



2013

**Needs Assessment of the Aging Population
in Frederick County, MD**

*Prepared by
JustPartners, Inc.*

Needs Assessment of the Aging Population in Frederick County, MD

Executive Summary

For Frederick County and the nation, changing demographics are creating the imperative to plan for an aging population. By 2030 the County's population aged 60+ will more than double, from about 37,000 seniors today to over 77,000 in less than two decades. The large majority of older residents want to remain in Frederick County as they age, as it is a desirable place to live. The purpose of this Needs Assessment is to analyze the current levels of services and supports for older residents and recommend what is needed in order for the County to remain supportive of seniors and their families in the years ahead.

To reach the recommendations contained in the report, the consultants worked closely with the Frederick County Department of Aging and the Commission on Aging, conducted a local survey that elicited input from 1,003 County residents, held three focus groups with service providers and other stakeholders, interviewed over 25 County officials and nonprofit or other institutional leaders, and conducted an extensive environmental scan of local, state, and national data, trends, and strategies relevant to Frederick County.

The report takes into account that the needs and expectations of subsequent cohorts of seniors (today's boomers) will not be the same as those of today's older residents. As a group they are healthier, expect to work longer, and intend to stay in their own homes as they age. Movement away from institutional care to "aging in place" in the community is considerably more cost-effective but requires the availability of critical services and supports to render this option viable and safe for seniors. In the near term, however, both the traditional expectations about aging services and supports and the emerging expectations of boomers will need to be accommodated simultaneously.

This report starts from the following assumptions: 1) Older residents are a natural resource whose talents and contributions to the life of the County are fundamental to its health and vitality; 2) Many attributes that make a community more senior-friendly enhance its livability for all ages; and 3) Government alone cannot create the community that older adults in Frederick County desire. Given these assumptions, the recommendations that are offered focus on capitalizing on the talents, time, and interests of older residents for the well-being of the whole community; prioritizing strategies to address older residents' needs that can benefit additional constituencies; and advancing public/private partnerships that complement government's role to ensure the well-being of older residents.

The **Vision** of the Needs Assessment is **to ensure that Frederick County is a senior friendly community now and for the future**. The Assessment proposes seven interrelated goals that must be met to achieve this vision:

- **Goal #1. Accessible and Affordable Housing.** *A range of affordable, accessible and supportive housing is available that meets the needs of older residents of the county to be able to age in place.*
- **Goal #2. Transportation Options.** *A variety of mobility options, including pedestrian-safe streets, makes moving around the county possible for residents of all ages and abilities.*
- **Goal #3. Long Term Services and Supports.** *Those with chronic diseases or functional limitations, and who need assistance with their health and personal care, lead more independent and healthy lives because they receive long-term services and supports in their homes and communities.*
- **Goal #4. Opportunity for Health.** *All residents, with special attention to lower-income older county residents, optimize their wellness and receive the health care they require.*
- **Goal #5. Social and Civic Engagement.** *Older residents enjoy a good quality of life through ongoing community engagement. In particular, the quality of life of all county residents is enhanced by the many volunteer activities of its older residents and their continued involvement in the social and civic life of the County.*
- **Goal #6. Economic and Workforce Development.** *The important contributions of older residents to the county's economy are recognized and the innovative entrepreneurship of, and on behalf of, older residents is encouraged.*
- **Goal #7. Communications, Outreach, and Collaboration.** *Information about services and programs is readily available and accessible in a variety of formats and venues for older residents of Frederick County, their families and caregivers, local organizations and businesses. The County's governmental units, nonprofit service providers, funders, and businesses further strengthen their collaborative efforts on behalf of Frederick's seniors.*

For each goal, the report offers a brief research-grounded context for the issue, a description of the services, supports, and opportunities that already exist, documentation of needs, and strategies for addressing the needs. While each section contains multiple, very specific recommendations, the following are the cross-cutting highlights and themes:

- ◆ **Older residents need and desire many of the services, supports, and amenities that all residents want.** These include adequate, affordable housing; convenient transportation; access to appropriate health care; and social connections. Actions the County is already taking, for example, around establishing a land trust, promoting transit-oriented

development, and incorporating human service considerations into other planning issues stand to benefit seniors, so long as their particular concerns within these issues are kept in mind. This Needs Assessment contains recommendations that are compatible with the various local strategic plans.

- ◆ **Considerable attention is given to targeted services and supports for older residents of Frederick County.** These include benefits like tax credits and taxi vouchers, as well as County support for the Department of Aging, to name a few. Combined with State and federal funds, local nonprofit efforts, and an array of volunteers, the County utilizes its current resources to good effect on behalf of the aging population. Still, needs remain, and waiting lists grow.
- ◆ **The needs of lower income, geographically isolated, and frail older residents are particularly acute.** These are the most vulnerable elders because of *the lack of* affordable housing, convenient transportation services, the necessary array of community-based supports, physicians who will accept Medicare/Medicaid and understand geriatric issues, adequate options for those with serious mental health issues, and overall case management. Residents above income eligibility thresholds for Medicaid and other means-tested supports are too often unable to pay full-cost for what they need and would benefit from sliding scale fees for services. Multiple recommendations in this report address these concerns.
- ◆ **Services and supports for the most vulnerable older residents are overwhelmed.** The Department of Aging and the larger provider community are confronted with insufficient funds even to meet the needs of today's seniors, which portends a crisis as the older population doubles. The report offers recommendations for public/private partnerships that can be the source of additional revenue streams for aging services, as well as advocacy for additional resources through State funding.
- ◆ **The provision of long-term services and supports to enable aging in one's own home opens up opportunities for economic and workforce development.** Aging is good for business! The increasing older population has considerable consumer spending power along with unmet needs. Several recommendations urge the Frederick County business community to recognize this opportunity and local educational institutions to create pipelines for the workforce that a sizeable older population requires.
- ◆ **Older residents remain an under-tapped resource for volunteer and entrepreneurial activities.** In particular, the social and civic interests of boomers can be mobilized further to

address needs of the County's older population, as well as apply their talents and time on behalf of new business creation and support for other generations, most notably children and youth. The County would be well served by greater attention to volunteer mobilization and management and the utilization of the intellectual capital that its older population possesses.

Finally, an Action Plan is offered that sequences the report's recommendations and identifies lead sectors, recognizing that it will take government, nonprofits, and the private sector together to ensure that Frederick County remains a senior-friendly community.



JustPartners, Inc.
Strengthening Capacity for Measurable Results



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities