

OAKLAND COUNTY

# BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

DECEMBER 2021

PREPARED BY AREA AGENCY ON AGING I-B

APPROVED BY THE OAKLAND COUNTY BOARD OF

COMMISSIONERS AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR HEALTHY AGING



## DEAR OAKLAND COUNTY RESIDENTS,

Our population is aging rapidly. Since 2015, the Oakland County senior population has been greater than our population of children, and that trend is projected to continue through 2045. The Oakland County Board of Commissioners recognizes that this demographic shift presents both challenges and opportunities for maintaining and improving the quality of life for all ages.

To embrace and prepare for these changes, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners formed the Oakland County Healthy Aging Ad Hoc Committee led by Commissioner Kristen Nelson. The committee was charged with creating a strategic blueprint for an aging-friendly county. This blueprint aims to meet the needs of our rapidly growing 65+ population and those who care for them; propose strategies to help all of our communities be responsive to the needs of older Oakland County residents, and provide environments for seniors to thrive as they live their way. Older adults are a valued asset when it comes to maintaining our quality of life, and for that reason, we must continue to strive to make Oakland County a retirement destination of choice and a community that allows seniors to age in place.

The Oakland County Healthy Aging Ad Hoc Committee, in collaboration with AAA 1-B, developed essential strategies for creating age-friendly communities while identifying unmet needs and gaps in current services. This Blueprint for Successful Aging provides a roadmap for the county and other stakeholders to move our community response forward with a broad set of recommended actions to improve the overall quality of life for all Oakland County seniors. The Oakland County Board of Commissioners is committed to mobilizing and creating change guided by this evidence-based blueprint.

We invite you to join us as we embark on turning identified challenges into meaningful solutions!



Commissioner David Woodward, Chair  
Oakland County Board of Commissioners



Commissioner Kristen Nelson, Chair  
Ad Hoc Committee on Healthy Aging



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2021, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners created an Ad Hoc Committee on Healthy Aging to assess gaps in services and unmet needs of older Oakland County residents to recommend actions that address identified needs and improve quality of life. The Area Agency on Aging 1-B was engaged to assist in researching, presenting data on the nature and extent of priority issues, quantifying the impact on successful aging, and developing a series of options to address identified concerns.

The Committee examined numerous existing reports and data documenting the extent of service gaps and unmet needs and received educational presentations from stakeholders. Four Town Hall meetings were held virtually and in-person throughout the county to hear firsthand the concerns and ideas of older adults, aging professionals, and other stakeholders. Several surveys were undertaken to fill information gaps and gain a better understanding of unmet needs and potentially successful strategies for addressing them. This effort culminated in the development of a white paper titled *Blueprint for Healthy Aging: An Analysis of Older Adult Unmet Needs, Service Gaps, Opportunities and Solutions*, a 69-page report containing 67 potential recommendations for the Committee to consider.

This Blueprint for Successful Aging serves as a strategic plan for Oakland County communities. It presents a comprehensive and data-driven set of 10 recommendations to create systems change and positive measurable outcomes to address aging service gaps, unmet needs, and opportunities. Implementation will begin in 2022 and, if successful, Oakland County residents will see:

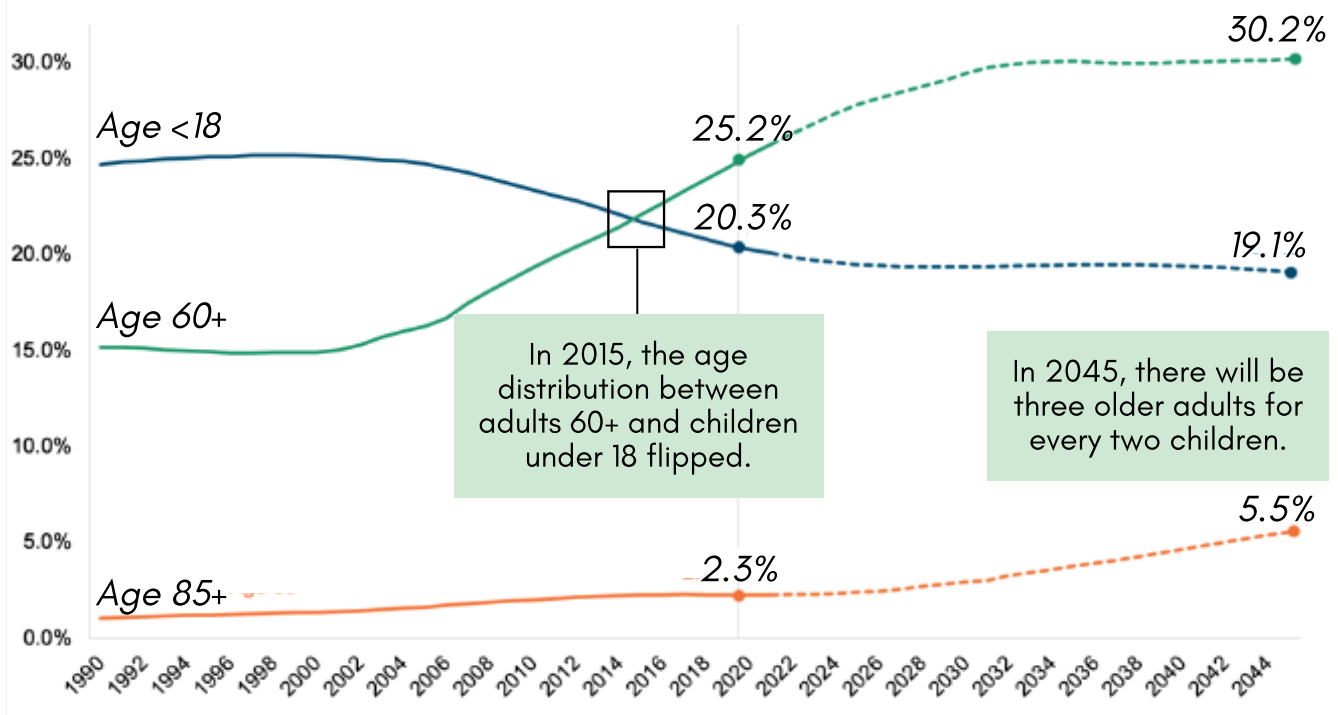
- More older adults receive help with minor home repairs and installation of home safety devices. (p. 5)



**14,646**

**Oakland County  
residents 65+  
were in poverty  
in 2019.**

## ACTUAL AND PROJECTED OLDER ADULT POPULATION 1990-2045



Source: SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. (2020). Population and Household Estimates for Southeast Michigan, June, 2020.

