

Burlington Aging Council – Program and Policy Scoping Rapid Assessment

Family Caregiving and Support:

Education, respite, and affordability are the major challenges for all family caregivers. Burlington does have a variety of resources; however, cost remains a major issue. Project CARE (*Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty*) is a model to review. It provides funds for self-directed respite care, care consultation, at-home services, and creates connections between caregivers and local community organizations. Other cities provide examples of ways to connect family caregivers with professionals through support groups and 1-on-1 meetings with industry professionals. Lessons to review include having updated accessible pamphlets of resources for caregivers, building collaborative networks, Caregiver education and support groups, and building on the Project CARE model.

Food Security:

An assessment of Burlington's current programs reveals there is a wide variety of programming available to support older adults and people with disabilities. Opportunities for increased collaboration and reduction in any service duplication should be examined. Better communication with the Hunger Councils throughout the state and coordination among organizations and initiatives in the Burlington area, can provide an impetus for better service for older populations, including refugees, New Americans, Veterans, and people with disabilities. Some recommendations to consider:

- a. Elevate the visibility of programs like Meals on Wheels, Feeding Chittenden's Stay at Home program, 3SquaresVT, etc. at area senior centers, assisted living facilities, places of worship, etc.
- b. Look to convene stakeholders across different language and cultural groups to support translation services for New American and refugee populations in Burlington with the goal of increasing the availability of culturally relevant foods.
- c. Collaborate to advocate more effectively for programs like Vermonters Feeding Vermonters and 3SquaresVT.

Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement:

There are notable programs in New England and beyond that seek to engage older adults in a community-minded way through volunteerism and offer avenues to social inclusion through direct community leadership opportunities and organizational partnerships. Current programs in/around Burlington such as Neighbor Rides (United Way) and Grand Friends (UVM Center on Aging) have proven successful; it is recommended that these programs are expanded upon and to encourage partnerships based on the models of the programs presented here. However, barriers such as COVID-19

health and safety and potential volunteer hesitance among older adults who may need to continue working past a typical retirement age pose challenges to the implementation of these programs.

Racial Equity:

There is a need for more coordination among support programs to ensure equity is a main consideration in program development and implementation. A study from Ottawa Canada on supporting elderly Indigenous community members pointed out the need for municipal governments to:

- Specifically engage the communities and groups in discussions about aging well to better understand the unique needs of each community
- Encourage and mandate cultural safety training for government staff involved in support services
- Translate documents into various languages
- Improve transparency and accessibility of city spaces

Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model is a good framework to use when addressing health and other disparities in minority populations. The CBPR model incorporates community members in all aspects of policy research, development, and design, emphasizing the need to work with existing organizations or hire members of the community to be part of the project recruitment and delivery of services.

Recommendations to better connect issue areas:

To address the intersectionality across all aspects of this assessment, we propose, along with conducting an **annual senior needs assessment**, the following recommendations to target enduring inequities that exist for older adults in Burlington:

- **Look for ways to convene stakeholders across different language & cultural groups.** Coordinating focus groups to gather key information for specific population demographics including people with disabilities, New Americans, the LGBTQQIA community, senior caregivers, etc.
- **Support volunteer programs that extend the benefits of senior program efforts.** Encourage increased participation in programs like the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- **Initiate intergenerational conversations** with the goal of developing an awareness among younger people for issues faced by older adults, and knowledge among older adults for the issues affecting young people.
- **Promote aging in place.** Advocate for continued funding of the Housing Recovery Plan to ensure permanent supportive housing for older adults experiencing homelessness.



UVM MPA CAPSTONE PRESENTATION FOR THE
BURLINGTON AGING COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Presented by: Maddie Russell, Katie McGrath, Sydney Hinckley, and Noah Gilbert Fuller

Overview:

IN OUR REPORT WE:

- Discuss goals and impact of communications strategies and our project research methods.
- Document research findings related to communications tools, market trends, accessibility and translation, and the importance of third spaces for accessing information.
- Provide recommendations including the implementation of a seniors' newsletter, partnerships with UVM resources and local businesses and organizations.
- Present an example of what a BAC newsletter could look like, including a Nepali translated version to illustrate how it can be made accessible to a wider range of Burlington seniors.

