

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES PROJECT IN PORTLAND, OREGON

Summary of Findings



Credit: Portland Oregon Visitors Association

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Context

The older population is increasing in size in Portland, the state of Oregon, the United States, and the rest of the world. Our cities and regions are vital to the support of this demographic shift through the provision of quality built environments, services, and social, cultural, and civic engagement opportunities promote healthy and active aging.

Over the next 30 years, the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area will see dramatic growth in the proportion of the population that is aged 65 and older. Although the total population will increase by 47 percent, the 65+ population will more than double, growing by over 137 percent, to comprise 17 percent of the population in 2030, compared to 10.5 percent in 2000. Fueling this increase will be the aging of the baby boomers. (Neal, M., et al.: http://www.upa.pdx.edu/IOA/documents/PSU_Age-Related_Final_Report_August_14_2006_000.pdf).

As a city and a region, changes that will enhance the quality of life, independence, and well-being of our aging population can be made. These include addressing important needs that are identified, and taking advantage of assets and resources that an older and experienced population provides. By doing this, as we conclude later in this report, we all will benefit:

“An age-friendly city is a city that is friendly for people of all ages and abilities.”

About the Study

In the late fall and early winter of 2006/07, researchers at the Institute on Aging in the School of Community Health, College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University (PSU) in Portland, Oregon were invited to collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO) on its “Age-Friendly Cities Project.” The WHO defines an age-friendly city as one that:

- Recognizes the great diversity among older persons
- Promotes older persons’ inclusion and contributions in all areas of community life
- Respects older persons’ decisions and lifestyle choices, and
- Anticipates and responds flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences

Portland was the only city in the United States to participate in the study, along with 32 other cities in 22 countries in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

The goal of the project in Portland was to identify concrete indicators of an age-friendly city and produce a practical guide to stimulate and guide advocacy, community development, and policy change to make urban communities around the world age-friendly. Each participating city’s results will be used by the WHO in its booklet, *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*, to be released on October 1, 2007. The results from each city, as well as the WHO guide, are intended to inform citizens, policy makers, businesses, and social and health service providers as they strive to make their own cities more age-friendly.

To guide the project, a local team of advisers was formed. Although the study’s methods were stipulated by the WHO protocol, the team aided in identifying study participants and tackling project logistics. To address the study’s research questions, PSU researchers conducted eight focus groups (55 total participants) with older adults (aged 60-81), informal caregivers, and service providers and businesses (public, private, and voluntary/non-profit) within the city limits of Portland. The participants were recruited primarily through the Senior Adult Learning Center at PSU and through Elders in Action, a local non-profit advocacy organization. The sample was designed to include older adults in neighborhoods of various socioeconomic levels, older adults with functional impairments, and family caregivers acting as proxies for elders who would be unable to participate in a focus group.

The questions posed in the focus groups were aimed at gaining better understanding of the everyday experiences of older adults regarding existing age-friendly features, barriers to age-friendliness, and suggestions for improvement in the following eight topic areas:

- **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**
- **Transportation**
- **Housing**
- **Respect and Social Inclusion**
- **Social Participation**
- **Communication and Information**
- **Civic Participation and Employment**
- **Community Support and Health Services**



In the section that follows, key findings are presented. In addition, examples of resources and links to websites are provided, where appropriate, to complement participants’ comments.

Key Findings

Outdoor Space and Buildings

Natural Features and Green Spaces

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Parks, trails, community gardens, and other natural features and green spaces afford locations for older adults to be active and engage in social activities; in November, 2006, voters approved a bond measure directing Metro, the regional government, to protect natural areas and lands near rivers and streams throughout the metro region, safeguard water quality, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and ensure access to nature for future generations (e.g., <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?ArticleID=16894>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Hills in certain areas of Portland are problematic for walking by some individuals; access to some trails and parks is limited to those using certain transportation modes (e.g., cars, bicycles).
- **Suggestions:** Provide new natural and green features where needed (e.g., residential neighborhoods outside of the city center) and maintain those currently available; make these areas accessible to those with physical limitations as well those using various transportation modes (e.g., bus); create more opportunities for animal (e.g., bird) and people watching; add additional recreational features to parks and open spaces, such as chess/checker boards and/or places for other outdoor activities.



“[The] outdoor spaces for me now are wonderful. [I] have access to Forest Park... I know where there are bathrooms...I just feel comfortable in and out of public and business buildings in the city”

– Older Adult



Pedestrian Infrastructure

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Sidewalks, curb cuts, street lighting, benches, and traffic calming devices are well developed in certain areas of the city and provide some older adults with preferred routes to services and activities; the Portland Department of Transportation’s (PDOT) Sidewalk Program and Maintenance Bureau develop and maintain sidewalks, curbs, and corners according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and accept recommendations for needed improvements (tel: 503.823.1711); the Safe Routes to Senior Centers program is underway in PDOT (<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=99357>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** There is limited funding for development and maintenance of pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, benches); areas of the city (e.g., southwest hills) have underdeveloped or insufficient pedestrian amenities.
- **Suggestions:** Improve pedestrian infrastructure; increase awareness of the city’s PDOT’s maintenance office; create safe routes to common destinations (e.g., community centers, libraries).