- Restored assistance with lawn care and snow removal for prioritized older adults. (p. 8)
- More transit-dependent older adults get to places they need to go when they need to get there. (p. 11)
- Fewer older adults susceptible to elder abuse and financial exploitation. (p. 14)
- Fewer older adults needing in-home care on waitlists. (p. 17)
- More innovative programs resulting from collaborative partnerships between senior centers and public libraries. (p. 20)
- More programs reducing social isolation at senior centers and senior housing communities. (p. 23)
- More socially isolated older adults will access technologies that help reduce seclusion and loneliness. (p. 26)
- More volunteers enlisted to help older adults maintain their independence. (p. 29)
- Oakland County strengthening its leadership role in ensuring that older residents have access to the supports and services that they need to maintain their independence and thrive. (p. 32)



## HOUSING - REPAIR

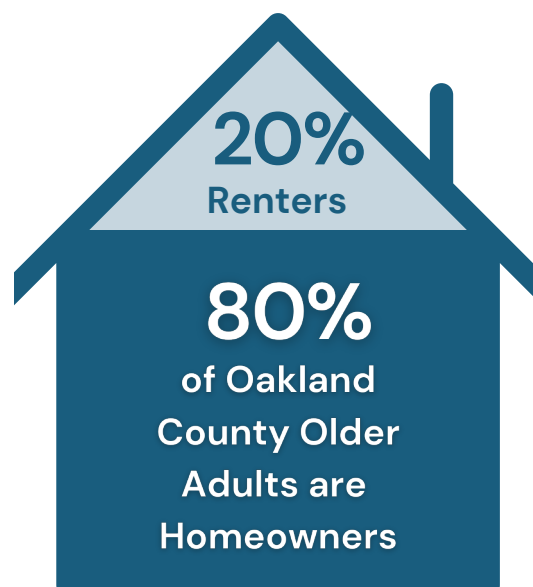
**ESTABLISH A COUNTY-WIDE PROGRAM FOR HOME MODIFICATION PROJECTS AND MINOR HOME REPAIR TO PROVIDE OLDER ADULTS WITH THE MODIFICATIONS NEEDED TO SAFELY AGE IN THEIR HOMES.**

### BACKGROUND

Access to safe, affordable housing is critical for healthy and fulfilling aging. Unsuitable housing exposes people to health risks, while improved housing conditions can save lives by preventing disease and increasing quality of life. Preservation of one's current housing is a key solution to support the 80% of adults aged 60 and over who own their homes in Oakland County. Housing instability risk is increased when more than 30% of monthly income is spent on housing costs, yet the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) reports there are approximately 55,000 older adult households in Oakland County paying more than 30% of their monthly income toward housing costs. Many older adults not eligible for low-income loan

programs need assistance to preserve existing housing and access to affordable housing options.

Older adults often need home modifications to make their home safer, such as adding grab bars in bathtubs or installing a wheelchair ramp. The 2019 AAA 1-B Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey found that 23.6%, or approximately 74,800, of county older adults under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level reported household maintenance and/or repairs posed a serious challenge. The survey's first and third most cited home condition concerns reported by respondents were not enough handrails/grab bars (33,350) and homes in need of minor repairs (18,420). Local programs,



such as those funded with Federal Community Development Block Grant dollars, providing low-cost or free home maintenance programs are rare and if available, often have waitlists representing a significant service gap. In addition, federally funded programs cannot assist mobile home residents.

## ASSETS

There are currently limited programs offering specific types of repair services under specific conditions. The Oakland County Home Improvement Program of Oakland County is limited by available funding on a rolling basis, and as of November 2021 does not have a waitlist. OLHSA has had difficulty maintaining contractors with limited funding. Critical Home Repair through Habitat for Humanity of Oakland County is mainly run by volunteers. Mission Possible is supported by volunteer workers, contractors discounting or donating their time, and other sponsors willing to donate materials.

## STRATEGY

- Map current service resources and gaps in the county.
- Develop and implement a strategy to increase access for contractor and volunteer home modification and minor repair service providers.
- Develop a guide that identifies the type of repair and eligibility requirements of various county programs and promotes their availability.

**An Aging Network Provider provided testimony of success with intergenerational home repair and maintenance programs and partnering with construction companies offering pro bono service. The volunteers also offered referral and socialization services. Provider expressed interest in expanding the service countywide.**

**-TOWN HALL, SEPTEMBER 2021 -**



## OUTCOMES

- All older Oakland County residents are able to access home modification and home repair programs.
- Achieve an overall increase in the number of home safety modifications and repairs for older Oakland County residents.

An estimated  
**74,800**  
county older adults  
under 200% of the  
Federal Poverty Level  
reported household  
maintenance and/or  
repairs posed a serious  
challenge.

## BENCHMARKS

- Establish county-wide coverage of home modification and minor repair services.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Oakland County Home Improvement Program
- Habitat for Humanity of Oakland
- Mission Possible
- Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
- OLHSA

**SEMCOG  
ESTIMATES 4.6%  
OF OAKLAND  
COUNTY 65+  
RESIDENTS LIVE  
ALONE.**



## HOUSING - CHORES

WORK WITH AREA AGENCY ON AGING 1-B TO RE-ESTABLISH A COUNTY-WIDE CHORE SERVICES PROGRAM TO RESTORE LAWN CARE AND SNOW REMOVAL SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS.

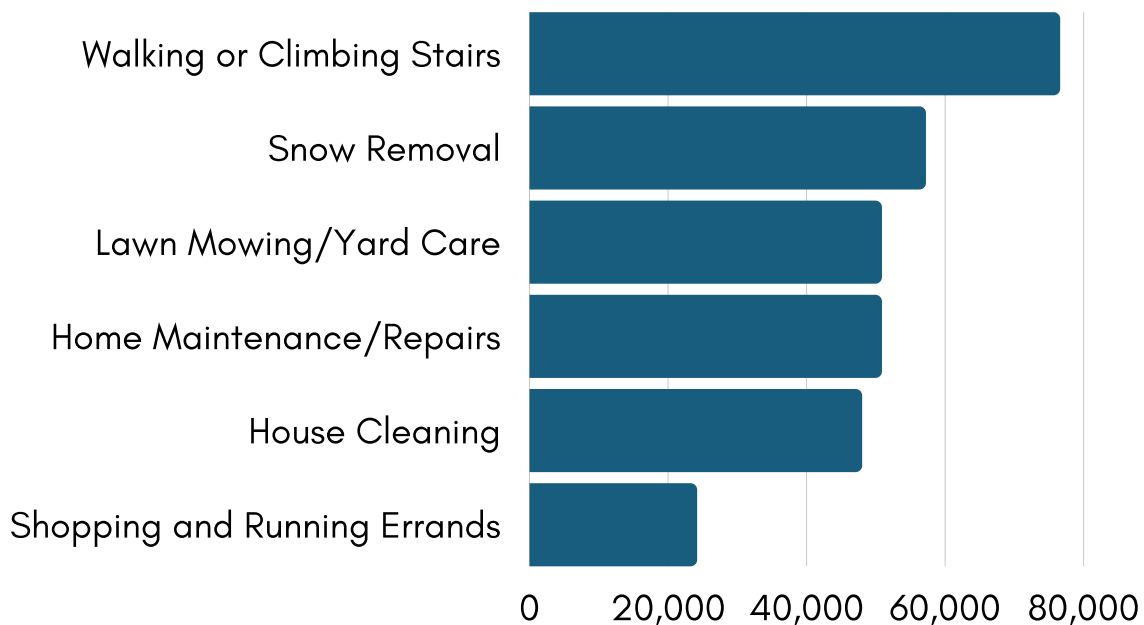
Survey, with 18% of older adults reporting snow removal poses a serious challenge and 16% reporting lawn mowing/yard care as a serious challenge. Root causes are traced to health conditions that make performing these chores a health risk or impossibility as well as affordability barriers for low-income older adults. Yard care is also essential for meeting local housing codes such as keeping walkways clear so care workers and deliveries can reach the home.