Recommendations:

We propose a dual-platform newsletter to disseminate resources and information, based on our research findings that indicate older residents react positively to both hardcopy and email advertising.

- Reach out to UVM's PCOM Program for newsletter content creation
- Partner with Third Places for disseminating information
- Plan for physical hardcopy and virtual distribution of newsletter
- Expand two-way communication opportunities for seniors
- Engage translation services to ensure information accessibility
- Establish metrics to measure success and readership engagement

Older Workforce Development in Burlington

QUESTIONS WE ASKED

- What are the demographics of the population we are looking at?
- What policies and initiatives are already in place?
 - what's working and what's not?
- What are the barriers preventing older workers from remaining in or rejoining the workforce?



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Marketing Campaign to highlight older worker success stories and narratives
- Burlington to invest in digital literacy resources specific to the needs older workers
- Create an Employer Panel as part of Burlington Council on Aging
- Create Focus Group of Older Workers
- Create a Handout or Brochure of New and Existing Resources in Burlington for Older Residents to Easily Access



GOALS

- Redefine the growing population of older community residents as Workforce Assets
- Understand how to reframe workforce policies and structures to better accommodate older workers
- Determine what initiatives need to be taken and what resources will need to be engaged
- Learn workforce strategies combined with the best thinking on this issue happening



KEY TAKEAWAYS & FINDINGS

- The work we do now will continue to serve future generations
- The older population is a diverse community with a multitude of backgrounds and opportunities
- Lack of accessible and affordable reskilling and digital literacy courses in the Burlington Area
- Information of available learning opportunities is not made known to the public very readily.



TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Executive Summary

This report brief was crafted for the use of the Burlington Aging Council, in Burlington, VT, to inform policy suggestions and decisions focused on transportation for an aging population. The report begins with an analysis of current Burlington policies centering walkability, increased use of public transit, and innovation for decrease in personal vehicle use. Next, the report explores potential public transportation initiatives and specialized transportation programs to better serve Vermont's aging populations to increase access to workforce opportunities. In addition, the report analyzes current infrastructure standards in BTV and potential opportunities to raise accessibility standards. Finally, based on these analyzed transportation methods, the report suggests viable options for transportation engagement with the aging population and policy suggestions the BAC could support to enhance accessibility for their constituents.

Recommendations



By ensuring alternative modes for transportation are accessible for all, BAC can advocate for a diverse aging population while also ensuring programs support vulnerable and marginalized populations.



Expanding Service & Free Fares

By continuing free fares on Green Mountain Transit buses, an increase and greater diversification of public transit riders will encourage increased ridership, indicating to policy makers that public transportation should be a priority. Expanding bus services would serve the public but also decrease distances for riders to walk/bike to their respective bus stop for more safety.



Greater Collaboration & Public-Private Partnerships

Programs such as MyRide and the UVMCC private bus system are pertinent examples of limited collaboration between community entities that seek to address the same transportation issues. BAC should encourage strengthened partnerships between organizations for streamlined transportation programs and access.



Diversification of Funding

Expanding on CARES act funding and diversifying from public dollars requiring voter approval will enable greater longevity in transportation systems and ensure sustainability of vital programs for access by aging and vulnerable populations.

Bus & Point to Point

Stakeholder interviews indicated that current transportation systems are not enough to meet the needs of an aging population. Opportunities for improvement included bus route expansion, public-private partnerships, removing ride cap for medical appointments, expansion of micro-transit programs. Collaborative assessments between transit partners should focus on intergenerational transit needs for longevity in transportation initiatives

Specialized Transit

Specialized Transportation Services are great programs for vulnerable populations to access rides for work and leisure. However, siloed systems put the burden on patrons to understand and utilize the system. Additionally, there needs to be more of a monetary commitment from different stakeholders to subsidize this service throughout the state of Vermont so more individuals can access it. Collaboration between service providers could enhance sustainability.

Infrastructure

Based on a 2018 AARP audit, conditions of Burlington streets vary widely. Overall, they rated intersections and crossings as poor, and sidewalks as fair. Expanding the Great Streets Projects beyond downtown would create infrastructure systems that take into account walkers and bikers while maintaining infrastructure for personal vehicles, buses, and SSTA vehicles. Infrastructure changes should encourage walkability, sustainability, vibrancy, functionality and accessibility.