

CITY OF RENTON OLDER ADULT BUSINESS PLAN

*A Community for Everyone, for Life*



# Acknowledgements

## CITY REPRESENTATIVES

### *Mayor and City Council*

- ▶ Denis Law, Mayor
- ▶ Ed Prince, Council President
- ▶ Randy Corman
- ▶ Marcie Palmer
- ▶ Armondo Pavone
- ▶ Ruth Perez
- ▶ Don Persson
- ▶ Greg Taylor

### *Staff*

- ▶ Terry Higashiyama, Administrator
- ▶ Kris Stimpson, Recreation Director
- ▶ Shawn Daly, Recreation Supervisor
- ▶ Debbie Little, Recreation Coordinator
- ▶ Dianne Utecht, Human Services Coordinator

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

- ▶ Lynn Bohart, Executive Director, Renton Community Foundation
- ▶ Susan Dailey, Resident Services Coordinator, Renton Housing Authority
- ▶ Jim Sullivan, Chairman of the Board, Senior Housing Assistance Group and Renton Business Owner
- ▶ Shelley Thompson, Senior General Manager, Merrill Gardens
- ▶ Kate Turpin, Vice President/Programs, Senior Services of Seattle/King County



2025 First Avenue, Suite 800  
Seattle, WA 98121

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Denis Law  
Mayor



Many of you know that the baby boomer generation is reaching retirement. This “age wave” provides stress on services, but also provides us with strong opportunities. This generation will be the healthiest, most educated and most affluent in history. However, there are still many vulnerable older adults within our community that we need to serve. The city will need to partner and collaborate with other agencies, such as businesses, nonprofits, and philanthropic organizations to expand capacity to provide these necessary services.

The City of Renton has taken steps to address the needs of the older adult population by initiating this Older Adult Business Plan. The plan addresses trends in transportation, healthcare services, recreation opportunities, housing, service partners, and more.

Older adults provide a wealth of knowledge in the workforce, a pool of talent and experience. Seventy percent of older adults want to work in some capacity in their later years. In addition, older adults provide an incredible amount of volunteer hours. At the Renton Senior Activity Center alone people have provided over 12,000 annual volunteer hours. We couldn't provide programs in the community without community volunteers.

In order to create “A Community for Everyone, For Life,” we must provide affordable housing, adequate public transportation, accessible physical and mental health care, lifelong learning opportunities, recreation opportunities, and public safety.

I applaud the staff, the planning team, and the stakeholders for their hard work, time and effort. This plan will guide us in the next five to ten years in our planning efforts.

Denis Law  
Mayor



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# A COMMUNITY FOR EVERYONE, *for Life*



In the United States today, the average life expectancy is almost 79 years, which means we can all expect to live at least one-third of our lives as adults over the age of 50. That is a significant portion of one’s life. What do older adults want? What do they need to remain productive and engaged members of our community? How do they want to contribute to their own community? This conversation is taking place across the nation, as local governments and municipalities prepare for an older adult population that is unlike previous generations in many ways.

The City of Renton is proactively planning for the increase in and changing preferences of older adults in the community. To best prepare for the future, the City conducted a business needs analysis of city-provided services for older adults, including an environmental scan of services and opportunities available for Renton’s older adults. The result of this effort is its inaugural Business Plan: A Community for Everyone,

for Life. The Plan sets a course for how Renton can best support older members of the community so that the last third of life can be the best third.

## PURPOSE & CONTEXT

This Plan will guide city decision-making and investments between 2015 and 2020. There is no crystal ball that predicts what the needs and preferences of older adults will be in 2020. However, national and local trends can provide direction for planning. This section discusses five trends that are key drivers of older adult service needs and demands at the national level, corroborated by local experience and viewpoints.

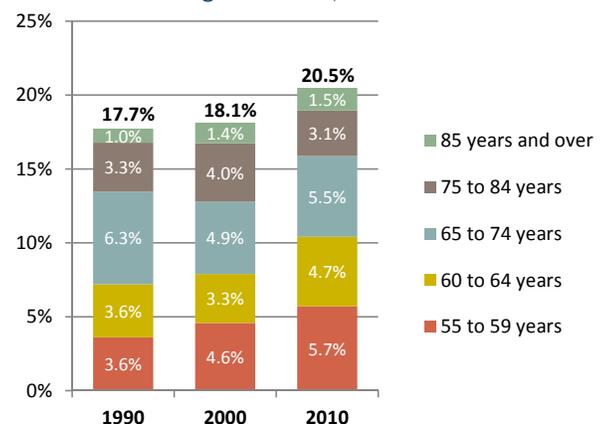
The Plan’s goals and strategies are designed to position the City to

anticipate and prepare for these key drivers.

### 1 *The Population of Older Adults in Renton is Growing.*

Major demographic shifts are reshaping the composition of communities across the United States. Our population is growing older, and over the next two decades, the Boomer Generation

Percent of Renton Population in Older Age Brackets, 1990 - 2010



Source: U.S. Census

(persons born between 1946 and 1964) will reach their 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> decades. As the average age of the American population increases, the service needs of older adults are growing and diversifying.

Renton has experienced an increase in the number of older adults in the community. Between 1990 and 2010, Renton’s population older than 55 years increased by more than 11,000 people. Some of the increase is natural and some is attributable to in-migration and growing city boundaries. While nation’s rural population has been dominated by older age cohorts for decades, there is indication that suburban communities, such as Renton, will see greater increases in the older adult population than urban-core cities. Many of the Boomer Generation came of age in the suburbs and are likely to remain in the suburbs in their advanced years. Rising urban land prices will support this trend, as suburbs such as Renton are likely to offer more affordable housing options than urban-core cities.

A larger older adult population will represent an increase in demand for services, and several existing older adult services in Renton are already over-subscribed. The ability to increase services is challenged by increasing financial strain on social services at every level of government. Developing partnerships and linkages among community organizations that provide services and opportunities for older adults is a viable strategy

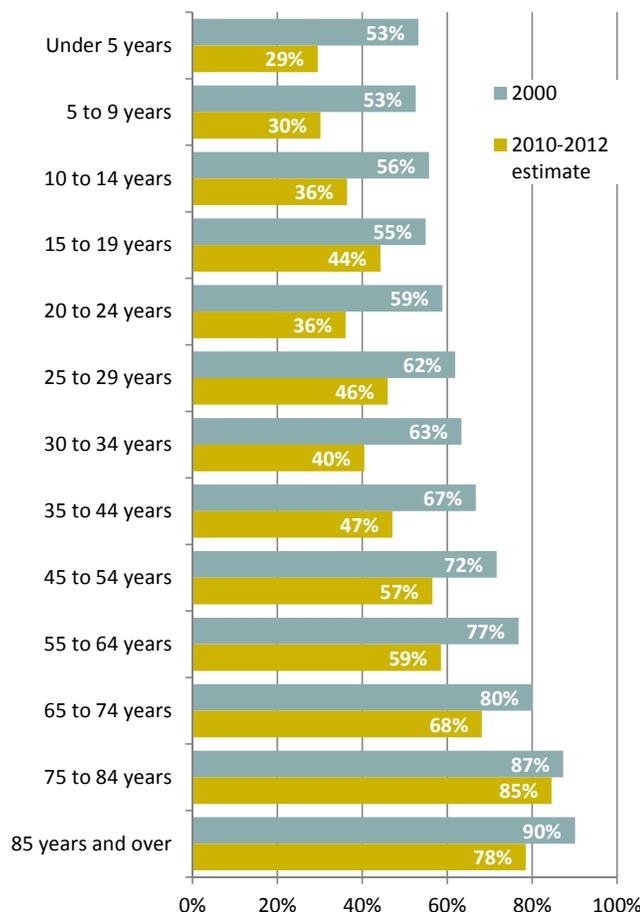
for local governments with limited or diminishing revenues. Renton is fortunate to have great, high-quality services. However, ability to access those services varies due to an individual’s knowledge about the services. The City can take concrete steps to help older adults access information about providers who can best fit their needs. Communication about the services and organizations that exist, and what they offer, is a crucial component of Renton’s strategy for providing services to older adults.

## 2 The Population of Older Adults in Renton is Increasingly Diverse.

It is evident in schools and neighborhoods that Renton is experiencing an increase in ethnic and cultural diversity. There have been significant changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the community over the last two decades, with younger immigrants representing an array of ethnic and racial backgrounds.

To what degree is growing diversity true for older adults? Between 2000 and 2012, all age cohorts grew more diverse (experiencing

Renton Percent of Age Cohort that is non-Hispanic White, 2000 and 2012



Source: U.S. Census, 2000; ACS 2010 – 2012 3-year Estimates

## Renton Today



*“After our children moved out of our home, we chose to downsize from Bellevue to Renton because we liked the small town and community atmosphere, and the vicinity of the airport for travel. We love the dog park, Farmer’s Market, May Creek, and the local restaurants.”*

- Amy Dedrickson, Renton Community Member

*Renton, historically, was a small town located between the lake and the forest. In many ways it still retains that character. As the physical and economic core of the city, Renton’s historic downtown offers shopping and year-round community events and activities. Uphill from downtown Renton, the landscape is characterized by residential development and natural areas. The City is crossed by river and creeks, and its terrain is defined by riparian woodlands. The Cedar River, containing the largest run of Sockeye salmon in the continental United States, runs through the heart of Renton’s historic downtown. The City’s rivers and Lake Washington are home to runs of Chinook, Sockeye and Coho salmon.*

*But several factors place Renton on the threshold of change: the transition of Renton’s industrial sector and economy; continuing regional and local population growth; and the City’s place at the crossroads of local, regional, national, and international transportation. These factors foreshadow a new role for Renton as an important*

*metropolitan center in the region, and are in step with downtown Renton’s designation as a Regional Growth Center.*

### TRANSITIONING ECONOMY

*Renton’s industrial sector is undergoing a transition away from heavy industrial/manufacturing toward medium and light industrial uses. Although manufacturing is expected to remain stable, the number of light and medium industrial jobs in wholesale, transportation, communications, and utilities is projected to nearly double in the Renton area between today and the year 2020. In addition, Renton has been experiencing an increase in professional and service jobs. As an example, Boeing’s research and development facilities in and around Renton spurred the development of office parks south of the downtown and at the north end of the Green River Valley. Consequently, Renton has seen growth in the number and types of commercial businesses in the city due to an increased demand for goods and services.*



*The Cedar River flows through Renton.*



*“Renton has been a great place to raise my family, walkable neighborhoods, open and approachable city leadership, and a caring community. We relocated to Renton in 1958, established roots and don’t plan on leaving. This is where we belong.”*

**- Norm Abrahamson, 2011 Citizen of the Year**

a decrease in the proportion of the population that is non-Hispanic White), with younger



*ESL Group at Renton Housing Authority Properties*

cohorts experiencing the greatest increases in diversity. This is likely driven by the natural increase in minority populations as well as in-migrants that are more diverse. Though not as quickly as younger cohorts, older adults are growing more diverse as well. The services to support the social, health, or personal interest opportunities for older adults have not kept pace with the growing diversity in Renton.

Stakeholders prioritize addressing the needs of diverse ethnic and linguistic communities in Renton. Many call for improving the cultural- and linguistic-competence of existing service providers, and identifying and providing new services tailored to the specific needs of these diverse communities.

Beyond ethnic and linguistic diversity, the diversity of older adults is growing in other ways.

For one, diversity in marriage and family patterns has increased. On the whole, the Boomer Generation married later in life and are more likely to get divorced than their parents. One study demonstrated that in 2009, 31% of Boomer men and 37% of Boomer women were unmarried, a 50% increase in unmarried individuals compared to the same age cohort in 1980 (Lin & Brown, 2012). Older adults that live alone have a different set of needs than those who are coupled, and may require additional caregiving and other supports. Additionally, unmarried Boomers have a poverty rate almost five times higher than married Boomers and are more likely to use social assistance, have a disability, or lack health insurance.

Secondly, wealth disparities have increased. Just as income inequality is growing in the United States, the older adult population is increasingly polarized in terms of financial resources. There is both growth in the purchasing power of older adults at higher

ends of the wealth spectrum and an increase in the proportion of older adults who are living with too few resources to meet their basic needs. While Renton’s older adult poverty rate is less than the nation’s, poverty has grown in Renton across all age categories.