### BACKGROUND

Snow removal and lawn mowing/yard care were two of the top three most serious challenges identified by older adults in the 2019 AAA 1-B Oakland County Senior Needs and Solutions

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) contracted with OLHSA to provide home

### ACTIVITIES THAT POSE A SERIOUS CHALLENGE





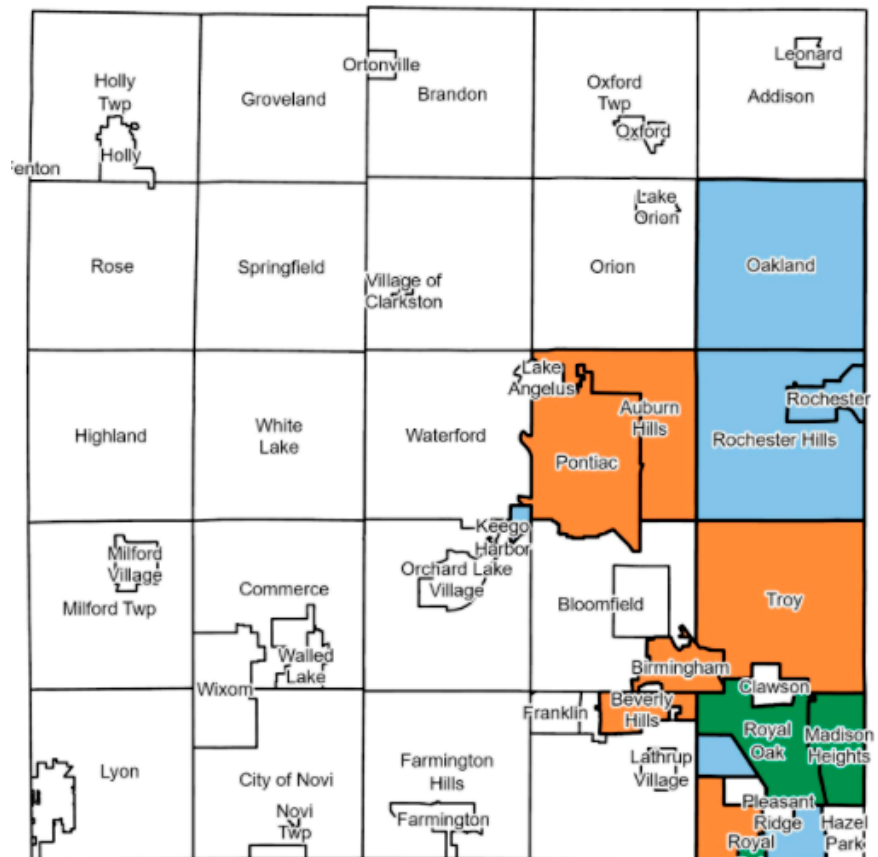
chore services until September 30, 2019. The contract was not renewed by OLHSA due to difficulty securing reliable local lawn and snow care subcontractors and insufficient funding. The AAA 1-B has not been able to identify alternative contractors capable of managing the program with the limited funds available. Some communities have local programs that use Community Development Block Grant funds to serve lower-income residents, but they cover a small portion of the county and are limited in capacity.

## ASSETS

There are existing Chore service programs in the eastern side of the county, but they are not able to expand beyond their municipal borders. There are only a few nonprofit organizations serving older adults countywide, but OLHSA is the only organization with chore service experience. The snow and lawn care industry consists mostly of small local operators with limited service areas and minimal liability coverage. The large companies that can operate countywide are focused exclusively on large commercial accounts.

### COMMUNITIES WITH LOCAL CHORE PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

- Lawn Services
- Snow Removal
- Both



## STRATEGY

- Identify options for restoring countywide chore services.
- Develop a viable financing plan.
- Issue a Request for Information to assess interest and requirements to restore countywide chore services.
- Engage an entity to operate a countywide chore service program.

## OUTCOMES

- All older Oakland County residents are able to access lawn care and snow removal services regardless of their home location.



## BENCHMARKS

- Availability of chore services in every community county-wide.
- Older adults in every community have access to an affordable snow removal and lawn care service.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Area Agency on Aging 1-B
- Habitat for Humanity of Oakland
- Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers
- Mission Possible
- Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
- OLHSA



# TRANSPORTATION

REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF TRIP REQUEST TURN DOWNS FOR SMART CONNECTOR AND COMMUNITY PARTNER PROGRAM SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS AND ADULTS WITH A DISABILITY.

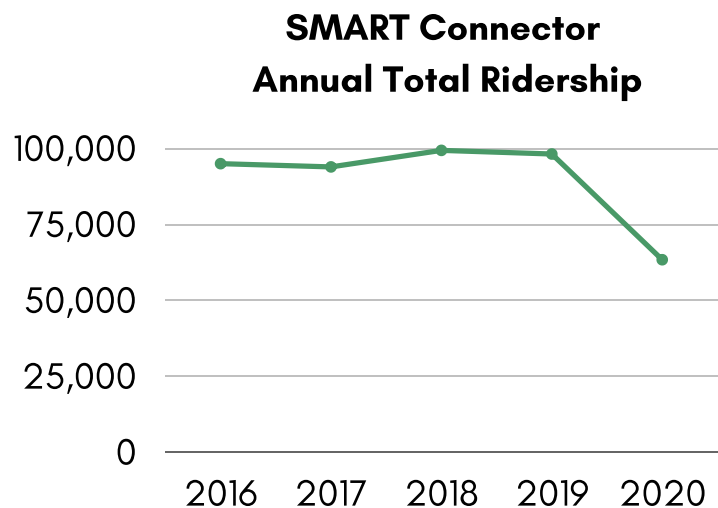
## BACKGROUND

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B 2019 Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey found that 5.8% of older residents (18,000) report having difficulty getting to places they need to go. Being unable to drive because of health conditions is the reason cited most often. While only 1.2% of respondents indicated they missed a medical appointment in the past 12 months, that equates to approximately 3,800 older adults missing medical appointments each year. The SMART Connector 7% turndown rate means one out of every 14 requests for small bus transportation is denied.

## ASSETS

The SMART Connector and Community Partnership Program small bus services are essential resources for transit-dependent older adults. Together they provide countywide curb to curb or door to door, demand-response transportation service for nominal fees.

Connector service utilizes small buses that provide a reservation-based curb to curb service and is open to residents of "Opt-In" communities only. A majority of riders who use this service are older adults and those with a disability however any resident of an Opt-In community can use this service.



SMART Connector ridership was 65,394 in 2020, down about 33% from 2019 due to the pandemic. Approximately 15% of riders are wheelchair users, and the program experiences a cancellation rate of almost 15%. In 2019 the trip denials averaged about 30 per day and equaled about 7% of the number of trips made.

It's important to note that the number of trip denials includes cancellations made at the last minute by those using this service and others listed as "no shows", buses arrived at the pick-up location, and no one was there to board. There needs to be an improvement in this behavior as it impacts other riders.

SMART encourages riders to cancel a reservation early. When riders follow these guidelines there is time for these spots to be filled thereby reducing the number of denials. However, early cancellations are not often given and this affects recorded denial numbers.

**Community Partnership Program (CPP)** service consists of transportation services operated by local municipalities and/or nonprofits and offered to residents within their respective communities. These services feature both curb-to-curb and/or door-to-door transportation. Ridership in 2020 was down from 2019 due to the pandemic. The program's cancellation rate and trip denials will need to be calculated.

State funding (Municipal credits and Specialized Services funds) along with local funding (local millages, revenues received from General fund accounts, private/corporate donations) as well as SMART funding (Community credits are given to Opt-In communities only) provide revenue to operate these local programs.

In addition, SMART utilizes its access to the federal capital funding to provide vehicles, small buses and vans, to these local programs at no cost. The



CPP's obligation is to cover the operating costs for their program including the maintenance and operation of the vehicles. These CPP's provide transportation to all residents with their target audience being older adults and residents with disabilities.

## STRATEGY

- Identify root causes of trip request turndowns.
- Develop a strategy to address causal factors.
- Implement strategy.

## OUTCOMES

- Reduce the rates of SMART Connector and Community Partner Program trip request turndowns.
- More riders will be able to get to places they need to go.

