



CITY OF OAKLAND

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MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Bryan Ricks
Chair, Commission on Aging

SUBJECT: Commission on Aging 2020
Informational Report

DATE: October 26, 2020

City Administrator
Approval

Date: December 16, 2020

INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

The Livable Oakland initiative is based on the “Global Age Friendly Cities and Communities”, a planning framework to create age friendly communities developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2007. This effort was developed as a response to national and international trends: an anticipated growth in older adults, people living much longer, an overall prioritization of community based living, and increasing urbanization. Initially piloted in 33 cities around the world, this approach has been extremely successful, as evidenced by the growing membership.

At the time of this report, the Global Age Friendly Cities membership includes 830 communities in 41 countries, with 478 age friendly communities in the United States alone. In 2012, AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) partnered with the WHO, becoming the United States affiliate of the “Global Age Friendly Cities and Communities”, which then became the AARP “Network of Age Friendly Communities.” AARP continues to support the designated age friendly cities and communities and their efforts through a variety of resources including regional meetings, online templates, and materials. Currently, Alameda County and the City of Fremont also have active Age Friendly initiatives.

AGE FRIENDLY PLAN & PROCESS

WHO offers a framework for assessing local conditions and identifying areas for improvement based on eight key urban realms, or domains, which guide cities through the planning process. A highly collaborative and community based process, the goal is to update and reevaluate the plan every four years, thereby ensuring that the efforts are reflective of the community they represent.

The **baseline assessment** is conducted in the initial year of the effort and aims to identify the assets and gaps within the identified domains, often by working closely with older adults, community providers, and various data sources. Based on those results, the **Action Plan** identifies key areas for improvement and develops recommendations that the initiative can focus on in the coming three years to improve conditions in those domains. Ideally all recommendations would incorporate SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) goals, or guidelines that help ensure the recommendations are addressing gaps, that the work is measurable, is time limited, readily actionable, and other critical considerations (see **Image 1** for livable communities timeline prior to implementation). The **Implementation phase** is generally a three-year timeline in which the group executes the identified recommendations, followed by a year of evaluation and assessment and publicly sharing those results. Based on the successes and any newly identified gaps, the Action Plan would be updated and implemented for an additional three years.

Image 1: Livable Communities Timeline



One of the many strengths of this initiative lies in its dynamic and iterative approach; it allows communities to develop a deeper and more profound understanding of the needs, barriers, and challenges facing complex issues, while also prioritizing long-term collaborative partnerships focused on ensuring Oakland is inclusive and accessible 5, 10, and 20 years down the road.

BACKGROUND

Below is some history and context about the Livable Oakland process, including Mayoral recommendations and baseline assessment process.

THE LIVABLE OAKLAND EFFORT

In 2017, the Mayor's Commission on Aging made the following recommendation to the Oakland City Council:

Active Aging: The Council should consider submitting a letter of intent seeking participation and designation as World Health Organization (WHO) age-friendly community, followed by a funded community needs assessment and action plan. Requirements for new development should include the creation and preservation of aging-friendly neighborhood amenities.

The Commission made this recommendation based on its recognition that the eight domains identified by the WHO mirrored many of the urgent concerns facing Oakland, including senior hunger and the effects of gentrification on the housing needs of seniors. Multiple agencies, public and private, provide a myriad of services to Oakland's elders, and the Commission believes that the WHO framework could lead to greater coordination of services and help identify gaps and unmet needs.

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Based on group work during a day-long 2018 planning retreat, the Commission on Aging identified an ad hoc **Age Friendly Cities** committee to coordinate a process of grassroots engagement, using guidelines created by the World Health Organization. Using this methodology, the Commission convened seven listening sessions, one in each Council District, to develop a framework from WHO guidelines, and conducted surveys, using both the AARP survey format and, subsequently, a simplified version to obtain additional data from all areas of the city. Commissioners worked with the Oakland City Council, the City's Human Services Department, Aging and Adult Services Division, Alameda County Area on Aging, other City Departments, and community-based, non-profit organizations whose services benefit older adults and persons with disabilities. The Commission also used this opportunity to forge relationships with a variety of individual Oaklanders, recognizing that the perceptions and wisdom of the community was necessary to formulate a plan that benefits those who are aging while contributing to the well-being of all ages.

