

City of Rockville Senior Citizen Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis

**Final Report
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1 Executive Summary

Findings from the Senior Citizens Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis Project along with the projected growth of the senior population underscore the need for the City of Rockville to address issues residents age 60 and older are experiencing. Major themes that emerged from the multi-mode research involving a web survey, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews include:

Barriers to Participation

Participants expressed multiple barriers to participation in programs and services for residents age 60 and older. Barrier most often mentioned by stakeholders and focus group participants include a lack of awareness of available programs and services, lack of door-to-door senior friendly transportation, and financial and language barriers.

Transportation

Transportation as a barrier to service provisions is well documented in the literature. Numerous studies have determined that access to transportation influences the likelihood of older adults utilizing community-based services, especially for those who are distanced from programs and services (Berke et al., 2006). Some studies suggest that enhancing public transit services can increase access to community-based services among those who need transportation assistance.

Given the literature, it was not surprising that nearly all stakeholders and focus group participants identified transportation as a barrier to Rockville's older adult population participating in programs and services. Though different transportation services exist in Rockville, stakeholders report that few seniors are aware of the array of options and the available options are not meeting senior's needs. As seniors age and are not as mobile, it becomes more difficult for them to utilize many of the existing services. Most stakeholders strongly urged the city to find a way to foster older adult friendly transportation to render this crucial service easier and more accessible. One option mentioned by a few stakeholders was a circulator. Stakeholders indicated that existing options are not meeting seniors' needs in a variety of ways, including more specialized and individualized assistance with door-to-door transportation options.

Lack of Awareness

Stakeholders and focus group participants expressed an overall lack of awareness and a need to inform the wider community, not just seniors, of programs and services for Rockville residents age 60 and older. Though Rockville Senior Center members are believed to be more aware of programs and services in the community, participants expressed a need for the City to better inform the larger community. Most stakeholders indicated that despite marketing and information distribution efforts, seniors are generally unaware of the programs and services available in Rockville. Many stakeholders also reported their own lack of awareness of programs and services available in Rockville. Due to limited resources, including staff, stakeholders report difficulty keeping abreast of services provided by other organizations.

Community Outreach

While there are clear, overarching themes across focus groups, differences were observed in the recommended means of communication and in avenues for outreach to ethnic minorities and younger seniors.

African American participants provided very detailed suggestions for tailored outreach strategies to increase awareness and engage minority residents age 60 and older in the Senior Center programs and services. Community outreach strategies for informing eligible residents about programs and services and encouraging participation include identifying local community leaders, organizations and residents who could act as ambassadors for the Senior Center. Additionally, some suggested making Senior Center meeting spaces available to other organizations and conducting tours and open houses for targeted groups.

Targeted marketing will be particularly important for the younger cohort of seniors, many of whom do not necessarily envision themselves as part of an aging demographic, or believe Rockville Senior Services is relevant for their lives.

Language Barriers

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 33.2% of individuals in Rockville aged 65 and older speak a language other than English at home, and 22.1% indicate they speak English less than very well. Given these statistics, it is not surprising that many stakeholders identified language as a barrier to participation in services and programs for non-English speaking seniors. Stakeholders and focus group participants mentioned the need for translation and more accessible services for non-English speaking populations, specifically Spanish and Asian languages.

Financial Barriers

While the median income for the City is above the national average, 7.9% of those 65 and older in Rockville are living below the poverty line. As a result, lack of financial resources was noted by most stakeholders as a barrier to participation in services for some older adults as well as for the organizations providing services.

Stigma

The word “senior” is stigmatizing and as a result is a barrier to participation for a younger cohort of adults age 60 and older. Several focus group participants mentioned a lack of association with the word “senior” and as a result, don’t view a “senior center” as a place for them. Several participants agreed that the Rockville Senior Center should consider eliminating the word “senior” from the name.

Underserved Populations in Rockville

Isolated and Homebound Seniors

Isolated and homebound seniors were identified by many participants as an underserved group in Rockville. However, stakeholders acknowledged they are unclear about the scope of the problem and that more data are needed.

Low and Middle Income Seniors

Seniors lacking financial resources were identified by many stakeholders as an underserved population. However, while qualifying seniors can and do receive financial assistance, many stakeholders expressed concern for “the middle income gap”, seniors who fall in the middle income range with too much income to qualify for subsidized services and financial assistance, yet not enough income to afford programs and services they may need and want.

Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities were identified by several stakeholders as an underserved group in Rockville. Both language barriers and cultural issues were identified as factors.

