

**Orange
County
Community
Assessment
Report**

Summer

2011

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A Summary of
Findings

Executive Summary of Findings

Orange County is entering its third cycle of a community-wide planning process that will dictate the goals and strategies to be followed by the Department on Aging over the next five years. This process will culminate in a written document called the Master Aging Plan, which will be approved by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners in May 2012. To prepare for this plan, the department conducted a community assessment to guide the development of goals, priorities, and structure for the 2012-2017 Master Aging Plan. The assessment focused on two areas:

- 1) a readiness assessment of Orange County's preparations for an aging workforce and increased demand for programs and services
- 2) community input from Orange County residents on their perceptions of aging in the county, perceived strengths and areas for improvement

As a result of the Orange County readiness assessment,

- We engaged 21 Orange County departments through a written survey (100% response rate) and in-person interviews (100% response rate) and identified over 11 employees to serve on Master Aging Plan workgroups.
- Inventoried 15 programs and services sponsored by other departments that are specifically targeted to older adults.
- Found that over 81% of Orange County departments anticipate increased demand for programs and services as the population ages, and 13 out of 19 departments with applicable programs and services describe this increase in demand as a medium, high, or very high challenge.
- Inventoried the ways departments are preparing for this increased demand and cataloged them by frequency.
- Found that over 68% of Orange County departments describe preparing for an aging workforce as a medium, high, or very high challenge. 14 out of 21 departments are either working on a plan or already have a plan to prepare for critical skills and knowledge loss over the next 5 years.

As a result of the Community Input assessment,

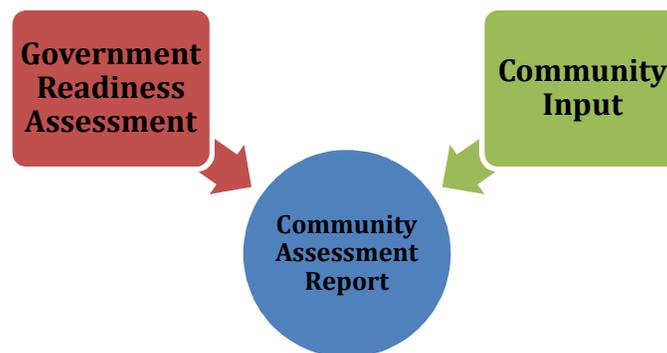
- We held 9 focus groups in the 7 townships of Orange County with 63 total participants.
- Surveyed 239 people (147 of whom live in Orange County) through an online Perceptions of Aging survey.
- Documented County residents' concerns about major topic areas of housing, health and wellness, navigation and transportation, community engagement, information sharing, and long-term care.
- Assessed the needs and concerns of 106 long-term care staff members from 6 facilities.
- Found that adults value aging in place, and look to their communities to support them.
- Described the ways in which the experience of aging differs based on where an older adults lives in the County (the towns in the South or the more rural North).

Introduction

Since 2000, the Orange County Department on Aging has undertaken a community-wide planning process to develop a Master Aging Plan that dictates the goals and strategies to be followed by the Department over the next five years. This strategic planning process will culminate in a written document called the Master Aging Plan, which will be approved by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners in May 2012. In early 2011, the Department's Aging Advisory Board began work on the development of the Master Aging Plan for 2012-2017 and set the following goals for the formative stages of the Plan:

1. Use input from the community to help determine goals and to set priorities for the Master Aging Plan.
2. Collect and analyze data on perceived needs from Orange County citizens, public employees, and community leaders.
3. Adapt data gathering instruments and methods already in use by the NC Department of Aging and Adult Services and other state Aging resources.
4. Present findings from the data collection process to the MAP Steering Committee and other groups as context for the Plan development and structure.

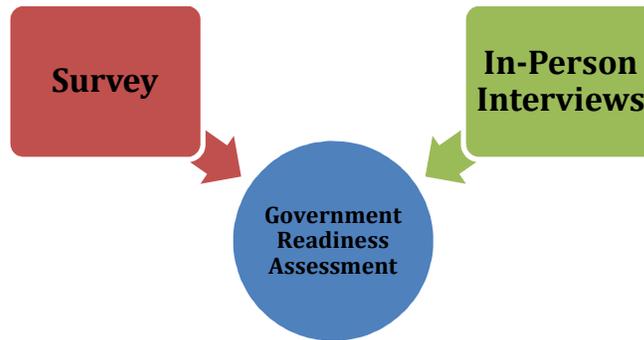
To accomplish these goals, the Department on Aging contracted with two students from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health's Health Behavior and Health Education department to conduct formative research for the plan. The formative research was a community assessment, which would guide the development of goals, priorities, and structure for the 2012-2017 Master Aging Plan. The community assessment consisted of two parts: (1) a readiness assessment of Orange County's preparations for an aging workforce and increased demand for programs and services, and (2) community input from Orange County residents on their perceptions of aging in the county, perceived strengths and areas for improvement. The results of this research are presented in this Community Assessment Report.



Together, the Government Readiness Assessment and the Perceptions of Aging research will inform the development of the 2012-2017 Master Aging Plan.

Government Readiness Assessment

Introduction and Methods



In June 2011, the MAP Formative Research Team conducted a government readiness assessment in order to answer two research questions:

1. How is Orange County preparing for increased demand for programs and services due to an aging clientele?
2. How is Orange County preparing for an aging workforce?

Together, these two questions address the concern that Orange County will experience a surge in demand for programs and services as the number of older adults increases, but diminished workforce capacity to meet this need.

The government readiness assessment consisted of two components. The first was a written survey developed by the North Carolina Division on Aging, and adapted for county use. The second component was a series of hour-long semi-structured interviews between Janice Tyler, director for the Department on Aging, the students and other department heads.