Both family structure and household resources impact an older adult’s need for caregiving supports. Multiple strategies and approaches will be necessary to meet the diversifying needs of older adults. Old models that assumed spousal-support will need to be updated to accommodate new family structures and social supports. Individualized approaches, early financial planning, and more varied home-based supports will all be necessary to meet the diverse needs of older adults.

**3** *Access to Services is a Challenge for Older Renton Residents.*

Renton is a suburban community, which presents both opportunities and challenges for older adults. The form of suburban communities is historically low-density residential areas separated from commercial

*Means of Transportation to Work, Renton Adults 60+ years, 2010*

	Total	Percent
Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	2,038	69%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	518	18%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab):	197	7%
Walked:	68	2%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means:	22	1%
Worked at home:	92	3%
	<b>2,935</b>	

*Source: U.S. Census*

or other services. National studies have linked suburban living and physical health, finding that older people walk less frequently when they live in lower density neighborhoods that are distant from services. A personal vehicle is almost always necessary to meet one's daily needs in suburban communities, though many older adults will eventually no longer want to, or be able to, drive. Without suitable transportation alternatives, older adults can face significant barriers to services in their own communities, let alone barriers to accessing services in neighboring communities.

This transportation challenge is especially acute in Renton. Renton is a sprawling suburb that is separated by several major topographical and manmade features, including the Cedar River, the Highlands, and

Interstate 405. There are few transportation options in Renton, and those that exist tend to have specialized missions or are too limited to meet demand. In fact, across all of the stakeholder feedback, transportation was considered the most pressing need or the most significant service gap in Renton. While the available transportation services are meeting the needs of some older adults in Renton, there is need for additional transportation and mobility options.

#### 4 *Preventing Older Adult Isolation is a Priority.*

The top concern of the community, service providers, and city leaders is the safety and well-being of community members who are socially and physically isolated due to age, personal mobility, health, or other factors. Older adults are

particularly vulnerable to social isolation. As described above, for the first time almost one-third of new older adult cohorts have never married, and many do not have children. In addition to changing family structures, increased mobility of some portions of the population can inadvertently leave older adults isolated from their families. For example, members of the Boomer Generation came of age during the popularization of suburban living and have continued to live in suburban communities throughout their lives. This affinity for the suburbs contrasts to a trend toward urbanization of younger generations, including the children and family of these older adults. As a result, an older adult may be "left behind" in their current community while most of their support system moves away.



## ADULT PLAYGROUNDS

*Health and wellness is a priority for today's older adults. In fact, group exercise is the only group activity where older adult participation continues to increase. However, valuing health and fitness has seemingly not increased American older adults' actual health and fitness. Adult playgrounds, where low-impact exercise equipment is available for use outdoors is a promising solution because it increases opportunities for group exercise.*

*These playgrounds have been successful around the world. For example, before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, China constructed 50,000 playgrounds for adults to help increase people's physical health and fitness for the games. The playgrounds have also cropped up in Japan and throughout Europe.*

Without concerted effort to identify and reach isolated older adults, there will likely be more adults who experience loneliness and social isolation in Renton. These factors are strongly linked to negative outcomes on individuals' health and wellbeing, and result in costly de-facto care strategies through emergency services. By enacting the strategies of this Plan, the City can improve its coordination and partnerships among City functions and departments, as well as with partners throughout Renton, to identify and reach isolated individuals.

### 5 *Cultural Shifts will Change Demand for Services.*

Cultural changes are likely the most significant driver of future older adult service needs and demand. By sheer numbers, the Boomer Generation will change what it means to be an older adult, just as it has shaped teen culture, career arcs, and middle age.

In addition to the diversification described above, the Boomer Generation will demand services that align to their values, including individual choice, community involvement, and health and wellness. Each of these cultural preferences will impact older adult service demand and preferences in ways both known and unknown.

**Individual choice and independence.** The Boomer Generation has been fiercely independent, defining themselves by how they differ from the generations before them. Indeed, the term “generation gap” is a Boomer-invention. The emphasis on individual choice, and eschewing of traditional social clubs and networks, undergirds many of the drivers described above. As a result, older adults are increasingly



*Long-standing Renton Farmers' Market Volunteer. Photo by robtehbusinesswriter.*

aging alone. For services, this has resulted in a movement away from institutional care toward home- and community-based services. Boomers are less likely to move to traditional retirement communities in sunnier locales than their parents, and instead prefer to age in place in their own homes and communities. Rather than clear transitions into new phases of life, older adults today will likely take their own path focusing on doing the things they enjoy, including working.

This has led to demand for highly individualized, à la carte service approaches designed to offer flexible amounts of support for adults as they encounter new limitations in their daily life.

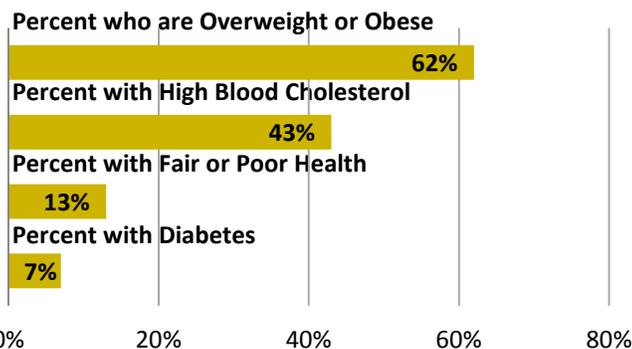
**Community involvement.** Traditional forms of civic engagement have been declining for the past few decades and are highly correlated with education levels and household income. This is true for older adults as well, who have become less civically involved over the years in all community-oriented activities, except for voting. The older cohorts (ages 67 to 83 and ages 84-plus) tend to be less civically engaged than the Boomer Generation, which is less civically engaged than Generation X (ages 31 to 47). The implications for services is that generally speaking, older adults are not actively seeking new ways to become involved—though those who are linked to organizations and participate in group activities report many benefits. It will take proactive marketing and outreach to keep Renton's community members engaged in community life.

**Health and wellness.** Compared to the older cohorts before them, exercise and fitness is an expression of one's personal identity for Boomer and following generations. National campaigns for fitness and exercise have shaped their attitudes toward exercise and made most aware of the benefits of physical activity. Research on social engagement

and community involvement has shown that participation in group exercise or gyms is one of the only community-based activities that have increased among older generations of adults.

However, the emphasis on physical activity has not translated into healthier lives for older generations. Like all adults, older adults tend to overestimate their actual level of physical activity and underestimate the amount of time they are sedentary in a day. Though people are living longer, Boomers are far less fit than their parents were at the same age and are more likely to be managing a chronic condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure. The data available shows that many of Renton’s adults have chronic conditions. These chronic conditions must be actively managed and indicate a demand for health care and management services.

Health Outcomes for Renton Residents, 2007-11 Five-Year Average



Source: PHSKC Community Health Indicators, 2014

Additionally, with over one half of Renton’s adult population being overweight or obese, it is likely that the prevalence of chronic conditions will continue to increase, as obesity makes adults more susceptible to many chronic conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, metabolic conditions, and some cancers.

Research on older adult motivations for physical activity have demonstrated that many experience access barriers and

perceived barriers to regular physical activity. Perceived barriers include finding fitness facilities intimidating and being concerned that one will slow down others in a group exercise setting. Service providers have a lot to offer in helping older adults overcome barriers to regular physical activity with strategies such as increasing public education and information, improving the older-adult focus of current programs, and developing alternative methods for promoting active lifestyle choices overall.



The Renton Senior Activity Center is next to a path along the Cedar River.

## VOLUNTEERS MAKE RENTON SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER A LASTING SUCCESS

*In September 1979, the city of Renton opened the doors to its “new” senior center on the Cedar River. Hailed by then Mayor Charles Delaurenti as the “Best on the West Coast,” the center was a dream come true for Renton-area older adults.*

*Today the Renton Senior Activity Center continues to flourish. A well-rounded program of social, health and recreational activities and services makes the center a very important part of the lives of many Renton families.*

*A key to the success of the facility is the commitment and involvement of older community volunteers. The creative, forward-thinking contributions of the Center’s volunteers has had a positive effect on the benefits to participants and the center’s lively atmosphere.*

*Volunteers have a vested interest in the program. This is their center, they have helped develop it and will continue to mold its future. They care about the center and are proud of what it offers. Volunteers deserve credit for making the Renton Senior Activity Center the special place that it has become.*

*Volunteers donate their time for a number of reasons, but most volunteer because they care about our community and want to give something back. One volunteer recently told me, “You get out of a community what you put into a community”.*

*Our volunteers are simply amazing. They truly are the heart of our senior center and without them we could not survive.*

*Renton-area residents age 50 and up are invited to call the Renton Senior Activity Center at 425-430-6633 for further information about the center and about volunteer opportunities available.*

*– Shawn Daly, Senior Activity Center Director*



Over six months, city staff and community volunteers reviewed trends, conducted analysis, and engaged the community in a broad conversation about how to ensure the older members of the Renton community can live their best lives. The result of this effort is a vision of an inclusive, supportive community for the benefit of everyone, top line goals to drive city services, and supporting strategies to bring the vision into a reality.

## **VISION:**

# *A Community for Everyone, for Life.*

## **GOALS:**

- 1. Improve the Quality of Life for all of Renton's Older Adults.**
- 2. Increase High-Demand Programming and Maintain Ongoing Relevancy.**
- 3. Improve Access and Transportation Options.**
- 4. Increase Capacity of Renton's Systems of Services and Supports.**

## **STRATEGIES:**

- A. Become a more effective partner.**
- B. Improve knowledge about the older adults in Renton.**
- C. Increase awareness about current offerings and opportunities.**
- D. Improve departmental coordination to better meet older adult needs.**
- E. Advocate regionally for older adults in Renton.**
- F. Support older adult engagement in the community.**
- G. Augment the City of Renton's current services with high-demand and family-support services**

# Goals and Strategies

We value inclusivity and recognize the importance of older adult services and supports to ensure that community members remain active members of the greater Renton community through all phases of life. To achieve this, we endeavor to ensure that services for older adults are accessible, welcoming, and supportive of our diverse community members.

The over arching Vision guiding this Plan is:

## *A Community for Everyone, for Life.*

The Goals and Strategies described below put this Vision into action to ensure that all older adults receive culturally appropriate services to allow them to live their best life, through a network of providers and partners that serve Renton's older adults inclusively, equitably, and efficiently.

### **GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OF RENTON'S OLDER ADULTS.**

As a community, Renton values inclusivity and endeavors to ensure that our older adult services are accessible, welcoming, and supportive of our diverse community members. This Goal focuses on reducing barriers to participation by increasing outreach and competence in service to diverse populations. It also emphasizes increasing the ability of individuals and families to find the opportunities, services, or supports they seek and desire. Of particular concern is the safety and well-being of community members who are socially and physically isolated due to age, personal mobility, health, or other factors.

To achieve this Goal, the City must be a strong partner to the many organizations and community groups that meet the needs of the growing and diverse older

adult population in Renton. It must improve coordination and partnerships, both among city functions and departments, as well as with partners throughout the Renton community. This will require increased knowledge about the diverse individuals and families that comprise Renton and broader opportunities for representatives of minority groups or protected classes to participate in the shaping of community services and opportunities. It will also require commitment on behalf of the City and its partners to proactively address the needs, desires, and preferences of these constituents.

### **GOAL 2: INCREASE HIGH-DEMAND PROGRAMMING AND MAINTAIN ONGOING RELEVANCY.**

Needs, preferences, and desires change with each generation. In Renton, generational change is



coupled with increasing diversity among ethnicities, family structures, and personal financial status. To meet the broad range of needs in Renton, it is critical that older adult services are broadly supported and responsive to changes in need and preference. This Goal is focused on ensuring the current system of services remain relevant and effective by establishing mechanisms to anticipate new needs and to efficiently bring new services to the community. Having relevant, useful services is necessary to cultivate support for older adult services and ensure older community members remain active, engaged members of Renton.

### **GOAL 3: IMPROVE ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS.**

The form of suburban communities is historically car-oriented, which can present difficulties to anyone without access to a personal vehicle. Renton is a sprawling suburb that is separated by several major topographical and manmade features, including the Cedar River, the Highlands, and Interstate 405. Older adults who are transitioning out of driving may find themselves

unable to access work, social, or personal interest opportunities, not to mention needed services. Additionally, individuals today are less likely to live close to family members. In Renton, the need for accessible and affordable transportation options is acute. This goal focuses on improving older adult mobility by reducing barriers to existing transportation options and advocating regionally for increased service and transit options.

