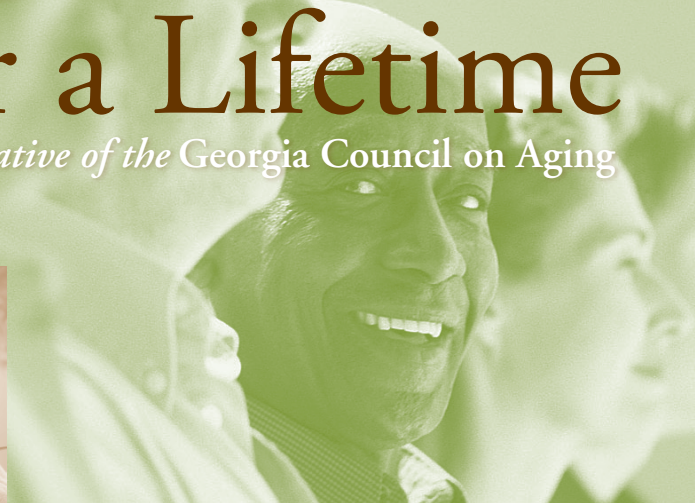


Georgia

for a Lifetime

An Initiative of the Georgia Council on Aging



Preparing for Georgia's Future

Georgia, like most parts of the country and the world, is experiencing a dramatic shift in its population. While the total population is expected to grow by 46 percent between 2000 and 2030, the older adult population will grow by over 140 percent, the ninth highest increase in the nation. This change affects state and local budgets, development patterns, transportation spending, healthcare services, parks and recreation — almost every facet of community life. It also offers Georgia, its cities and counties and the private sector tremendous opportunities and some potential challenges.

In 2008, the Georgia General Assembly asked the Georgia Council on Aging to study the effects of this impending population shift on state and local governments, private and non-profit organizations and to make recommendations for both short- and long-term action. It is clear that:

To meet the demands of the current and future older adult population and to foster long-term economic growth in communities across the state, Georgia must begin to transform her neighborhoods, cities and counties into places where people of all ages and abilities can live throughout their lifetime.

Creating these communities will require changes in housing, transportation and healthcare policy, a thorough examination of the effects the changing population will have on fiscal policy at the state and local level, and deliberate and concentrated efforts to engage the resources and skills of the changing older adult population.

The report and the recommendations are broken into five distinct sections: Housing, Transportation, Civic Engagement, Health and Economic Self-Sufficiency. Many changes in one area will affect outcomes in another. A summary of the recommendations of the interim report follows.



Summary Recommendations

Housing

1. Support older adults who want to live in their homes

- » Provide assistance with rehab and modification projects
- » Educate older adults about their housing options
- » Expand reverse mortgage counseling
- » Re-zone to allow neighborhood-based retail options
- » Support Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs

2. Provide options for those who want or need to move

- » Integrate supportive housing options into existing neighborhoods so those who need assistance don't have to leave their communities
- » Permit the construction of accessory dwelling units
- » Address comprehensive accessibility in local building codes
- » Provide non-segregated housing options by emphasizing the importance of design rather than age restriction

3. Expand the range of supportive housing options available in Georgia

- » Increase services offered in assisted living models
- » Expand the pioneering concept in nursing home care, the Green House model, to communities throughout Georgia.
- » Foster culture change in nursing homes throughout the state

4. Improve affordability of housing for older adults in Georgia

- » Increase subsidies available for senior housing
- » Lobby for additional federal Section 202 units in Georgia
- » Use land banking to set aside land in areas where housing options for older adults will be needed
- » Evaluate the role of property tax exemptions in long-term housing affordability
- » Target tax credits to housing specifically designed to meet the needs of older adults

Transportation

1. Provide alternatives to the car for those who can no longer drive

- » Ensure that transportation options are readily available to older adults and designed to meet their needs.
- » Provide timely, safe and secure service that supports the needs of this population
- » Incorporate design standards to support the aging population in all roadway projects
- » Encourage opportunities to increase service and modes through transit strategies
- » Offer incentives for car and vanpooling or shuttle systems to major activity centers
- » Identify connectivity and accessibility needs in urban, suburban and rural communities across the state

2. Deliver comprehensive transportation planning and infrastructure which reflects the needs of all people

- » Georgia Department of Transportation and Georgia Department of Community Affairs should adopt and support "Complete Street" policies, which integrate facilities for all users (bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and drivers) to road design

- » Adopt recommendations of the Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan's Older Driver Safety Task Force
- » Adopt Federal Highway Administration's guidelines for road design to meet the needs of older drivers
- » Support a coordinated Human Services Transportation (HST) Plan that pools state resources, provides cost-effective services, creates transparency in the HST coordinated transportation planning process, and improves reliability and quality for all users

3. Expand pedestrian infrastructure to encourage walking as a transportation alternative

- » Modify walking speed calculations for pedestrian timings
- » Create a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities to link residential areas, activity centers, the recreation, parks and school systems
- » Improve intersections to aid pedestrian mobility

4. Design and maintain roads to address the needs of decreased visibility, limited hearing and reduced reaction times characteristic of older drivers