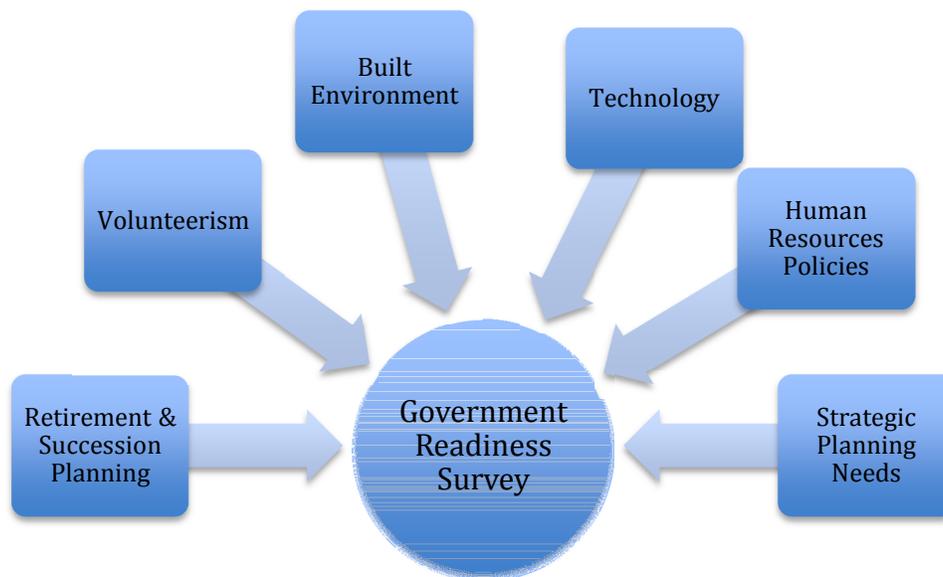
Twenty-two departments participated in this study with a 100% response rate for both the in-person interviews and the surveys. Participating departments are listed below.

- Animal Services
- Asset Management Services
- Board of Elections
- Child Support Enforcement
- Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners
- County Manager's Office
- Cooperative Extension
- Department of Environment, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Emergency Services
- Financial Services

- Health
- Housing, Human Rights and Community Development
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Libraries
- Planning and Inspections
- Register of Deeds
- Sheriff's Office
- Social Services
- Solid Waste
- Tax Administration

Findings

The government readiness assessment included items related to four core dimensions of preparation: engaging older adults in the County's work, alterations to the built environment, government policies, and strategic planning needs. The workforce assessment included items related to retirement & succession planning and Human Resources policies, and the programmatic assessment included items on inventorying existing programs and services. Findings from the survey are presented below. Please note that only respondents who marked a question as applicable to their work were included in analyses, so not all data presentation will account for all 22 responding departments.

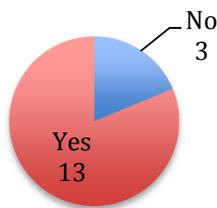


Preparing for Increased Demand for Government Programs and Services

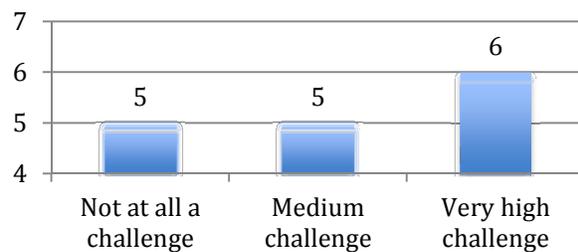
As part of the in-person interviews for this assessment, we engaged all Orange County departments in the strategic planning process, identified 11 employees to serve on MAP work groups, inventoried 15 programs targeted specifically to older adults and 6 formal plans related to aging preparedness.

One of the major findings of this assessment was that 81% of departments anticipate an increase in demand for programs and services because of the changing demographics of Orange County, and that 13 out of 19 departments anticipate that this increased demand will be a moderate to very high challenge to prepare for. However, levels of preparedness for this increased demand vary considerably.

Does your department anticipate an increase in demand for your programs and services?



Over the next 5 years, how much of a challenge will it be to meet the increased need from older adults for expanded programs and services?



Institutional Understandings of Aging

One of the more basic forms of preparation for meeting this increased demand is having an institutional definition of the age at which a client is considered to be an older adult, as well as program tracking that allows for analyses based on age. We found that more than half of the responding departments (12 out of 21) had one or multiple definitions of an older adult, whereas 9 departments had no definitions at all. Additionally, 11 out of 14 departments with applicable programs and services currently track changes in client demand, but only 4 of these can isolate changes based on client age. Creating a department-specific definition of an older adult and analyzing program demand based on age may be an important initial step in preparing for the increased demand that will accompany the changing demographics in Orange County over the next five years.

Responsiveness to Change

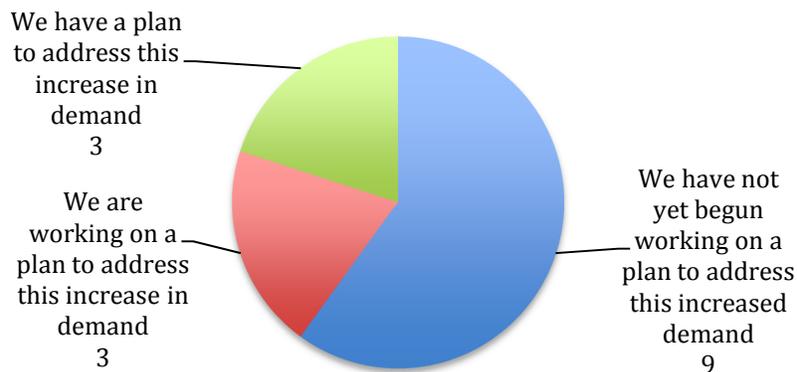
Another element of preparation to meet increased demand for government programs and services is a department's responsiveness to change in demand. A high number of departments (9 out of 14) reported having made changes in the last five years to how they implement existing programs and services for older adults to accommodate this increase in demand. 6 out of 21 departments directly solicit the views of older adults, their families or caregivers in helping shape programs and services. These views are commonly solicited through client surveys, focus groups, advisory committees and boards, public hearing sessions/listening sessions and other trainings. However, only 4 out of 15 departments have policies and practices to increase the number of employees based on the increased need for programs and services.

