THE CITY OF BURLINGTON
AGING COUNCIL

March 21, 2023

Draft Planning
Recommendations

Burlington Aging Council

Mission: To understand the opportunities and challenges facing all older community members, and to recommend policies and programs that respect and empower all older Burlington community members, to ensure and expand their quality of life.

Burlingtonians should be able to direct their own lives as they age so that aging is not something that merely happens to them but a process in which they actively participate.

Whatever services , supports, and protections are offered, older residents in Burlington deserve dignity and respect and must be at the core of all decisions affecting their lives.

Self-Determination

Safety and Protection

Coordinated and Efficient System of Opportunity: Older residents bring years of experience, wisdom, and energy to their lives and communities. They are an asset to the community and pathways to afford them opportunity to contribute to the social, civic, and economic fabric of the community should be enhanced, and they should be actively engaged as workers, volunteers, and leaders.

Coordinated and Efficient System of Services: Older residents can benefit from a system of services, supports, and protections, that is coordinated, equitable, and efficient, promoting choice, flexibility, and creativity. The system should be easy for individual and families to access and navigate, including as it relates to the major transitions of care.

Financial Security
Older Residents should be able to receive an adequate income and maintain assets for a reasonable quality of life as they age. They should be able to seek and maintain employment without fear of discrimination and with any needed accommodations. Mechanisms should be in place to protect from consumer and financial fraud. Older Residents should also be able to retire after a lifetime of work, if they so choose, without fear of poverty and isolation.

Optimal Health and Wellness
Older Residents should receive, without discrimination, optimal physical, dental, mental, emotional, and spiritual health through the end of their lives. Holistic options for health, exercise, counseling, and good nutrition should be both affordable and accessible. Access to coordinated, competent, and high-quality care should be provided at all levels and in all settings.

Social Connection and Engagement
Older Residents should be free from isolation and loneliness, with affordable and accessible opportunities in their communities for social connectedness, including work, volunteering, lifelong learning, civic engagement, arts, culture, and broadband access and other technologies. Older Residents are critical to our local economies and their contributions should be valued by all.

Housing, Transportation, and Community Design
Burlington should be designed, zoned, and built to support the health, safety, and independence of older residents, with affordable, accessible, appropriate, safe, and service-enriched housing, transportation, and community support options that allow them to age in a variety of settings along the continuum of care and that foster engagement in community life.

Family Caregiver Support
Family caregivers are fundamental to supporting the health and well-being of older Vermonters, and their hard work and contributions should be respected, valued, and supported. Family caregivers of all ages should have affordable access to education, training, counseling, respite, and support that is both coordinated and efficient.

Burlington Aging Council Action Areas

Mission: To understand the opportunities and challenges facing all older community members, and to recommend policies and programs that respect and empower all older Burlington community members, to ensure and expand their quality of life.

Financial Security	Optimal Health and Wellness	Social Connection and Engagement	Housing, Transportation, and Community Design	Family Caregiver Support
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BAC Focus Areas

• Industry Support	• Health Prevention, Access & Quality; Nutrition & Physical Activity • Food Security	• Technology Accessibility • Civic Engagement & Volunteerism • Social Inclusion	• Housing: Affordability, Availability, & Accessibility • Multimodal Transportation • Accessible Outdoor & Indoor Public Spaces	• Family Caregiver Support

PURPOSE

- elevating the contributions of older adults in Burlington;
- raising issues facing older adults in Burlington and the organizations that serve them;
- making policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council to address gaps, needs, and opportunities that impact older adults in Burlington; and
- ensuring that the voices of older adults in Burlington are at the forefront of City policy; and
- creating and maintaining a "Burlington Plan on Aging" to act as a guiding template for City policy and initiatives.