### **GOAL 4: INCREASE CAPACITY OF RENTON'S SYSTEMS OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS.**

Community services are experiencing increased demand while traditional city revenues are eroding. This has led to increased financial strain on social services at every level of government. This Goal seeks to proactively address this challenge for Renton's system of older adult services. The City is only one provider in Renton's network of older adult service providers. The City can build upon its current partnerships and increase awareness of other community organizations that provide resources to older adults. This Goal is focused on increasing

service capacity among current service providers and improving the efficiency of the overall system through improved information sharing and coordination. Improving coordination and awareness of what already exists in the community, as well as improving the capacity of service providers to meet the needs of a broader cross-section of our diverse population, will ensure all members of the community have many opportunities to sustain their lifestyle.

Achieving this Goal would bring immediate benefits to individuals and families who need support and opportunities, as well as the broader community which will benefit from the increased engagement of older adults in community life. It is our system of services and supports that will allow individuals to remain active, engaged members of the community throughout a significant phase of life. In this way, all members of the greater Renton community are stakeholders of older adult services.

## STRATEGIES

### Strategy A: Become a more effective partner.

1. **Lay the groundwork to increase the effectiveness of partnerships.**
  - ▶ Identify priority needs and partners who can support those needs.
  - ▶ Identify organizations serving targeted communities in Renton.
  - ▶ Establish protocols and tools to improve two-way communication.
  - ▶ Designate an individual staff for each partnership and establish annual goals.
2. **Build new partnerships with organizations and institutions that currently support diverse communities.**
  - ▶ Identify potential areas for collaboration and opportunities to prevent duplication of service.
3. **Facilitate and expand cross-referrals between partners.**
  - ▶ Strengthen relationships with neighborhood associations and service providers to help identify isolated older adults.
  - ▶ Consider co-locating services and programs from agencies outside of Renton within city facilities.
4. **Establish collaborative programming where possible.**
  - ▶ Consider co-location of services to improve access.
  - ▶ Provide space for community outreach workers from partner organizations to work within the Senior Activity Center.
  - ▶ Coordinate and collaborate with other service providers to provide services throughout the community.



### DOING MORE TOGETHER

*The REACH Center of Hope is a day center and night shelter for homeless women and children. The Center of Hope partners with a number of agencies to ensure that clients are accessing every avenue possible as they make their journey from homelessness to stability.*

*The Reach Center of Hope is an example of how the City and its community partners can accomplish more by working together. The Center provides a much needed service by leveraging the leadership and vision of REACH, with City support and community volunteers.*

## **Strategy B: Improve knowledge about the older adults in Renton.**

- 1. Leverage data to understand demand for existing services.**
  - ▶ Monitor data points to track demographic trends for older adults.
  - ▶ Use trends to establish next steps and direct further action.
  - ▶ Use metrics to monitor performance and inform programming and service decisions.
- 2. Improve decision-makers' knowledge of diverse communities within Renton and their needs and preferences.**
  - ▶ Reduce barriers to participation on advisory boards for representatives of minority communities.
  - ▶ Improve provider understanding of obstacles faced by older adults.

## **Strategy C: Increase awareness about current offerings and opportunities.**

- 1. Reach a broader segment of the community with improved communications about services.**
  - ▶ Identify potential audiences and key messages
  - ▶ Develop appealing messages and that older adults can identify with (such as “older adults” instead of “seniors”).
- 2. Improve the visibility of Renton’s services within diverse communities by leveraging new communications channels and approaches.**
  - ▶ Use Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to announce resources and opportunities in Renton.
  - ▶ Employ new communication channels to reach additional audiences.
  - ▶ Proactively inform partners and connectors/gatekeepers (such as Senior Information and Assistance) of existing programs.
- 3. Pilot “full service days” or “service fairs” to offer a one-stop access for services.**
  - ▶ Consider targeted fairs to specific ethnic and limited English-speaking groups.
  - ▶ Provide transportation to these events through Hyde Shuttle or a comparable service.



## COORDINATED OUTREACH

*Former retired Renton Fire Chief Lee Wheeler takes advantage of the free blood pressure and glucose screenings offered by Renton Fire District 11 at its Senior Day Picnic.*

*Coordinated community outreach among City staff can help connect community members to needed services and opportunities. Many city services other than community services can act as first points of contact with community members who need services or support.*

### Strategy D: Improve departmental coordination to better meet older adult needs.

1. **Improve communication and coordination between city departments about programs and services.**
  - ▶ Offer education about the aging process, dementia, older adult abuse, and exploitation to emergency services and other resident-facing departments.
2. **Improve first point of contact with the City of Renton to attract and retain clients.**
  - ▶ Hire a paid front desk/telephone receptionist for the Senior Activity Center to facilitate communication with stakeholders.
  - ▶ Coordinate with City Public Safety Officers to improve effectiveness as point of first contact to better serve older adults.
3. **Align funding for older adult services to stated goals.**
  - ▶ Once the Human Services Strategic Plan is adopted, use it to guide funding and programming decisions.
4. **Implement recommendations of the City’s assessment of inclusiveness.**

### Strategy E: Advocate regionally for older adults in Renton.

1. **Advocate for improved funding for older adult services in Renton and South King County.**
  - ▶ Educate decision makers about the needs in Renton and South King County.
  - ▶ Lobby on behalf of Renton’s older adults.
2. **Seek additional grant and other funding opportunities.**
  - ▶ Create an ongoing task force to guide grant-seeking opportunities.
3. **Advocate for transportation improvements for older adults.**
  - ▶ Lobby for a bus stop at the Senior Activity Center.

## Strategy F: Support older adult engagement in the community.

### 1. Improve and expand the volunteer opportunities.

- ▶ Explore development of a volunteer transportation program.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for older adults to volunteer and mentor others.
- ▶ Develop an older adults skills bank.

### 2. Develop meaningful opportunities for older adults to contribute to the broader community.

- ▶ Explore opportunities to showcase “whole lives” of older community members.
- ▶ Develop clear opportunities and pathways for giving, both money and time.

### 3. Educate and promote community awareness about ageism and the value that older adults provide to the community.

## Strategy G: Augment the City of Renton’s current services with high-demand and family-support services.

### 1. Offer information and education about aging for families, including through peer mentoring.

### 2. Offer person-centered counseling and transition services to help adults make the best care choices.

### 3. Improve existing transportation options to expand accessibility.

- ▶ Increase transportation options for non-medical appointments, including social opportunities and accessing the food bank.

### 4. Offer more education opportunities, potentially with accreditation options, for older adults.



## PROVIDING HIGH DEMAND SERVICES

*Renton’s Senior Activity Center provides a range of activities for community members. One area of increasing interest are group trips to local and regional destinations. By working together, service providers can offer a broader range of high-interest activities and opportunities to meet a broader cross-section of needs.*

The Business Plan’s four goals are supported by its seven strategies. The matrix below illustrates how individual strategies support the four goals.

**OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

**GOALS** ➔

<b>Improve the Quality of Life for All of Renton’s Older Adults</b>				
<b>Increase High-Demand Programming and Maintain Ongoing Relevancy</b>				
<b>Improve Access and Transportation Options</b>				
<b>Increase Capacity of Renton’s Systems of Services and Supports</b>				

**STRATEGIES**

A. Become a more effective partner.	✓	✓	✓	✓
B. Improve knowledge about the older adults in Renton.	✓	✓		✓
C. Increase awareness about current offerings and opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	
D. Improve departmental coordination to better meet older adult needs.	✓	✓		
E. Advocate regionally for older adults in Renton.	✓		✓	✓
F. Support older adult engagement in the community.	✓	✓		
G. Augment the City of Renton’s current services with high-demand and family-support services.	✓	✓		✓

# APPENDIX A:

## The Planning Process

## *The Planning Process*

The planning process was led by a Planning Committee comprised of City staff, representatives of community services, and community members from March 2014 to November 2014.

The Planning Committee reviewed national and local trends in older adult needs and services, met with service providers and stakeholders across the community, and deliberated about the most promising opportunities for the City of Renton to better serve its older adult residents. The Committee participated in four working sessions, reviewed all Plan inputs, and conducted most of the community outreach. The Planning Committee developed the Vision, Goals, and Strategies and submitted the recommended plan to the Renton City Council. Two primary inputs to the planning process include:

### **A. Older Adult Demographic and Service Trends**

The Business Plan is informed by a scan of national trends in older adult demographics and related service needs and trends. The consulting team, BERK, prepared a high-level overview of national and local trends in the older adult population and related service needs. The summary is presented in Appendix B.

### **B. Community Engagement and Outreach**

The Planning Committee conducted outreach and engagement activities to gather information on current needs and services and to ensure the resulting plan best met the specific needs and built upon the local assets of the Renton community. Outreach activities included focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and facilitated discussions at community meetings. Through these activities, the City gathered information about trends in older adult services, the needs of older adults in Renton, service gaps for existing services in Renton, top service priorities for the community, methods for improving current services, and the strengths of the City's current efforts.

Most of the outreach activities were conducted between February 2014 and May 2014. A summary of community engagement summary is presented in Appendix E.

### **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- ▶ Lynn Bohart, Renton Community Foundation
- ▶ Susan Dailey, Renton Housing Authority
- ▶ Shawn Daly, City of Renton
- ▶ Terry Higashiyama, City of Renton
- ▶ Debbie Little, City of Renton
- ▶ Kris Stimpson, City of Renton
- ▶ Jim Sullivan, Senior Housing Assistance Group (SHAG)
- ▶ Shelley Thompson, Merrill Gardens
- ▶ Kate Turpin, Senior Services
- ▶ Dianne Utecht, City of Renton

### **STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS**

- ▶ Senior Citizens Advisory Committee
- ▶ Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches
- ▶ South Sound Senior Center Directors
- ▶ Senior Housing Assistance Group (SHAG)
- ▶ City of Renton Department Administrators
- ▶ City of Renton Senior Activity Center Users
- ▶ Renton Area Nonprofits Unite (RANU)
- ▶ UW Medicine | Valley Medical Center

### **STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWEES**

- ▶ Valerie Baldisserotto, Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL)
- ▶ Janet Ceballos, Alzheimer's Association
- ▶ Boliver Choi, Chinese Information and Service Center
- ▶ Mark Gropper, Renton Housing Authority
- ▶ Charles Hoy-Ellis, UW Graduate Student
- ▶ Dan Kellogg, Legal Services
- ▶ Denis Law, City of Renton Mayor
- ▶ Tanya McGee, Senior Information and Assistance
- ▶ Don Persson, Renton Council President
- ▶ Oleg Pynda, Ukrainian Senior Center
- ▶ Ann Rhyner, Greenwood Memorial Park

## APPENDIX B:

Older Adult Services Provided by Other Providers in Renton, 2014

Category of Service	Program/Service Name	Service	Provider	Location	Geographies Served	Ages Served	Other Eligibility Criteria
Health	Medicaid Contacts	Primary contact for Medicaid	AASA, DSHS	King County	King County	Adults, 18+	
Health	Medicare	Assistance with Medicare services	US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid	USA	USA	Adults, 65+ (some exceptions)	24 consecutive months of SSI disability, individuals in end stage renal failure
Health	Medicaid	Assistance with Medicaid services	US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid	USA	USA	N/A	N/A
Nutrition	Community Dining	Free lunch made with fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables in a community space	Senior Services	King County	King County	Adults, 50+	N/A
Nutrition	Meals on Wheels	Nutritious, free meals delivered throughout King County; grocery delivery available in Seattle, non-food staples available in King County	Senior Services	King County	King County		N/A
Social Services	Adult Protective Services, Region Four	Report and investigate abuse or concerns about adults' welfare	ADSA, DSHS	King County	King County	Adults, 18+	N/A
Social Services	WA State Ombudsman, King County	Report Resident Rights concerns	WA State Ombudsman	King County	King County	Adults, 18+	N/A
Social Services	DSHS Complaint Resolution	Report and investigate DSHS complaints	DSHS	Statewide	Statewide	Adults, 18+	N/A
Social Services	Complaint Resolution for Referral Agencies	Report and investigate complaints regarding service referral agents	Attorney General for the State of Washington	Statewide	Statewide	Adults, 18+	N/A

Category of Service	Program/Service Name	Service	Provider	Location	Geographies Served	Ages Served	Other Eligibility Criteria
Social Services	Senior Information and Assistance	Information and assistance, including services and referrals for older adults and persons with disabilities	Senior Services	King County	King County	N/A	N/A
Social Services	Veteran's Services Offices	Regional assistance for filing for veteran's benefits	Veteran's Administration Washington	Seattle	King County	Adults	Service in the armed forces
Social Services	Social Security Administration	Assistance with social security filing and receipt of benefits	US Social Security Administration	USA	USA	Adults	N/A
Transportation	Volunteer Transportation	Free transportation for individuals who can self-transfer into a private vehicle	Senior Services	King County	King County	Adults, 50+	N/A
Transportation	Hyde Shuttles	Door-to-door accessible transportation in select neighborhoods/services areas	Senior Services	King County	King County	Adults, 55+	N/A



# APPENDIX C:

## Older Adult Demographic and Service Trends

### Older Adult Demographic and Service Trends

UPDATED: March 2014

#### INTRODUCTION

The City of Renton is developing a Business Plan to guide its provision of older adult services for the next five years. The planning process will be inclusive and draw on the insight and perspective of a broad range of stakeholders in Renton. It will be led by a Senior Services Planning Committee comprised of City staff and community partners.