In terms of making physical changes to programs and services, about half (9 out of 17) departments have made physical changes (e.g. ergonomics, lighting, screen size) over the past five years to accommodate clients. Many fewer departments (4 out of 13) have made changes in the past five years to increase access to transportation for clients. About half of departments (5 out of 11) sponsor education programs aimed at helping older adults use technology, and about half (4 out of 9) make changes in how they inform, support or deliver technologies to meet the needs of older clients. Two additional departments intend to make such changes in the future.

Strategic Planning

Few departments (6 out of 21) listed that they had produced formal documents, such as plans, reports or studies of the effect that an aging population will have on the department. These plans have been inventoried and will be reviewed and disseminated to MAP work groups as appropriate. Overall, government departments collaborate frequently with other organizations in planning for and responding to the aging population. 12 out of 20 departments collaborate with other government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations, private for-profit organizations, and public universities. Four organizations listed the Department on Aging as a future collaborator in preparation for an aging population. Additionally, only 4 out of 15 departments have at least one staff member who has a percentage of his or her time designated for preparing for this increased demand in programs and services.

Which describes your department's level of preparedness for meeting increased demand for programs and services over the next 5 years? (Units are number of departments)



Summary

This survey identified the strategies government departments are using to prepare for the increased demand for programs and services due to an aging population. The following figure shows the types of strategies that are being implemented according to frequency.

| More departments are preparing in these ways: | Half of the departments are preparing in these ways: | Fewer departments are preparing in these ways: |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a definition of an older adult. • Track changes in demand for programs and services and client age. • Made changes to how programs are implemented for older adults. • Collaboration with other departments and organizations to prepare for an aging population. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor education programs about technology use for older adults. • Made changes in how inform, support, and deliver technology for older adults. • Made physical changes to the environment with older adults in mind. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit views of older adults on programs. • Have policies to increase employees to meet increased demand. • Produce formal documents about how aging will affect the department. • Have designated staff to prepare for increased demand. • Increase access to public transportation for clients. |

The Effect of an Aging Workforce on County Government

One of the major findings of this assessment was the demands of an aging workforce are perceived as less of a challenge than meeting the increased demand due to an aging clientele population. 6 departments describe planning for an aging workforce as a medium challenge, with roughly equal numbers describing it as a low or nonexistent challenge (6) as a high or very high challenge (7).

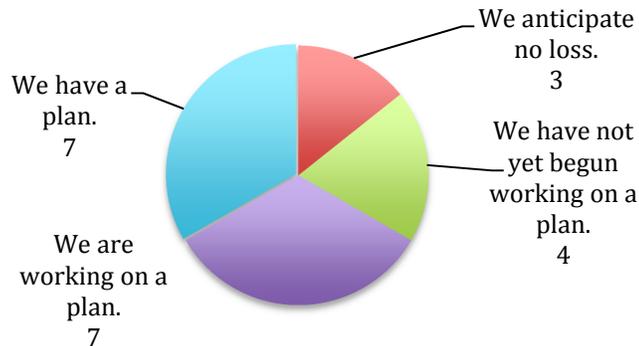


Understanding the Workforce

In terms of understanding the workforce, 18 out of 20 departments know how many employees are eligible to retire in the next five years, and all departments reported knowing which divisions will likely experience the most critical skills/knowledge loss. 3 know they will not have any critical shortages, 4 have not yet begun working on a plan to address critical skills/knowledge loss, 7 are working on a plan to address skills/knowledge loss, and 7 have a plan to address the skills/knowledge loss. Two of 20

departments have a staff person who has a percentage of time designated to preparing for an aging workforce. However, departmental levels of preparedness vary.

Which describes your department's level of preparedness for preparing for critical knowledge/skills loss based on retirement projections for the next 5 years? (Units are number of departments)



Workforce Capacity

Formalized knowledge transfer, as part of a job description is one way to lessen the impact of retirements on critical knowledge/skills loss. Overall, 9 of 21 departments transfer knowledge to younger employees as a formal part of their job, and 6 of them report that this is part of a larger preparedness plan. Three departments are planning to implement knowledge transfer. Additionally, 8 out of 20 have a volunteer program that engages older adults to extend the capacity of the workforce. Volunteers are active in these roles: clerical/administrative support, routine non-skilled tasks, advisory committees and boards, instructors/educators, and specialized response teams.

Human Resources policies

The presence or absence of certain Human Resources policies can be perceived to make a difference in retaining older adult workers. Overall, a little under half of responding departments (9 out of 20) report that there are HR policies which make it difficult to retain older workers, but far fewer report that there are HR policies that make it easier to retain older workers (5 out of 17), that there are HR policies that make it difficult to hire back retirees to meet skills/knowledge needs (8 out of 17), or that there are those which make it easier to hire back retirees to meet skills and knowledge needs (2 out of 18).

Built Environment and Workplace Modification

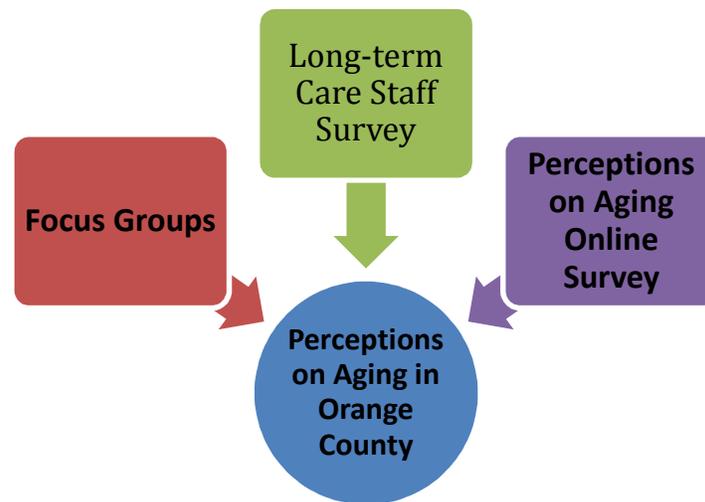
Orange County departments are active in modifying the work environment to accommodate changing need from workers. Two provide telecommuting, 6 provide part-time work, 13 provide flexible work hours, 3 provide flexible work places, and 1 provides job sharing. Additionally, 12 departments have education programs about technology targeted towards own employees. Most departments (15 of 21) have made physical improvements or changes (e.g. ergonomics, lighting, screen size) in the past five years to accommodate staff members. However, only one department has made changes to increase access to public transportation over the past five years for staff members.

