



**Minnesota Gerontological Society
Annual Conference
April 27, 2007**

**Building a “Community for a Lifetime”
in Carver County**

Presenters

Bob Roepke, *Chair, Senior Commission,
Carver County Health Partnership and
Former Chaska Mayor*

Maureen Melgaard-Schneider, *Senior
Services Development Consultant*

Renee Wixon, *Senior Commission Planner*

- The CCHP is a private public collaborative with a mission to make Carver County a healthy place to live and work.
- Various businesses, senior serving organizations, government agencies and engaged citizens serve on one of the four committees.
- Committees meet monthly and are facilitated by a part-time planner.

Senior Commission

■ Our Vision

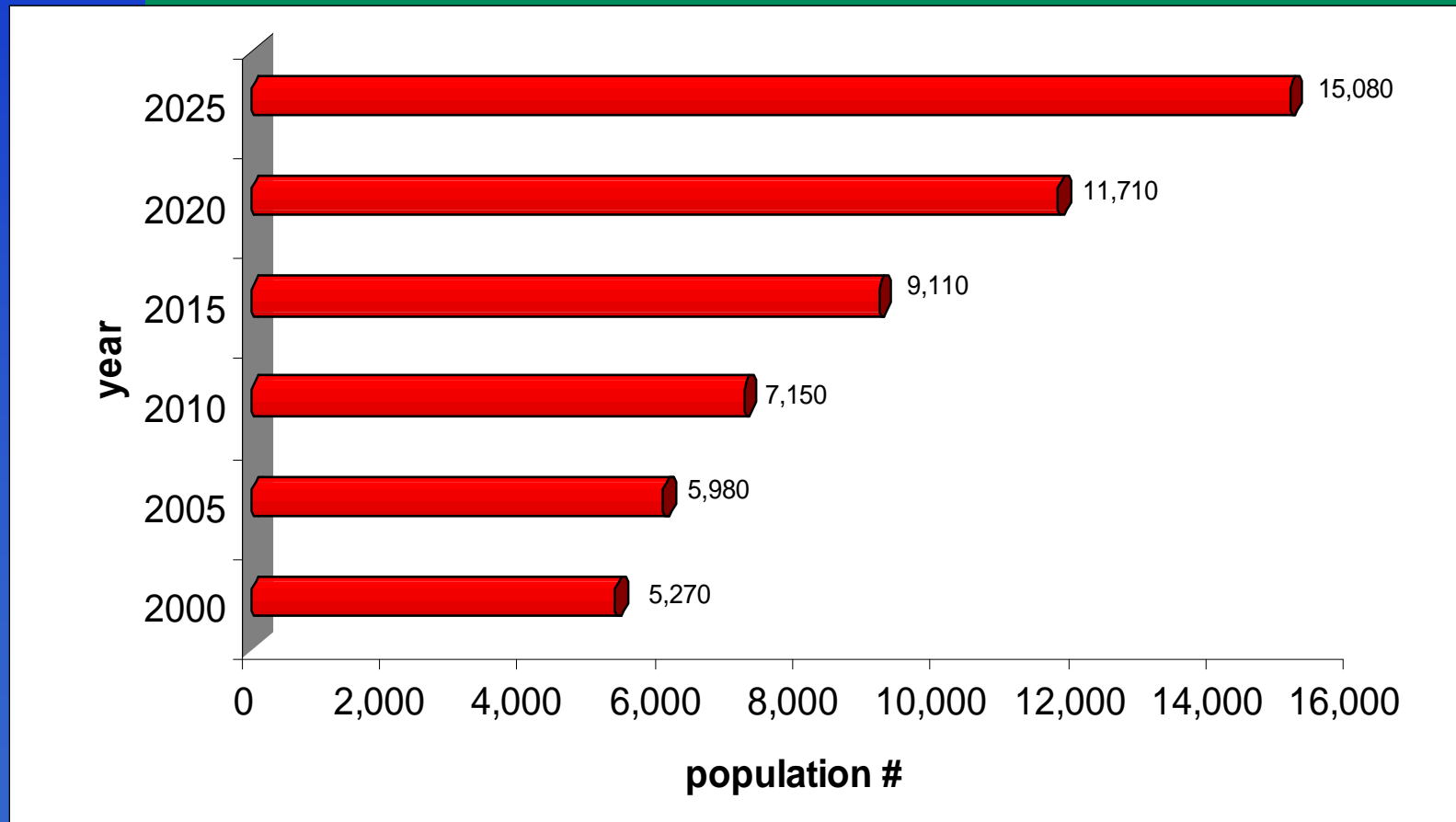
Each community in Carver County will be a vibrant and senior-friendly community prepared for an increasing number of older residents.



