Dear Colleagues:

Today, nearly every community in North Carolina is seeing greater numbers of seniors. We must assure that our communities are livable and senior–friendly. As we undertake this initiative, we hope you will join us with ideas and enthusiasm. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions. Also, let us know of communities, policies, programs, and practices that can serve as models for others to follow. The future interests of older adults, their families, and communities are at stake.

Sincerely,

Dennis W. Streets

Dennis W. Streets

Vision

North Carolina's diverse communities will be dedicated to improving the lives of all people, especially seniors.

These livable and senior–friendly communities will:

- promote social and economic security for all citizens;

- celebrate seniors' contributions to the community;

- inspire intergenerational relations;

- encourage community planners to involve seniors and consider their needs and interests;

- affirm senior efforts to live independently and build responsive systems of long–term care for people of all ages; and

- acknowledge the important role that families, friends, and neighbors play in the lives of seniors, and enhance their capacity for caring.

For more information about the Livable and Senior–Friendly Communities Initiative or the Division of Aging and Adult Services' programs and services, please contact:

Division of Aging and Adult Services

NC DHHS
Dennis W. Streets, Director
2101 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2101

919-733-3983

www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/home.htm

dhhs
nc department
of health and
human services

**LIVABLE AND SENIOR-FRIENDLY
COMMUNITIES**
NORTH CAROLINA

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*putting the
pieces together*
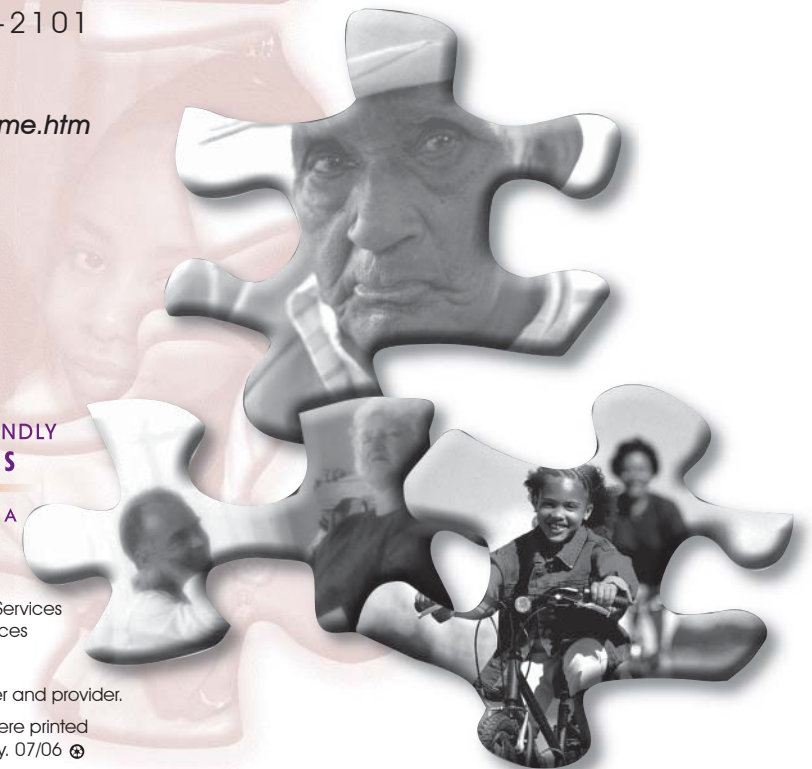
Building Livable and Senior-Friendly Communities

There are many dimensions to developing a community that promotes quality of life for all citizens, including seniors. At the same time, it is hard to imagine any aspect of society that is not affected by our demographic shift. Listed below are some components of a livable and senior-friendly community to consider when evaluating readiness for an aging population in North Carolina.

Areas of Interest and Concern

Physical and Accessible Environment

- Transportation
- Air/water quality
- Housing/utilities
- Land use
- Neighborhood organizations
- Noise control
- Road safety
- Recreational facilities
- Shopping
- Zoning

Healthy Aging

- Adult immunization
- Dental health
- Hospitals
- Leisure
- Nutrition
- Mental health
- Medicare/ Medicaid acceptance
- Medications
- Preventive care
- Primary care
- Rehabilitation
- Vision/hearing care
- Wellness/fitness

Economic Security

- Job training
- Age discrimination
- Financial planning
- Health care cost
- Health insurance
- Income
- Job opportunities
- Job retooling
- Senior-friendly businesses
- Long-term care cost
- Tax credits/ Exemptions

Technology

- Internet access
- Assistive/Adaptive devices
- Distance-learning
- Medical alert
- Tele-medicine
- Telephone/ cell phone access

Safety and Security

- Driver safety
- Abuse/neglect
- Domestic violence
- Emergency response
- Fire safety
- Fraud/exploitation
- Outreach

Social and Cultural Opportunity

- Volunteerism
- Community sensitivity
- Media
- Intergenerational relations
- Libraries
- Lifelong learning
- Spiritual growth
- Racial/ethnic/ linguistic diversity
- Cultural/social programs
- The Arts

Access and Choice in Services and Supports

- Information & assistance (I&A)
- Caregiver Support
- Drug assistance
- End-of-life care
- Grandparents-raising grandchildren
- Legal services
- Senior centers
- Home & community services
- Long-term care facilities
- Guardianship
- Care management

Public Accountability and Responsiveness

- Public benefits
- Community needs assessments
- Planning and coordination
- Program evaluation
- Public and private funding sources
- Taxes
- Representation in public affairs

Demography

North Carolina ranked 11th nationally in total population and ranked 10th in the number of persons age 50 and older in 2004.

North Carolina's older population increased 20.5% between 1990 and 2000, giving the state the 12th fastest-growing older population. This rate of growth exceeds the national average growth rate of 12%. In 83 of our 100 counties, the rate of increase among those age 65 and older is expected to exceed the growth of the total population between 2000 and 2010. By 2030, 75 counties are projected to have more persons age 60 and older than age 17 and under.
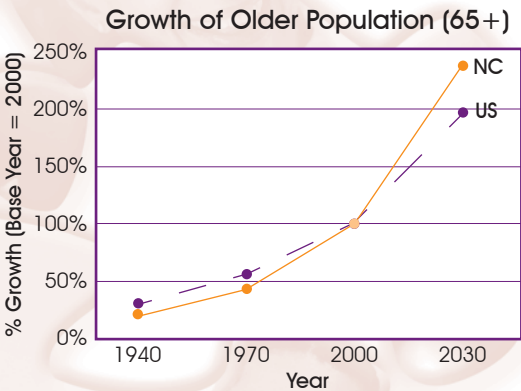
Baby Boomers

Many of the oldest baby boomers will retire in this decade. Here are some milestones. Beginning in

2006 The oldest boomers became eligible for services under the Older Americans Act.

2008 They can draw Social Security at a reduced rate.

2011 They can receive Medicare benefits and Medicaid assistance.

2012 They start drawing full Social Security at age 66, because of the phased increase in age of eligibility.

Other Important Facts:

- NC ranks 11th highest in the proportion of the poor among older adults, with 12.7% below the federal poverty level in 1999. Another 23.2% are considered near-poor with incomes between 100% and 200% of poverty.

- Among the top 20 most populous states, North Carolina has the highest percentage of seniors living in rural areas.

Growth of Older Population (65+)

North Carolina is in the midst of a significant demographic transition as the baby boomers approach retirement age in the latter part of this decade. The time to chart an effective course for Livable and Senior-Friendly Communities is NOW.