
II.

Background

This chapter provides background regarding the impetus for the Blueprint for Aging Services Partnership, how this Project was organized, and the purpose of the Project. It also provides an overview of the major demographic trends that are resulting in significantly increasing numbers of older adults in Washtenaw County.

A. Study Impetus, Purpose and Organization

1. **Impetus for the Study.** Reflecting the national trend, the population of Washtenaw County is aging. Consequently, the number of older adults in the County is increasing. Meanwhile, problems related to aging are becoming more complex and difficult, both for seniors and their families. In particular, access and affordability are critical service issues.

Against this backdrop, an ad hoc group of local agencies serving older adults in Washtenaw County met regularly over the past few years to identify and address priority issues affecting the elderly. This group recognized the problems facing the County's older adults require fundamental solutions that include all community stakeholders. However, the County then lacked a current community-wide plan addressing the specific needs of the elderly.

To create such a community-wide plan, the ad hoc group of local agencies collaborated in submitting a proposal to the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County agreed to serve as the fiduciary agency for the Project. In April 2002, this proposal resulted in the funding of a one-year planning project, with the potential for a multi-year process. This Project became known as the Blueprint for Aging Services Partnership ("BASP").

2. **Project Purpose.** The overall goal of the Project was to first identify and characterize the needs of aging adults in Washtenaw County adults, and then define an appropriate community response. Toward this end, the following objectives were established:
 - a. Identification and participation of interested stakeholders.
 - b. Development of the Strategic Plan that:
 - (1) Outlines findings regarding the current adequacy of existing programs and services for older adults in Washtenaw County.

(2) Presents recommendations for addressing identified deficiencies.

3. Project Organization. Appendix A lists the name and affiliation of members of the ad hoc group that organized the Project, the Steering Committee, and each of the Workgroups. The organizational structure and the participants of the BASP Project are discussed in turn below.

a. Structure: The BASP Project was organized to include three key structural elements:

(1) BASP "Members": Through public notice and direct solicitation, leaders and private citizens with interest and/or involvement in aging services in Washtenaw County volunteered to participate in the Project. Those invited included representatives of the Area Agency on Aging, local government, senior centers, health care providers, universities, transportation and nutrition programs, and housing facilities. A number of private citizens with a strong interest in improving programs for older adults also responded. This Membership group was convened on July 23, 2002 for the purpose of orientation, endorsing the proposed committee structure for the Project, and to elect members of the Steering Committee.

(2) Steering Committee: An eleven member Steering Committee was appointed to establish guidelines, to monitor the Project schedule, and to oversee and coordinate Workgroup activities. In this effort, the Steering Committee was assisted by a Project Coordinator/ Consultant. Ten of the members of the Steering Committee also served as Co-Chairperson of one of the Workgroups described below.

(3) Workgroups: The Project was organized into the following five Workgroups:

- Health
- Housing
- Quality of Life
- Social Services
- Transportation

These Workgroups met regularly throughout the course of the Project. They were responsible for investigating the assigned area, to include developing findings on the state of affairs in Washtenaw County and proposing recommendations for improvement. In some cases, outside experts were invited to Workgroup meetings to address specific issues. In addition, individual members were occasionally assigned to a working a sub-group that was given specific responsibilities on behalf of a Workgroup.

- b. Participants:** Previously referenced Appendix A lists the 56 active participants and 8 ad hoc contributors to each of the Workgroups, along with their affiliation. It can be readily seen that the membership of Workgroups encompasses a full spectrum of 33 non-profit, governmental and private organizations and agencies serving older adults in Washtenaw County. The Workgroups also included private citizens with experience and interest in issues related to seniors. Because the Workgroups included seasoned practitioners, often with decades of relevant experience, each Workgroup was considered to be an authoritative and credible source of findings and recommendations on their assigned topic.

B. Key Demographic Trends

1. **Changes During the Decade of the '90s.** The table below presents statistics on the historical growth of the senior population in Washtenaw County over the 1990-2000 time period. As a frame of reference, comparable figures for the state of Michigan are included, as available.

Trends for Selected Population Segments, Washtenaw County and Michigan. 1990 to 2000			
Segment/ Geographic Area	Year		Percent Change 1990 - 2000
	1990	2000	
Total			
- Washtenaw	282,937	322,895	14.1%
- Michigan	9,295,297	9,938,444	6.9%
Population 60-plus			
- Washtenaw	29,522	35,478	20.2%
- Michigan	1,510,397	1,596,162	5.7%
Population 85-plus			
- Washtenaw	2,344	3,199	36.5%
- Michigan	106,907	142,460	33.3%
Minority Pop. 60-plus			
- Washtenaw	2,992	4,566	52.6%
- Michigan	171,602	195,459	13.9%
Foreign-Born (total)			
- Washtenaw*	19,415	33,164	70.8%
<small>Source: Area Agency on Aging 1-B, using U.S. Census Bureau data. * Estimates from www.fairus.org; preponderance came from China, India and the "Soviet Union" (Source: Center for Immigration Studies).</small>			

The following general trends over the 1990-2000 period are apparent from the above data:

- a. The total population in Washtenaw County grew nearly twice as fast as Michigan as a whole.
- b. The County's 60-plus population grew more than three times as fast as did Michigan's comparable segment.
- c. The 85-plus population in the County recorded a growth rate that was 80 percent higher than that for the 60-plus population as a whole, indicating a rising trend in the average age of older adults in the County (by 2000, nearly 9 percent of the 60-plus population was 85 or older).
- d. The minority population aged 60 and over grew by an above-average 50 percent during the period, constituting 13 percent of the 60-plus population by 2000.
- e. Washtenaw County saw its total foreign-born population increase by more than two-thirds during the 1990-2000 period, to over 10 percent of the total population. It should be safe to assume that the 60-plus age category shared in this increase in foreign-born.

2. Projected Growth in the Senior Population. A recent report (See Appendix B) from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, or SEMCOG, projects that Washtenaw County is at the beginning stage of sustained rapid growth in the number of older adults. The following table summarizes Washtenaw County's projected growth in the 65-plus population in the current and upcoming decades.

Year	Washtenaw County Actual/ Projected Population			Projected Growth in 65+, Over Prior 10-Years	
	Age 65+	Total	Percent 65+	Number	Percent
2000	26,271	322,895	8.1%	-	-
2010	33,634	371,401	9.1%	7,363	28.0%
2020	51,529	410,748	12.5%	17, 895	53.2%
2030	72,631	448,020	16.2%	21,102	41.0%

Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, September 2002.

The following general observations are offered regarding the projected rapid growth in the over-65 population in Washtenaw County between 2000 and 2030:

- a. By way of overall perspective, between 2000 and 2030 the 65-plus population in the County is projected to grow nearly three-fold, from about 26,000 to nearly 73,000.
 - b. Meanwhile the County's total population is projected to increase only 39 percent, from about 323,000 in 2000 to over 448,000 in 2030.
 - c. As a result of significantly above-average growth, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is projected to double, from 8 percent of total in 2000 to 16 percent of total in 2030.
 - d. The actual number of additional seniors added each successive decade between 2000 and 2030 is projected to grow to very significant levels:
 - For example, about 7,400 persons aged 65-plus are expected to be added in the current 2000-2010 decade.
 - Between 2010 and 2020, an additional 17,900 older adults are projected.
 - The 2020-2030 decade is forecasted to witness the addition 21,100 older adults.
 - e. An exceptionally high *rate* of growth in the senior population of Washtenaw County is expected to be sustained between 2010 and 2020:
 - National news media have long been touting the fact that the so-called baby boom will hit retirement age in 2010 (65 years after the end of WW II, which is often cited as the beginning of the baby boom generation).
 - This national trend will be felt in Washtenaw County, where the rate of growth in the over-65 population is expected to peak between the years 2010 and 2020 (i.e. over 50 percent growth).
 - Between 2020 and 2030, the County's rate of growth is projected to decelerate somewhat, but will still remain high (i.e. over 40%)
 - f. The exceedingly high rate of growth projected for the County's senior population after 2010 should not be allowed to obscure the fact that this segment of the population is currently growing at a rapid rate:
 - For example, between 2000 and 2010, the 65-plus population of the County is projected to grow by a substantial 28 percent.
 - This rate of growth would be considered quite rapid by historical standards.
- 3. Conclusion.** The rapidly increasing numbers and diversity of older adults in Washtenaw County will continue to add potentially overwhelming demands on the support services and programs for seniors in the County.