The Situation in Carver County

- **The fastest growing age group in Carver County is adults ages 65 and older.** By 2025 older persons will constitute more than 15 percent of the population—up from 8 percent in 2000.
- **Carver County's older population will almost triple between 2000 and 2025**—from 5,270 in 2000 to 15,080 persons in 2025. Dramatic growth will be seen in the “very old” age group, those over 85 years old.

Carver County's 65+ population growth, Years 2000 to 2025



Community for a Lifetime Initiative



Communities
For A Lifetime

Creating Vibrant, Senior-Friendly Communities

Key Components of a Community for a Lifetime

1. Transportation for seniors who can no longer drive a car
2. A range of affordable housing alternatives
3. A continuum of home and community-based services that allow people to remain in the home of their choice
4. A safe and caring environment
5. Parks and recreational activities designed to meet the needs of older adults
6. Affordable accessible healthcare, medications and services including mental healthcare.

Key Components

7. Long-term care options that provide a home-like atmosphere and consumer choice
8. Flexible educational programs and opportunities for lifelong learning
9. A community environment that fosters meaningful connections with friends, family and neighbors
10. Opportunities to volunteer and work that are meaningful and purposeful
11. A community infrastructure that allows seniors to be active and mobile and live in the residence of their choice (benches, doors that easily open, mother-in-law apartments, etc.)

Our Approach

- Our major goal was to develop Carver County into a “senior-friendly” community. We didn’t think seniors who spent their life in the community should have to leave as they aged because the community could not accommodate their needs.
- We spent much time “spinning our wheels” trying to determine the “how”.
- After some initial, less than positive response, we started over with the strategy of developing local senior commissions to work at their city level.
- Over time, our efforts built enough credibility and recognition that enabled us to begin working on a Master Plan on Aging.

Our Strategies

1. Put the Issue on the Map
2. Show me the Money
3. It's the Relationship Stupid
4. Buy Local
5. Be Informed
6. Find the Best Talent
7. Own It

1. Put the Issue on the Map

- Articles in local papers
- Periodic training events
- Presentations to County Board of Commissioners, local cities, Chambers of Commerce, volunteer groups, elected leaders, etc.

2. Show Me the Money

- Received grant funding from The Minneapolis Foundation to support the initiative
- Our grant dollars provided credibility to our group and the issue

3. It's the Relationship Stupid

- Build your team through common vision and shared responsibilities.
- Reach out across sectors to develop relationships—private business, nonprofits, churches, government, senior serving organizations and older adults.
- Partnership-building brought synergy, new ideas and energy to our teams

4. Buy Local

- We are slow learners but did eventually realize that beginning at the county level would not work well. People are committed to their community. Community for most means their neighborhood or city.
- We used a model already developed in Chanhassen –start a local Senior Advisory Committee, appointed by the city council to assess city needs and develop a city plan for Community for a Lifetime.
- These local senior commissions have the ear of elected officials, credibility in their community and serve the added purpose of engaging older adults in their community.
- Eventually we worked with five cities to develop and train local Senior Advisory Committees. These became the center of our efforts.

5. Be Informed

- Like money, data is an essential tool.
- We conducted surveys and analyzed data on both a county and city level
- Objective data helps to inform stakeholders and define the issues and approaches

6. Connect with the Best Talent

- By the time we were ready to begin the Master Planning Process, the community was already aware of the issues and the need for a plan.
- We asked the best community leaders (business, government, nonprofit and retired) to serve on the Design Teams
- Currently 8 Design Teams are working to craft a Master Plan on Aging
- Their talent, connections and ideas are essential



7. Own It

- We've worked diligently to ensure that our Master Plan on Aging will be a plan that is used to guide efforts and budgets in the future
- Unless the plan is owned by an entity, it will not be implemented
- Metrics and accountability measures need to be integrated into the plan

Results to Date

1. We are currently in the middle of developing our Master Plan on Aging to be integrated into Carver County's Comprehensive Plan. First draft will be complete in June.
2. Five local cities now have active Senior Commissions working to ensure that their city is a Community for a Lifetime.
3. We have county and city data that informs and drives our efforts.
4. There is raised awareness among residents and community leaders.
5. Engaged hundreds of people in working to make Carver County a Community for a Lifetime.

Keys to Success

- Vision and leadership are essential—find and/or develop key leaders to move the issue forward
- View older adults for their value and potential
- Build partnerships and collaborations across sectors
- Think long-term, act short-term and grab the low-hanging fruit
- The process takes time, don't get discouraged by the upfront investment in planning

Keys to Success

- Look for outside funding sources to support initial efforts
- Emphasize long term cost savings and reliance on private solutions---not every issue needs government funding
- Work with the local media to publicize your efforts
- Celebrate small achievements
- Not everyone is interested or motivated – work with those who are

Keys to Success

- The issue of our aging population impacts everyone—not just seniors
- Emphasize that Senior Friendliness = Friendliness for all ages
- Don't reinvent the wheel—use the resources and knowledge developed by others

Questions & Comments