## BENCHMARKS

- SMART Connector service trip turndown rate of 7%.
- SMART Community Partner Program trip turndown rate.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- SMART
- Community Partnership Program Providers
- Senior Advisory Council
- Freedom Road
- AAA 1-B myride2



**18,000**  
or 5.8% of older  
residents report  
having difficulty  
getting to places they  
need to go.



**3,800**  
older residents  
missed medical  
appointments.

# ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION

REVIVE THE OAKLAND S.A.V.E. TASK FORCE, A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIVE FOCUSED ON ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION.

## BACKGROUND

According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services nearly 1 in 10 older adults in Michigan will experience some form of elder abuse. Elder abuse is defined by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) as any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. In 2019, the Area Agency on Aging 1-B conducted a confidential phone interview of 344 people over the age of 60 living in Oakland County in which it found that approximately 1 in 13 (24,000) Oakland County residents experience one or more abusive forms of treatment, excluding financial abuse or exploitation. Unfortunately, previous activities that focused on elder abuse prevention such

as elder justice coalitions and SAVE (Serving Adults who are Vulnerable and/or Elderly) task forces, as well as the No Excuse for Elder Abuse movement have halted.

According to Michigan Adult Protective Services (APS) data, Oakland County has seen a trend of an increasing number of referrals pertaining to older adults (individuals 60+) since 2016. However, a referral does not always signify abuse. When receiving a referral, APS investigators will decide whether the referral is appropriate for an investigation and if deemed appropriate, will then investigate the referral further to decide whether there was a

85%



The three most common forms of substantiated elder abuse in Oakland County:

- Self Neglect (51.6%)
- Neglect (23.8%)
- Financial Exploitation (9.7%)

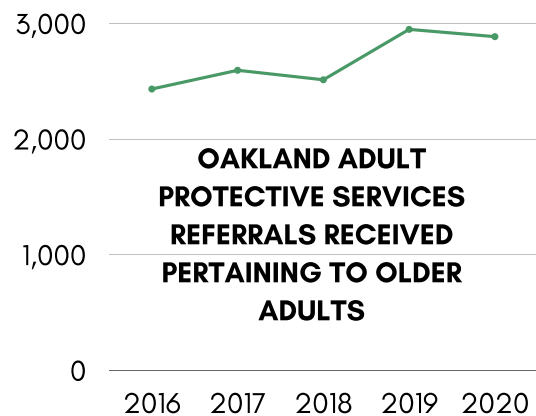


substantiated case of abuse. A case would be substantiated if abuse was found during the investigation.

APS serves any person age 18 and older. Some data is available for older adults and other information is only made available for the total referral population.

Referrals of adults age 60 and older

increased between 2016 and 2020. At the same time the percent of persons referred to APS that were over age 60 increased from 61% to 67.2%.



According to APS, of the substantiated referrals of abuse, the most common form reported was self-neglect (51.4%), followed by neglect from others (23.7%). Emotional abuse (9.2%) was more common than physical abuse (4.9%) and exploitation of person (0.5%) was the least common.

## ASSETS

A form of abuse that is generally found to be most common is financial exploitation and concerns about the prevalence of scams were raised at several Town Hall meetings. The Federal Trade Commission reported that although those 60 and older make up only 8% of the total scam reports, the reported losses accounted for 25% of all losses. This means that nationwide the estimate of financial exploitation in older adults ranges from 5% to 11%.

The SAFE (Successful Aging through Financial Empowerment) program developed by the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology is working to address this issue by providing older adults and caregivers resources to recover from financial exploitation, provide education, and offer one-on-one support on financial management issues. In 2020 SAFE helped victims save or recover an average of \$733 in lost funds.

While the total number of referrals to Adult Protective Services increased between 2016 and 2020, the percent of substantiated referrals decreased.

While the causal factors that contributed to this decline is not known, the trend suggests that there needs to be greater public understanding and education on the types of activities that constitute legitimate instances of abuse and the Adult Protective Services criteria for defining what is elder abuse.

## STRATEGY

- Reconvene SAVE Task Force.
- Identify best practices for elder abuse prevention.
- Develop public education and action plan.
- Implement action plan.

## OUTCOMES

- Victims of financial abuse for exploitation will save or recover greater amounts of funds lost.

## BENCHMARKS

- Decrease the reported financial losses by older adults due to financial exploitation.
- Expand the SAFE program financial coaching model in Oakland County to increase the number of older adults able to prevent being victimized by scam and able to successfully recover if victimized.



## STAKEHOLDERS

- SAVE Task Force
- Law Enforcement
- Judicial System
- Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
- Coordinated Community Response Coalition
- Adult Protective Services

# IN-HOME SERVICES

**INCREASE ACCESS TO IN-HOME CARE BY PROVIDING RESOURCES TO ENROLL HIGH NEED OAKLAND COUNTY OLDER ADULTS INTO THE COMMUNITY LIVING PROGRAM.**

## BACKGROUND

Of those aged 65 and older, 70% will need long-term supportive services such as personal care or homemaking assistance during the remainder of their lifetime. Most older adults prefer for this care to be provided in their homes rather than moving to an institutional setting, however many families struggle to afford in-home care services. Genworth Financials' 2020 Cost of Care Survey reports that in the Metro Detroit Area, the median hourly cost of homemaker services was \$25 per hour and home health aide service was \$26 per hour, making in-home care unaffordable for older adults with low and moderate incomes. For older adults who need activity of daily living support, going without needed help often results in these seniors deteriorating faster as well

as end up costing more in health and long-term care services.

The Community Living Program (CLP) is a federal, state, and locally funded program administered by the AAA 1-B which evaluates an individual's long-term care needs and provides in-home care such as homemaking, personal care, and respite services. Demand for the Community Living Program continues to exceed the available funding to support increased enrollment in the program. In November 2021, there were 670 Oakland County seniors on the CLP waitlist, with 51 individuals in the highest priority category.

A 2014 AAA 1-B study in southeast Michigan found that those who remained on waitlists for in-home services and never got help were five times more likely to enter a nursing home than those who received services. This study found that family caregivers of those who received services were three times more likely to report their caregiving responsibilities no longer interfere with their ability to work.

Direct Care Workers (DCWs) are needed to provide the hands-on care necessary to support older adults in the Community Living Program with activities of daily living (ADLs), such as dressing, bathing, and eating. There is a shortage of direct care workers throughout the county, leading to unmet needs for in-home care services. As the older adult population increases, this shortage is expected to grow. The Advantage Oakland Labor Market Profile listed home health/personal care aides as the fastest-growing occupation in Oakland County from 2020-2022, but it is difficult for employers to attract and retain direct care workers who face low wages, few training opportunities, and limited opportunities for career advancement.

## ASSETS

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners made a \$600,000 investment in 2018 to serve the highest-need individuals on the waiting list for the Community Living Program. This funding provided 280 Oakland County older adults with essential care, surpassing the initial program goal of serving 163 seniors, before the county funds were exhausted. This initiative provides a model for future investment in Community Living Program Services.



In recognition of the challenges faced by the Direct Care Workforce, the Michigan state legislature implemented a wage increase of \$2.35 per hour in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget for Direct Care Workers in the Community Living Program. While this wage increase provided critical support to stabilize this essential workforce, the shortage of direct care workers persists.

## STRATEGY

- Identify funding methodologies to support increased enrollment of high-need individuals in the Community Living Program.
- Identify barriers to attracting and retaining direct care workers in Oakland County and develop solutions.



## OUTCOMES

- Eliminate or delay the need for nursing home entry for vulnerable older adults on waiting lists for Community Living Program services.
- A reduction in individuals with the greatest needs (priority “0”) on the waiting list for Community Living Program assistance.
- Achieve an overall reduction in caregiver burden for those removed from the waitlist receiving Community Living Program services.

