

MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON AGING RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of these Recommendations is to focus resources on prudent investments that result in social and economic benefits for seniors in our community. By investing intelligently and utilizing the newest technologies, we can avoid costly interventions and leverage existing resources.

The recommended strategies focus on fostering intergenerational interaction and creating Complete Communities to support seniors in using their skills to contribute to society, while providing adequate supports to help them age with dignity.

The Recommendations are divided into *Community Goals* and *Goals for the City of Austin*. All these recommendations and a list of *other recommended strategies* are included in the full Task Force Report.

Community Goals

Goal 1 Focus on *Healthy Living*

Good health enables seniors to thrive and to continue contributing to their communities. An investment in affordable, accessible, and holistic care in Central Texas will build the foundation for a vibrant and productive senior community.

Strategies

1.1 Create a Care Transitions Coalition

A Care Transitions Coalition should be created to prevent unnecessary hospitalization and to reduce the risk of re-admissions. The coalition should set transitions standards; combine public, private and non-profit resources; and determine best practices for increased quality of transitional care:

- Discharge planning
- Family member involvement
- Available community-resources
- Patient education
- Staffing care transitions initiatives

1.2 Create Alliance to Better Integrate Aging and Mental Health Services

Senior mental health includes a focus on late-life depression, suicide prevention, substance abuse and misidentifying mental health symptoms, such as dementia. A collaboration could:

- Convene aging services and mental health providers
- Coordinate dementia education efforts for citizens and providers
- Promote career pathways in geriatric mental health, including geriatric psychiatry fellowships and student internships

- 1.3 **Develop a Health Outreach Program in Low-Income Neighborhoods**
Outreach would include preventative screenings, medication management, mental health, and nutrition. Providers would coordinate services to include:
- Mobile health units
 - Telehealth
 - Preventative care nurses staffed at senior centers during peak hours

- 1.4 **Expand Food Availability to Older Adults**
Congregate meal sites present opportunities for social engagement and improved daily nutrition. The Fresh Food for Families Program could work in tandem with sites to expand fresh foods for seniors.

Goal 2 Focus on *Independence*

Most seniors want to age in their home and community for as long as possible. Aging in community entails providing seniors the proper supports in the safest, least restrictive environment possible. For some, this means living in the home where they have resided for decades, and for others this means moving in with family or to a living facility. Family caregivers, home-based services and modifications, and access to transportation are critical elements that extend independence and create senior friendly communities.

Strategies

- 2.1 **Expand Caregiver U**
Caregiver U, a program of AGE of Central Texas, is an existing collaboration that provides critical supports and training to Caregivers. An expansion should include:
- Intensify Community Outreach and Public Awareness Around Elder Abuse and Caregiver Support
 - Develop Dementia Care Program for Families
- 2.2 **Expand Home-based Supportive Services**
Home care services to assist with the activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, toileting, meal preparation, med management etc.) allow people to successfully age in place. In-home respite services for family caregivers

(companionship care for a senior while spouse/adult child is working, running errands, etc.) help seniors stay in their home. However, rising costs deters many caregivers from seeking in-home care. More affordable home care options could increase the number of seniors who age in place.

2.3 Expand Home Modification and Repair Services

The Austin Housing Repair Coalition repairs and modifies seniors' homes so they may stay in their homes while it is healthy for them to do so.

2.4 Create a Central Dispatch for All Transportation Services

Creating a one-stop dispatch for all transportation services within the region would promote efficient use of limited vehicles and increase accessibility for seniors. Capital Metro is currently hiring a Mobility Manager who will oversee a centralized dispatch center. Capital Metro should engage nonprofit stakeholders to integrate services.