| More departments are preparing in these ways: | Half of the departments are preparing in these ways: | Fewer departments are preparing in these ways: |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how many employees are eligible to retire. • Know which divisions will experience critical knowledge/skills loss due to retirement. • Have finished or begun working on a plan to address critical knowledge/skills losses due to retirement. • Offer flexible work hours. • Provide technology trainings. • Made physical improvements to office environment. • Use volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can identify HR policies that make it difficult to retain older workers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use knowledge transfer as a formal part of jobs. • Offer telecommuting, part-time work, flexible work places or job sharing. • Increased access to public transportation. • Can identify HR policies that make it easier to retain older workers. • Designated a staff member who helps prepare for aging workforce. |

Future Directions for Research

Based on our findings from the government readiness assessment, the MAP Formative Research Team has identified additional sources of information that need to be included in this assessment. In the coming months, the team plans to survey and set up interviews with the town managers of Hillsborough, Chapel Hill and Carrboro as well as the members of the Board of County Commissioners.

Community Input

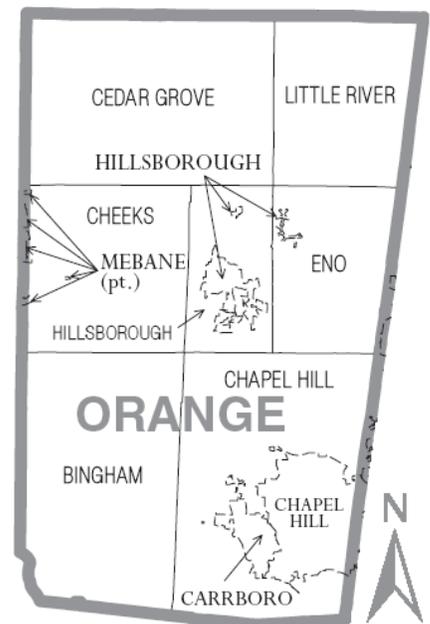


Focus Groups

Between May 25- and June 20, 2011, the MAP Focus Group Team conducted 9 focus groups, with representation from 7 different townships in Orange County, with a total of 63 participants. Focus groups were held at the following locations:

- Seymour Center
- Carrboro Century Center
- Central Orange Senior Center
- White Cross Recreation Center
- Efland - Cheeks Community Center
- Schley Grange Hall
- Little River Presbyterian Church
- Palmer's Grove United Methodist Church

Additionally, in September 2011, we conducted 3 focus groups at 3 long-term care facilities in the county, with a total of 15 participants. Focus Group participants were asked to share their experiences and perspective on aging in Orange County, to describe their ideal vision of aging in Orange County, to discuss challenges and strengths of the County with regards to services, and also provided demographic information. Participants were encouraged to remain involved in the MAP process by attending the Community Kickoff Meeting or participate on a Work Group or on the Steering Committee. Findings from the focus groups are presented in paragraph form at the bottom of the following one-page reports based on subject area.

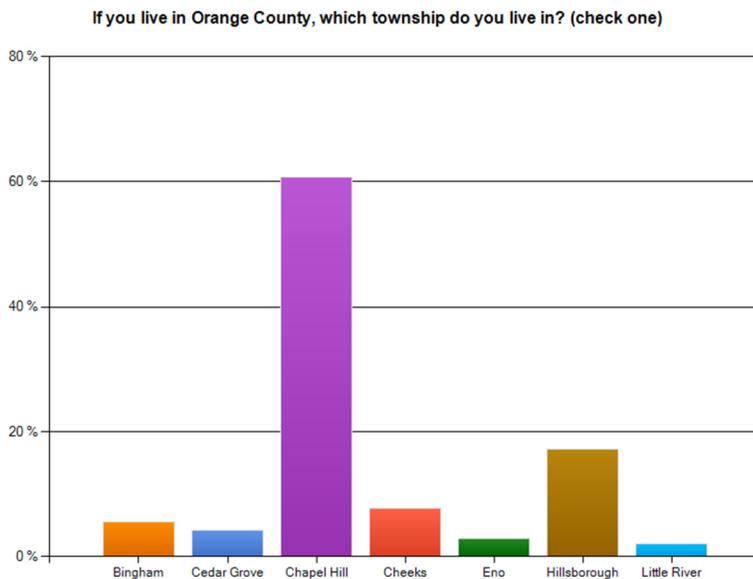


Perceptions on Aging Online Survey

The Perceptions of Aging online survey was developed by Rebecca Woodruff and My-Linh Luong, rising 2nd year public health graduate students from the University of North Carolina, who were working as summer interns at the Department on Aging. The survey was based off of a previous survey developed by Ashe County, NC and approved by both the Department on Aging Advisory Board and the Orange County Board of County Commissioners.

Individuals were asked to “imagine that in the next 5 years, either you, your parents, or another loved one will be turning 60 or older in Orange County” and included questions regarding housing, transportation, health and wellness services, recreation and leisure activities, financial assistance, in-home and long-term care, opportunities for community engagement and overall community perspective.

The survey was sent out to all county employees as well as individuals on the Department on Aging email list-serv. Between July 1st and July 15th, 239 individuals responded to the survey, 147 of whom reside in Orange County. Only data from Orange County residents were included in this analysis. Additional demographic information is reported below.



- Although there was representation from all townships of Orange County, Chapel Hill and Hillsborough residents made up more than 75% of the survey respondents.
- 72% of respondents listed that they had lived in Orange County for more than 10 years
- 88.9% identified themselves as White, and 79% of respondents identified themselves as female.

Question wording from the Perceptions of Aging Survey and summarized responses from each item are presented in the following one-page reports based on subject area.

