



Bryte and Broderick Community Action Network

transformation through education

Board of Directors December 1, 2012

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To Concerned and Supportive City Officials and Staff:

BBCAN Senior Services Committee has been working for a number of years on issues of importance to our aging population. As the result of many long and deliberative conversations and meetings, the Committee, with the support of the BBCAN Board of Directors, is sending you the attached summary of challenges and recommendations: Urban Planning and Our Aging Population. We hope you take the recommendations seriously. BBCAN is open to continuing the conversation in the future.

Sincerely,
BBCAN Senior Services Committee and Friends.

Martha Mills
Jeri Hughes Wingfield
Helen W. Smith
Shirley Cypos
Jim Brewer

Joyce Miller

Mildred H. Hefley
Dolores L. Savala
Teresa Blackmer
Mickey Fausett
Harry V. Valerius
William H. Wyfuld
Charlotte Dorsey

And many, many other residents of West Sacramento who voiced support but were unable to sign.

Urban Planning and Our Aging Population

Who are the “Aging Population”?

The unusually large Baby Boom generation and its increasing longevity and natural aging is resulting in the rapid growth of the senior population. Society currently boasts of three- and four-generation families. Our seniors range from very active independent participants in our community to highly dependent individuals with little opportunity or encouragement to engage.

According to Area 4 Agency on Aging:

- The 60 and older population will nearly triple between 2000 and 2040.
- There will be a five-fold increase in the 85+ population between 2000 and 2040.
- The number of people 100 and older will increase by a factor of fifteen by 2040.
- Most Baby Boomers (over 54%) will live to age 85, and about 21% will live to age 95.

Other statistical research indicates:

- Centenarians (people 100 years and older) are the fastest growing group.
- Currently the population in California includes 11.7% seniors and the US population includes 13.3% seniors.
- If persons 65 or over were computed as a percent of total population 21 years of age or more, roughly one out of every six persons would be in this bracket.
- At the other end of the age spectrum, California's population of children is not expected to change very much over the next 10 years.

What are the challenges of our aging population?

If the aged were no different from other age groups, there would be no need to consider them as a separate group deserving special consideration in the planning context. But there is a growing body of evidence that the process of aging, in which there is a gradual attrition of physiological and mental faculties as well as economic resources and societal connections, has definite implications for environmental planning.

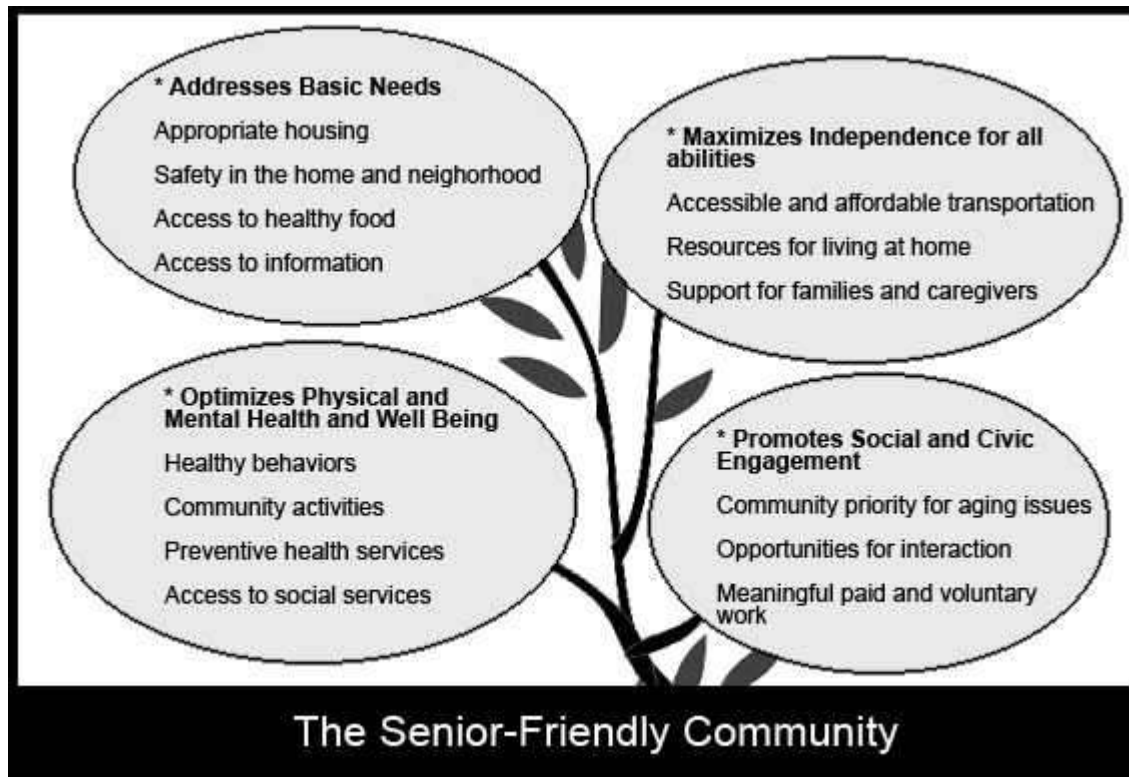
The concerns and goals may be similar to other age groups, but for many seniors they may not be attainable. According to an urban study recently completed in the eastern United States, the aging population has these major areas of concern:

- transportation
- information and communication
- civic participation and employment
- social participation
- housing
- public spaces
- health and human services

In most national studies, transportation is at the top of the list.

Urban planning for all age groups should be a principle that is never ignored. In practice, planners have been preoccupied with certain age groups. The approach to community development and planning has traditionally been child- or family-centered. Significant advances in school and recreation planning, in subdivision design,

in commercial centers and even in neighborhood planning, sprang originally from the concept of needs of the young family with children or the employed and physically able population. Infrastructures in towns and cities are geared to the young and the middle years. Older citizens often find that their only option is to live in senior segregated areas.



Adapted from the Center for Home Care Policy and Research, Visiting Nurse Service of New York

How do these concerns impact our economy?

The impact of this pronounced shift in age composition on community services, urban design and economic activity is beginning to be realized. There is evidence that the senior populations are coming in for more specific consideration. Recognition should be given not only to the past contributions of the aged, but also to the significant value of their ongoing support to their families, volunteerism, peer to peer assistance and collective wisdom.

The central focus of age-appropriate city planning should be to create an infrastructure which tries to address these issues and helps older people organize their lives autonomously for as long as possible. A future-oriented policy that includes senior citizens is crucial to their survival and to our survival as a community. It means raising the city's attractiveness as a place for everyone to live and thereby creating more possibilities for growth. Without this focus, the community would be ignoring an important opportunity for economic, social, commercial and psychological health and sustainability.

How are urban areas addressing these concerns?

It is an oversimplification to conclude that planning, as it is presently conceived and carried out, will automatically meet the needs of elderly citizens. Fresh thinking is required. Traditionally, planners relegate

older persons to a few footnotes, gleaned from cursory information, in the comprehensive planning report. Rarely do subsequent proposals and plans reflect other considerations.

Our decision makers will need to intervene, not only to address the human aspect, but also for financial reasons. The current practice of isolating people through limited access to goods and services as soon as they are even slightly restricted in their capacities will prove to be unaffordable and irresponsible as the demographic trend continues. The financial benefit of keeping elders in their homes has been proven countless times.

Planning departments are beginning to engage urban planners who specialize in the aging of our country. Cities have talked directly to their senior citizens in addition to commissioning an expert consultant. Senior citizens from different abilities and interest groups have met to explore the city on foot and by bus through their own eyes. Their findings - such as the need for supportive infrastructures, wider sidewalks, better transportation, medical support, affordable housing, local amenities, green spaces, and civic services centrally located or easily accessible - are now being taken into account in the plans to expand or redevelop cities. Builders and developers are discovering the economic potential of the retirement market. And cities are listening.

In the new way of thinking through strategic inter-generational planning, different age groups are intentionally mixed. Appropriate distances between residences and destinations can eliminate barriers to accessing vital goods, services and leisure activities in the community. Recreational activities already in place will be accessible to everyone. Transit connectors and infrastructures are woven into the planning fabric so that those who are unable to bicycle or walk short distances will be supported by affordable inter modal connectivity for access to necessary amenities and not be faced with an insurmountable task.

How can West Sacramento address these issues more effectively?

There is no legitimate reason why planning cannot be age-inclusive and cost-effective. Close collaboration can be undertaken among the planning, civil engineering, construction, safety and other concerned sectors in the context of the healthy urban policy, so as to promote the physical and mental well being of senior citizens. Embracing all age groups with their different abilities will create a sense of collective self-worth and would promote West Sacramento's reputation as an inclusive community.

We therefore respectfully urge you, the architects of our community environment, to undertake the following:

- Seriously consider the importance of addressing these issues as you work for the future of West Sacramento.
- Invite professional and academic urban planners, who have expertise, knowledge and understanding of aging population issues and opportunities, into your city planning process.

Thank you for your consideration,

**Bryte and Broderick Community Action Network
Senior Services Committee**

December 2012

Growing older is an accomplishment, not a sentence