Goal 3 Focus on an *Informed Community*

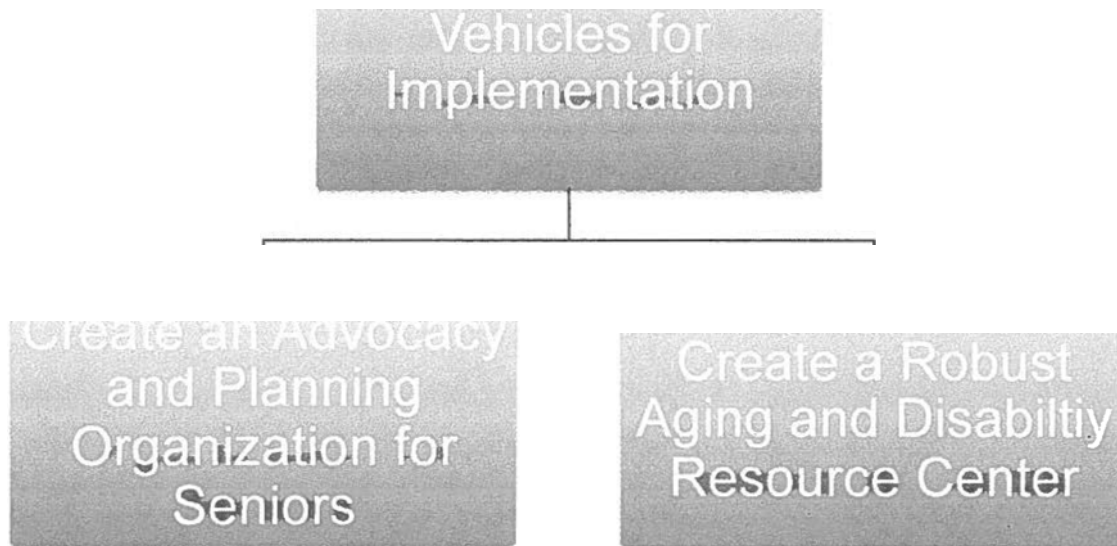
An informed community is well-equipped to locate the services they need to care for themselves, their family members and their neighbors.

Strategies

3.1 Create a Website and/or Phone Number That Serves As a Central Clearinghouse for Information about Senior Services and Activities

3.2 Develop a Public Awareness Campaign for a Variety of Issues, such as:

- Caregiver assistance
- Locating senior service providers
- Elder abuse



Recommendations for *The City of Austin*

Goal 1 Focus on *Age-Inclusive Policies*

Strategies

- 1.1 Integrate Age-Inclusive Policies as Criteria for City Decision-Making
Policies should focus on reducing negative impacts and promoting positive impacts on seniors. These include ordinances, regulations, and policies related to transportation, affordable housing, land development, and affordable utilities and taxes. Additionally, consider impact on seniors of activities related to the City's Imagine Austin Plan.
- 1.2 Join AARP/World Health Organization Age-Friendly Communities Initiative

Goal 2 Focus on *Affordable Housing*

Strategies

- 2.1 Research and Analyze the Impact of Property Tax Deferrals/Caps and Utility Cost Subsidies on Seniors and Recommend Appropriate Action
- 2.2 Prioritize Affordable Housing Funding for Seniors
- 2.3 Expedite Permitting Process For Secondary Apartments

Goal 3 Focus on *Integrating Seniors into Civic Life*

Strategies

- 3.1 Fund Neighborhood Programs for Senior Assistance
City's Neighborhood Match Program could foster neighborhood senior assistance. Neighborhood associations could offer meals, transportation and social engagement.
- 3.2 Create an Interagency Committee to Optimize Facilities for Senior Engagement
 - Develop an asset map to identify existing and new opportunities for senior social engagement at public libraries, PARO facilities, HHS facilities, and schools
 - Identify opportunities for co-located services
 - Develop intergenerational programming at Recreation Centers and schools
- 3.3 Create Intergenerational Opportunities for Seniors
 - Invest in intergenerational art education partnerships between schools, organizations, libraries and senior programs to provide exposure to the arts.
 - Designate a City Recreation Center as an intergenerational site and provide dynamic volunteer and co-learning opportunities for all ages.

Vehicle for
Implementation

Create a City
Commission for Seniors