Gaps in Senior Services

Stakeholders identified homecare services and case or geriatric case management services as the most common gaps or services that are needed, but currently not available in Rockville.

Many participants expressed a strong need for door-to-door senior friendly transportation services. The African American focus group participants all agreed that programs providing opportunities for homebound and isolated seniors to socialize while also providing relief for their caregivers are services needed and currently not available in the community. This group discussed burdens and pressures on Rockville families by not having needed programs and services in place.

Affordable Housing

Senior’s ability to remain in Rockville and age in place was a concern identified by most stakeholders. The high cost of living, the need for affordable housing, and employment opportunities were frequently noted.

Villages

Many participants expressed support and excitement for the Villages movement in Rockville. Support for the Villages concept included reaching the isolated and homebound; assisting older adults with aging-in-place; promoting a stronger sense of community; greater opportunity to coordinate and engage seniors in volunteer opportunities; and increased accessibility to services. Similar to the Village Coordinator position in Montgomery County, several participants believe a Rockville Village Coordinator is needed as a resource to facilitate the rollout of the Villages in Rockville neighborhoods.

Other Rockville Senior Services Community Centers

Most participants expressed strong support for using neighborhood community centers as satellite locations for senior programs and services. Participants believe seniors are more likely to utilize community centers in their own neighborhoods due to greater accessibility and ability to attend with friends and neighbors.

“The main thing in everything we’ve talked about is seeing that the City of Rockville keeps its Senior Center funded to continue to carry on ... and improve (programs).”

African American focus group participant

2 Introduction

The mid-20th century saw substantial growth in Rockville, especially with the annexation of the Twinbrook subdivision in 1949, which added hundreds of new homes and thousands of new residents to the city. Conveniently located outside of Washington, DC, these new areas provided affordable housing and many young families moved into the area following World War II. Emblematic of strong commercial growth in the area, the shopping center, Congressional Plaza, opened in 1958. Sixty years later the children in these households are now entering their retirement years, and their parents are in their eighties. Nationally, there are currently three main trends with respect to the areas where the Silent Generation (born 1927-1945) and Boomers (born 1946-1964) are expected to locate themselves in their post-retirement years. A portion is moving to traditional retirement areas such as Florida and the Southwest, and some are moving to rural locales. By far, though, the largest segment is expected to “age in place” (Hedge & Albright, 2012). While traditional retirement areas and rural areas are experiencing high rates of growth in their senior populations, in terms of headcount, the most growth in the number of people entering retirement is a result of residents remaining in their current locations and getting older.

Several major surveys concur that many seniors plan to stay near where they currently live. As many as 84% of respondents from the current Rockville Web Survey (see *Section 5.1 Rockville Senior Web Survey*) indicated that they are very or somewhat likely to remain in Rockville. Keenan et al (2010) report that nearly 90% of older adults they surveyed desire to “age in place” by remaining in their residence as long as possible. Many rate being close to family members, friends, churches, or clubs as a major factor in their decision. Family interdependencies are frequently cited as a contributing factor. As many as 40% of Americans between 20 and 34 now live at least part-time with their parents, an option that is likely to become more common in areas where home prices are particularly high. Older Americans will remain a far more active force in the economy—and in their children’s lives—than might have been the case a generation ago. As seniors tend to remain healthy longer, relocation is being delayed or is limited to moving within the same area.

This convergence of population dynamics, extended health, multi-generational family dependencies, and preference to age-in-place is highly apparent in the City of Rockville. The 2010 Census tabulated Rockville's population at 61,209, making it the third largest incorporated city in Maryland, behind Baltimore and Frederick. Among that population, 26% are aged 45 to 64 and 14% are aged 65 years or older. While there was not a single person identified as Chinese in Montgomery County prior to the 1900 census, Rockville is now home to one of the largest Chinese communities in Maryland. In 2010, the racial makeup of the City was 60% White, 21% Asian, and 10% African American, with the balance being Native American, other races, or two or more races. Hispanic or Latinos are nearly 15% of the population. Religion is another dimension presenting challenges to senior services programming. Rockville is the center of the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area's Jewish population and home to the largest of the Washington area's three Jewish community centers, which includes a Jewish nursing home. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs are also represented in the City's population. Income is another

major challenge. While the median income for the City is above the national average, 7.9% of those 65 and older in Rockville are living below the poverty line. As the current Rockville Stakeholder Interviews reflect, those seniors who can't speak English and have limited income are particularly vulnerable.