“There’s no reason to take my mother [downtown] again...it would be harder to get her around, she’d have to walk, there would be no immediate parking to the stores...when I do take her out, we go to the mall.” – Caregiver

Urban Form

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Some older adults prefer the more dense, central locations that exist in Portland (e.g., pedestrian and transit-oriented developments), as they are able to easily reach services, desired destinations, etc.; other older adults prefer less dense, less hectic, more peripheral locations (e.g., suburban areas) that are accessible by automobile.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Living in an area that does not match one’s needs or desires (e.g., living in a low-density suburb without a car) is problematic for some older adults and those with disabilities, as are places with a lot of activity and/or where considerable construction is underway (e.g., downtown).
- **Suggestions:** Educate older adults who may be relocating about the best neighborhoods and housing units to suit their needs and desires (e.g., non-driving older adults should consider areas that are walkable and pedestrian friendly); allow for and promote a mix of uses in buildings and neighborhoods through zoning codes and planning tools (e.g., plan districts and comprehensive plans) that provide access to necessary services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.; provide multiple transportation options in neighborhoods.



Buildings

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** New developments and redevelopments, including businesses and housing developments, are required to build or remodel buildings, parking lots, etc. according to ADA standards; some buildings, such as malls and larger retail stores, are accessible with good amenities (e.g., toilets, benches, rest areas, carts designed for those with impairments); a local advocacy organization, Elders in Action, provides Elder Friendly® business certification (<http://eldersinaction.org/whatwedo/elderfriendly/>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Most new developments meet only minimum ADA requirements, rather than designing for a wide population of individuals in a universal fashion; certain buildings lack accessible features for older adults and those with disabilities (e.g., ramps, accessible bathrooms); many businesses and houses lack visible street numbers.
- **Suggestions:** Go beyond the ADA regulations toward universal design standards (e.g., elder-friendly certified businesses, level entries or ramps, first-floor bathrooms); require easily visible street numbers on businesses and houses.



(Wheelchair Lift)

General Outdoor Spaces

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Many older adults feel safe and secure in the outdoor spaces of Portland.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Some older adults report a lack of a sense of physical safety and security in some areas in the city (e.g., downtown, certain light rail stops).
- **Suggestions:** None offered.

Transportation

“I give every new person [in my building] a ticket, tell them to get on the bus and ride the entire route, to see what they could do, where they could get off... it is a very convenient bus.” – Older Adult

Public Transportation System

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** TriMet, Portland’s public transportation system (<http://www.trimet.org/>), offers good general service provision for older adults and those with disabilities, including: light rail trains, buses, and special services for persons with disabilities and for low-income individuals with medical needs; there are brochures that detail transportation options for older adults and those with disabilities; RideWise, a collaborative effort between TriMet and the non-profit organization Ride Connection (<http://www.rideconnection.org/services/RideWise.htm>), assists older adults and people with disabilities to learn how to travel independently and safely using transit; public transit is affordable and includes a “fareless” zone in and around downtown Portland; transit is accessible for those with disabilities.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Some older adults experience discomfort on public transportation due to riders who are disrespectful or who do not yield seats designated as priority for older adults or those with disabilities; transit is not easily accessible for some older adults, especially in areas away from the central city; there are long waits for transit, especially at night; there is a lack of transit at certain times, especially nights and weekends; some people experience difficulty in signing up for TriMet’s LIFT (special transportation) program (<http://www.trimet.org/lift/index.htm>); some drivers of public transportation seem unaware of the needs of older adults and those with disabilities; on trains and at transit stops, crime and fear of crime deter older adults from using transit or feeling safe and secure on board; although there is an accessible light rail car, it is never in the same location, so riders cannot position themselves appropriately in advance.
- **Suggestions:** Place an accessible light rail car in the same location for those with disabilities; further educate public transit drivers about older adults and those with disabilities (e.g., cognitive impairments); provide more night and weekend transit service; give new residents of an area a free transit ticket and suggest exploring a full bus, light rail or streetcar line; educate older adults on how to use public transit; place security officers on light rail cars; design new transit stops so that illegal activities cannot be shielded from the view of others.



*“I think if you live next to the [public transportation] system... and you’re going someplace that’s next to it, you can’t beat it... for \$23 you can do that all month long.
- Older Adult*

Private Transportation (Driving)

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Driving a private vehicle is a desired mode of transportation due to convenience, enjoyment, and familiarity.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Heavy traffic is a barrier, as are: rude and inconsiderate drivers; a lack of parking; construction delays and detours; insufficient and inadequate signage; trouble giving up driving; and the difficulty of maintaining driving skills as one ages.
- **Suggestions:** Older adults should attend AARP Driver Safety classes (http://www.aarp.org/families/driver_safety/) or similar programs; multiple modes of transportation and training in how to use them should be available.

Alternative Motorized Vehicles

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Portland International Airport uses small motorized carts to transport those with mobility needs.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Certain facilities, especially larger campus-type facilities (e.g., hospitals) are difficult to negotiate for those with physical limitations.
- **Suggestions:** Consider using alternative motorized vehicles (e.g., golf carts, electric passenger carts) for transportation at larger facilities that serve older adults.