- » Develop a maintenance plan for replacement and repair of signage, striping and signals on local and state roads
- » Plan, design and require developers to intersect streets at 90° to facilitate turns; use left hand turn arrows whenever possible
- » Plan, design and require developers to provide adequate sight distance at intersections
- » Increase lane and shoulder widths
- » Plan and fund the installation of street lights
- » Increase the size of street name signs
- » Increase road contrast sensitivity by encouraging the usage of thermoplastic striping material instead of paint
- » Develop a sidewalk program that will retrofit existing facilities to meet ADA guidelines
- » Reduce sign clutter by removing any unnecessary signs

Civic Engagement

1. Reduce barriers preventing current and future older adults from volunteering

- » Provide safe and reliable transportation to volunteer sites
- » Offer free or low cost transportation to older volunteers
- » Provide incentives for corporate volunteer programs
- » Provide incentives for public employees to volunteer

2. Modernize volunteer opportunities at the local, regional and state level

- » Improve organizational management practices and develop appropriate engagement opportunities for older adults
- » Increase understanding of older volunteer needs and objectives through focus groups, one-on-one discussions and surveys
- » Streamline communication vehicles about volunteer opportunities using 21st century technology, including a Website and online volunteer matching service

3. Increase the awareness of the importance and benefits of volunteering

- » Consider a statewide or local education campaign



Health

1. Expand the healthcare workforce prepared to serve an aging population

- » Increase HPSA funding to programs focused on serving Georgia adults over 45
- » Provide incentives for medical professionals of all skill levels who train in Georgia to stay in Georgia
- » Support federal applications for additional Geriatric Education Research Centers affiliated with a hospital system
- » Create incentives for health care professionals to focus on geriatrics throughout their education and stay in Georgia
- » Support medical training grant proposals specifically focused on serving people 50 and over

2. Increase access to mental health services targeted to the needs of older adults

- » Fund inter-agency public and mental health training targeted at the needs of older adults
- » Expand of the evidence based HEALTHY IDEAS program in Georgia

3. Address the gaps in service and the increased expense that can occur when older adults transfer from acute care to community-based settings

- » Promote the Care Transitions collaborative effort within hospital systems across Georgia
- » Incentivize home and community based service programs that support the Care Transitions model
- » Support and provide funding for community/consumer education around the Care Transitions model

4. Develop facilities and programs that encourage regular physical activity among older adults

- » Improve opportunities for physical activity and social interaction
- » Enhance community environments to support walking
- » Support local walking programs
- » Design neighborhood based parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of older adults
- » Promote and support the development of community gardens
- » Increase support for neighborhood health and wellness centers
- » Encourage senior centers to modernize to meet the needs of 21st century older adults

5. Expand preventive care to improve and maintain the physical and mental health of older adults

- » Increase access to affordable preventive care and screenings
- » Target public health screening and vaccination programs to the 50+ population
- » Combine services and improve the convenience and accessibility of preventive services through the expansion of the SPARC (Sickness Prevention through Regional Collaboration) model

6. Improve efforts to help older adults manage chronic disease

- » Increase funding for the training of volunteer lay leaders and implementation of the evidence- based Chronic Disease Self Management Program throughout Georgia

7. Increase the capacity of consumers and their caregivers to make informed choices about their long term care service decisions and management of their personal resources

- » Invest in the statewide Information and Assistance network
- » Expand the Aging and Disability Resource Centers throughout the state

- » Ensure that there are adequate Information and Assistance counselors to advise persons of options and assist in making informed choices

8. Align the supply of long term care services with demand for long term care services

- » Evaluate the feasibility of using a global budgeting methodology to finance state Medicaid long-term care programs
- » Global budgeting allows money to follow need, better calibrating care to individuals
- » Expand the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program

9. Change the way we deliver Long-Term Care services to give consumers more control and reduce cost

- » Update the Medicaid waiver service package
- » Examine Eligibility Criteria
- » Implement consumer directed care in the Medicaid waiver program

Economic Self-Sufficiency

1. Create incentives for individual and household savings for retirement and long-term healthcare expenses

- » Provide tax deductions or credits for employers offering group long-term care insurance policies
- » Provide state tax deductions or credits to individuals who purchase long-term care insurance
- » Allow family members to provide financial support to older persons in the community without jeopardizing the older adults' Medicaid benefits
- » Provide asset protection under Medicaid for individuals who purchase special partnership long-term care policies
- » Encourage the state government workforce to purchase long-term care insurance by offering special, low-cost long-term care insurance policies to state employees, establishing a self-funded long-term care insurance program or offering long-term care insurance policies through employee benefit programs
- » Create public education and marketing campaigns
- » Promote new tools and proposals like federal health savings accounts and reverse mortgages
- » Encourage employers to move from standard to automatic enrollment in retirement programs

2. Address potential shortages in Georgia's future labor force

- » Help older adults connect to or remain in the workforce
- » Promote training and educational opportunities for mature workers
- » Review workforce needs and the impact of policies on mature workers
- » Raise awareness of the benefits of hiring older adults

3. Adjust state and local fiscal policy to reflect the shifts in the population

- » Consider fewer tax preferences for older adults
- » Evaluate tax structure
- » Consider a more balanced approach to taxes
- » Develop more public-private partnerships



The Georgia Council on Aging (GCoA) was created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1977 to advise state government about issues of concern to older Georgians, to educate, advise, inform and make recommendations concerning programs for Georgia's elderly and to advocate with and on behalf of older Georgians and their families. Council members are appointed by the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services.

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