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. Which types of housing do you/he/she expect to live in over the next 5 years?

| Likely to live in | Not sure/Don't know | Unlikely to live in |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houses and condos for homeowners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naturally occurring retirement communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing Care Retirement communities (CCRC) Multigenerational Housing Rental apartments or homes Assisted living units Senior Housing with Meals and Activities Senior Housing based on your income Unsubsidized Senior Housing |

Focus Group Findings: Housing

One major finding of this analysis was that adults in Orange County both value aging in place and expect to age in their homes. Focus group participants expressed this by saying things like “I am going to live where I currently live. I am comfortable there...It’s better to be taken care of in your home.”

Although the consensus seemed to be that aging in place is a desirable way to grow older in Orange County, many residents also repeatedly voiced the desire for more senior housing options, especially affordable options, other than living in one’s own home. Reasons included worries about declining health, concern about maintaining a household independently, and an increased desire for social interaction that senior housing often affords. Some participants in focus groups in the southern part of the county were interested in building intentional communities in their neighborhoods to provide opportunities for social engagement and interaction and to promote health and wellness.

Additionally, focus group participants expressed a lack of knowledge about existing housing options in the county (e.g. home sharing, income-based housing, CCRC, et). For example a participant noted, “People need to know what kinds of homes and services those homes provide and how to pay for them. They need options.” Even for those familiar with other kinds of long term care resources noted the extensive barriers, including long waiting lists and lack of financial assistance

Focus Group Findings: Housing (con't)

It should be noted that new housing developments were not a salient issue in the focus group in the rural Northern area of the county. There, the conversations centered on community-oriented strategies and using church networks as a resource to help older adults age in place in a supportive community. Without a social network or community, a sense of isolation, particularly in Northern parts of Orange County, may actually lead individuals to “age in place accidentally.”

Housing Priorities

- **People intend to live in their own homes**
- **Physical modification and appropriate services will be necessary**
- **People want more housing options to avoid isolation**
- **Valuable to understand role of community in an individuals' ability to age in place**
- **Concerns about property taxes, cost of living and financial planning**

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. Which of these services do you/he/she expect to need over the next 5 years?

| Likely to use | Not sure/Don't Know | Unlikely to use |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-home structural features to accommodate mobility and safety Housekeeping Heavy cleaning Yard work Assistance with home repairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grocery Delivery Pharmacy Delivery Home health services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing Financial assistance with utilities Home-delivered meals on wheels Senior Nutrition Program or Group Meals Volunteer visitor program Personal care services Telephone reassurance or buddy program Religious group support, like parish nursing |

Imagine that you are a caregiver to an adult age 60 or older. Which of these caregiver support services do you expect to use over the next 5 years?

Most survey participants responded “Not sure/don’t know” when answering this question, signifying that information/literature regarding caregiver support services could/should be clarified to residents of Orange County.

| Likely to use | Not sure/Don't Know | Unlikely to use |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-home assistance Care management Individual counseling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respite care Caregiver support groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Day Care |

Focus Group Findings: In-home care services

In order for older adults to age in place safely and successfully, they may require a variety of in-home services and programs, such as the Urgent Care/Home Repair program sponsored by the Housing Department, and the curbside assistance program sponsored by the Solid Waste Management Department.

Being able to access everyday services may be more difficult for an older adult to complete frequently so having “services come to you”, for example mobile libraries and grocery delivery, may be a new model to consider. It was suggested that grocery stores like Harris Teeter and Weaver Street could develop a fund for older adults to send out meals and might be interested in developing a partnership with the local community. Greater publicity surrounding the types of services younger individuals can do to help older adults may also be valuable, especially to older adults who are living without families.

While a telephone reassurance program may not be popular in the Northern part of the county, it was suggested that those living in the Southern part of the county might be better served with such a program.

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. How important will each of these health and wellness services be to you/him/her over the next 5 years?

All items listed were considered health and wellness services Orange County residents foresaw themselves using over the next 5 years. The following list prioritizes this list based on the combined percentages of “Essential” and “Very important.”

Essential/Very Important

- Adequate healthcare coverage
- Access to activities to stay mentally and physically active
- Access to a specialist
- Access to dental care
- Not having to wait a long time to be seen by a medical provider
- Access to healthcare options
- Affordable nutritious food
- Affordability of prescription medications
- Easy to understand information about healthy aging and disease prevention
- Information about how to access assistance services for in-home care
- Assistance services for in-home care

Focus Group Findings: Health and Wellness Services

Focus group participants had varied knowledge regarding healthcare options, if they were mentioned at all. Some mention was made regarding individualized tiered services that could be offered through CCRCs, Carol Woods and Meadowmont. While the government can meet some need, it is possible that services provided by private or community models may fill a gap; Carol Woods may begin providing health services to those on their waiting list, while Meadowmont (and other local aging in place groups) may have a nurse available 24 hours to give advice to avoid trips to the emergency room. It was also suggested that pharmacy minute clinics are filling a gap by having nurse practitioners on staff that can see people for minor illnesses.

Please see the transportation section of this report for a more detailed review of access to nutritious food and medical services.

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. Which of these recreation, leisure, and wellness activities for older adults will you/he/she/expect to need over the next 5 years?

All items listed were considered recreation, leisure, and wellness services Orange County residents foresaw themselves using over the next 5 years. The following list prioritizes this list based on the combined percentages of “Will definitely use” and “Will probably use.”

- | Will definitely/probably use |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness (e.g. health screen, massage, physical therapy) • Fitness (e.g. yoga, strength training, access to exercise machines) • Senior Centers • Cultural/Performing Arts (e.g. dance, singing/chorus, theater/improve) • Education opportunities (e.g. language classes, computer classes) • Social events (bingo, potlucks, day/overnight trips) • Recreation (e.g. bridge, dominoes) |

Focus Group Findings: Health & Wellness Activities

The Senior Centers serve a “really valuable role of socialization. [People who come here] might not do a lot, but they’re socializing. They also come for the exercise and the health.” Although it may be difficult for individuals to get transportation to and from the senior center or to realize the resources that are available through the senior centers, once individuals become involved they feel more connected to their community—whether it be through participating in classes, daily activities or volunteering. For many it becomes a “home away from home” where seniors can “actively engage in all facets of life”

However, those who live in more rural areas of the county may not be able access the resources offered at the county’s two senior centers. Although it may not be possible or feasible to build more senior centers “in the sense of bricks” offering gathering places and actively providing individuals in rural areas of the county with ways to remain active and engaged and finding ways to connect older adults in these rural communities to the greater community in Orange County may reduce the feelings of isolation these individuals may feel.