IMPACT AREAS

1. Housing: Affordability, Availability, & Accessibility

2. Combating Social Isolation; Increasing Social Inclusion

3. Healthcare Workforce

4. Food Security

5. Multimodal Transportation

6. Accessible Outdoor & Indoor Public Spaces

7. Technology accessibility

8. Civic Engagement and Volunteerism

9. Industry (Employer) Support

10. Family Caregiver Support

11. Health Prevention, Access, & Quality: Nutrition & Physical Activity

1. Housing: Affordability, Availability, & Accessibility

1.   Increase accessibility to service enriched housing- expand SASH and SASH type programs to serve more older Burlington residents in congregate settings.

2.   Expand existing Home Modifications program within the City of Burlington with a specific focus on older adult homeowners (develop a survey to determine most common and pressing home modification needs) to help them age safely in their homes.

3.   Apply Universal Design Guidance to new housing, building codes, etc.

4.   Inventory the available capacity and wait lists at licensed long-term care communities in Burlington- Residential Care Homes, Assisted Living and Nursing homes to identify the unmet need for long term care in Burlington.

2. Combating Social Isolation; Increasing Social Inclusion

1. **Draw on existing data sources to build a thorough understanding of where our residents over the age of 65 are living and what kind of conditions they are living in.**
2. **Increase Mobility, Accessibility and Space Utilization**: Prioritize system enhancements to best serve older residents in making safe, affordable, and efficient mobility choices in city mobility planning.
3. **Create a comprehensive communications strategy to reach all older residents with essential information and resources. Assess the multiple platforms currently used.**
4. **Advance a Community Emotional Wellness framework.** Recognize that Emotional Wellness of all residents is a critical attribute of a livable and sustainable community. Convene Stakeholders regularly (e.g., SASH, Howard, Cathedral Square, AgeWell). Evaluate the expansion of the program embedding mental health services in congregate housing (SASH-Howard Center – Cathedral Sq).
5. **Create a Pandemic response plan and set of tools for the future.** Burlington will have a Pandemic Emergency response plan that includes a strong emphasis on reducing social isolation and increasing social engagement for older residents.

3. Healthcare Workforce

1.Promote and support the launch of a PCA training program in Burlington modeled after the LNA program.

2.The City should provide a financial incentive for Burlington based long-term care employers to participate in the United Way Working Bridges program to provide resources and support to their direct care workers on site in order to increase retention and provide career ladder opportunities.

4. Food Security

5. Multimodal Transportation

1. **Prioritize Access**
    1. Both from Policy and Operationally within the city

2. **Information Centralization and Coordination**
    1. Large need for better information sharing of current transportation options, programs, etc., as well as transportation advocates for older Burlington residents.

3. **Transportation Funding Alternatives**
    1. New Infrastructure
    2. Maintenance of Current Infrastructure
    3. Programmatic such as for Transit

4. **Adopt a Winter City Strategy**
    1. Prioritization of continuity of public city services and infrastructure all year round
    2. Updating Design Standards to be adaptable to winter months

6. Accessible Outdoor & Indoor Public Spaces

1. ADOPT A WINTER CITY STRATEGY: The creation of a Winter City Strategy can provide the policy backing to support initiatives like extending patio space into the winter, adding heating and lighting elements to the public realm and investing in pop-ups during the winter. The creation of a winter city strategy must begin with community engagement and political support. The City of Burlington must update policies that restrict public life during winter including the closure of washrooms.

   A. PRIORITIZE ACCESS: Winter can be challenging for many, but with the right municipal priorities, winter can be made more accessible and inclusive. To prioritize access, snow removal of multi-use lanes, sidewalks and bike lanes must be removed 24-hours after a snowstorm. Access should be a multi-faceted term that prioritizes equity. Many BTV policies note the importance of mobility and accessibility of streets, sidewalks, and parks but fail to touch on winter's impacts that may affect mobility or access. Snow clearance and winter mobility are missing in dialogue around access and safe mobility.

   B. DESIGN STANDARDS: In 2018, Burlington City Council introduced downtown street design standards in the new Great Streets BTV plan. The design standards discuss accessible street furniture, water drainage and clear walkways but fail to make mention of how these elements will function in the winter. An amendment should be made to these standards that acknowledge how clear walkways, retail frontages and bike paths will be maintained during the winter months.

      a. Walk Bike Master Plan makes a record 54 mentions of winter. Within this Master Plan is the Winter Action Plan that details bike path maintenance and flexible winter streets. These elements from the Action Plan can be incorporated into the Downtown Street Standards design guidelines for a holistic approach to investing in vibrant, sustainable public spaces in winter.

   C. CENTRALIZE WINTER INFORMATION & INITIATIVES: Consider consolidating information of all things winter onto a main webpage on the official city website. Consolidate information pertaining to all things winter onto one webpage location such as: Having a central node for winter information can act as a starting point for residents to navigate easily. This centralized information should be current, removing outdated events and details is important for user navigation and information sharing.

7. Technology Accessibility

- Conduct **a comprehensive Needs Assessment** to understand the needs of the older Burlingtonians, including BIPOC and New American communities re: technology access and supports focused on infrastructure, capabilities, training/education, path to 6G. Consider how tech access can be advanced in a culturally appropriate manner so that it is embraced by New Americans/elder BIPOC population.
- Complete the implementation of the **"planBTV 2019" and update for 2023** and beyond, with a strong focus on technology, innovation and accessibility for all especially older adults.
- Advance **Training/Education**:
    - Tap into high schools and colleges for student/intergenerational tech teaching programs. Pilot some.
    - Explore ongoing tech training and education for older adults to promote accessibility. E.g., Collaborations with local tech centers, universities/colleges and libraries.
    - Promote the Vermont Assistive Technology Program that offers free supports/hardware/assessments. https://atp.vermont.gov/
- Identify and Secure **Funding:**
    - Assess funding coming from federal grants and funds for technology infrastructure
    - Explore whether insurance/other private companies would step in to support the technologies and tech access for older Burlingtonians.
    - Expand low-cost tech bundle/programs like those offered by BT. Explore options with other vendors to offer discounts to older Vermonters for internet service and tech support.
- Expand **Safety/Security Access: C**ollaborate with security/safety companies to offer older adults access to security systems at a low cost e.g., "Ring app" on the iPhone or other security systems for their home.

8. **Civic** Engagement and Volunteerism

9. Industry (Employer) Support

1. Provide staffing support at CEDO to coordinate BAC, including a significant function of a staff person to be an Older Worker ombudsperson.
2. Resources for a Marketing Campaign to highlight older worker and employer success stories and narratives.
3. Create an Advisory panel of Employers.
4. Convene a Semi-annual Peer Group of mature worker (from different fields, backgrounds and employers) to share and learn new tricks and techniques and provide support whether one is returning to the workforce or shifting to a new area or field or reducing hours or negotiating other flexibility. Document the lessons learned.
5. Create an easily accessible source of resources in Burlington for older workers.
6. City investment in a digital literacy resource specific to the needs of older community members.

10. Family Caregiver Support

1. Caregiver Awareness campaign – Who is a caregiver? Elevate the roll of the caregiver. Focus on exposure during Family Caregiver Month in November.

2. Organize education and access to resources for service provider and family care givers who will also need guides to assist in access. Create an easily accessible comprehensive data collection of resources for all Family Caregivers, Partner with organizations that provide services or resources to assure they are distributed

3. Question: Do we need to survey caregivers regarding their needs? Idea: Do different disease/conditions organizations have this information.

4. Employers of caregivers need to accommodate their needs. Focus campaign to engage employers in directed advocacy and accommodation.

5. Education for service providers needed around BIPOC populations regarding culture of caregiving.

11. Health Promotion, Access, & Quality: Nutrition & Physical Activity

2023 Priority Policy and Program Recommendations

Key Priorities for an Age-Friendly Burlington

Key Next Steps to Empower the Aging Council

What resources or support is needed for the Aging Council to be an ongoing advocate and to support plan implementation, refinement, and evaluation?