## BENCHMARKS

- Enrollment of high-need individuals into the Community Living Program.
- Number of individuals on the waiting list for Community Living Program resources.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Area Agency on Aging 1-B
- Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
- Home Care Providers



**Mrs A is an 86 year old woman who lives alone a home that is owned by her son in Milford. She walks with a cane and needs help with bathing, climbing and descending stairs, managing finances, managing medications, housework, and transportation.**

**She receives home-delivered meals and has depression, chronic pain from a past neck injury, and macular degeneration. The Community Living Program is providing an emergency response device and 5 hours per week for help with personal care, homemaking and errands, and mileage for transportation.**

**From March 2018 Community Living Program Narrative Report**

# SENIOR CENTERS

COORDINATE AN OAKLAND COUNTY SENIOR CENTER – PUBLIC LIBRARY SUMMIT TO EXPLORE COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES ON INFORMATION SHARING, RESOURCES, AND PROGRAM BEST PRACTICES.

## BACKGROUND

Oakland County boasts thirty-seven senior centers and aging recreation programs which are independent non-profits and municipal parks and recreation programs that offer opportunities for socialization, nutrition, fitness and wellness, transportation, recreation, travel, community services, and education. The range of programming and staffing offered at the county's senior centers varies, representing a significant inequity in Oakland County for access to social, recreational, and wellness benefits.

A 2021 AAA 1-B survey of Oakland County senior centers found 100% of centers with a strategic plan are planning to expand services either in-person or remote/virtually, and 75% of all

county senior centers are willing to help bridge the digital divide by building their capacity for computer and internet access training. Yet they face many barriers from space to equipment to staff.

The 2019 AAA 1-B Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey found many older people turn to Oakland County senior centers (36%) and local public libraries (38%) for information around aging, healthcare resources, services, or benefits. These organizations have many common purposes for public services and Town Hall testimony suggested mutual benefits can be achieved through enhanced program collaboration.

**AGING NETWORK  
PROVIDER  
RECOMMENDED  
PARTNERING WITH  
PUBLIC LIBRARIES  
FOR TECHNOLOGY  
CLASSES AND  
LENDING BOOKS OR  
TECHNOLOGY.**

**~ SEPTEMBER 2021  
TOWNHALL ~**

## ASSETS

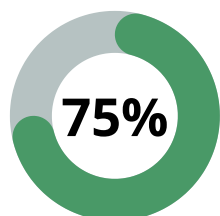
The Oakland County Board of Commissioners Ad Hoc Committee for Healthy Aging tasked the Area Agency on Aging 1-B to conduct a county-wide senior center survey to collect feedback on the needs of the 37 centers in the county resulting in 57% response rate (21 centers). Results from this survey demonstrate that Oakland County Senior Centers are interested in growing their capacity to meet identified community needs. 87% expressed interest in expanding their service capacity in at least one area.

Of the sites with strategic plans:

- 100% plan to expand at least one program or service.
- 30% plan to expand at least one program or service virtually/telephonically.
- 69.2% need more space.
- Funds, Physical Space, and Technology are the top three barriers to expanding programs.
- Exercise equipment, computers, and transportation vehicles are the most needed equipment.
- Fundraising is the most needed skill set followed by information and referral, marketing/communications, program coordination, and information technology (IT).

With all responding sites, 75% want to be involved with digital literacy programs for older adults – 46% of which already offer at least one digital support program.

Not only do 36% of older adults go to senior centers for information around aging, healthcare resources, services, and benefits but also 38% of Oakland County older adults turn to local public libraries for the information.



**OF SENIOR CENTERS WANT TO  
SUPPORT DIGITAL LITERACY  
PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULTS**



**OF CENTERS ALREADY OFFER  
AT LEAST ONE DIGITAL  
SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Oakland County Public Libraries are resource hubs for older adults as well with 38% of older adults reporting going to the library to access information and programs. Oakland County libraries have been offering services such as book and tape delivery to homebound older adults since 1994. The aging service delivery system recognizes libraries as an asset in their annual senior resource directory.

## STRATEGY

- Create a committee to plan a summit and address event planning, training sessions, workshops/panels, and roundtable discussions.
- Implement summit with focus on cross-promotion of programs, information dissemination practices, fundraising, technology lending, and digital literacy programs, and coordinated evidence-based wellness programming for older adults across the county.

## OUTCOMES

- Expand the number of collaborative efforts and joint programs between Oakland County senior centers and public libraries.

## BENCHMARKS

- Document the number of partnerships and shared programs between Oakland County senior centers and public libraries.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Senior Centers
- Public Libraries
- Senior Advisory Council





# SOCIALIZATION AT SENIOR CENTERS

**BUILD THE CAPACITY OF SENIOR CENTERS TO SERVE AS SITES TO OFFER VOLUNTEERING, GROUP FITNESS, CONGREGATE DINING, AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIALIZATION TO REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION.**

## BACKGROUND

Oakland County older adults want to be more socially involved with 1 in 4 seniors (73,000 or 23%) reporting they would like to do more social activities, with low-income seniors expressing this desire at a rate double that of the total senior population (40%). The 2019 AAA 1-B Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey found 43,000 older residents say they want to participate in senior center programs and 21,900 want to participate in their senior center congregate dining programs. Additionally, there are 48,400 older adults interested in volunteering and 38,000 looking to participate in group wellness or fitness classes – opportunities that are found at some, but not all, senior centers.

Older adults who would like to do more social activities identify several barriers to participation such as not having a way to get there (26,600), too sick/disabled to participate (26,600), cannot afford it (27,580), and that they simply don't know of programs (45,960).

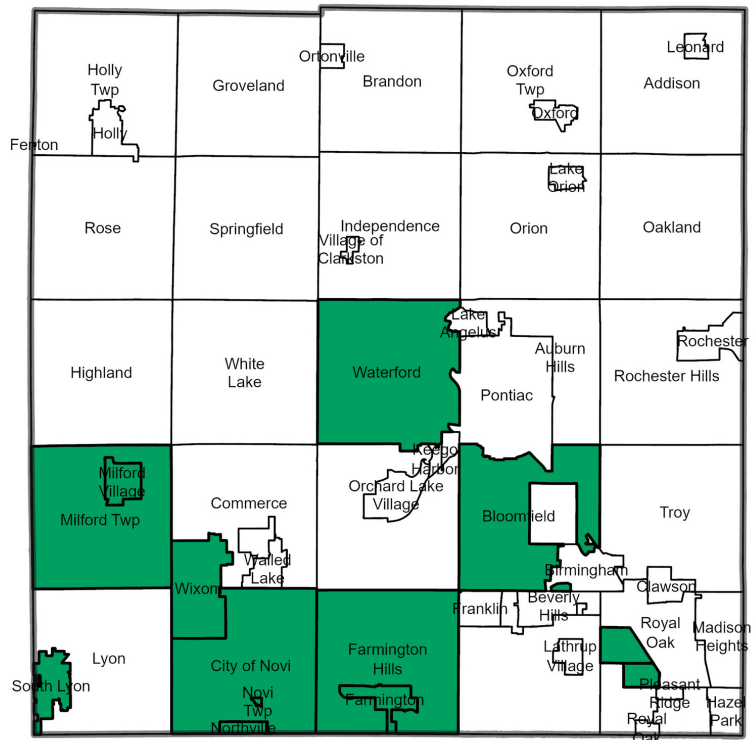
Fortunately, some of these obstacles can be overcome with resources such as transportation, reduced participation costs for low-income individuals, and greater promotion of programs.