When Oakland made the commitment to become an Age Friendly City, AARP provided support through community partner Center for Elders' Independence (CEI) to implement a community engagement survey for Oakland seniors. The survey questions were pre-set by AARP, so nothing needed to be created. However, the Commission was required to provide 500 responses by December 31, 2018. Facilitated by CEI, Littleton Consulting Group administered the surveys achieving this time-sensitive goal. The Commission observed that the initial segment of the population who replied to the survey did not adequately represent the demographics of Oakland. Therefore, the Commission recognized the need for direct contact with communities would be realized through a series of listening sessions.

Priorities gathered at the listening sessions and survey varied from district to district, and participants volunteered scores of suggestions and concerns across the eight Domains of Livability established by the WHO. During the listening sessions, elders in all areas of Oakland identified major common issues affecting their lives, including the availability of healthy, fresh food; a strong desire for effective communication; and the need for well maintained and accessible parks, community centers, and other gathering places. Many issues cut across multiple domains; for instance, issues concerning transportation turned out to be centered on the need for more effective communication regarding the many transportation options currently available to seniors.

At their February 2019 retreat, Commissioners and City staff reviewed the results of the listening sessions as well as the information to date from the ongoing survey process, and set as priorities for 2019 communication, food security and access, secure housing and health, open space and recreation. The Commission also looked at its own effectiveness in bringing forward policy issues and advocating for funding necessary programs, engaging community-based organizations to help seniors, and ensuring that the voices of seniors are heard as an integral part of City planning decisions.

At the Commission's February 2020 retreat, in which members of the community as well as representatives of community-based organizations were active participants, we discussed the continued relevance of these issues and added housing, especially the effect of homelessness on seniors, to our priority issues for 2020. With an expanded stakeholders group, including eleven commissioners representing all City Council Districts, and nine community-based organizations providing essential services for seniors and other volunteers, we established four dedicated subcommittees for housing, parks and recreation, health and wellness, and communications. Fueled by this community engagement, the Commission has established goals, recommendations and action items in a three-year plan to submit to the WHO and AARP to monitor progress moving forward.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has highlighted the need for flexibility to respond to the needs of seniors that could not have been foreseen earlier. Accordingly, to enable Oakland's elders to participate in the November 2020 general election, we have added the domain of civic engagement to the action plan.

ACTION PLAN

DOMAIN: Health & Wellness/Food Insecurity

DESCRIPTION: Prioritize community aspects that promote healthy living standards for Oakland seniors (and all community members). Understand barriers and challenges and recommend ways to alleviate their impact on Oakland seniors. Identify resource gaps and opportunities

DOMAIN GOAL: Optimize a healthy life span for all Oaklanders and enable them to thrive.

1. **Recommendation:** Advocate for increasing healthcare workers that specialize in working with older adults.

Action Items:

- a. Collaborate with community partners and professionals to identify the gaps and challenges older adults experience within the healthcare system; and
 - b. Identify and develop recommendations that would increase the quality of care for older adults within the healthcare system.
2. **Recommendation:** Ensure consistent access to nutritious food for seniors and their families/caregivers who need it.

Action Items:

- a. Collaborate with providers and stakeholders to develop a gaps and assets analysis;
 - b. Based on gaps, identify existing and additional funding sources to address those gaps. (e.g. Measure AA funding, parking fee fund); and
 - c. Research the feasibility of creating innovative funding options to support hunger organizations.
3. **Recommendation:** Ensure that senior/community centers support and reflect the diversity and range of needs experienced by Oakland seniors and their families.

Action Items:

- a. Utilize senior centers as a healthcare navigation portal for people at higher risk of becoming homeless;
 - b. Support senior centers becoming community-based resource hubs particularly for marginalized populations;
 - c. Explore/support rebranding senior centers as “community centers” to reach all Oaklanders (led by what is right for seniors); and
 - d. Support the Mayor’s initiative to identify seniors at risk for homelessness.
4. **Recommendation:** Identify and develop recommendations for food deserts. Solve for gap areas in which residents have no access to fresh foods, fruits and vegetables.

Action Items:

- a. Expand the capacity of current food delivery programs to add routes in areas with high concentration of low-income seniors;
- b. Research and develop recommendations regarding creative and innovative partnership opportunities between the city and local home delivery food providers.

WORKGROUP DETAILS.