Parking for Private Vehicles

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Ample and accessible and free parking exists in many shopping centers and malls, especially outside of the city center; central city parking spaces designated for longer than 30 minutes are free and available with no time limit to anyone with a Disabled Parking license plate or permit; “Park & Ride” locations provide good access to public transportation and services that are located nearby transit lines.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Parking is expensive or unavailable in the city center; parking that does not provide any protection from weather is a barrier; there are not enough “Park & Ride” options; there is a lack of parking near recreational areas (e.g., trails); there are insufficient valet services.
- **Suggestions:** For caregivers, older adults, and persons with disabilities, offer valet parking at hospitals and at public events; have “honored citizen” parking, rather than disabled or handicapped parking; provide covered walkways between parking lots and buildings to protect people from inclement weather; have awnings over passenger drop-offs at hospitals, health centers, and other facilities; provide more “Park & Rides” and parking near accessible recreational locations.



Specialized Transportation Services

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Ride Connection (<http://www.rideconnection.org/>), a non-profit organization, assists in the coordination and provision of special transportation services, including information, assistance, and training on how to use alternative modes of transportation.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Taxis are scarce or unavailable during certain times of the day and night (e.g., after arts and cultural events); some older adults find having a myriad of transportation options overwhelming and difficult to negotiate.
- **Suggestions:** Create a special transportation cooperative that allows individuals to pre-pay for service; consider and encourage the development of neighborhood cooperatives that focus on older adults and those with disabilities; give taxi companies a list of local arts and cultural events so that they can provide timely service; increase awareness of current transportation programs that provide age-friendly transportation services, including travel training.



Bicycling

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Bicycling options exist; PDOT has introduced a Senior Cyclist Program for new and experienced bicyclists (<http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?a=bffbgh&c=dheab>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Bicyclists are a concern for some older pedestrians and drivers.
- **Suggestions:** Create additional lanes for bicycling that are separated from cars; consider adding more bicycling trails that are wide enough for three-wheeled bicycles.

Pedestrian Environments

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Pedestrian-friendly streets and neighborhoods (e.g., well lit areas, wide sidewalks, curb cuts, well marked crossings, benches for resting) foster a sense of safety and provide more accessibility for older adults; PDOT's Safe Routes to School program helps create better walking environments for older adults, too (<http://www.trans.ci.portland.or.us/SafeRoutes/>), as does its Safe Routes to Senior Centers; Metro has handbooks which provide guidance on the creation of safe and healthy streets (<http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?ArticleID=235>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Construction areas and hectic urban spaces (e.g., downtown) are undesirable destinations for some older adults; automobile-dominated environments are difficult to negotiate for some older adults and those with disabilities.
- **Suggestions:** Continue adding pedestrian islands and traffic-calming devices such as curb extensions, and roundabouts; create special car-free zones.



Housing

Affordability

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Programs are available to help older individuals find (e.g., <http://www.housingconnections.org/>) and obtain (e.g., <http://www.nwpilotproject.org/>) quality affordable housing; having affordable housing in the city is a goal for some leaders and agencies in Portland (e.g., City of Portland: <http://www.portlandonline.com/bhcd/index.cfm?c=dabec>; Metro: <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?articleid=417>; Portland Development Commission: http://www.pdc.us/pubs/inv_detail.asp?id=670&ty=48).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** The city lacks affordable housing; what is considered affordable by policy makers is not viewed as such by some older adults; programs for rent assistance/subsidy are limited, and there are long wait lists for available units; apartment-to-condominium conversions reduce the available rental housing stock; neighborhood gentrification can reduce social networks and the ability to find assistance from long-standing neighbors; high property values and taxes force some to move out of the city; the cost of housing for those who need assistance with activities of daily living (e.g., adult foster homes, assisted living facilities) is very high.

- **Suggestions:** Create additional affordable housing for older adults and those with disabilities; limit property tax increases for those with fixed incomes; assist older adults with fixed and restricted incomes who are experiencing “condo conversions” (e.g., provide ample time for relocation, provide relocation assistance, including help with moving expenses); ensure that housing near concentrated services is affordable for older adults who have restricted incomes.

Available Housing Options

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Co-housing developments, which can be described as intentional communities of homes that are managed by residents and that foster interaction with neighbors, exist in parts of Portland (e.g., Trillium Hollow: <http://trilliumhollow.org/>). These developments, which have shared facilities and involve consensus decision making, are desirable housing options for some older adults; more traditional intergenerational housing options also exist (e.g., Center Commons: <http://www.huduser.org/research/AIA-2001.html>); the City of Portland allows the construction and use of accessory dwelling units (ADUs or “granny flats”) which provide options for older adults to live in more affordable housing or to increase their income by renting out such units (e.g., <http://www.portlandonline.com/bds/index.cfm?c=dgghg>); some realtors are certified as “Senior Real Estate Specialists” and assist older adults in finding housing that will allow them to age independently (e.g., <http://www.generationscounseling.com/resourcepagefora.html>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** There is a lack of knowledge about available quality housing that will allow an older adult to age in place successfully; there is only limited availability of federally subsidized housing (i.e., Sections 202 and 811: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/progdesc/eld202.cfm>) and housing assistance (i.e., Section 8: <http://www.hapdx.org/resident/sc8intro.html>).
- **Suggestions:** Provide a continuum of housing and care options that allow individuals to age in place within their neighborhood; explore the development and implementation of multigenerational and co-housing/cooperative housing environments that cut costs, offer shared facilities (e.g., community and dining rooms), and foster a sense of community, but recognize that these options will appeal to only some older adults; promote the current zoning allowance of ADUs as a viable and affordable option for older adults or for their caregivers or family, or for renting out as a source of additional income; explore the possibility of a public program to facilitate the development of quality and appropriate ADUs in Portland; educate older home buyers concerning how best to age in place (e.g., find housing with services and transit nearby); develop an understanding of older adults’ needs and preferences among realtors and developers.