Faced with this growing and diverse population of older and soon-to-be older residents, the City of Rockville faces immense challenges. Older adults aging in place require a broad spectrum of support services, programs, and accommodations. From a health perspective, nearly half of Medicare enrollees ages 65 and older report that they require some assistance with routine daily activities (Freedman & Spillman, 2014). Among those having difficulty with routine activities, 32% reported an adverse consequence in the past month related to an unmet service need (Freedman & Spillman, 2014). While living longer, the Baby Boom cohort is expected to experience a greater number of disabilities than previous generations. This creates an even greater need for community services to support aging in place.

True to patterns exhibited throughout their lifespan, Boomers take action when they want something. Brossoie et al. (2010) found that nearly one-half (49%) of respondents ages 45 to over 85 reported that they were likely to explore community-based senior services in the future. Baby Boomers are more likely than previous cohorts to say they would seek assistance in obtaining senior services. Additionally, the City faces the challenge of responding appropriately to the needs of older residents of diverse racial/ethnic groups. Cultural patterns of different groups strongly influence what older residents and their families consider important, appropriate, and needed.

The City of Rockville has heightened its focus over the past 20 years on meeting this panoply of growing and changing needs of its aging residents. Valid and reliable data is critical when allocating City funds and comparing Rockville's existing services to those regionally, nationally, and considered best practices.

3 Background and Purpose

The City of Rockville has made significant investment in tracking the quality of life and services provided to its growing senior population. To help seniors age-in-place and preserve their independence, the City currently offers a variety of successful services and programs. As the City's senior population surges, the demand for senior services will also increase causing strain to the City's current resources and facilities. By 2020, it is anticipated the Rockville senior population will experience 100% growth, reaching more than 15,000 seniors (*Senior Citizen Task Force Report, 2006*). The City faces significant challenges to not only maintain existing services for the evolving population, but also develop and fund new programs addressing the increasingly divergent needs of a racially, religiously, economically, culturally, and medically diverse population. Strategic planning informed through solid research will help the City maintain all its seniors' current quality of life and accommodate future needs.

4 Methods

This section details the methods used for the four components of the Rockville study: (1) Inventory of Existing Services, (2) Senior Web Survey, (3) Focus Groups, and (4) Stakeholder Interviews.

4.1 Inventory of Existing Services

4.1.1 Design

Every person in every age group needs organizations in their community that provide services for daily lives. To identify and understand how adults age 60 and over use organizations, an inventory of existing services and their service provisions was created (see **Appendix A**). This was one of several research efforts undertaken to create a foundation of knowledge that prepares Rockville for examining unmet current and future needs. The database includes the following elements for each service (note that some organizations provide multiple services):

- Organization name
- Organization information (address, phone, website, fax)
- Organization contact person (name, role/title, email, phone)
- Program(s) or service(s) (name and description).

4.1.2 Procedure

Through the process of conducting in-depth stakeholder interviews and focus groups, RTI identified organizations serving residents age 60 and older in Rockville and gathered information on their existing services. To further complement the inventory, RTI also used a common methodology in community based research, the ‘snowball’ method, and asked stakeholders interviewed for the study to name other organizations they recommend we contact that provide senior services to Rockville residents. To make the inventory more comprehensive, extensive web searches were also conducted to identify organizations and the services they provide adults age 60 and older in Rockville.

4.2 Senior Web Survey

4.2.1 Design

RTI created a 15 minute Senior Web Survey (see **Appendix B**) to help the City of Rockville better understand the availability and use of programs and services throughout the City for adult residents aged 60 and older. To develop the Web Survey, RTI created questions to address topics of interest to the Rockville Senior Services team. The survey covered the following areas:

- Experiences Finding and Getting Services
- Utilization of Rockville Senior Services
- Awareness of Rockville Senior Services

- Experience with Rockville Senior Services
- Gaps in Service Provisions
- Demographics

The Rockville Senior Services team pretested the Web Survey with staff and members of the Rockville Senior Center. The Web Survey was revised based on pretest feedback.

4.2.2 Procedure

The Web Survey link was provided to Rockville Senior Services which promoted participation in the survey in several online distribution channels as well as traditional paper-based methods, which some older adults prefer.

- Web Survey link was posted on the City of Rockville’s website and sent out via multiple e-mail announcements to the Senior Center Listserv and through Montgomery County Villages’ email Network.
- An email about the survey was sent through Rockville Senior Services’ registration network to adults age 55 and older enrolled in a Department of Recreation and Parks class.
- Flyers were posted at the Rockville Senior Center as well as sent to Rockville community centers, libraries, churches and senior apartment buildings.
- Advertised in the Rockville Senior Center newsletter as well as *Rockville Reports*.
- Paper copies of the survey were available at the Rockville Senior Center with announcements about the survey made in all classes and club meetings. Rockville Senior Center staff worked one-on-one with many of the daily lunch and transportation participants to assist with completing the hardcopy version of the survey.