Most Oakland County social isolation prevention programs are operated at the municipal level through senior centers or nonprofits that serve special populations such as those with multiple sclerosis, dementia or physical limitations, Latino older adults, and LGBTQ seniors. These socialization programs do not achieve county-wide coverage.



**80% OF SENIOR CENTERS WITH STRATEGIC PLANS WANT TO EXPAND SOCIALIZATION PROGRAMS**

Oakland County's thirty-seven senior centers and aging recreation programs have a long history of offering social programs that attract a wide age range and accommodate the interests of participants who prefer both physically active and sedentary activities. An AAA 1-B focus group study of older adults who have never participated in senior center activities found that when asked what activities they are interested in participating in, most named activities that were commonly offered by senior centers.



Area Agency on Aging 1-B conducted a county-wide senior center survey to collect feedback on the needs of the centers in the county. Results from this survey demonstrate that Oakland County Senior Centers are interested in growing their capacity to meet identified community needs with 87% expressing interest in expanding their service capacity in at least one area and 100% of centers with a strategic plan do plan on expanding at least one program or service.

## STRATEGY

- Convene senior center directors to discuss and develop core socialization programs, such as telephone reassurance or friendly visitor programs, offered at all sites.
- Discuss funding methodologies to support launching and maintaining these programs.
- Discuss barriers to older adults participating in the centers' socialization programs and develop solutions.



## OUTCOMES

- Equalize access to senior center socialization programs for older adults county-wide.
- Establish a core set of programs offered at all senior centers in the county.
- Achieve an overall reduction in measures of loneliness and social isolation in Oakland County older adults participating at senior centers.

## BENCHMARKS

- Use the 2019 AAA 1-B Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey and questions as a pre-test and post measure for social isolation metrics such as contact with others and painful feelings attributed to social isolation.
- Participation in senior center programs that address social isolation.
- Number of senior center programs that address social isolation.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Senior Centers
- Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
- Volunteer Caregivers
- Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan

# SOCIALIZATION UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY

EXPAND THE OAKLAND  
LIFELINE SOCIAL ISOLATION  
REDUCTION PROGRAM USING  
TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING  
TO ADDITIONAL CONGREGATE  
SETTINGS AND LIVING  
COMMUNITIES.

feelings with low-income seniors facing this concern at a rate double that of the total senior population (12.5%).

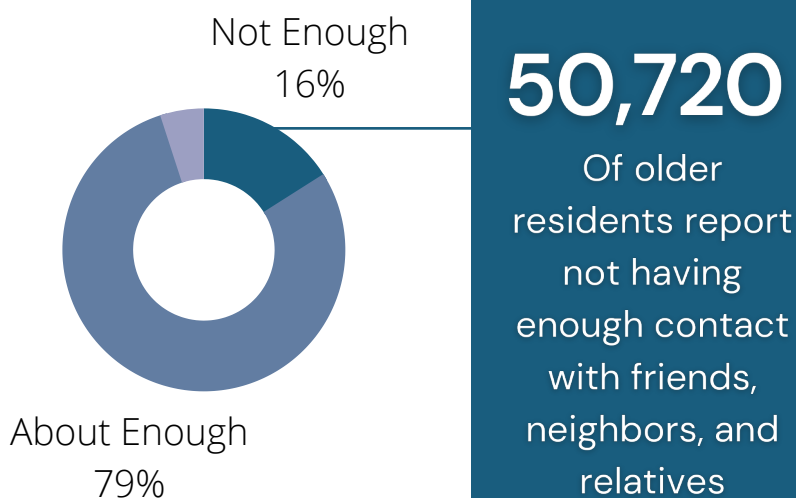
Oakland County older adults express the desire to be more socially involved with 1 in 4 seniors (73,000 or 23%) reporting they would like to do more social activities with low-income seniors expressing this desire at a rate double that of the total senior population (40%). Older adults want to do more social activities such as volunteering, senior center programs, group wellness or fitness classes, and congregate dining programs.

## BACKGROUND

According to the 2019 AAA 1-B Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey, 95% of Oakland County older adults feel socially connected (95%) yet 15,500 seniors say they do not have someone they can tell just about anything to or count on for understanding and advice.

The needs survey revealed 16% (50,720) of Oakland County, older adults report not having enough contact with friends, neighbors, and relatives. Additionally, 18,400 (5.8%) older adults say social isolation is the cause of their painful

## CONTACT WITH FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, AND RELATIVES



**50,720**

Of older residents report not having enough contact with friends, neighbors, and relatives



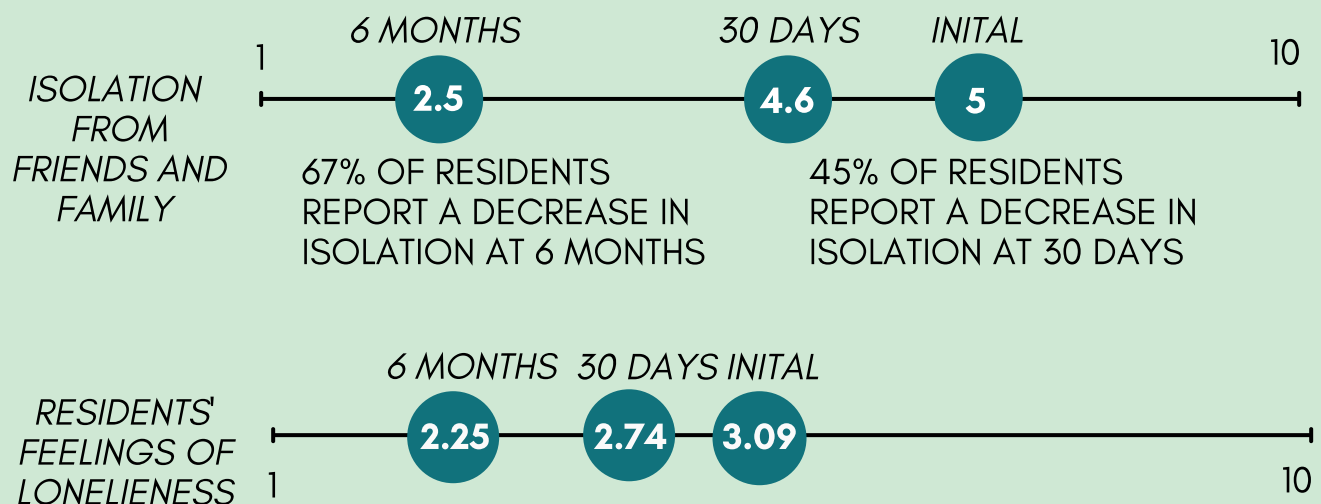
## ASSETS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, socialization programs for older adults became overwhelmed as more individuals found themselves socially isolated and requesting participation. Most Oakland County social isolation prevention programs are at the municipal level through senior centers or through nonprofits serving special populations such as those with dementia, physical limitations, Latino older adults, and LGBTQ seniors. There is currently no county-wide social isolation reduction program, leaving many geographic coverage gaps.