Proximity to Services

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Some housing in Portland is located very near to services and social activities; housing located near transit lines affords older adults easier access to services; downtown Portland offers free public transportation and a wealth of services and activities for older adults; some centers and corridors in Portland provide for a range of transportation options, a variety of businesses, housing opportunities, and urban amenities), and are especially beneficial for older adults (see Metro’s 2040 plan: <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm?articleid=231>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Some housing in suburban and/or low-density areas is located far from public transportation options and important services used by older adults; some areas in Portland are designed for automobile access and limit the ability of older adults who do not drive to access services; some commercial and residential areas lack important businesses and services (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies).

- **Suggestions:** Locate new age-specific developments (e.g., assisted living, co-housing) near services (e.g., grocery stores, parks, public transit options); ensure developments near planned centers and corridors are accessible, available, and affordable to older adults; develop links between programs for children and older adults (e.g., safe routes to schools/community centers); locate key services (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies) in areas where there are large or growing populations of older adults; co-locate more services for older adults.

Housing Design, Amenities, and Accessibility

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Some housing (e.g., single story) exists that facilitates aging in place; easy access to green spaces and gardening spaces is available in some units; some older adults feel that having multiple levels in housing (e.g., two stories) helps maintain physical well-being, as stairs must be climbed; some redevelopment and remodeling projects create accessible housing for older adults; many assisted living facilities and other care settings provide quality options for older adults to age with dignity; there are age-specific housing options that provide desirable living environments.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Higher density and infill developments are often built with stairs and multiple levels that make aging in place difficult and do not take older adults or those with functional impairments into consideration during design and development; there is a lack of housing that is appropriate for those with dementia or other cognitive disorders; there is a lack of housing that allows older adults or those with disabilities to age in place; there is little easily adaptable housing or housing that is universally designed (http://www.aarp.org/families/home_design/universaldesign/a2004-03-23-what_is_univdesign.html); limited housing options are available that allow pets to live with residents.
- **Suggestions:** Develop housing with green spaces, gardening areas, and balconies; allow pets in housing for older adults; for new developments, consider design possibilities to make them more accessible to an aging population (e.g., elevators in smaller buildings, town homes with accessible ground floor units); install higher toilets, higher electrical outlets, and door levers instead of handles for those with physical and cognitive disabilities; consider allowing accessibility improvements made by renters in housing to remain rather than requiring the unit to be restored to its original condition; design apartments and other shared housing for older adults to have windows facing hallways to foster a sense of community and safety; change building codes to require better accessibility in all homes; consider designing new housing to accommodate not only residents but also visitors with disabilities; develop an adequate supply of housing that has level entries (or ramps), first-floor bathrooms, rocker light switches, and wide hallways and doorways for wheelchair entry; provide seating and waiting areas outside of housing; develop single-level housing or multi-level housing with elevators or ground floor units;



(Two-story townhouse without level entry)

“A reporter [called] me and [told] me he was writing an article about new homes in the Portland area - brand new construction built to be accessible - and I laughed and said it would be a very short article.” – Professional Designer

develop flexible housing that can be easily converted into multiple dwellings and/or remodeled to add accessible features (e.g., grab bars); reduce glare on floors (e.g., avoid direct light shining on floor, use blinds and dimmers); eliminate dramatic changes in floor color; remodel housing so that it appears similar to prior living arrangements to aid those with cognitive impairment; install radiant heating in floors; place locks on doors and cabinets (such as those with cleaning supplies and install security systems and/or other technologies to help keep safe individuals with cognitive impairments.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Language, Recognition, and Consultation

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Those aged 65 and older, Medicare members and persons with disabilities are recognized as “Honored Citizens” by TriMet (Portland’s regional transportation provider) and other agencies; some organizations publicly recognize the contributions of older adults; some organizations and agencies actively seek input from older adults (e.g., the Mayor’s office consulted Elders in Action for input concerning hopes and ideas for the future of Portland: <http://www.visionpdx.com/>; input was also sought for the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for the tri-county Portland Metro Area: http://www.trimet.org/pdfs/publications/Coordinated_Human_Services_Transportation_Plan.pdf).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Service providers and older adults feel that some language used in the community establishes negative images of aging (e.g., “long-term care,” “anti-aging”); some older adults feel that their contributions to the community are not adequately appreciated or recognized; some older adults feel that their input is not sought out often enough from organizations and agencies in the community.
- **Suggestions:** Use language such as “honored citizen” rather than “old people,” “elderly” to refer to older adults; use the term “long-term living” rather than “long-term care;” publicly recognize the contributions of older adults; encourage more organizations and agencies to consult and listen to the advice of older adults.