This document provides a high-level overview of national and local trends in the older adult population and related service needs. It is intended to start the conversation, and build a common understanding of how the older adult population is changing and the potential implications for future service interests and needs.

The overview includes information on:

- Demographic trends at the national and local level
- Generational preferences
- Service trends

This is a living document and the content and ideas will be advanced over the course of the planning process.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Major demographic shifts are reshaping the composition of communities across the United States. The population is growing older and over the next two decades, the Boomer Generation (persons born between 1946 and 1964) will reach their eighth and ninth decades. As the average age of the American population increases, the service needs of older adults are growing and diversifying.

This section examines the changes in the older adult population, at both the national and local level, and explores the implications for different types of services. The review finds ten trends associated with older adults that have implications for service provision. The older adult population...

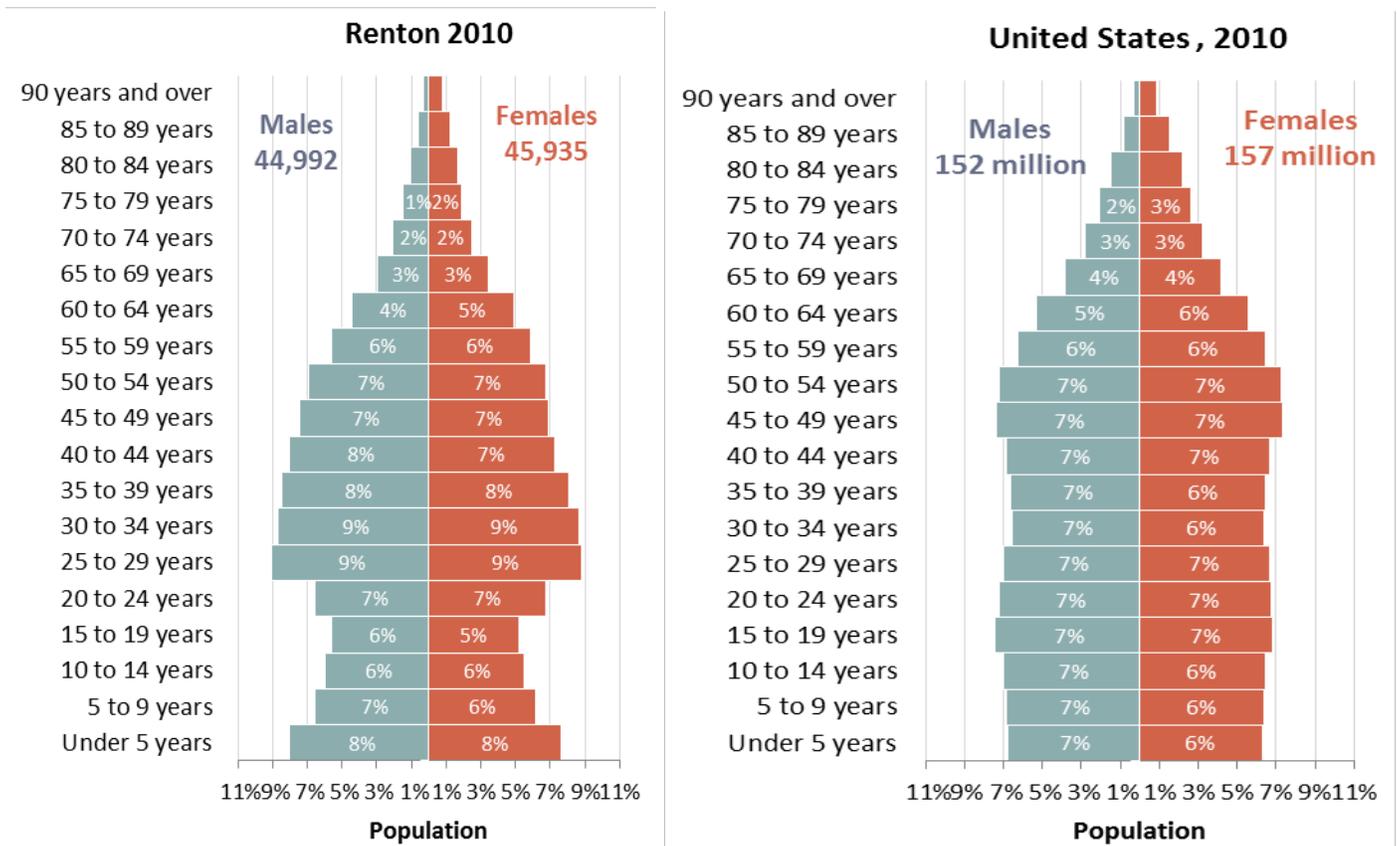
- Is growing
- Is increasingly ethnically diverse
- Is more educated than previous generations
- Has increasing wealth disparities
- Has greater diversity in marriage and family patterns
- Is working longer
- Is more likely to be living with a chronic illness

**The proportion of the population that is older is growing.**

The United States population of adults 65 years and older numbered 40.3 million people 2010, about 13% of the U.S. population overall. At this time, the Boomer Generation was in their most productive working years. However, as the Boomers age, the proportion of the U.S. population 65 years of older will quickly increase. By 2030, older adults in the U.S. will number 72.1 million—over twice the number counted in the 2010 Census—and about 19% of the overall U.S. population. The growth in the older adult population will increase demand for all services.

Renton’s population structure suggests a younger, more quickly growing population than the United States as a whole. **Exhibit 1** presents the age distribution for both Renton and the United States in 2010. Renton’s population structure is more pyramid-shaped, with a larger proportion of the population in the decades generally associated with early careers and raising children, roughly 25 to 40 years old. The United States’ population is more box-shaped, with a more equal distribution of population across all age categories. The Boomer generation is evident in the national population structure, with a slight bulge at ages 46 to 64. For Renton, the demographic bulge is in the earlier age categories of 25 to 39.

**Exhibit 1  
Age Distribution, 2010**



Source: Source: U.S. Census, 2010; BERK, 2014

The City of Renton has experienced an increase in the number of older adults in the community, as presented in **Exhibit 2**. Between 1990 and 2010, Renton’s population older than 55 years has increased by more than 11,000 people. Some of this increase was due to natural increase as well as in-migration and growing City boundaries. There is some indication that suburban communities, such as Renton, will see greater increases in the older adult population than urban-core cities, as aging Boomers are more likely to wish to remain in the suburbs and the suburbs are likely to offer more affordable housing

options than urban-core cities. A reasonable planning estimate of older adults (ages 55 and older) in 2013 is approximately 19,600 individuals.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Renton Trends in Older Adult Population, 1990 – 2000**

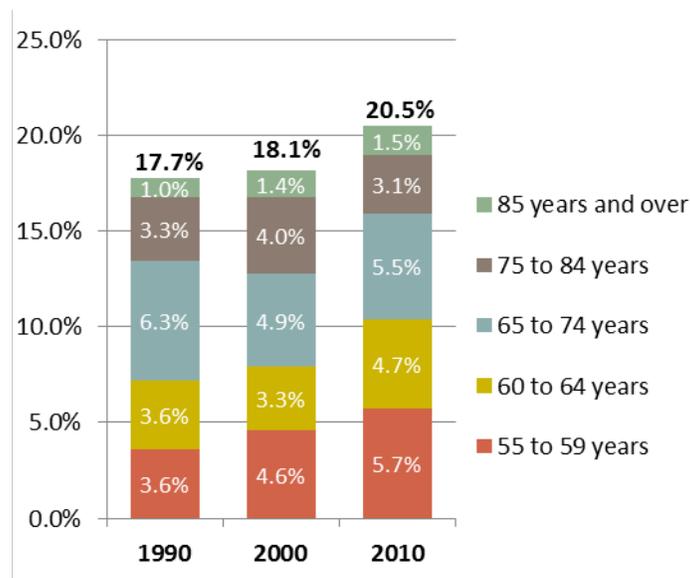
	Total Population			
	1990	2000	2010	2013 est
<b>Total Population*</b>	<b>41,688</b>	<b>50,052</b>	<b>90,927</b>	<b>95,540</b>
55 to 59 years	1,503	2,292	5,196	
60 to 64 years	1,501	1,661	4,267	
65 to 74 years	2,610	2,444	4,977	
75 to 84 years	1,380	1,981	2,794	
85 years and over	400	698	1,393	
<b>Total 55 years and over</b>	<b>7,394</b>	<b>9,076</b>	<b>18,627</b>	<b>19,600</b>

\* Change in total population includes natural increase, net migration, and annexations

Source: Source: U.S. Census, 2010; BERK, 2014

In addition to an increase in the total older adult population, the *proportion* of Renton’s population in the older adult age categories is also growing. In 2010, one in five Renton residents was older than 55. This represents a change in almost 3 percentage points since 1990.

**Exhibit 3**  
**Change in Renton’s Age Distribution, 1990 – 2000**



Source: U.S. Census, 1990, 2000, 2010; BERK, 2014

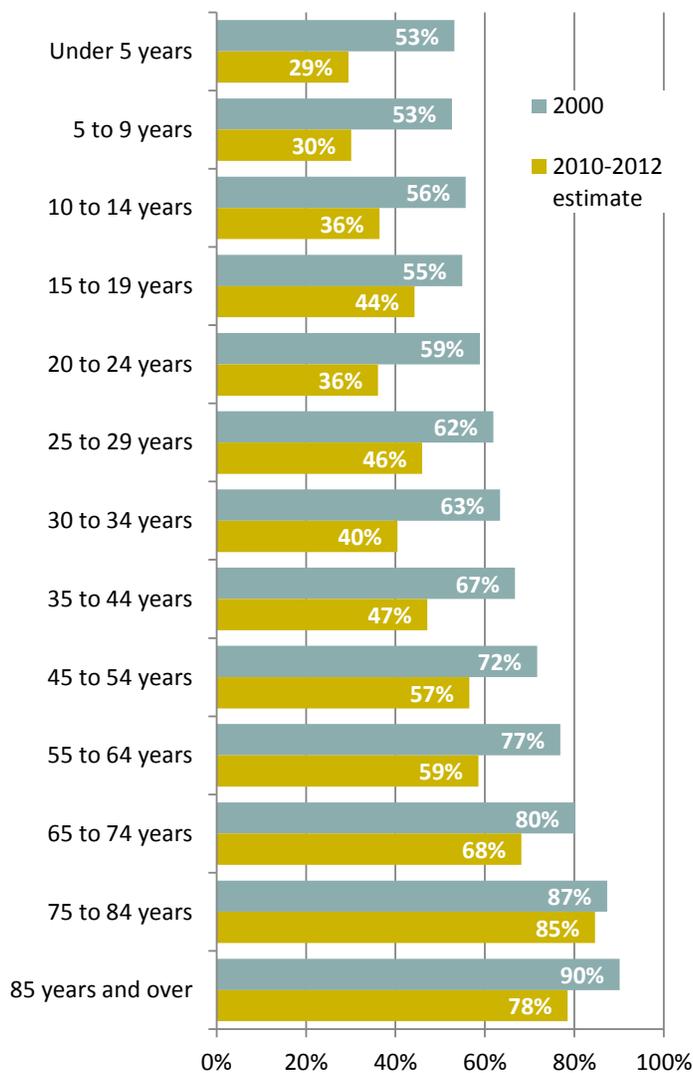
Similar to national trends, we expect the older adult population in Renton to continue to grow both in total numbers and as a percentage of the whole population.