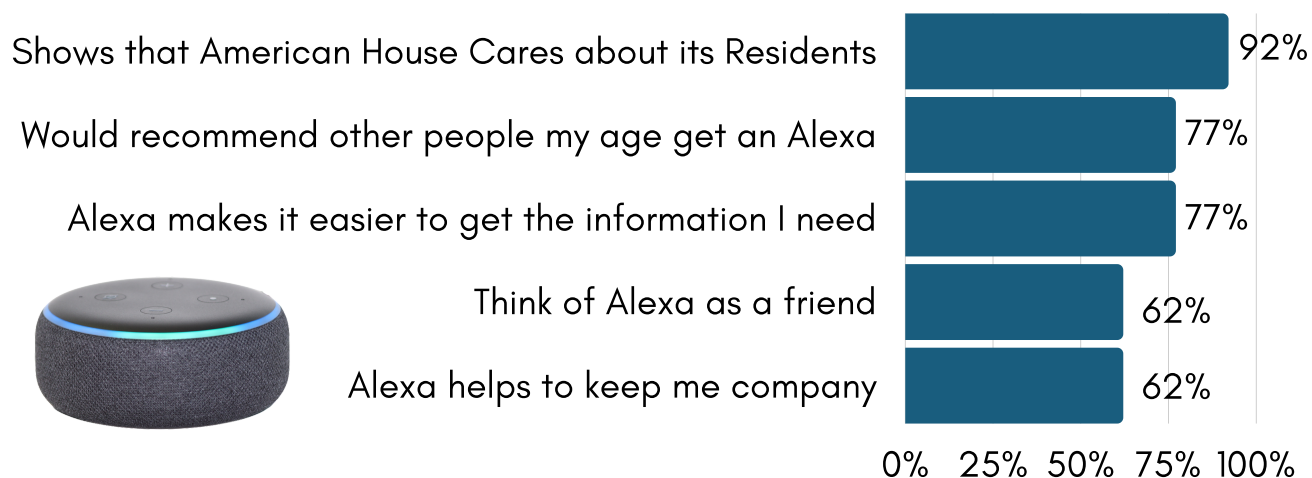
Older adults living in congregate communities were especially isolated during the COVID pandemic, having no in-person social interaction for almost one year including limited virtual social interaction. In response, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners piloted a virtual socialization program in American House Senior Living Residences called Oakland Together Lifeline which provided participating residents with an Echo Show Alexa device in their room. Residents received training on how to make video calls to family members as well as other practical uses of the devices' Alexa features. After using the device for 30 days, isolation from family and friends decreased by 45% and at the sixty-day mark decreased by 67%. Feelings of loneliness also decreased with 43% of residents reporting a decrease at the thirty-day mark and 50% at the six-month mark.

### OAKLAND LIFELINE SOCIAL ISOLATION PROGRAM STATISTICS

*1 indicates low isolation and 10 indicates high isolation. Results are preliminary.*



**AFTER SIX MONTHS WHEN ASKED IF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT, PARTICIPANTS SAID...**



## STRATEGY

- Develop and implement an action plan to expand the Oakland Lifeline social isolation reduction program throughout Oakland County.
- Provide additional training to all congregate facilities that are participating in the Oakland Lifeline social isolation reduction program.

## OUTCOMES

- Expand the Oakland Lifeline social isolation reduction program to additional congregate living facilities.
- Achieve an overall reduction in measures of loneliness and social isolation in Oakland County older adults living in congregate facilities that are participating in the Lifeline program.

## BENCHMARKS

- The number of facilities participating in a Lifeline social isolation reduction program.
- The number of individuals participating in a Lifeline social isolation program.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Oakland Together Lifeline social isolation workgroup
- Oakland County congregate housing representatives
- Senior Advisory Council representative

# VOLUNTEERISM

**INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF COUNTY SENIOR SERVICE VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS TO RECRUIT AND DEPLOY VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE TO ALL OLDER OAKLAND COUNTY RESIDENTS WITH NEEDS.**

## BACKGROUND

Older Oakland County residents are a valuable resource with the capacity to be more highly engaged in volunteering. The AAA 1-B 2019 Oakland County Older Adult Needs and Solutions Survey found that 3 of 4 older adults were seeking to be more active, and about 60% (140,000)



expressed interest in volunteering at a school, library, charity, or social organization. Oakland County has three major organizations that are struggling to achieve their potential for recruiting volunteers to serve older adults mostly due to funding and staffing limitations: CatholicCharities of Southeast Michigan (CCSEM), Mission Possible, and Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers.

## ASSETS

Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan administers three federally funded AmeriCorps Seniors programs: Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Senior Companion Program, and Foster Grandparent Program. These programs have some restrictions on volunteers and deliver prescribed services based on federal policies. Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan has experienced a 40% drop in senior volunteers since the COVID-19 pandemic began. For example, a normal year would see 400 full-time volunteers whereas in 2020 they only had 130, meaning they have the capacity to recruit more volunteers.

The county also has two other volunteer programs that address senior needs with the flexibility to provide a wide variety of assistance, Mission Possible (formerly Faith in Action) and Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers. Both organizations are more grassroots and have a long history of service to older adults. Both primarily support themselves through fundraising and provide valuable resources

and assistance that fills gaps in the service delivery system. Neither organization currently has the capacity to serve the entire county, but they have that goal. Mission Possible provides home repair and Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers specializes in food and transportation, with 32 volunteer drivers in Oakland County. Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers has indicated that the most prominent unmet needs that



they address but are not able to completely fulfill are transportation, home chores/repairs, housekeeping, and visits/phone calls.

In addition to the three leading senior volunteer programs, there are local programs supported by many of the county's 37 senior centers. Most senior centers depend on volunteer support to manage their operations and some key programs and have also experienced a severe drop in volunteers commensurate with their pandemic scale back. These centers are beginning to slowly restore selected volunteer programs with precautions.

## STRATEGY

- Assess the capacity of volunteer organizations to expand in order to further meet the needs of older adults.
- Assist the volunteer-based organizations with developing a coordinated volunteer outreach plan for both older adults as volunteers and in need of volunteer services.
- Implement the outreach plan.



## OUTCOMES

- Achieve county-wide coverage of senior service volunteer organizations.
- Deliver assistance to vulnerable older adults using volunteers at a fraction of the market rate for comparable assistance.
- Increase the number of volunteers engaged with the county's three senior volunteer service organizations.
- Increase the number of older adults who receive assistance from the county's three senior volunteer service organizations.

## BENCHMARKS

- The number of volunteers participating in the three leading senior volunteer organizations.
- The number of service recipients that benefit from the work of the three leading senior volunteer organizations.
- Data gathered from county senior service volunteer assistance organizations can be used to assess community impact and return on investment.

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan
- Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers
- Mission Possible
- Area Agency on Aging 1-B
- Senior Advisory Council



**ON AVERAGE,  
VOLUNTEER CAREGIVER  
PROGRAM SERVICES  
COST 56% LESS TO  
DELIVER THAN THE  
PRIVATE MARKET RATES  
FOR COMPARABLE  
SERVICES.**

## COUNTY ROLES

### OLDER ADULTS AND AGING SERVICE SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS ADVOCATE FOR MORE ACTIVE COUNTY LEADERSHIP

#### BACKGROUND

The role of the Oakland County government in influencing the county's Aging Service Sector was discussed with the 151 individuals who participated in four September 2021 Town Hall meetings conducted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Healthy Aging. Present and future county roles were mentioned more than any other single issue by attendees. Suggestions ranged from being a disseminator of information and an advocate for seniors to creating a "one-stop-shop" for access to information and resources. Attendees clearly supported a stronger leadership role for county government.

Oakland County's Aging Services Sector is a decentralized service delivery system with many different nonprofit organizations responsible for a range of Older Americans Act (OAA) and state funded services. Fourteen different

organizations provide the county's ten different OAA contracted services while neighboring Macomb County has only seven providers. Of the fourteen, no single aging organization serves as a voice exclusively for older Oakland County residents.

Oakland County government has been an active supporter of aging programs through direct funding, collaborations, advocacy through the active Senior Advisory Council, and oversight of the Area Agency on Aging 1-B through its Board appointments. However, there are additional roles that could position the county to have a greater positive influence on the lives of residents age 60 and older, who will represent 26.2% of the county's population in 2022. It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners and County administration assess whether additional county structures or roles can bring value to systems that support older adult wellbeing and quality of life.

