), reported they were unsure of the current percentage of persons 65 years and older who reside in their municipality. Only 29.3% of the respondents correctly estimated their current population of older adults when compared against 2000 Census data.

After determining communities' awareness of their older adult population, municipalities were then asked to compare their older adult population to other cities. Fifty-two percent of the respondents felt that their city had an average amount of persons 65 years and older, 36% believed they had a more than average amount of persons 65 years and older, and 12% thought they had a less than average amount of persons 65 years and older.

Finally, participants were asked to estimate future trends with the question, "By 2020, what do you estimate will be your city's/township's percentage of people 65 years and older?" Again, a significant minority, 20% (14 responses), reported they were unsure of the percentage of persons 65 years and older that will reside in their municipality in 2020.

When comparing cities' perceptions of their estimated population of persons 65 years and older between 2000 and 2020, many reported an increase in their aging population. In fact, when comparing current older adult estimates, to estimates by 2020, many cities estimated their community's percent of older adults would increase to between 21% and greater than 30%.

Table 4
Communities' estimates of their older adult population by 2020

	# of responses
Less than 5%	0
5-10%	1
11-20%	9
21-30%	13
Over 30%	33
Unsure	14

Preparation

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) conducted a survey of 10,000 local governments to determine “age readiness.” The results showed that 54% of communities have not begun to prepare for the aging of the baby boom generation.¹ Locally, this study conducted by CMCOA showed that 89% of municipalities in the region that responded to the survey have done some work to prepare for the demographic shift. Table 5 outlines the activities conducted by municipalities.

Table 5
Actions by municipalities related to the demographic shift

	# of responses
Developed gathering spaces for seniors	25
Attended educational sessions about the demographic shift	22
Integrated aging components into a comprehensive plan	20
Thought about creating a plan	17
Other	12
Created a task force	6
Developed a plan	6
Conducted a needs assessment	5
Hired a consultant to assist with planning	2

Other actions included hearing a presentation from CMCOA on aging, developing a senior center, building senior housing units, and will begin to include components in a local comprehensive plan.

Assistance

After learning about the activities cities had undertaken to prepare for an aging population, CMCOA wanted to ascertain the kind of assistance cities needed to support the planning and preparation process for an aging population. Responses indicated a strong need for funding, education, sharing of best practices and networking opportunities. In fact, 47 cities responded that additional funding would need to be secured to plan for an aging population. Forty-one cities

¹ The *Maturing of America* study can be downloaded at <http://www.n4a.org/pdf/MOAFinalReport.pdf>

responded that additional education about the impact of the demographic shift on municipalities was needed.

Table 6

Assistance requested by municipalities	# of responses
Funding to plan	47
Additional education about the demographic shift	41
Networking opportunities	38
Information about best practices in planning	37
Tools to assist in planning	36
Implementation assistance	22
Planning Consultation	21
Other	5

Other assistance requested included enthusiasm to plan, technical assistance, transportation needs, and unique needs of the aging population.

Area Agency on Aging

The Central Minnesota Council on Aging is the designated Area Agency on Aging for the 14 county central region of Minnesota. CMCOA provides planning and coordination, Older Americans Act funding administration, and information and assistance services. Municipalities were asked if they were familiar with the area agency on aging.

Sixty-four percent responded that they were aware of the agency. A confounding variable to this finding may be the name “council on aging.” There are many independent councils on aging throughout the region and while local governments may interact with these local entities, they may in fact not be referring to the Central Minnesota Council on Aging.

Senior LinkAge Line®

A core service of the Central Minnesota Council on Aging is the Senior LinkAge Line® information and assistance program. Municipalities were asked if they were familiar with the Senior LinkAge Line®. Seventy-three percent of responded stated that they were not aware of the Senior LinkAge Line®.

Part II: Interview Findings

Key informant interviews showed that a number of local governments stressed the importance of the area agency on aging raising the issue of an aging population. Further, local governments highlighted the importance of additional information on planning for the demographic shift.

It is also critical for CMCOA to be aware of the resource issues (financial, staff, time, etc.) that local governments face in administration and planning.

Acknowledgements

The Central Minnesota Council on Aging would like to thank the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging for sharing its best practices to replicate their Communities for a Lifetime study.

The study was conducted by students in the Community Design Course from Saint Cloud State University under the direction of Chuks Ugochukwu, Ph.D. Analysis was conducted by Rajean Moone, Ph.D. Agency support was provided by Lori Vrolson, M.S.

This report is available in pdf at www.cmcoa.org.

Appendix A: Online Survey

The following questions were asked via an online survey sent to municipalities:

Your Name:

Your Title:

Your City or Township:

Your Phone Number:

Email Address:

How would you rate the following domains in your municipal planning activities? (Very important; Somewhat important; Neutral; Somewhat unimportant; Not important)

1. Transportation
2. Public Safety/Emergency Services
3. Housing
4. Taxation and Finance
5. Workforce Development
6. Civic Engagement/Volunteer Opportunities
7. Health and Wellness
8. Nutrition
9. Recreation and Parks
10. Libraries and Education
11. Technology
12. Zoning and Land Use
13. Building Codes
14. Aging/Human Services

What percentage of your city's/township's current population is 65 years and older?

1. Less than 5%
2. 5-10%
3. 11-20%
4. 21-30%
5. Greater than 30%
6. Don't Know

Compared to cities and townships in the seven county metropolitan area, do you think the percentage of persons 65 years and older in your city/township is:

1. Less than Average
2. Average
3. More than Average

By 2020, what do you estimate will be your city's/township's percentage of people 65 years and older?

1. Less than 5%
2. 5-10%

3. 11-20%
4. 21-30%
5. Greater than 30%
6. Don't Know

What priority does your city/township place on planning for the shifting aging demographic?

1. High
2. Medium
3. Low

Has your community done any of the following to prepare for an aging population? (check all that apply)

1. Attended educational session(s) specifically related to aging of the population
2. Thought about creating a plan
3. Created a committee or task force
4. Hired a consultant
5. Conducted a needs assessment
6. Begun developing a plan
7. Incorporated aging population components into a comprehensive plan
8. Created gathering spaces for older people to come together
9. Other (specify)

What assistance would you need to support planning and preparation for an aging population? (check all that apply)

1. Education on the impact of an aging population on your city/township
2. Planning consultation
3. Funding to develop and/or implement a plan
4. Information about planning processes and tools
5. Networking opportunities with municipalities that have done aging demographic planning
6. Sharing of best practices
7. Implementation consultation
8. Other (Specify)

Are you familiar with the Central Minnesota Council on Aging?

1. Yes
2. No

Are you familiar with the Senior LinkAge Line®?

1. Yes
2. No