Chair: Commissioner Ricks

Members: Mattie Scott, Shannon McDonnell, Michael Coleman, Blake Spears, Lenore McDonald

DOMAIN: HOUSING

DESCRIPTION: Provide information and services to assist seniors in maintaining existing housing, to make shelter available for homeless seniors, to allow seniors to have choices of housing design and location as their needs change, and to support physical and financial programs to ensure adequate resources for housing.

DOMAIN GOAL: Keep seniors in housing.

1. **Recommendation:** Develop and implement a shared housing rental program that matches potential roommates and seniors.

Action Items:

- a. Develop and release a request for proposals (RFP) for a 15-month pilot program;
 - b. Support chosen community partners with outreach and implementation; and
 - c. Based on pilot program results, advocate for continued funding.
2. **Recommendation:** Seniors have access to information about vetted home repair services and supports for safety modifications to their homes.

Action Items:

- a. Develop an asset and gaps analysis of current resources by June 2020, best practices, or models of home repairs and modifications;
- b. Partner with identified organizations, City Departments, and volunteer groups that support affordable or free home repairs;
- c. Identify gaps and develop policy or program recommendations based on those results, and develop a white paper based on the analysis; and
- d. Advocate for an online directory of critical housing-related resources for seniors.

DOMAIN GOAL: Seniors have a voice in the decisions around housing in Oakland.

1. **Recommendation:** Ensure that seniors' needs, challenges, and unique experiences are incorporated within Oakland's housing policies, planning, and services.

Action Items:

- a. Identify and partner with key housing organizations and decision-makers to ensure that advocacy for senior needs and challenges are incorporated;
 - b. Identify and engage with key decision-making bodies by providing expertise, recommendations, and lived experiences, such as Commissions, community and advocacy groups and other venues;
 - c. Identify opportunities where seniors can share/engage directly and encourage participation; and
 - d. Recruit stakeholders, advocates, and continue to engage seniors.
2. **Recommendation:** Support the Mayor's mandate on homelessness in relation to seniors and their families and caregivers.

Action Items:

- a. Host a listening session specific to the mandate on homelessness;
- b. Inform and update seniors regarding final recommendations; and
- c. Collect and share community feedback with critical decision-makers.

WORKGROUP DETAILS.

Chair: Commissioner Asha Benne-Clarke

Members: Lenore McDonald, Scott Means, Dennis Yee, Toni Gomes, Tracy Jensen, Cheryl Moore, and Lena Owens

DOMAIN: OPEN SPACES

DESCRIPTION: It is important for elders to have access to parks and open spaces to encourage social interactions, which leads to more physical activity. Maintaining regular physical activity can help prevent common ailments, such as heart disease and diabetes. The social benefits of elders participating in outdoor activities include improved brain health and reduced isolation. Exercise improves overall immune function, which is important for seniors as their immune systems are often compromised.

DOMAIN GOAL: To ensure that Oakland public spaces are open, welcoming, engaging, and safe for all ages.

1. **Recommendation:** Support efforts to ensure that parks are available for people of all ages, including enhancing park accessibility, engagement, and safety.

Actions:

- a. Identify and develop collaboration with relevant City departments that have jurisdiction over the key priority areas;
 - b. Prioritize park safety, including adequate lighting and wayfinding; and
 - c. Review and assess current park gaps analysis and develop recommendations.
2. **Recommendation:** Advocate for opportunities for residents of all ages to actively participate within public parks.

Action Items:

- a. Bring together the many City departments that have jurisdiction over the multiple areas of concern;
- b. Advocate and partner with stakeholders to create an intergenerational park pilot;
- c. Work with seniors and/or community members of all ages, identify and share park best practices, advocate to address gaps and share resources; and
- d. Develop policy and/or programmatic recommendations that will advocate

for increased park engagement that builds off community feedback and needs.

3. **Recommendation:** Advocate for and support efforts that will increase the accessibility and livability of public spaces.

Action Items:

- a. Identify and develop partnerships with key organizations and advocates;
- b. Interact with the City agencies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Division to review new Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) for accessibility of outdoor and public spaces that provide opportunities for physical fitness;
- c. Develop and share recommendations around key public space concerns including bathrooms, sidewalks, curb cuts, and benches; and
- d. Support and leverage existing Capital Improvement Projects to include efforts and initiatives that improve access and participation of seniors in open space programming.

WORKGROUP DETAILS.

Chair: Commissioner Coleman

Members: Commissioner Neal-Madison, Wendy Peterson, Chonita Chew, Bill Sadler, Madlynn Johnson

DOMAIN: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION: Ensure Oakland residents receive timely, practical information to manage their lives, attend events, and stay connected and informed.