**The older adult population is characterized by increasing racial and ethnic diversity.**

In the United States as a whole, the older adult population is still majority White, non-Hispanic. The current population of people 70 or more years old were children during the great depression—an era characterized by very little immigration. Although the older population (ages 65 and older) is not expected to become majority-minority in the next four decades, it is expected to become more diverse along with the general population. Between now and 2030, the proportion of older Americans that are Hispanic is expected to reach 12%, Asian to 6%, and the African-American share will increase to 11%.

Renton has experienced a significant change in the racial and ethnic composition of the community over the last two decades, with younger immigrants representing an array of ethnic and racial backgrounds. **Exhibit 4** presents the percentage of each age cohort that is Non-Hispanic White. In 2000, the younger age cohorts had a smaller proportion of the population that was Non-Hispanic White than older age cohorts. Between 2000 and 2012, all age cohorts grew more diverse (a decrease in the proportion that was Non-Hispanic White), with younger cohorts experiencing greater increases in diversity. This is likely driven by natural increase in minority populations as well as more diverse immigrants. In 2000, one in two Renton children under five years old was Non-Hispanic White. By 2012, the rate was one in three. According to the most recent estimate, 32% of Renton residents 65 to 74 years is Hispanic, a race other than White, or both. The percentages are lower for the 75 to 84 years cohort and the 85 years and over cohort.

**Exhibit 4**  
**Non-Hispanic White Percentage**  
**by Age Cohort, 2000 and 2012**



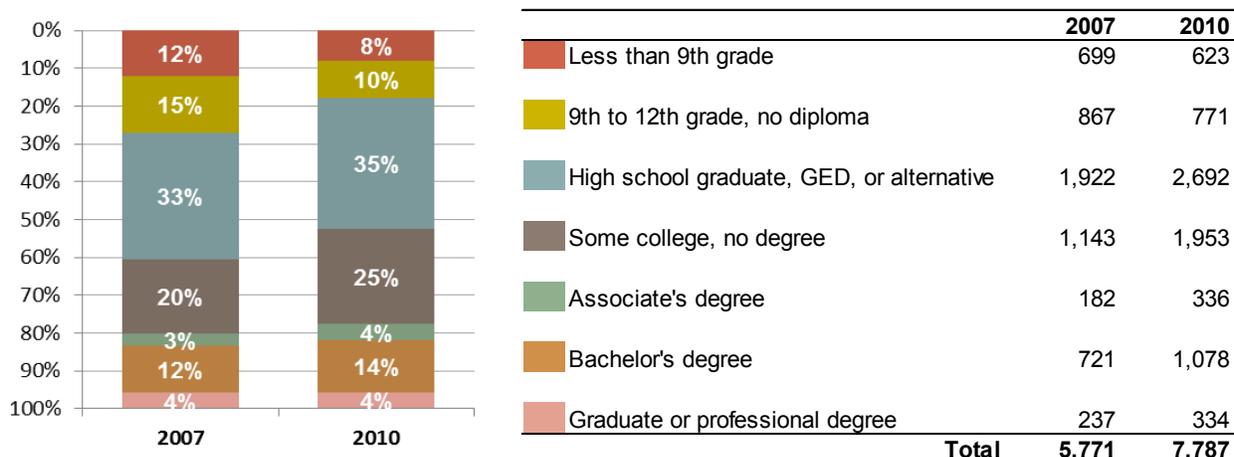
Source: U.S. Census, 2000; ACS 2010 – 2012 3-year Estimates, 2014; BERK, 2014

**On the whole, the Boomer Generation is more educated than the generation before them.**

In the United States, the Boomer Generation is generally more educated than their parents’ generation. In Renton, all levels of educational attainment are represented in the 65 years or older population. **Exhibit 5** shows that between 2007 and 2010 there was a decrease in the number of adults age 65 and

older who had less than a high school diploma. There was also an increase the number of adults with some college, associate’s degrees, and bachelor’s degrees.

**Exhibit 5**  
**Educational Attainment for Adults Age 65 and Older Living in Renton, 2007 and 2010**



Source: ACS 2007 3-year Estimates, 2014; ACS 2010 3-year Estimates, 2014; BERK Consulting, 2014.

**In spite of overall wealth among older adults, many of the Boomer Generation are not financially prepared for retirement and an increasing proportion of older adults live in poverty.**

Today’s elderly (those in their 70s) are fairly well off, having saved over their working years and having gotten cash out of their home and retirement assets before the 2008 crash. In the U.S. households headed by people age 75 and over have a higher median net worth than any younger age bracket.

Just as income inequality is growing in the United States, the older adult population is becoming increasingly polarized in terms of financial resources. There is both growth in the purchasing power of older adults at higher ends of the wealth spectrum **and** an increase in the proportion of older adults who are living with too little resources to meet their basic needs. The Boomer Generation was hard hit by rising divorce rates, surging immigration, and widening gaps in wages—all serving to increase the distance between the haves and the have nots. National estimates suggest 15.9% of all individuals 65 and older live in poverty. In Renton, the most recent estimate (2008 – 2012) is 11.8%, as presented in **Exhibit 6**.

While Renton’s older adult poverty rate is less than the nation as a whole, poverty has grown in Renton across all age categories. The poverty rate for those 65 years or older has grown more than 3 percentage points since 2000.

**Exhibit 6**  
**Population living in Poverty**

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2008 - 2012 estimate</u>	
	<u>Living in poverty</u>	<u>Living in poverty</u>	<u>125% of the poverty line</u>
Under 18 years	14.0%	16.4%	22.2%
18 to 64 years	8.6%	10.5%	13.0%
65 years and over	8.4%	11.8%	16.2%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000; ACS 2008 – 2012 5-year Estimates, 2014; BERK, 2014

### More seniors will be living in the suburbs.

There is a strong preference for “aging in place” or living in the same place where older adults spent their working years. National estimates show up to 70% of seniors today live in the same place where they celebrated their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.

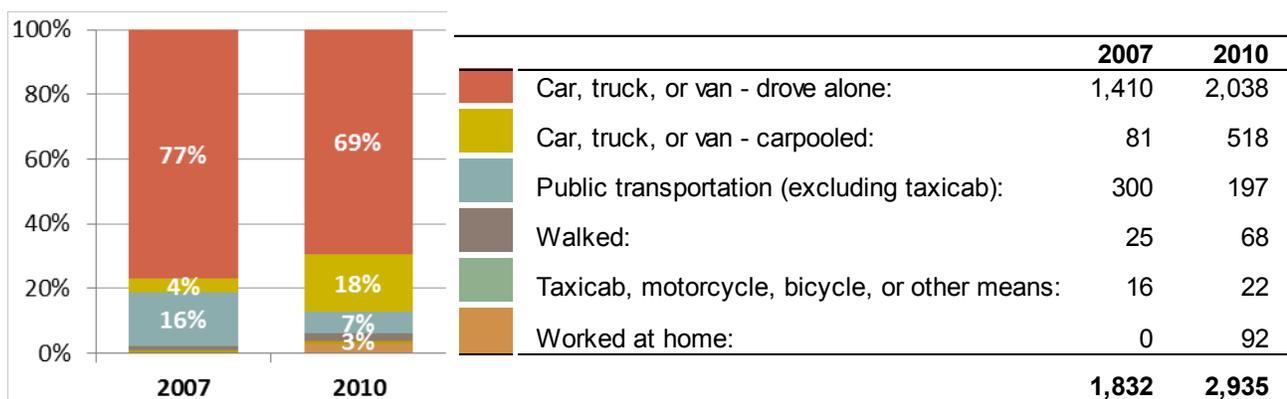
Members of the Boomer Generation came of age during the popularization of suburban living and continued to live in suburban communities throughout their lives. However, older adult affinity for the suburbs is in contrast to a trend toward urbanization of younger generations, including the children and family of these older adults. As a result, an older adult may be “left behind” in their current community while most of their support system moves out. This is resulting in naturally occurring retirement communities in suburban areas that were generally designed for families with young children and cars.

National studies have linked suburban living and physical health, finding that older people walk less frequently when they live in lower density neighborhoods that are more distant from services.

Suburban and rural communities are often organized around private vehicles. As a result, many older adults live in communities with limited transportation options and continue to be dependent on their personal vehicle. **Exhibit 7** shows that older adults that continue to work often are reliant on driving themselves in a single occupancy vehicle. The 2007 and 2010 estimates demonstrate the continued dominance of the single occupancy vehicle in Renton, though carpooling has become a more frequent strategy.

**Exhibit 7**

### Means of Transportation to Work for Employed Renton Residents ages 60 or older, 2007 and 2010



Source: ACS 2007 3-year Estimates, 2014; ACS 2010 3-year Estimates, 2014; BERK Consulting, 2014.

### Greater diversity in marriage and family patterns.

On the whole, the Boomer Generation married later in life and were more likely to get divorced than their parents. In 2009, one study demonstrated that 31% of boomer men and 37% of boomer women were unmarried, a 50% increase in the unmarried individuals compared to the same age cohort in 1980 (Lin & Brown 2012). These unmarried boomers have a poverty rate almost five times higher than married boomers and are more likely to use social assistance, have a disability, or lack health insurance.

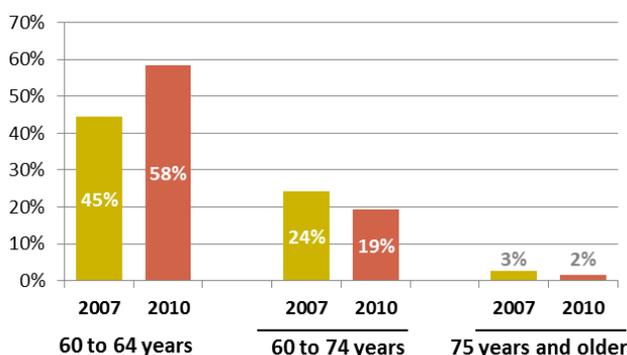
The Boomer Generation is also characterized by much more diversity in family form including single-parent families, stepfamilies, cohabitating heterosexual and same-gender couples, childless families and non-kin based families. Family patterns vary by ethnic and racial categories, which has implications for the type of services and service delivery approaches that are desirable.

### Prolonged participation in the labor force with many developing second, third, or subsequent careers.

In the United States in 1960, one-third of all males over age 65 were employed. By the mid-1980s, only 15% were employed due to Social Security, Medicare, and the spread of private retirement plans. The Boomer Generation is expected to remain in the workforce longer and thus push up the average retirement age. National studies predict that by 2020, the share of Americans ages 65 to 74 who are still in the workforce will break 30%. There are many factors driving this trend, including higher earning potential of the Boomer Generation and health care costs, but the dominant reason is financial necessity. The economic challenges of the last two recessions have made prolonged earning a necessity for the Boomer Generation, many of whom lost substantial retirement savings, pensions, or other long-term securities in the last years of their working life. Even so, many older adults find more than financial benefits in working, including psychological and social fulfillment.

**Exhibit 8** presents the workforce participation of Renton Residents 60 years and older. Between 2007 and 2010, the workforce participation of 60 to 64 years increased significantly, similar to National trends. In Renton, the workforce participation for older cohorts decreased over the same observation period. The margin of error for the estimates makes it unclear if there is a valid different from national trends.

**Exhibit 8**  
**Workforce Participation of Renton Residents 60 years and older, 2007 and 2010**



Source: ACS 2007 3-year Estimates, 2014; ACS 2010 3-year Estimates, 2014; BERK Consulting, 2014.

### Increase longevity coupled with more older adults managing a chronic illness.

National trends suggest that older adults, while living longer than previous generations, will also spend more years of their life unhealthy or with chronic conditions. The data available in Renton (**Exhibit 9**) shows that many of Renton's adults have chronic conditions: 7% have diabetes, 43% have high blood cholesterol (an indicator of heart disease), and 28% have hypertension. These chronic conditions must be actively managed and indicate a demand for health care and management services. Additionally, with over one half of Renton's adult population being overweight or obese, it is likely that the prevalence of chronic conditions will continue to increase, as obesity makes adults more susceptible to many chronic conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, metabolic conditions, and some cancers.