Rockville Senior Services also made special efforts to reach individuals whose primary language is not English as well as minority ethnic groups. Rockville Senior Center provided hardcopy paper surveys and translation assistance to participants at the following:

- All Rockville Senior Center English as a Second Language classes
- Chinese congregate meal program
- Chinese Cultural and Community Services Center
- Bethany House Bible study, primarily Asian seniors, received translation assistance from Rockville Senior Center staff member
- Hispanic Churches
- Hispanic and Spanish speaking Senior Center members received assistance from Hispanic Spanish speaking Rockville Senior Center staff member with filling out the surveys

Rockville Senior Center staff entered data from all completed paper surveys.

4.3 Focus Groups

4.3.1 Participant Recruitment

RTI enlisted the assistance of the Rockville Senior Services team in identifying community leaders as well as residents age 60 and older to participate in focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted: one each with community leaders, African American Senior residents, and Other Senior residents who were non-members of the Rockville Senior Center.

A personalized letter was sent via U.S. mail to the seniors inviting them to participate in a focus groups. Additionally, a personalized endorsement e-mail describing the study was sent to each individual from the City of Rockville Manager of Senior Services. The endorsement e-mail was followed by a personalized e-mail invitation from the RTI project director, which included detailed information and procedures for follow-up and confirming participation in the focus group. In addition to the endorsement and email invitations, seniors also received a hardcopy letter via U.S. mail. RTI conducted telephone follow-up calls to seniors one to two days after the emails were sent to answer any questions and confirm participation in a focus group. Community Leaders confirmed participation via email and did not receive a telephone follow-up. One week before the scheduled focus groups, the RTI team called to remind all confirmed senior participants of the scheduled focus group. Community Leaders received a reminder email three days before the scheduled focus group.

Focus group attendance included five Community Leaders, five African American Seniors and six Other Seniors. Throughout this report, focus groups will be referred to by these group 'characteristics'.

4.3.2 Conduct of Focus Groups

In-person focus groups were conducted at the Rockville Senior Center on February 3 and February 4, 2016. Two RTI survey researchers attended each focus group and served as moderator and note-taker. At the outset of each focus group, the RTI moderator explained the purpose of the effort. Each group was held in a private room with the moderator and participants seated at a table. The moderator used a focus group guide (see **Appendix C**) to help direct the conversation. The RTI note-taker audio-recorded each focus group and also took notes. The audio-recordings were used to produce verbatim transcriptions for reporting purposes. The African American and Other Senior focus groups lasted no more than 90 minutes and the Community Leaders focus group lasted 60 minutes. At the close of the African American and Other Senior focus groups, participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire (see **Appendix D** for questionnaire and **Appendix E** for results). Refreshments were provided at all three focus groups. In following industry practices, at the close of each group, participants signed an incentive receipt and received \$30 cash in appreciation for their time. All of the Community Leaders and one African American Senior participant donated their incentive to the Rockville Seniors Inc. (RSI).

4.4 Stakeholder Interviews

4.4.1 Design

In-depth interviews were conducted with Rockville stakeholders, including representatives of organizations that provide services to adults age 60 and older and City of Rockville government officials. To develop the interview guide (see **Appendix F**), RTI leveraged the stakeholder interviewer guide created for a similar project developed in consultation with subject matter experts from RTI International. We compiled topics relevant to understanding the available services for older adults in Rockville and drafted new questions. The guide included open-ended questions on services provided to older adults; organization's background; populations served; barriers to utilization of services; perceived gaps in services; collaboration with other organizations; and local and national trends and best practices. To ensure comprehensiveness and usability of the interview guide, a subject matter expert from RTI International as well as the Rockville Senior Services team reviewed and commented on the guide, which was revised based on their feedback. Finally, RTI conducted pretest interviews that resulted in final revisions to the guide.

4.4.2 Procedure

Convenience and snowball sampling procedures were used to identify community stakeholders and organizations that provide services to adults age 60 and older in Rockville. The Rockville Senior Center provided an initial list of stakeholders and RTI conducted internet searches and reviewed web-based publications to generate additional organizations. Additionally, stakeholder respondents were asked to recommend organizations to interview.