DOMAIN GOAL: Every Oakland resident can access robust and needed information about services in a format that works for them.

1. **Recommendation:** Create a central hub of broad and diverse resources that seniors and their families or caregivers can access. Ensure that the information distribution is accessible and inclusive, including formatting and language translation.

Action Items:

- a. Identify and collaborate with resource information stakeholders;
- b. Identify and research best practices regarding information referral systems; and

- c. Develop and share a recommendation to the City of Oakland in October 2020.
2. **Recommendation:** Support an outreach campaign (sharing Information and Referral Hub) for Oakland residents.

Action Items:

- a. Identify potential key stakeholders for future Oakland outreach campaign.

WORKGROUP DETAILS.

Chair: Commissioner Garrett

Members: Commissioner Siebert, Lisa LaMagna, Susan Pierpoint, Howard Kirsch, Antoinette Warren, Commissioner Moore, Commissioner Coleman, Wendy Peterson

NEXT STEPS

In early March 2020, COVID-19 upended every aspect of life in Oakland, for public agencies as well as private citizens. The City, together with community organizations and other agencies, mobilized promptly to make sure that nutrition programs continued, that food could be delivered to those who depend on these programs, and that homebound seniors would continue to receive necessary services.

The Commission, working with its public, community, and nonprofit partners, is committed to continuing to promote the goals, recommendations, and action items in this report, while attempting to ensure that Oakland's elders, insofar as possible, are protected from the physical, social, and economic ravages of the coronavirus. As an example of the flexibility called for by the pandemic, the WHO domain of Civic Engagement has become a priority, and we are taking immediate steps to preserve the right of every Oakland senior to vote in the November 2020 election.

ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

Additionally, while our intention is to develop and follow a transparent three-year plan based on community feedback, we also recognize the importance of being able to respond to needs and challenges as they arise. Therefore, Livable Oakland will also support critical initiatives as they arise and will continue to use the framework developed over the past year, including addressing

existing gaps, and ensuring that goals are measurable and time sensitive. One such initiative is ensuring that all seniors in Oakland are registered to vote and to provide the opportunity to exercise that privilege. Voting is at the heart of democracy. Within Oakland, there are senior populations who either through lack of computer access or due to other factors are not currently registered to vote. The lack of voter registration by seniors inhibits their ability to choose their elected officials, diminishing their influence on the decisions their elected officials make relative to issues of importance to them (e.g., housing, food security and access, open space).

Therefore, our goals are as follows:

1. Develop and implement a program to increase senior voter registration in Oakland:
 - a. Obtain voter registration forms and develop a flyer instructing seniors how to fill out and return the forms; and
 - b. Work with community partners to distribute the voter registration forms and instructions to seniors in Oakland.

2. Develop a program to increase voter participation among registered seniors in Oakland:
 - a. Work with community groups to encourage seniors to fill out their ballots in a timely fashion so their votes are counted; and
 - b. Provide seniors with instructions on how to complete the ballot and distribute the instructions with other community groups.

Among other upcoming activities for 2020, as part of our gaps and analysis assets analysis in the area of Food and Nutrition we will obtain detailed information about the availability of fresh food throughout Oakland, to better understand exactly the location and extent of the city's food deserts. We have also applied for a grant from AARP for the construction of a senior playground and are actively collaborating with the City and civic groups on the upcoming revitalization of Mosswood Park, in hopes of creating a space that is welcoming and functional for all ages. We stand ready to collaborate actively with planning and advisory groups as they move ahead on charting Oakland's future. We are prepared to assist the Commission on Homelessness as it deliberates on priorities for expenditure of revenue from the Measure W vacant property tax, to ensure that the needs of seniors are addressed. We will also participate in future meetings of any Equity Working Group considering future neighborhood planning, and we hope to be included in decisions implementing the Downtown Specific Plan which potentially affects seniors.

Finally, we have been reaching out to other WHO-designated Age-Friendly cities and counties around the Bay Area, to share successes and challenges and bring back information that will help us achieve our goal: to make Oakland a Livable City for All Ages.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan C. Ricks

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Chair, Commission on Aging

Reviewed by Sara Bedford, Director, Human Services and Scott Means, Adult and Aging Services Manager. For questions, please contact Scott Means at (510) 238-6137.