## POTENTIAL COUNTY ROLES

- Create a position or department within county government that works within the administration to support innovation in county programs serving older adults and outside of county government to support program development and system change through collaborations with community partners.
- Elevate the visibility and oversight of aging programs by the Board of Commissioners by creating a separate committee on senior issues or formally assigning senior issue oversight to the jurisdiction of an existing Board committee.
- Establish new program initiatives that directly provide services to older adults such as a single point of access/one-stop-shop for information and access to resources and benefits.
- Establish new levels and/or sources of support that will enable county and aging sector services to grow commensurate with the growth in demand for community resources related to the aging of the county population.

**THE NUMBER OF  
OLDER ADULTS 65+  
PERSONS UNDER THE  
POVERTY LINE  
INCREASED 28%  
FROM 2010-2019.**

**THE THREE MUNICIPALITIES  
WITH THE LARGEST  
PERCENTAGE OF 60+ ARE:  
LAKE ANGELUS CITY (40.5%)  
BLOOMFIELD HILLS CITY (38.8%)  
NOVI TOWNSHIP (33.5%)**



## ADDITIONAL HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the recommendations in the Strategic Blueprint, there were 14 recommendations that received strong support by at least one of the commissioners:

- Initiative to provide seniors with more entry points for benefit enrollment by training and supporting more organizations to provide benefits counseling.
- Expand SAFE (Successful Aging through Financial Empowerment) program to provide older adults and family caregivers with financial education, one-on-one support, and recovery after being victimized from financial scams and exploitation.
- Create a technology loan program for Oakland County seniors and caregivers participating in virtual health and wellness courses. Purchase equipment, including tablets and Wi-Fi hotspots for use by wellness program participants. Consider partnerships with libraries to make extended-length loans (6–8 weeks) available for the duration of health and wellness classes.
- Develop community education resources for older adults on where and how to obtain low-cost technology and internet, particularly for low-income persons, comparable to the Lifeline program for access to discounted telephone services.
- Develop a permanent in-home vaccination program to ensure that homebound Oakland County residents can receive vaccinations. Invest in routing software to enable the efficient distribution of in-home vaccinations. Prepare for rapid deployment of in-home vaccinations in emergency response planning.
- Support Direct Care Workers by establishing career supports for this high-demand workforce.
- Address the need for special meals by replicating the current Kosher meal single vendor subcontractor strategy to prepare and deliver one or more special meals.

**475**

Residents will celebrate their 100th birthday in 2022.

**7,000**

More older adults in Oakland County in 2022

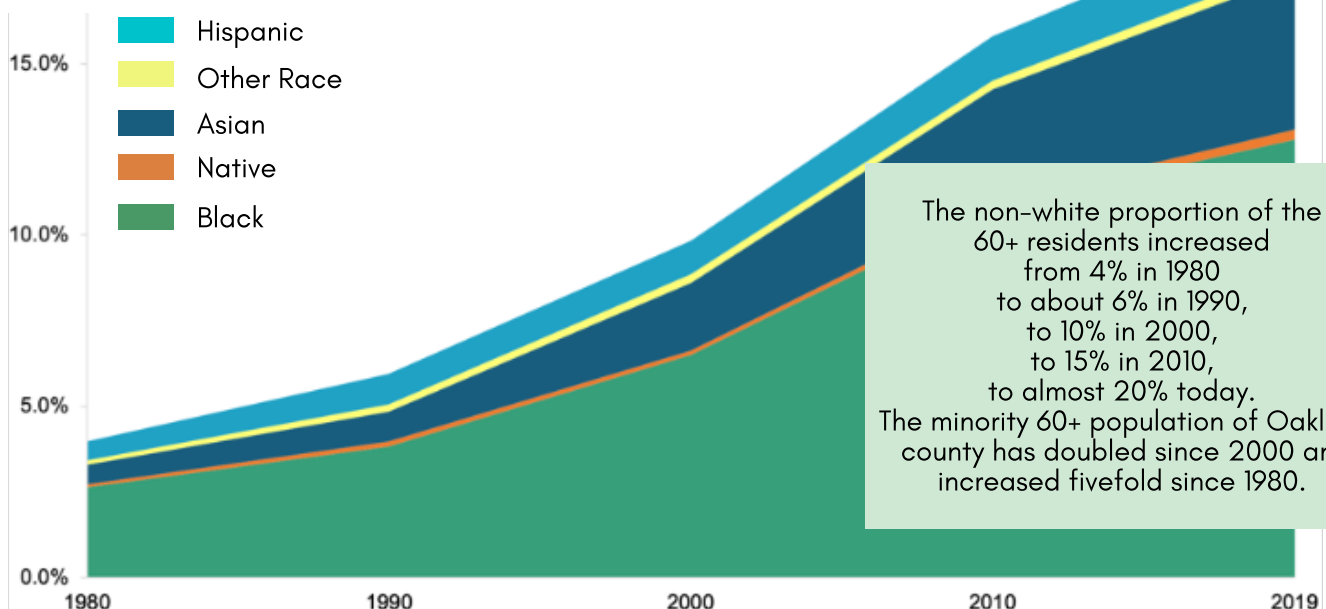
**55,900**

Residents age 80 and older in 2022. All data provided by SEMCOG.



- Catalog existing caregiver training and educational programs available to county residents and identify ways to ensure they and the CONNECT caregiver guide are accessible to all county residents.
- Equalize access to senior center programs for older Oakland County residents by leveraging resources to enhance the capacity of senior centers to provide a core set of programs and support for staff certification.
- Develop county-wide availability of Telephone Reassurance and Friendly Visitor programs.
- Reinstate the Michigan Works workshop target adults 55 and over and connect seniors to this resource.
- Foster the interest in late-life entrepreneurship by connecting resources like Michigan Small Business Development Center with senior centers to provide informational training on business development and entrepreneurship.
- Increase the capacity of county senior service volunteer assistance organizations to recruit and deploy volunteer assistance to all older Oakland County residents with needs.
- Encourage a collaborative effort among Oakland County aging sector nonprofit service organizations to raise public awareness about charitable giving to support enhanced services for older county residents perhaps including the formation of an endowed fund.

#### NON-WHITE OLDER ADULT POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 1980-2019



Sources: 1980–2010: Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Tracy Kugler, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 16.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D050.V16.0>  
 2019: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0102. <https://data.census.gov>



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the many leaders who partnered to produce the Oakland County Blueprint for Successful Aging. Hundreds of community members and scores of stakeholders offered their valuable time, data, expertise, and firsthand knowledge to elevate the county. We would like to especially thank the following contributors to the development of this Blueprint:

Oakland County Board of Commissioners Ad Hoc Committee on Healthy Aging

Commissioner Kristen Nelson, Chair

Commissioner Penny Leubs

Commissioner Eileen Kowall

Commissioner Gary McGillivray

Commissioner Chuck Moss

And Barbara Winter, Board of Commissioners Staff



To the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, a non-profit organization whose mission is to support older adults, caregivers, and people with disabilities in a six-county region that includes Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties. The AAA 1-B helps people access the services and programs they need to remain living independently and with dignity in their own homes or with family caregivers. The AAA 1-B provides direct care programs for older adults, along with funding and support for many programs provided by community partner organizations.

Jim McGuire – Solutionary

Katie Wendel – Director of Planning and Advocacy

Amanda Sears – Grant Manager

Stephanie Hall – Research and Advocacy Specialist



To consultant Marie Gress at Kovir LLC, providing capacity support and training to aging services and age inclusion initiatives.

Members of the public who participated in one or more of the four town halls and the 317 survey respondents voicing feedback on issues of importance to older Oakland County residents.