- | Health & Wellness Priorities |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to affordable healthcare • Increase knowledge about health care options • Need for different health care delivery options • Senior centers are a valued way to remain engaged with the community |

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. Which of these employment options will you/he/she expect to use over the next 5 years?

| Likely to use | Not sure/Don't Know | Unlikely to use |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible job opportunities (e.g. flexible work hour, telecommuting) • Employment opportunities for older workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not plan to continue to work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job training for older adults |

Imagine that you, one of your parents or another loved one is turning 60 or older. Which of these financial planning options or financial planning assistance services will you/he/she expect to use over the next 5 years?

| Likely to use | Not likely to use |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable health care • Help with financial planning • Help with retirement planning • Help with financial planning • SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program) • Prescription assistance • Help choosing a long-term care insurance policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services assistance (e.g. food stamps, energy assistance) |

Focus Group Findings: Financial Planning Assistance

Although there was not extensive conversation regarding resources for financial planning assistance, some focus group participants did make note of affordability issues in Orange County. Ideally, options for housing, health care and transportation would be free or affordable for all residents. Repeatedly (and particularly in free response sections of the Perceptions on Aging survey), individuals noted that the cost of property taxes and general cost of living in Chapel Hill were too high and that if you are financially well-off, Orange County is an ideal place in which to age due to retirement options, access to hospitals, proximity to the University with cultural events to attend.

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. How important will each of these features be in helping you/him/her navigate around Orange County over the next 5 years?

| Likely to use |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of sidewalks and paths Availability of parking Availability of sidewalks, especially in busy areas Appropriate timing of traffic lights and crosswalks Easy to read signage on streets, crosswalks, businesses, houses Accessibility of building entrances Availability of benches in public areas Availability of handicapped parking |

Focus Group Findings: Navigating Orange County

Some participants noted the lack of walkable areas in Orange county, noting that it becomes very dangerous if the sidewalks are incomplete or not well maintained. While organizations like Walkable Hillsborough may be trying to ameliorate this situation, the lack of sidewalks are still of great concern, especially to those who have physical disabilities.

For those who have a physical disability, parking and accessibility to buildings is very limited, thus limiting the places that disabled individuals can go. Attention should also be given to allow individuals to cross the street in time.

Imagine that you, one of your parents, or another loved one is turning 60 or older. Which types of transportation services do you think you/he/she will use to help you/him/her get around in Orange County over the next 5 years?

| Likely to use | Not sure/Don't Know | Unlikely to use |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own car or vehicle Bus Affordable public transportation services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door-to-door transit (such as E-Z Rider) Volunteer driver program Transportation that is handicapped accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi or other private transportation |

Imagine you, one of your parents, or another loved one is 60 or older. To what types of places in Orange County will you/he/she need transportation other than one's own car over the next 5 years?

| Likely to need | Unlikely to need |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical appointments Shopping and haircuts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social/Cultural Events Senior Centers Adult Day Services Religious Services |

Focus Group Findings: Transportation Services

As one focus group participant described, “There is Chapel Hill, and then there is Orange County. You have a great transportation system in Chapel Hill, and there are opportunities for transportation to other places in Orange County, but it’s not as elaborate.” This is a sentiment echoed throughout focus groups and in response the Perceptions on Aging survey. Chapel Hill and Carrboro focus groups touted the bus system in Chapel Hill as one of the benefits of living in Orange County, whereas those in rural areas of the county voiced major concerns about being able to get around—particularly being able to get to medical appointments. Other than a personal car, individuals lack reliable, user-friendly transportation in these areas and may have to depend on their children to get around, since there are not networks of individuals in the community who would help residents get around. At a psychological level it may as feel as though one is losing their independence and unable to complete the tasks they once could when they could travel with a car. In addition to medical appointments, participants were also interested in affordable transportation services to get to and from the airport, to sporting events like Durham Bulls games, or into Durham and Raleigh, more generally.

Chapel Hill Transit, Orange Public Transportation and EZ-Rider do not go as far in rural areas and “expanding the system would help tremendously.” While rural areas of the county may be trying to address the transportation needs of their residents, seniors may end up moving to urban areas (either to Chapel Hill/Carrboro or to D.C., for example) where access to public transportation and services, like grocery shopping, are more readily accessible. It has been suggested that different modalities of transportation would be valuable in different parts of the county, for example mass transit buses in more heavily populated areas and door-to-door call-in services or subsidized taxi rides in more rural areas of the county.

Clarification about who is able to access transportation services could also be beneficial. Some participants were unsure of whether they would be able to use bus services (e.g. E-Z Rider, OPT) if they were not poor or disabled.

The frequency and schedule of bus services is also a point of concern for many individuals. Individuals might be waiting for an hour, maybe even hours for a bus to come because of reduced frequency during the daytime. For example, “E-Z Rider is great; I can get to my appointment, but I am there for several hours.” Others described having to wait on the veranda of the Senior Center for hours, unsure of when the bus would come, thus reducing the number of activities they could participate in at the Senior Center because of the schedule. Others felt that the bus system is too focused on students and the University system, as the daytime [when buses have reduced hours] is when most seniors are active.

Navigating and Transportation Priorities

- **Structural concerns about safety and accessibility in the community**
- **Chapel Hill Transit is beneficial, but has limitations**
- **Expand transportation services especially to/in rural areas of the county**

Imagine you, one of your parents, or another loved one is 60 or older. To what extent do you think that the following opportunities for community engagement are important for older adults in Orange County?