Fare Category	Price
Adult • All Zones	\$2.05
Adult • 1 or 2 Zones	\$1.75
Honored Citizen 65+, Medicare or disability	\$.85
Youth/Student 7-17 or high school/GED	\$1.40

Education

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** There are many opportunities for education in the city; the Senior Adult Learning Center in the Institute on Aging at Portland State University (<http://web.pdx.edu/~psu01435/salc.html>) provides classes tuition-free to adults aged 65+; Portland Community College offers discounts on degree and non-degree classes for those aged 62+ (<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/tuition-fees/>); various organizations provide community and professional education regarding aging, caregiving, and other important topics that pertain to older adults (e.g., Elders in Action: http://www.eldersaction.org/whatwedo/community_education.php; the Institute on Aging at Portland State University: <http://www.upa.pdx.edu/IOA>; the Oregon Geriatric Education Center: <http://www.upa.pdx.edu/OGEC>; the Oregon Gerontological Association: <http://www.oregongero.org>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Education regarding the process of aging throughout the life course is not as widely available as it should be.
- **Suggestions:** Educate those of all ages, including service providers, businesses, caregivers, etc., about the process of aging and the needs, assets, and contributions of older adults and those with disabilities, and debunk the myths and stereotypes about aging.

Intergenerational Events and Activities

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Intergenerational activities are promoted by some agencies in Portland (e.g., Neighborhood House: <http://www.nhweb.org/programs/>; Portland Parks and Recreation: http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=djidd#cid_93132).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Events such as concerts, movies, public hearings, and cultural activities often have no accessible seating or assistive devices (e.g., hearing, vision).
- **Suggestions:** Continue to support intergenerational interaction and activities; designate preferred seating arrangements for frail older adults and those with disabilities; ensure that public meetings have proper equipment for those with functional impairments (e.g., adequate sound systems).

Transportation

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Public and non-profit transportation providers such as TriMet and Ride Connection (i.e., RideWise) train vehicle operators to understand the special needs of older adults and those with disabilities; older adults feel that most public transit patrons are respectful and courteous.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Some older adults feel that some patrons do not demonstrate respect, courtesy, or politeness while on public transportation (many mentioned younger riders being the biggest problem); some older adults feel that it is disrespectful that some riders on light rail trains do not pay for their trips.
- **Suggestions:** Have public transit operators or security guards enforce and/or announce “honored citizens” seating arrangements; consider security on light rail trains and enforcing payments for riders outside of “Fareless Square” (the free public transit zone in the central city).



Social Participation

Educational Activities

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Some colleges and universities offer free classes for those aged 65+ (e.g., the Senior Adult Learning Center at the Institute on Aging at Portland State University: <http://web.pdx.edu/~psu01435/salc.html>) or discounts on degree and non-degree classes for those 62+ (e.g., Portland Community College: <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/tuition-fees/>); various other non-academic educational opportunities exist in Portland for older adults as well (e.g., OASIS (<http://www.oasisnet.org/portland/>) and Life by Design Northwest, which is a partnership among nine major institutions in Portland to support people contemplating retirement and older adults by providing opportunities for in-depth assessment and life planning, lifelong learning, and civic engagement (<http://www.lifebydesignnw.org/aboutus.php/>)).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Older adults who are better educated, more secure financially, or who live near educational institutions and facilities use these services most often.
- **Suggestions:** Inform all older adults about the many educational opportunities that exist in the city.

Physical Activity

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Portland has many programs and opportunities for older adults to engage in physical activity (e.g., Portland Parks and Recreation; the YMCA, which offers programs for people with Parkinson’s Disease: <http://www.metro-ymca.org/parkinsonsprogram.html>) (also see the Outdoor Spaces section of this report); parks, trails, public spaces, malls, and other areas of the city offer locations for physical activity; existing programs are relatively affordable.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Rainy and cold weather for several months of the year can deter some older adults from outdoor physical activity.
- **Suggestions:** Encourage physical activity among individuals of all ages, through the funding of additional demonstration programs (e.g., the ABLE program at Terwilliger Plaza: <http://www.agingblueprint.org/MiniGrants/TPgrant.cfm>) and through creating walkable and bikeable communities, as these help to maintain physical well-being as well as facilitate social participation.

Engagement in Various Activities

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Neighbors provide support and opportunities for engagement in some communities; there are many cultural opportunities and activities available in Portland neighborhoods; many activities are affordable and located conveniently; adult day services provide caregivers with the opportunity for social interaction and a break from caregiving responsibilities (e.g., Volunteers of America: <http://www.voaor.org/service/senior.html>); there are many places for dining out in Portland, which can be a positive social experience for older adults and their caregivers as well.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Dining out with individuals who have cognitive impairments is seen as difficult for some caregivers.
- **Suggestions:** Open more community centers or public meeting locations in areas where many older adults live; encourage more multicultural activities within neighborhoods; service providers suggest creating vibrant centers that fall in line with Portland’s current plan for higher density and compact urban development that fosters social interaction (e.g., through creation of additional recreational space, enhanced access to convenient services, housing features that increase social contact).

“[My mom] really appreciated coming up here in my old neighborhood... [there are] a lot of people walking their dogs, so it [is] entertainment for her, so she really [enjoys] that.”

– Caregiver

Animals and Pets

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Older adults and caregivers feel that opportunities to interact with people and their pets are available in Portland, as are places to view and enjoy wildlife; some establishments allow pets inside (e.g., the Lucky Labrador: <http://www.luckylab.com/>); some care providers recognize the importance of animals in the lives of older adults, and some facilities have “pet therapy” animals.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Many housing units and most commercial establishments do not allow pets inside their buildings.
- **Suggestions:** Allow pets and animals in more residential housing units; encourage the use of service and therapy animals in care facilities and in social programming with older adults and individuals with disabilities.