### Exhibit 9

#### Health Outcomes for Renton Residents, 2007-11 Five-Year Average Health Reporting Area

	Renton	Renton-East	Renton-North	Renton-South
Life Expectancy at Age 65	20.4 years	20.8 Years	21 years	20 Years
Percentage in Fair or Poor Health	13%	10%	19%	13%
Percent with Unmet Medical Need	12%	9%	13%	14%
Diabetes Prevalence	7%	7%	9%	7%
Percent who are Overweight or Obese	62%	62%	57%	64%
Percent with High Blood Cholesterol	43%	47%	49%	41%

Source: PHSKC Community Health Indicators, 2014; BERK Consulting, 2014.

### Exhibit 10

#### Health Outcomes for Renton Residents, 2006-10 Five-Year Average

	Renton Health Planning Area
Percentage with Activity Limitation	23%
Percentage with Hypertension Awareness	28%

Source: PHSKC Community Health Indicators, 2014; BERK Consulting, 2014.

Additionally, as almost one quarter of all adults in Renton have an activity limitation. Health and fitness programming will need to provide a continuum of experiences for all activity levels. Adults who do not have an activity limitation might want higher impact or more active programming, while modified programming will be necessary for those with activity limitations.

#### Increasingly costly health care.

The increase in life expectancy and growing rates of chronic disease are happening at a time when health care costs are outpacing income. Health care costs will continue to be a drain on the budgets of older adults.

#### Cultural shifts favoring choice and independence are changing social services provision.

There is much debate about how Boomer Generation culture differs from both the generation before it and the generation after. Regardless of the generational divisions, the Boomer Generation will demand services that align to their values, including individual choice, community involvement, and health and wellness. The cultural values associated with the Boomer Generation will lead to several trends in service provision, including:

- Emphasis on personal choice and individualized services.
- Movement away from institutional care and toward home and community based services.
- Increased interest in “aging in place” which allows older adults to continue involvement in their longtime communities and prevents displacement into institutional communities. Many Boomers will wish to stay near their adult children and remain an active, productive member of their communities.
- Demand for active hobbies and activity options (more sports and fitness opportunities).

- Interest in lifelong learning and continuing education.

## SERVICE TRENDS

The demographic trends discussed above have implications for the on-going delivery of older adult services. This section reviews implications and trends driven by the demographic factors discussed above as well as other factors that impact the availability of services for older adults.

### General Trends

#### Increasing financial strain on social service at every level of government.

At the same time the older adult population is growing, there is an increasing financial strain on social service provision at every level of government. As a result, there is a growing focus on cost efficiency and cost reduction in service provision.

Additional trends in services are meant to improve older adults access to information in the market so that they may make the best, most economically efficient choices. These services include:

- Case management and options counseling, to help older adults make fiscally sound choices for their future care.
- Information and referrals to community resources, and education about available services.

#### Support for adopting technology-enhanced services.

The Boomer Generation is one of the last generations that did not grow up using computers. As such, Boomers will likely continue to need phone and in-person assistance, as information is increasingly disseminated through the internet. Older adult services must integrate the use of technology in service provision in an inclusive way that accommodates all skill levels.

### Housing

- Older adults are delaying their move to senior living settings, creating an emphasis on services to support “aging in place.” This will increase demand for housing retrofits to existing homes and housing that accommodates individuals at every stage of life and ability (ramblers, minimal stairs, wide hallways, ramps, minimized thresholds, bars and grips).
- Housing for older adults is moving away from institutional settings and towards home and community based services and other more personalized living arrangements. This will increase the demand for:
  - In-home skilled nursing care
  - Adult family homes
  - Delivery of groceries and other staple goods
  - In home services (various therapies, health services, personal care, home care)
- There will be increased demand for affordable, accessible housing.
- New housing models such as multigenerational housing, senior villages, co-housing and other community living solutions will continue to evolve as a way to reduce housing costs.

- For individuals who do pursue assisted-living options, independent living and housing communities that provide varying degrees of independence through a continuum of services for their residents is a major trend.
- Since older adults prefer to “age in place” care facilities will have to update rates, admission policies, and make other changes to account for higher rates of high-acuity residents. Definitions of senior living categories will change, with assisted living communities functioning more like skilled nursing settings, and nursing homes beginning to serve as alternatives to hospitals (Sherriffe, 2014).

## **Nutrition**

- An increasing focus on and awareness of social equity and cultural competence throughout all government agencies and community based organizations will also inspire the need for meal and food choices that best meet the needs and desires of all older adults. This will include providing meal options that respect the dietary restrictions and food preferences of a diverse array of older adults.
- To help mitigate the impacts of chronic illness and obesity, and respond to demands for health and fitness options, there is a trend toward providing healthy and nutritious meals that include fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Providing meals in a group or social setting when possible to provide the necessary nutrition support, help make meal provision cost efficient (minimizing delivery costs, standardizing time served to minimize labor), and to help enhance social opportunities.

## **Social Services**

- Increased awareness of elder abuse has made it necessary to improve service providers’ ability to identify and prevent elder abuse. Many social service agencies provide opportunities for filing complaints and concerns regarding elder abuse.
- Older adult services and social services supports have grown increasingly complex over the last decade. This has increased the need for case management and options counseling, to help older adults make appropriate choices (fiscally and individually) for their future. It has also increased the need for information, referrals, and education about community resources and available services.

## **Transportation**

- The car-oriented structure of most suburban environments, coupled with limited public transportation options (a trademark of many suburban environments) is necessitating additional transportation options.
- Transportation will continue to be a primary barrier to accessing services and remain a need for older adults.

## **Health**

- Low-impact and adaptive fitness activities like walking, tai chi, exercise with the aid of a chair, and yoga will continue to be offered to suit those with limited mobility and low fitness levels.
- By 2027, the Medicare eligibility age will be raised to 67, however, with the existence of the Affordable Care Act, there is debate about how this will affect long term social service needs for older adults.

## Activities/Entertainment

- Expanding activity offerings to include activities for people of all cultures and backgrounds.
- An emphasis on community building and supporting relationship development between participations. Most activities advertise the opportunity for participants to meet new friends and have fun.

## Employment and Volunteer Opportunities

- More older adults are interested in subsequent careers, increasing demand for educational opportunities and professional networking.
- Flexibility in work and retirement options will be necessary for those older adults who need to, or choose to, work past the traditional retirement age.

## Pets

- There is an increasing recognition of the important role of pets as companions, and thus on helping older adults maintain their pets. This includes assistance with the pre-related costs, including emergency veterinary costs and ongoing pet food and care supply costs.
- Interest from private donors in this cause has led to the existence of several private funds in the City of Renton for pet assistance

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# APPENDIX D: Engagement Summary



# CITY OF RENTON

## OLDER ADULT SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN

### Engagement Summary

UPDATED: June 2014

## Introduction

The City of Renton conducted outreach and engagement activities as part of its current efforts to develop a Business Plan for the provision of older adult services in Renton. Outreach activities included focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and facilitated discussions at community organization meetings. Through these activities, the City has gathered information about trends in older adult services, the needs of older adults in Renton, service gaps for existing services in Renton, top service priorities for the community, methods for improving current services, and the strengths of the City's current efforts.

A list of the focus groups conducted and interviewees consulted is presented below.

#### Stakeholder Focus Groups

- Senior Citizens Advisory Committee (conducted by the consultant, BERK)
- Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches (REACH)
- South Sound Senior Center Directors
- Senior Housing Assistance Group
- City of Renton Department Administrators
- City of Renton Senior Activity Center Users
- RANU

#### Stakeholder Interviewees

- Valerie Baldisserotto, HEAL Public Health of Seattle & King County
- Janet Ceballos, Alzheimers Association
- Boliver Choi, Chinese Information and Service Center
- Mark Gropper, Renton Housing Authority (a written submission)
- Charles Hoy-Ellis, UW Graduate Student focused on LGBT Community
- Dan Kellogg, Legal Services
- Denis Law, City of Renton Mayor
- Tanya McGee, Senior Information and Assistance
- Don Persson, City of Renton Council President
- Oleg Pynda, Ukrainian Senior Center
- Ann Rhyner, Greenwood Memorial Park

Outreach activities were conducted between February and May 2014 by City staff as well as members of the Renton Senior Services Business Planning Committee. This summary is based on the written notes taken by City staff, planning committee members, and the consulting team. In some cases, community representatives provided their feedback in written form. The summary identifies key themes across three topics:

- Trends in Older Adult Needs
- Trends in Older Adult Services
- Strengths of Renton’s Current Services

Themes and subthemes are presented in descending order of the frequency of mentions by stakeholders. The summary uses selective quotes to illustrate the idea or concept in a stakeholder’s particular words. Quotes are not individually attributed.

## Trends in Older Adult Needs

### Characteristics of Renton’s Older Adult Population

#### DEMOGRAPHIC AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Many stakeholders provided comments and input on how they see the older adult population changing now and in the future. A common theme throughout these discussions is that different populations of older adults have different needs, and that there are significant differences between older adults across decades. It is frequently the case that an important service meets the needs of some portions of the adult population well, while the needs of other groups are not well met. Section 2 of this summary provides information on potential services changes to address gaps.

- **Renton is increasingly ethnically and linguistically diverse.** Stakeholders expect the older adult population to grow increasingly diverse over the next few decades.
  - A focus group of older adults that was mostly White expressed interest in better integration among the ethnic communities represented in Renton.
- **Family structures will continue to change,** with increasing diversity in family structures.
  - People are increasingly mobile, so older adults are much less likely to live near family. This creates challenges for continuity of care for older adults and may lead to other challenges such as social isolation.

*“Here in the states older adults live in their own housing separate from their children and grandchildren. Sometimes their children don’t even live in the same state. Splitting the generations can increase isolation for older adults. By not being included in everyday life many feel they are not needed any more.”*

*“Older adults need more local support from others, outside of family”*

- Some stakeholders suggest that a growing implication of the move from a nuclear family is that older adults will not be able to rely on support from their adult children.
  - Adults without children, including same sex couples, will need caregivers beyond family members.
 

*“The majority of informal caregivers are family, but in the LGBT community the majority of informal caregiving is to and for each other. This will become a problem as caregivers are also aging.”*

*“LGBT people in general have developed families of choice because they have been ostracized by their families or don’t have children or young in-laws. They have to provide the support for each other and those informal families are also not recognized.”*
  - Older adults will not be able to rely on family for their caregiving needs and will be less likely to live with family as they age.
- In some cases, older adults are **assuming care for their grandchildren**, placing them in a role they had not planned for. These families need a different set of supports.
  - Many grandparents don’t have the money to access the services they and their grandchildren need. Even navigating the school system and other services for children is daunting.
 

*“Many grandparents don’t have the money to do a lot of things they have to do, a lot of calling and a lot of things to find out what is available to them.”*
  - From a community-wide perspective, affordable day care is a need so that grandparents are not entirely relied on for babysitting.
- Some older adults will find themselves supporting their adult children, stretching resources that are already likely to be very limited. Stakeholders shared stories of elder abuse and financial troubles that have befallen older adults as they struggle to support their adult children who have health and financial troubles of their own.
- **Gender norms continue to change** with each generation, though there are significant variations from person to person.
  - In discussion of older adult needs, stakeholders acknowledged that women today are much more independent and have more opportunities in education and the workforce. However, they also warned that there are still a lot of older adults for whom this does not apply. There are still women in our community who are not independent.
 

*“We have a lot of women who come in with a spouse for a long time and then lose their spouse and are very lost after they lose their partner.”*

Other’s note that this is not specific to women.

*“This doesn’t just apply to women. This applies equally to men and in our observations with our GoldenCare members men are often much more ‘lost’ when they lose their spouse.”*
  - Some feel gender norms will continue to diversify. One stakeholder explains that she sees a trend in independent women having increasing cultural differences with less independent women, and this difference will be important to consider in designing services.

- Older adults will **continue to live longer**, but not necessarily healthier or with enough resources to support themselves.
  - Older adults are living longer but will have more mental and physical chronic conditions.
- Many stakeholders expect older adults to **have fewer resources** than previous generations.
  - Stakeholders link the trends in fewer resources, less immediate family, and poorer health conditions as signaling an increase in very vulnerable seniors who need multiple services.
 

*“The intersection of diversity, health disparities, income disparities, and aging continue to grow. Limited income older adults, immigrants, and other minority groups continue to face greater barriers in accessing services.”*
  - Older adults might not have the financial resources to see them through their whole lives.
  - Fewer older adults will have a middle class income in retirement. Many baby boomers have not planned or saved for their retirement years and as a result stakeholders expect many older adults to continue to work out of financial necessity.
  - Some stakeholders expressed concern that we will see a rise in homeless seniors.

## CULTURE, PREFERENCES, AND NORMS

- Older adults now, and more so in the future, **do not identify with the label “old.”** In conversations with older adults, we heard many explanations of how their generation was different from their parents’ generation.
 

*“Older adults do not want to be called or considered OLD!”*

*“We are more outgoing and more active. I get out in the community more than my parents did.”*
- Increasingly, older adults have a **preference for aging in place**, which is staying in their homes and communities as long as possible. However, the ability to age in place is often dependent on financial resources.
- **Travel and cultural exposure/experiences** are highly valued by older adults today, some feel more so than in generations past.
  - Many older adults are interested in travel, perhaps more now than in previous generations. Stakeholders believe this trend will continue.
 

*“Traveling lets us experience other cultures, travel to Europe, and go on cruises among other things.”*

*“Traveling is a good education and keeps you going a lot longer.”*
  - Focus group participants mentioned that older adults enjoy going to a lot of cultural events. Plays, symphonies, ballets, and sporting events were mentioned specifically.
  - Older adults value being active, and stakeholders believe that subsequent generations of older adults will continue to seek opportunities for activities. Some stakeholders anticipate an increase in golf course and trail usage in Renton.
  - Some believe that older adults will want to be busy. One interviewee stated that volunteering and staying active will be key for those growing older in the next five years.

- Stakeholders believe physical fitness will be a top priority for older adults in the next five years. They think that this is partially because exercising will also be a social outlet for older adults.
- There is a **digital divide** among today's older adults. Technology is a challenge for some older adults now and can be an obstacle to accessing needed services (such as on-line health record management). However, this is not universal. Some older adults are very comfortable with technology and would like to expand their skills and knowledge of new tools and opportunities.
  - A survey done by Washington Dental health found that 75% of seniors prefer their information online rather than one-on-one or through telephone and mobile devices.
  - Some stakeholders suggested more access to wifi and coffee shops where there is internet would be helpful to seniors.

## Older Adult Service Needs

### AFFORDABLE APPROPRIATE HOUSING

- Many stakeholders listed **affordable, appropriate housing as a priority** need of older adults in Renton. Product types such as attached, compact, duplex style, single-floor, bottom floor, step-up and shared housing were mentioned as desirable.
  - Opportunities for both rental and owner-occupied option are needed.
- Some feel the real estate market is turning around, allowing older adults with home equity to move into other living arrangements. For example, some speculate there will be **greater movement to assisted living** in the next five years due to pent up demand from the recession.
- Stakeholders expect **Renton to become an even more expensive place to live** given its location and rise in housing prices. Stakeholders are concerned that rising housing costs will limit Renton's older adults ability to age in place in their own community.
- For those with limited resources, **affordable housing is a significant need** that is confounded by lifestyle and other considerations.

*"Housing is an interesting conundrum because senior housing is one of the top program needs that [seniors] say is needed, but they are afraid to access senior housing due to fear of being ostracized, fear of not belonging...Even when agencies and programs are making good faith efforts."*

- Many service providers work with older adults who are under extreme housing burden. Stakeholders mentioned several types of housing assistance that are important to older adults, including **rent subsidies, utility assistance, eviction services, chore services and housing repair**.

### IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- **Improved and more diverse transportation options** are a significant need in Renton. Across all stakeholder feedback, transportation is frequently cited as the most pressing need or the most significant service gap in Renton.

- There are good transportation services to support access to medical appointments, such as the Hyde Shuttle (though it is insufficient to meet the community need). However, stakeholders stress the need for more options for a wider variety of purposes:
  - Transportation to recreation programs
  - Access to grocery stores
  - Travel to Seattle for cultural events
  - Options for inclement weather
- Bus services are slim, and inaccessible to those with personal mobility challenges.
- Stakeholders believe there will be **additional and growing transportation needs** for seniors who live in the car-oriented suburbs like Renton, and can no longer drive. At least one stakeholder felt that older adults would prefer reliable transit options over driving, but too often transit isn't reliable.
- The **existing transportation services do not serve the needs of all older adults** and are **not older-adult friendly**.
  - Some older adults need more information about transportation options and subsidy support to access the existing services. Cost and navigability are barriers to existing services.
  - Personal mobility limitations create barriers to accessing existing bus service:
    - Some older adults cannot walk to their bus stop and wait while standing.
    - Crosswalk signals are too short for some older adults to get across the street safely as well.
    - Transitioning from bus to bus can be a burden for older adults, and the routes in Renton aren't great so it might take multiple buses to get to a destination.
    - A sense of personal safety is also a consideration: *"putting sidewalks in isn't necessarily that helpful if older adults are in an area where they don't feel safe."*
  - Housing, access to services and transportation are all critical components of well-being.
 

*"The next 10-20 years offers the opportunity to create elder friendly communities. This would include partnering with a wide variety of service agencies, partnerships with schools to develop intergenerational relationships, creating a walkable community, alternative forms of transportation, and the use of universal design."*

## NUTRITION SUPPORTS AND EDUCATION

- Stakeholders express concern that older adults have **limited access to healthy foods** and can become dependent on fast food because it is inexpensive and convenient.
- Many stakeholders **link access to healthy food with transportation constraints**: *"If they can't drive and have to go on the bus and get groceries it is very difficult. They don't want to buy things that are healthy."*
- **Concerns around food are different among different age groups**:
  - The younger generation (boomer generation) is more familiar with convenience and packaged foods and may lack skills and familiarity with cooking and shopping to support a healthy diet.

- The older generation (currently in their 80s and 90s) and foreign-born communities may have more pride associated with being able to feed oneself and are not as familiar with packaged foods. The nutrition needs of these groups are not well met by packaged, convenience foods.

*“Many older adults from the former Soviet Union feel shame, and will never admit the need for food. Many older adults attend the UCC lunches because they need the food, it helps stretch their dollars for other needs and because the food is culturally appropriate. Many of their older adults are eligible for Meals on Wheels but the program does not serve meals from their culture.”*

- **Food is very culturally specific**, and the cultural appropriateness of food is a consideration when meeting the nutrition needs of older foreign-born adults.
- Some suggest that more **education about nutrition and how to cook for one’s self economically** would be helpful to older adults, especially those adjusting to a reduction in the size of their household. A few senior stakeholders shared their personal experience that fast food seems like a good option when faced with the difficulty of cooking for one.

*“Being a widow, I agree about the risks of fast food when you are cooking for one. My diet has changed now that I am only cooking for one. You have to be intentional to have a healthy diet.”*

- This is an area of new programming in Kent by Chinese Information and Services. Many stakeholders reviewed the Renton Senior Activity Center’s nutrition programs favorably.
- Some stakeholders suggested improving access to healthy food through farmers’ markets or a South King County food hub where local farmers could aggregate their food for sale to human services and community organizations. Starting a farm-to-table cooperative was also suggested.

## FINANCIAL AND LEGAL SERVICES AND COUNSELING

- Older adults will continue to have financial and legal needs beyond what they are prepared for. Stakeholders anticipate a **growing need for financial planning and financial counseling services**.
- Many older adults do not have a will and/or durable power of attorney in place and may find it increasingly difficult to navigate financial services.

*“Start helping people with how to deal with their legal and financial plans. It is really interesting to talk to people in this process who haven’t talked about a will and durable power of attorney. Need to have a strong emphasis on planning for the future.”*

- Stakeholders stress the need to begin financial planning and counseling earlier rather than later.
- Funeral costs can be prohibitive and will continue to increase.
- While stakeholders felt that financial difficulties will increase in general as the Baby Boomers age, some **ethnic, racial or other minorities may be even less well financially prepared**. Some ethnic or cultural groups are less likely to plan for the future or make assumptions about what supports will be available (family, government, church).
- However, **financial hardship will not be universal**, and some baby boomers will have significant financial savings that they must manage to their best interest.

- Many stakeholders expressed concern about **financial abuse and fraud** of older adults. Many have witnessed a trend, or know personally someone who was a victim.
  - A few stakeholders provided examples of elder abuse within families—linking financial stress of adult children to elder abuse.
  - The change in technology was cited as contributing to older adult vulnerability to fraud. The prevalence of the Internet creates more opportunities for seniors to be victimized by scams.
 

*“...this specific senior population is more trusting and less familiar with scammers and computer schemes that younger people are more aware of.”*
  - One stakeholder associated the increased victimization of older adults by scams with a disintegration of the moral fiber of our communities. He or she believes that as communities get bigger and more anonymous, fraud will continue to become a bigger issue.

### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

- Many stakeholders identified **individual and family support for mental health** as a top service priority for older adults and an area where there is a significant shortage of services. Many consider mental health services to be a growing need and correlated to longer life expectancies and increased health concerns or chronic conditions.
  - Specific mental health services needs identified by stakeholders include:
    - Mental health services for all ages and populations
    - Education, information, and support of individuals and families facing dementia. Dementia is one the health concerns most frequently mentioned by stakeholders.
    - Services to address post-traumatic stress disorder for veterans
  - In addition to more mental health services, stakeholders addressed the need for **mental health outreach**, including improving systems and abilities to identify isolated or homebound individuals.
  - Mental health services must also be delivered in culturally relevant ways. In some communities, mental health issues are both common and stigmatized. For example, a stakeholder familiar with the Ukrainian community explains:
 

*“Mental health issues are of concern in the older adult population. Under the umbrella of Valley Cities Counseling UCC has started offering mental health services. They have found many older adults suffer from depression, stress and anxiety. It is important that they are able to offer these services from people who speak their language and understand the culture they come from. For instance you would not name their condition as depression because older adults would relate that to evil spirits. Mental health services are promoted as emotional support.”*
  - In addition to mental health services for those suffering from mental health, there is a need for **support for caretakers**. Most caretakers of older adults are older adults themselves, and need a specialized system of supports.

### OTHER SERVICE NEEDS

- **Socialization and connecting older adults to the community** is another top service priority mentioned by stakeholders.

- One organization recently conducted a survey of older LGBT adults about their service needs, and socialization was identified as a priority need.
- One service provider shared their strategy for reaching older adults who do not speak English:
 

*“Social isolation is an issue, their biggest concern. Both language barriers and transportation barriers are contributing factors and can lead to health issues. Their approach is to reach out to individuals and set them up with a volunteer opportunity. Many of the people they serve have professional backgrounds and often have skills they can contribute to the program.”*
- Stakeholders shared the following as ideas for the types of activities that would support socialization:
  - Mall walking is good but there is no place like that in Renton to walk indoors
  - In good weather older adults can't always use Renton stadium
  - Trails are good but restrooms and places to rest are limited
  - One provider shared that her clients want to do more trips to support friendships and socialization, but transportation and other costs make it difficult to provide travel opportunities.
- Improved services to address **the needs of diverse ethnic and linguistic communities** in Renton.
  - Many stakeholders felt that future service improvements should focus on the needs of Renton’s minority populations and acknowledged different ways that language barriers currently act as a barrier to accessing services. Specific language needs identified include Ukrainian, Spanish and Southeast Asian languages.
  - Stakeholders suggest improving awareness of the needs and differences of older adult communities can be helpful as other organizations work to reduce isolation and increase the ability of older adults to participate in their community.
    - Partnering with culturally specific agencies, non-profits, community groups, volunteer groups, or schools was suggested as a strategy to address the diverse needs of our older adult cohorts.
  - A focus group of older adults expressed interest in learning more about the new ethnic groups that are part of the Renton community and stressed the importance of improving their own ability to communicate with members of the community who speak little English:
 

*“There are trends in greater cultural awareness and language needs in this area and so there are needs to learn about cultural differences....I came from a background where most of the people who were 1st generation but didn’t keep their languages so that they could assimilate. There is a role reversal now; people maintain their native languages and cultures.”*

*“The ability to communicate goes both ways...we had a young man come in Friday and he wanted to know if his grandmother could have her income tax done and he said I need a service that speaks Chinese and the young man said no one in his family could interpret.”*

- Older adults might have higher fitness levels than older adults from past generations, and want **opportunities to maintain active lives**. Opportunities for exercise and fitness were identified as priority areas for programming.
- Some stakeholders mentioned that there is a need for services to help older adults **prepare for emergencies**.