Likely to use

- Physical activity and exercise
- Participation in educational and outreach programs for health and wellness
- Providing a range of opportunities for volunteering
- Recognizing the contribution of older adults
- Participation of older adults as leaders (e.g. mentorship, sharing experiences)
- Offering a welcoming environment for diverse groups
- Participation in creative art activities
- Promoting intergenerational activities

Focus Group Findings: Community Engagement

Across our focus groups, “building community” was something important that participants sought to define. The Senior Centers are certainly seen as integral to many individuals’ positive experiences of aging in Orange County. However, there was still a sense that an aging-friendly and supportive community needed to be developed beyond the senior centers and rather than be “fenced off” older adults should be “sharing with younger people and giving more.” Promoting intergenerational activities and projects would allow people to be engaged in their communities and to continue to feel useful, but also provide children with the opportunity to see active adults and remove the negative stigma of being “older.” Inclusion in a community also means including immigrants and refugees, minorities, the mentally and physically disabled and LGBT populations, as part of the conversation to meet the needs of our community.

Building community has different definitions from person to person and from focus group to focus group, but there is an understanding that intentional communities will provide a safe and caring space, not only for older adults but also for an entire community. The “geographic set-up of the county will be a continuing challenge to connect other seniors, their families, and the services they need,” so meeting the needs of communities across the different townships and pocket neighborhoods will definitely look different. Although the Department on Aging may be an easy one-stop shop for those who have easy access to email, the internet, and transportation, understanding that the needs and demands of our more rural townships are different than needs of those living in the Southern parts of Orange County will demand that we find innovative ways to encourage community engagement and include these populations as part of our Master Aging Plan.

Community Engagement Priorities

- **Promote intergenerational activities**
- **Reduce stigma of being old**

Focus Group Findings: Information Sharing

Ideally, the Department on Aging will be the “one-stop shop” for individuals seeking resources on aging in Orange County—whether they are caregivers or older adults. A major finding that emerged from gathering community perspectives across several townships is the need for individuals to have access to the information they need to help them as they age. Having structured methods of communicating and disseminating information across Orange County should be addressed throughout the development of the Master Aging Plan 2012-2017.

Using technology, such as the internet, has been both a blessing and a barrier in communicating with older adults. While many of our focus group participants heard about our focus group and the Master Aging Planning process through email and through the Senior Center listserv, it was clear that there was a significant gap in communication in the more rural townships of Orange County.

Although using email and technology may be an efficient way of reaching large populations “Listervs aren’t around [Schley] as they are in Meadowmont, and some elderly people don’t have computer. Internet isn’t the way to do it in the rural areas”, “People my age don’t email. We just don’t” [Efland-Cheeks], “There are people my age who don’t want the computer, and we need to get in touch with them” [Palmer’s Grove]. In the Northern areas of Orange County, other methods of communicating information included mailing or having flyers posted, having a telephone conversation, or having a community social network that is more reliant on personal interaction, such as help from the Sheriff’s office or participation in a church network. As a participant remarked, “Out in the country, it’s the sheriff’s office who knows where the old folks live and they stop in and check up on them...churches, granges, the American Legion serves agricultural parts of the county than the county itself.

While this disparity was heavily emphasized more often in Northern parts of the county, a recognition about the dearth of readily accessible information to older adults and their caregivers was also mentioned in Southern part of the county; there is an awareness that [Southern areas of the county] may be “overshadowing and overpowering access to knowledge and information. [People] worry about rural communities.”

As other areas of our lives continue to be more technology dependent (e.g. online banking), learning to navigate these resources may become more difficult for aging adults. While having classes to learn about these new technologies may be somewhat helpful, focus group participants mentioned having “personal advocates” and using “information-savvy individuals to spread the word [to others without computers]” and to “guide others.”

Without a focus during the Master Aging Plan process on communicating and disseminating information about resources and information to support people as they age, we risk, as a focus group participant said “leading people to fall through the cracks.”

Information Sharing Priorities

- **Email/Internet is efficient, but limited**
- **Use existing social networks in communities**

Long-term Care – Resident Experiences

Residents and staff of long-term care facilities have particular needs and concerns unique to their housing and health statuses, so the Department of Aging conducted 3 focus groups at 3 different long-term care facilities with a total of 15 participants. Participants were residents and family members of residents of these facilities.

An important theme that emerged from these decisions was how stressful the decision to place an older adult who requires increasing care into an assisted living facility. Family members spoke of the tension between the guilt of placing their loved ones into a facility, but also the reassurance that round-the-clock care provides them. Additionally, residents reported that their broader community of friends was impacted by this decision with many friends expressing the concern that they will not see their loved ones again. However, even in the most supportive communities, the responsibilities of family and friends continues in the form of providing emotional support, social interaction, transportation and more generally a window into the world outside of assisted living. One participant described this as “it’s an insurance policy to have children” when she described the role that her children continue to play in her life.

Due in part to the particular circumstances that lead a person to enter assisted living, long-term care residents articulated many needs and values which help to maintain their quality of life at a time of declining health and increasing dependence on others for day-to-day needs. Among those needs are variety of interesting activities, quality food, a responsive and respectful staff, active role in treatment decisions, information about health status and medications, transparency about treatment changes.

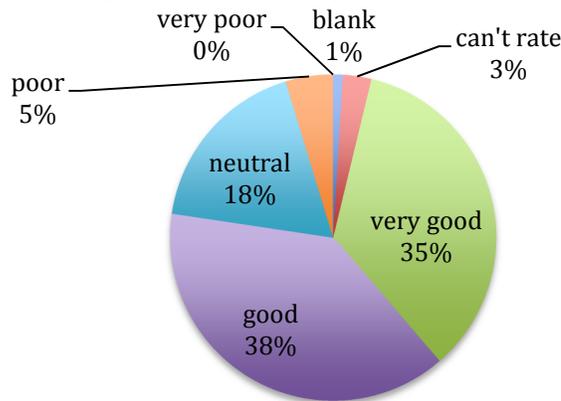
A major theme that emerged from these discussions was about concrete needs centered on the compounding losses of independence. Some residents described losses of control over their ability to leave the facility and run errands outside, their ability to manage their own finances, their treatment options, their daily choices like what to eat, and even the sleeping patterns which are interrupted for medical treatment or monitoring. At the extreme, some residents described feeling completely disempowered in their treatment decisions with no access to their primary physicians, unannounced treatment changes, no information about side effects, and no ability to choose among treatment options when such options are available.