“Most of my activities revolve around the church...there’s something going on at the church every day of the week... because [my aunt] was so active in working with the church and church activities, I know that’s where she likes to go because she lightens up; she turns into a different person.”
- Caregiver



Religion and Spirituality

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Many religious and spiritual opportunities exist throughout Portland.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Some older adults feel that Portland is not a very religious city.
- **Suggestions:** For people who are caring for individuals with cognitive impairment, attend familiar events such as church services with the elder; explore alternative spiritual endeavors (e.g., Garden Partners: http://www.gardenpartners.org/who_we_are/our_story.html).

Communication and Information

Multnomah County Aging and Disability Services Helpline (503.988.3646)

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** The county’s telephone hotline, the Helpline, is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides callers access to “a real, live person” for information about services for older adults; interpretation service in many languages is offered as part of the Helpline.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** There is a lack of knowledge and use of the Helpline by some older adults.
- **Suggestions:** Continue operating the Helpline, and educate older adults about its existence and utility.

Internet Communication and Information

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** A vast amount of information is available on the internet (e.g., Network of Care: <http://oregon.networkofcare.org/>; Elders in Action: <http://www.eldersaction.org/>); internet access is available at public institutions such as universities and libraries; classes are available on how to use the internet and computers (e.g., at Multnomah County Library).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** There is a lack of knowledge and understanding of technology such as computers and the internet on the part of some older adults; not all older adults have access at home to a computer and/or the internet.
- **Suggestions:** Create a comprehensive information website for older adults that is easily navigable; have older adults teach their peers how to use computers; ensure that information is distributed in ways other than just electronically, as not all older adults use computers and the internet.

Agencies and Organizations that Provide Information and Programs for Older Adults

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Public institutions such as the libraries, Multnomah County Aging and Disability Services, and Portland Parks and Recreation provide information pertaining to older adults; there are radio and television programs geared toward older adults (e.g., Oregon Public Broadcasting and Senior Showcase, which is a local cable television show where older adults produce their own programs on lifestyles, hobbies, issues, entertainment, and information); TriMet has telephone and internet transportation planning information (tel. 503.238.7433; <http://www.trimet.org/>) and Senior and Disabled Citizen Information (tel. 503.962.2455); Ride Connection coordinates available transportation services and provides education and information for riders of public and special transit.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** There is no central clearinghouse for print information; some older adults feel there is a general lack of access to services and information.
- **Suggestions:** Create a central clearinghouse for information (e.g., in local newspapers, on a website, at a grocery store); encourage people to use the public library to access information, including via the internet; create and distribute a local calendar of senior events at key locations (e.g., grocery stores, community centers).



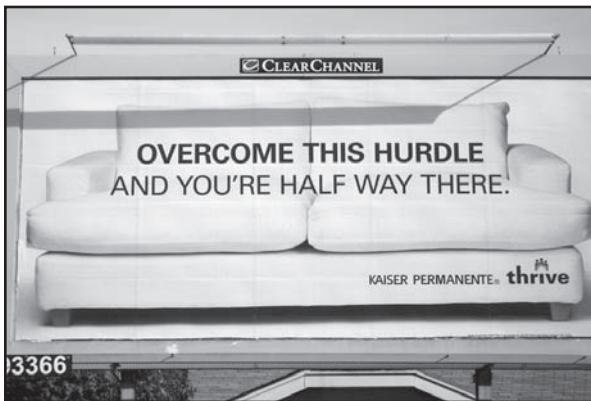
Civic Participation and Employment

Volunteer Opportunities/Civic Engagement

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Several organizations, such as Elders in Action (<http://www.eldersaction.org/>) and Life by Design Northwest (<http://www.lifebydesignnw.org/aboutus.php/>) via Hands-On Portland (<http://www.handsonportland.org/>), have a number of ways for older adults to become civically engaged, such as through volunteer work that focuses on personal advocacy (e.g., preventing ID theft), community education (e.g., accessing public transportation); elder-friendly business/web evaluation, fundraising, getting involved in a committee that provides advice, direction, and advocacy for issues pertaining to older adults to local policy makers, volunteering with local non-profit organizations; there are opportunities to be engaged in volunteer activities through religious organizations; there are volunteer opportunities that allow for flexibility in schedules and commitments.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Volunteer opportunities for those with cognitive impairments are limited; some older adults lack motivation or access to information about volunteer opportunities, especially lower-income older adults; often the same people are involved in many of the volunteer activities; volunteer opportunities that are rigid in their schedules and time requirements are not as desirable; some feel age discrimination is present in volunteer opportunities.
- **Suggestions:** Involve older adults who are not typically engaged in volunteer activities (e.g., those with lower incomes, less education); develop volunteer opportunities for those with physical and cognitive impairments.

Employment Opportunities

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Several companies in Portland employ and value the contributions of older adults (e.g., New Seasons Market: <http://www.newseasonsmarket.com/>), offer job placement services for older adults (e.g., Seniors Make Sense: tel. 503-533-2768) and persons with disabilities (e.g., Employed Persons with Disabilities: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/spw/pd/employ/empserv.shtml#epd>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Age discrimination is seen as a barrier by some older adults, caregivers, and service providers; employment options for older adults are limited; the lack of computer skills on the part of some older adults is a barrier to employment; jobs that lack schedule flexibility are problematic.
- **Suggestions:** Educate employers concerning the benefits of hiring older adults.