## Trends in Older Adult Services

Many of the stakeholders consulted in the Community Engagement process provide services to older adults in Renton and other King County communities. This section presents themes on trends in older adult services, strengths in Renton’s current system of services, and priorities for future services.

### Service Trends

- Seniors have a strong **preference for aging in place**, which is staying in their home and community as long as possible. Acknowledging this trend in preferences, stakeholders felt that there will be an increase in services to support older adults who are aging in place.
  - Services to support aging in place both meet the older adults’ needs and preferences, and in some cases offers an economical option compared to very expensive assisted living facilities.
 

*“As more baby boomers enter the older adult cohorts there is more need and demand for services to age in place. There are limited choices for low income older adults to move from independent living to assisted living. The cost of assisted living is generally prohibitive. In response to this gap there is a heavy demand on services that assist older adults to age in place, which in turn can create long wait lists for these services, or tighter restrictions as to who can access these services.”*
  - One stakeholder warned that the focus on “aging in place” can lead to social isolation for older adults. The stakeholder believes the next 10 – 20 years will offer an opportunity for an improved approach that emphasizes elder friendly communities and universal design.
- Stakeholders expect an increase in **tailored and individualized services**.
  - Advances in medicine are helping us understand how to approach health for individuals, which is leading to tailored health plans and customized medicine.
 

*“Approaches have changed a lot. We are now tailoring to individual needs rather than to a larger, meta group. We don’t try to apply a cookie cutter approach. Personalized everything now (personalized medicine, person centered options counseling, need care plans tailored to individuals).”*
  - Noting these trends, focus group participants felt that older adults might have higher expectations of their services in the future and demand more individualization.

### Service Priorities

As part of the outreach and engagement process, stakeholders were asked what they felt were the top service priorities for older adults now and into the future. This section summarizes the themes in current and future service priorities.

## IMPROVING SERVICES TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF MINORITY POPULATIONS

Improving services to **better meet the needs of minority populations**, including cultural, linguistic, and sexual preference minorities was considered important. Stakeholders suggested strategies or service revisions to better meet the needs of cultural and linguistic minorities. These include:

- **Accessible and linguistically appropriate materials in print.** One stakeholder warned that poor translations can be a deterrent for people: *“If they can’t understand you, they are not going to join you.”*
  - In addition to language preferences, plain-speak translation is important. Very intellectual language, even in a familiar language, can be a barrier.  
*“Always when we are doing things like this we hear about the people who don’t speak English and I always hear that people don’t know about things so communication in all languages including English is key.”*
- **Diverse staff in workplaces that serve older adults** to help make older adults more comfortable. Some stakeholders felt that native speakers will be necessary to make older adults comfortable and to best be able to serve them.
- **Partnering with other organizations that have connections to linguistic and ethnic minorities.**  
*“Partner with culturally specific agencies, non-profits, community groups, volunteer groups, schools, etc. that can help address the diverse needs of our older adult cohorts.”*
- **Improved outreach and engagement strategies for diverse communities.** Beyond translating materials, many stakeholders stressed the need to proactively reach out to diverse communities and strengthen relationships between services providers and minority communities. Community outreach events targeting diverse populations and greater inclusion of minorities on boards and commissions were suggested strategies.
- **Improve provider’s understanding of the cultural customs, practices, and differences of diverse communities.** In order to meet the needs of Renton’s diverse populations, stakeholders suggested a focus on increasing the City and provider’s understanding and knowledge of diverse communities’ needs.
  - Be wary of relying on stereotypes as a method of cultural competence.
  - At least one stakeholder suggested that cultural competence across all cultural groups would be impossible: you can never be competent in understanding everyone and their individual cultures. She suggested that taking a cultural humility approach—such as asking people how they would like to be communicated with and served—would be a more effective approach.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES

In responding to a question about priorities for older adult services, many stakeholders emphasized the need to improve older adult *access* to existing services. Many older adults face barriers to accessing services such as transportation, geography, language, knowledge of the service, or ability to navigate the system of referrals to access the services. Stakeholders offered suggestions for how to improve older access use of services including:

- **Provide services throughout the City**, particularly in areas with a high proportion of low-income older adults, to help improve access for all older adults.

- Mobile and satellite service many help reach older adults currently unable to access services: *“Take the services to the seniors.”*
- Provide older adult recreational programming at locations other than the Renton Senior Activity Center.
- Expand the time services are available to **include weekend options**.
- **Expand the range of transportation options** for older adults and **make existing options more accessible**. Stakeholders note the challenge of transportation services not being available on the weekend and that inclement weather can pose barriers to otherwise helpful options.
- Stakeholders noted that some older adults don’t know how to access the services they need, or even that those services exist. They recommend **improving the navigability** of the existing services.
  - There are a lot of services and service options, but it can be hard to know how to access them. **Older adults aren’t educated enough on how to access services**. One stakeholder shared this is much more common among minority populations who may have a mistrust of government.
 

*“Older adults do not know how to use the resources available to them, or how to access services. Help educating people on what resources are available to them. Help to build trust since many have mistrust of their former government.”*
  - Stakeholders explained that **reliance on phone trees and telephone systems are difficult for seniors to navigate**. One stakeholder recommended incorporating face to face outreach as much as possible.
 

*“Communication can be very difficult as older adults find the phone system difficult to use. For example if you call for a service and they get a recorded answer that requires them to press buttons most of them give up. Oftentimes they will not leave a voicemail message as they find this concept difficult. Clients would prefer face to face contact.”*
- **Improve partnering and system of referrals to reach homebound or socially isolated individuals.** Some stakeholders feel this should be a priority of the City.
 

*“Try and spend some time focusing on the most vulnerable people in the community—specifically the home bound and those with limited social networks. Some cities are incorporating programs like Federal Way Cares and City of SeaTac community liaison to help refer vulnerable people to services and options counseling. Crisis referral like adult protective services might be a good place to get referrals. Senior Services Senior Information & Assistance program gets a lot of calls from gatekeepers in the community but recently lost the funding to do a large amount of that. That might be something that the city could do.”*
- **Improve access to the Renton Senior Activity Center.** Stakeholders that were familiar with the Senior Activity Center suggested strategies to decrease barriers to accessing services offered there. These include:
  - **Expanding the footprint of the senior center** to allow for a wider variety of services and activities.
  - Expanding the coffee bar and provide extra space for walkers and wheelchairs.
  - Increasing parking.

- **Improve outreach and communications about the services that are available.** Stakeholders suggest better communicating that the City of Renton is a welcoming community and that services are open to all would help make all people feel comfortable with and trusting of the City of Renton. Improving comfort and trust will be necessary to reach older adults who are most vulnerable.
- **Consulting and collaborating with representatives of the target population** can be an effective strategy for improving outreach approaches and messages. Conducting focus groups, or other means of targeted outreach, can also improve the City’s approach. This may help older adults in the community feel that they matter and can be involved.
  - Word-of-mouth service referrals from trusted community organizations and between friends/family is one of the most effective outreach strategies.
  - Participate in cultural groups existing events, like the Pride Parade, to increase visibility and trust in those communities. This would be great advertising for the City.
  - Improve the diversity of staff to build trust with diverse communities.
  - Demonstrate inclusivity in communications materials such as by using diverse individuals in print and other advertising. One stakeholder suggested communicating “all are welcome,” but also adding “regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity,” when communicating about programs and services.
  - Some stakeholders noted that even though the City is committed to service its diverse communities, individual older adults may not feel as comfortable participating in diverse programming.

#### EXPANDING CAPACITY OF EXISTING AND OVER-SUBSCRIBED SERVICES

Throughout conversations about services priorities, stakeholders stressed the need to expand the service provision in Renton. Stakeholders note that funding limitations prevent existing services from meeting all those in need and oversubscribed services prevent vulnerable individuals from accessing the services they need. Many stakeholders had suggestions for how to expand the capacity of services within their existing budgets.

- **Increase and improve Renton’s current services by partnering with existing agencies.** Stakeholders noted partnering as a strategy to both improve existing services as well as an opportunity to improve capacity and service provision. Stakeholders identified the following as specific agencies to consider partnering with :
  - The Alzheimer’s Association on programming for caregivers and those with dementia
  - Senior Services
  - SeaMar
  - Neighborhood House
  - Gay City to help serve those with health issues in the LGBT community
  - Ingersoll Gender Center
  - Lifelong AIDS alliance.

- Consider regional strategies and **collaborate with neighboring cities** in the planning and provision of services. This may enable economies of scale and solutions to problems that can be shared regionally. Stakeholders noted that many persons in need of services flow between cities. The stakeholder also suggested joint use agreements for developing services and facilities and looking at the flow of migration between the cities to find opportunities to collaborate.
- Improve communications and **collaboration across departments** within the City. Once interviewee is conducting a survey of City services and shared that some cities are advancing by simply improving internal communications and better leveraging what they are already doing.

*The cities who are moving toward more livable communities are doing a few things: they are talking across departments and “silos,” they are doing robust community engagement like WACAN or Global to Local or Forterra and when they are doing that they are able to really find out what is going on in the neighborhoods.*

- **Forge partnerships with private entities.**
- One Seattle-based service provider shared that it has been difficult for his organization to find partners in Renton, or to understand what services are already available. He was not familiar with RENU, but suggested a coalition a potential approach.
 

*“It would be helpful if there was a coalition, something like the Refugee Forum, so that they can learn quickly what organizations are currently operating in Renton. In his view, he doesn’t see as much community partners in Renton as he sees in other communities. Perhaps focusing around different services and working to connect groups across services would help.”*
- One stakeholder cautioned about allowing other organizations to access to the people is current servicing. In some cases, organizations may see it more of a marketing opportunity as opposed to a service opportunity.

## **BROADENING LEARNING AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

When asked what kinds of services they would like to see more of, most older adults engaged in this process said more opportunities for classes and opportunities to learn. For example, a “draw what you see” class; driver’s training class; brain training activities and games; health, wellness, and nutrition classes; fitness programs; memoir-writing; lifelong learning programs, and outdoor trips were all mentioned as desirable topics.

## **DEVELOPING SUPPORTS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY**

Many older, active community members are interested in giving back to their community. Stakeholders identified Services and supports that expand opportunities for older adults to be engaged in the broader community as a priority.

- Many stakeholders emphasized the broad knowledge based and skills possessed by older adults in Renton. Developing opportunities for older adults to service as volunteers or connect with other organization can bring many community benefits.
- The transition from full time employment to retirement can be difficult for individuals; opportunities to engage in a productive manner would be helpful.

- A stakeholder suggested focusing on creating a more older adult-friendly community. This would include partnering with a wide variety of service agencies, partnerships with schools to develop intergenerational relationships, creating a walkable community, alternative forms of transportation, and the use of universal design.

## Strengths of Renton’s Current Services

- The **Renton Senior Activity Center is a significant asset** to the Renton community.
  - Programming at the Center is highly valued, especially its recreation offerings, educational speakers, nutrition program, and associated meals on wheels program that the City helps to fund.
  - Stakeholders consider Center’s location on the river is very inviting.
  - Stakeholders said that the Center is a “hub” for older adults and a community gathering place. They feel this is also evidenced by the fact that the Center has a strong membership and a core of dedicated older adult volunteers. They also felt that providing volunteer opportunities was a core strength of the Center.
- In general, stakeholders feel that Renton is a community of caring people. Many stakeholders commented that **City of Renton staff and leadership are compassionate and care about serving older adults** in Renton
  - The City and its leadership are responsive to community members’ suggestions. Stakeholders described the Mayor and City staff as good listeners.
  - Stakeholders value the spirit of giving in the Renton community. Other words used to describe the community were “generous” and “not pretentious”
- **Renton has a robust parks system**, which includes more parks per capita than any other City in Washington.
  - The downtown Renton piazza and Renton’s many walking trails are assets.
- Stakeholders feel that **Renton is a comparatively affordable place to live.**
  - Renton is considered to be more affordable than Seattle. Stakeholders mentioned that there is some quality affordable housing available, too.
- **Renton has a great religious community**, which is considered a social service asset and community net for many older adults.
- **Renton is fortunate to have a strong and vital Community Foundation**, something many other cities do not have.
- Other strengths that stakeholders mentioned:
  - Renton Technical College and its provision of continuing education
  - City furnished lock boxes to help prevent emergency services having to break down doors in an emergency.