Long-term Care – Staff Surveys

In addition to assessing the needs and concerns of residents of long-term care, we also assessed the perspectives, needs and concerns of 106 long-term care staff from 6 long-term care facilities in Orange County. The results from these findings are not meant to generalize to all long-term care staff, but rather to gain some perspective on the needs and concerns of a subset of long-term care staff in this county.

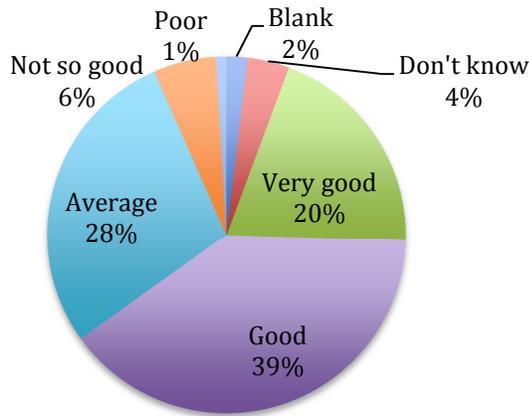
One of the most important findings of this assessment was that when asked about the quality of long-term care provided to all residents, 38% of staff described it as good and 35% of staff described it as very good. These proportions reflected in the pie chart below remained the same when staff were asked about groups of older adults with particular needs, such as those who are bed-bound, those with dementia or Alzheimer’s, those with mental illness and those in short-term rehabilitation.

How would you rate the quality of long-term care provided to all residents in general?



Among those who have worked in long-term care in another county, 15% report that Orange County long-term care is much better, 21% report that Orange County long-term care is better, and 22% report that Orange County long-term care is about the same. Only 3% reported that long-term care in this county is worse by comparison. Additionally, most respondents report that their experience working in long-term care in Orange County is very good (20%) or good (39%).

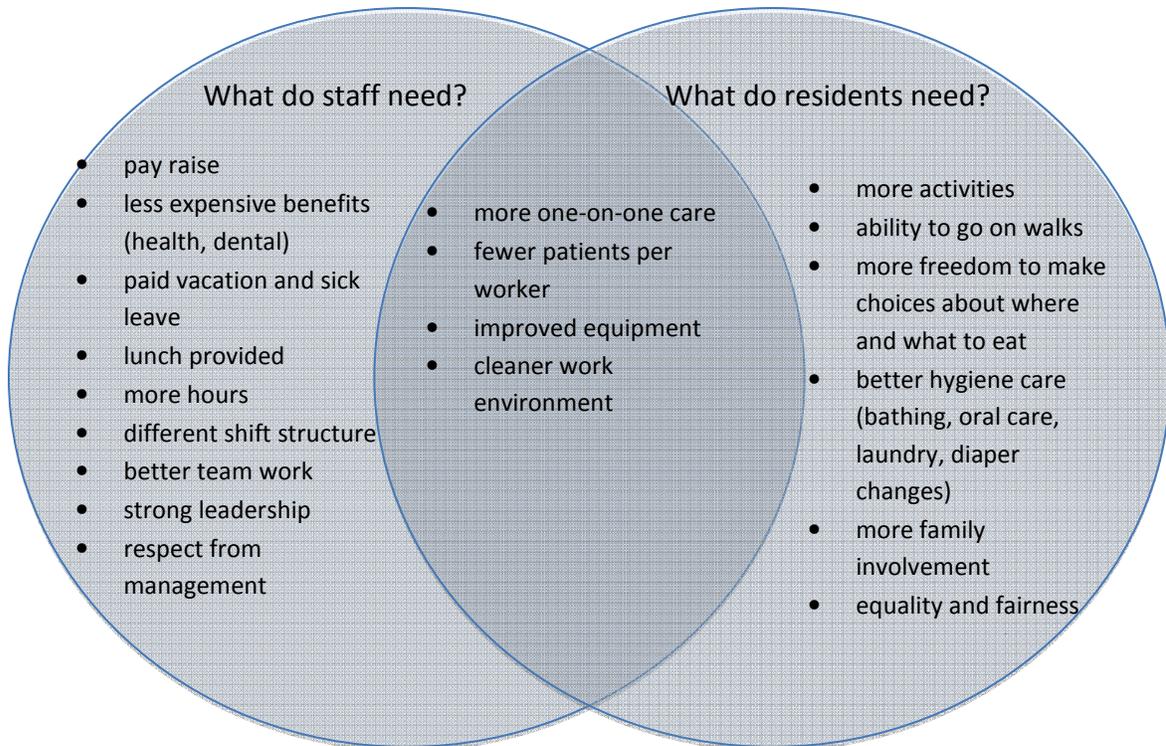
How do you rate your experience working in a long-term care facility in Orange County?



Additionally, most respondents report that they feel that their training for their job was very good (35%) or good (33%). Only 6% reported that their training was not so good and 3% reported that their training was poor.

Additionally, the majority of those surveyed have worked in long-term care for less than 5 years, with 24% reporting having worked in the field for 1-2 years and 23% reporting having worked for 2-5 years. Most of the sample (45%) reports not knowing how much longer they intend work in long-term care, with 14% reporting intending to work for another 1-2 years and 17% reporting intending to work for more than 5 years longer.

Finally, we asked staff what they needed in their work environment and what changes they would like to see made for residents, and we found considerable many areas that overlapped, as depicted below.



Conclusion

As is often the case with formative research, answering research questions raises new lines of inquiry. In September and October of 2011, even more data will be collected to contribute to a richer understanding of the needs of Orange County over the next five years. Among these activities are expanding the government readiness assessment to incorporate the perspectives of the members of the Board of County Commissioners and town government officials. The information generated from these sources will provide a more thorough grounding for the 2012-2017 Master Aging Plan.

In the coming months, the results from the Orange County Community Assessment will be distributed to key stakeholders in the 2012-2017 Master Aging Plan process, including the MAP Steering Committee, MAP Management team, and the Work Groups. Results, methods, and assessment will be made publicly available on a website and will be shared with the general public on October 5, 2011 at the Master Aging Plan Community Kick-Off.