“How do we preserve and [enhance] an individual’s assets as they age...we’ve talked about prevention forever, but I’d like to think we’re beginning to really take it seriously... I think both [older adults and health care providers] benefit if we can really focus on prevention.”

– Service Provider

Community Support and Health Services

Health Services

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** Some older adults feel that Portland offers quality health services (e.g., Oregon Health and Science University: <http://www.ohsu.edu/>) and a range of alternative health care options for older adults (e.g., National College of Natural Medicine: <http://www.ncnm.edu/>); some feel insurance plans benefit older adults (e.g., Providence ElderPlace: http://www.providence.org/Long_Term_Care/Elderplace/default.htm; Oregon Health Plan: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/healthplan/>); preventive services are offered (e.g., Kaiser Permanente: <http://members.kaiserpermanente.org/kpweb/entryPage.do?cfe=032>).
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** There is a lack of affordable health care; there is a lack of physicians and dentists with adequate training in geriatrics; some health care provided is of poor quality; acute care services are more available than preventative services; there is poor access to health care; some feel there is a lack of oversight of nursing and assisted living facilities; some older adults lack health insurance.
- **Suggestions:** Support the development of universal health care; train more doctors, dentists, and health care professional in geriatrics; develop a health care system that strives for a balance between preventive and acute care services for people of all ages.

Community-Based Social Services

- **Age-friendly feature(s):** A wide range of public and private non-profit community services is available (e.g., Volunteers of America: <http://www.voa.org/>; Alzheimer's Association: <http://www.alz.org/oregon/>; Goodwill Industries: http://www.meetgoodwill.com/testim_home.html; see Network of Care for many others: <http://networkofcare.org/home.cfm>); there are services that assist older adults to remain living in their communities, such as Oregon Project Independence (http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/ads/ads_services.shtml) and Loaves and Fishes' Meals-on-Wheels (<http://www.loavesandfishesonline.org/>); there are community organizations that provide personal advocates who speak with health care providers (e.g., Elders in Action: <http://eldersinaction.org/whatwedo/advocate.php>); service providers are beginning to co-locate services; neighbors and others in the community offer assistance with caregiving and health-related needs.
- **Barrier(s) to age-friendliness:** Some individuals lack knowledge or information about available programs; there have been large cutbacks in the funding of social and health services; there is a lack of adequate staffing and a lack of trained providers; regulations that require excessive paperwork to be completed by staff pose barriers to service; income and age eligibility requirements limit access.
- **Suggestions:** Encourage the co-location of various services; form partnerships between organizations to enhance available funding, deliver more efficient and effective services, and increase the responsiveness of services (e.g., culturally-appropriate meals); provide additional funding for programs that deliver quality services to older adults and people with disabilities; train staff and service providers on the needs of older adults and people with disabilities; reduce paperwork and bureaucracy in the service delivery system; consider needs-based rather than age- or income-based service delivery.



Conclusion

These findings emerged from a series of focus groups convened with older adults, family caregivers of older adults, and providers of services in the public, private, and voluntary/non-profit sectors. Participants identified important needs of older adults, as well as valuable assets that this population possesses, and suggestions for changes were made, either directly by participants or extrapolated from participants' comments (full report available at: <http://www.upa.pdx.edu/IOA/>).

It is clear that Portland currently has many age-friendly features, such as its numerous green spaces and natural features, its transportation system, and a wealth of services, as well as activities in which older adults can participate. At the same time, there is room for improvement. Inequities exist in regard to access to affordable housing, services, and health care.

This project does not represent the first effort to make Portland a better place to live for older adults. Indeed, service providers and advocates within the city and region have been working toward this end for a long time and with considerable success. The findings from this study help both to highlight some of these successes and to signal areas needing improvement. The results serve as a call to action to all of us - public officials, businesses, voluntary organizations, providers of senior and health services, older adults themselves, citizens of all ages. Preparing for our increasingly older population will benefit us all, and the time to begin is now: *An age-friendly city is a city that is friendly for people of all ages and abilities.*

Additional Resources Regarding Livable Communities

Resources from AARP (order from www.aarp.org/research/)

- A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging (D18316)
- Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide (D18311)
- Home Modification (D18524)
- Universal Design and Home Modification (D16691)
- Home Made Money: A Consumers Guide to Reverse Mortgage (D12894)
- Your Home and Community: Are they Ready for You (D18566)
- Beyond 50: Livable Communities Quiz - www.aarp.org/beyond50
- Community Exchange is AARP's new web area devoted to housing and mobility issues and to living the richest and fullest lives we can live - <http://communityexchange.aarp.org/>
- AARP Bulletin - <http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/> Check out the 9/07 issue on StreetSmart
- AARP Magazine - <http://www.aarpmagazine.org> Check out the Location Scout and the 9/07 issue that features an article on 5 Great Places to Live (and Retire).

Northwest Initiatives

- Lake Oswego 50+ Dialogue Report - www.ci.oswego.or.us/acc/news.htm
- Elders in Action Elder Friendly Business Certification - www.eldersinaction.org/whatwedo/elderfriendly
- Housing Authority of Portland; New Columbia - www.hapdx.org/newcolumbia/index.html
- Clark County Initiatives - www.clarkcommunitychoices.org/ and www.stepstohealthierclarkco.org/

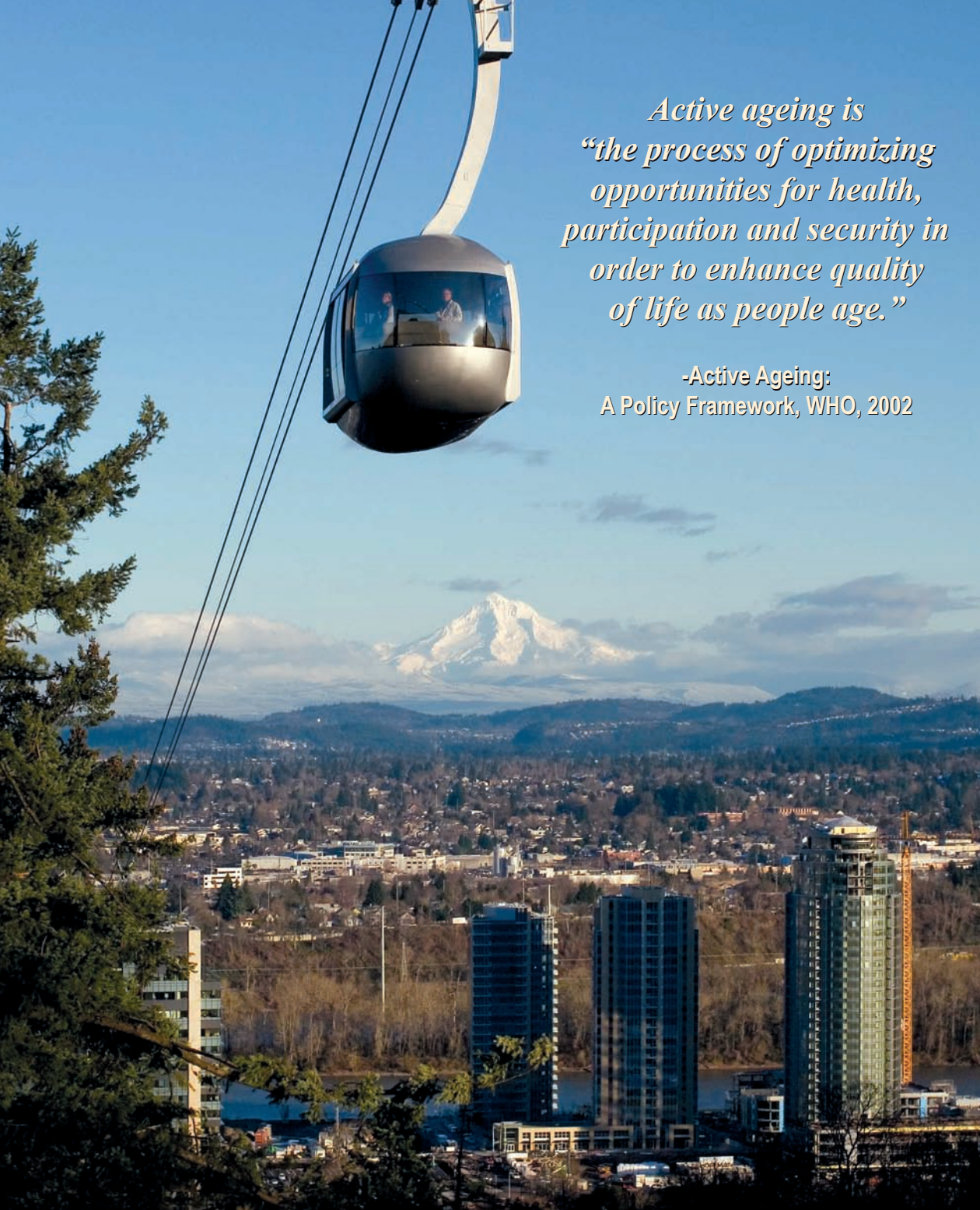
Other Regional Initiatives

- Beacon Hill - www.beaconhillonline.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi
- Traverse City, MI - www.tlcsurvey.org/
- Atlanta, GA - www.atlantaregional.com/cps/rde/xchg/arc/hs.xsl/467_ENU_HTML.htm and <http://dp06lcc.d-p.com/>
- Chicago HOME - www.homeseniors.org/inter/
- Georgia (Easy Home Living) - www.easylivinghome.org
- Burlington Livability Project - www.snellingcenter.org/filemanager/download/5881



Additional National Resources:

- **NeighborWorks** - www.nw.org/network/comstrat/agingInPlace/nwresources.asp
- **Partners for Livable Communities** - www.livable.com/
- **Aging in Place Initiative** - www.aginginplaceinitiative.org
- **Coalition for Livable Future** - www.cfuture.org/
- **Viable Futures Toolkit** - www.viablefuturestoolkit.org
- **Walkable Communities** - www.walkable.org
- **Complete Streets** - www.completestreets.org/
- **US EPA Active for Life Initiative** - www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/lnaa/index.htm
- **Civic Ventures** - www.civicventures.org/
- **The AdvantAge Initiative** - www.vnsny.org/advantage/
- **Center for Civic Partnership** - www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/home/Aging_Brief_Summary.htm
- **Easter Seals Project ACTION** - <http://projectaction.easterseals.com>
- **Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations** - www.ampo.org/



*Active ageing is
“the process of optimizing
opportunities for health,
participation and security in
order to enhance quality
of life as people age.”*

*-Active Ageing:
A Policy Framework, WHO, 2002*

Credit: Tim Jewett

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