A personalized endorsement e-mail describing the study was sent to each stakeholder from the City of Rockville Manager of Senior Services. The endorsement e-mail was followed by a personalized e-mail from the RTI project director, which included procedures for follow-up to schedule an interview. Follow-up telephone calls were conducted one to two days after the emails were sent, during which stakeholders were invited to participate in an in-depth telephone interview. One stakeholder requested an in-person interview which was conducted at the Rockville Senior Center. Interviews were recorded to produce verbatim transcriptions.

A total of 24 stakeholders were interviewed, representing a variety of organizations including (1) Rockville City and Montgomery County government officials; (2) social services organizations, mental health and counseling; non-clinical community-based organizations, including transportation, faith-based, social and wellness programs; (3) home-based organizations providing services focused on home care, companionship, and meals; (4) and advocacy organizations (see **Appendices G** for a full list of stakeholder organizations).

5 Findings

5.1 Rockville Senior Web Survey

Nine hundred fifty-one respondents completed the Rockville Senior Web Survey. An additional 136 respondents partially completed the survey for a total of 1,087 (see **Appendix H** for frequency tabulations and **Appendix I** for the Web Survey data).

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly female and White/Caucasian (for the race/ethnicity question respondents were able to select all that apply);

- 69% Female
- 31% Male

- 79% White/Caucasian
- 8% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 5% Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- 4% African American
- 2% Other

The web survey used a convenience sample to reach Rockville residents age 60 and older. Of the participants who answered the question, 73% respondents indicated that they have used or attended programs or services at Rockville Senior Center. The top reasons survey respondents have not used or attended programs or services at Rockville Senior Center include:

- 27% I don't need any of the programs/services at this time
- 23% I don't know what is offered
- 21% I'm 60 years old or older, but feel I'm too young to participate in "senior" programs
- 21% Too busy

All respondents were asked where they get information about programs and services for adults age 60 and older. The top sources of information include (percentages exceed 100% because respondents were not limited to one source, but were able to select all that applied):

- 74% The Recreation Guide
- 43% Rockville Reports
- 37% Rockville Senior Center Newsletter (sent via U.S. Mail)
- 25% City of Rockville's website

Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents indicated that the programs and services they've participated in through Rockville Senior Center or Senior Services need no changes and are meeting their needs and

interests. Others indicated that programs and services could be improved as follows to better meet their needs and interests (respondents were able to select all that applied):

- 26% Larger variety of programs/services
- 25% Night and weekend options

Respondents indicated that they would be interested in programs and services through Rockville Senior Services if offered at the following:

- 28% Rockville Swim Center
- 24% Thomas Farm Community Center

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents indicated that there are programs and services they would like to participate in that as far as they know are not currently available.

Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents indicated they were either unsure or somewhat or very unlikely to remain in Rockville in retirement. These respondents indicated the following factors influence their decision to leave Rockville (percentages exceed 100% because respondents were not limited to one factor, but were able to select all that applied):

- 68% Cost of living
- 49% Taxes
- 27% Housing

5.2 Focus Groups

5.2.1 African American Residents Age 60+

Utilization of Services

African American focus group participants indicated that they are members of the Rockville Senior Center and either currently participate or have participated in the past in program and services at the Center. The most popular programs and services include the senior trips and fitness center.

- “I joined the fitness center and I have come to the yoga class, which I enjoyed very much”
- “Fitness, counselor, senior trips, birthday parties, seminars, movies, Red Hatters club and the Young at Hearts club, piano lessons here, a computer class.”
- “The trips really have knocked off a lot of things from my bucket list, places that...I’ve always said, “I’d love to go there,” and they read my mind.”
- “it’s all about the trips and the food”
- “I don’t want to go on anything that requires a lot of walking...But they have some great trips.”
- “The Rockville Little Theater is through the recreation department, musical groups are also through the recreation department.”
- “piano lessons here, a computer class, the fitness center, trips”

African American participants indicated that they prefer the Rockville Senior Center to Montgomery County programs and service for the convenience and quality.

- “more convenient for me”
- “the city programs are better than the county”

All of the African Americans reported participating in faith based organizations within their community, including programs for seniors.

- “3Cs, we have a senior’s group at our church...other kinds of service programs for seniors, counseling in financial matters, health matters, and ... a fitness program for all ages, including seniors.”
- “few trips and a lot of food”

African American participants were asked whether and why their friends do not participate in programs and services at the Rockville Senior Center. Participants indicated that their friends who do not live in Rockville do not participate because of the increased cost for non-resident participation. Others indicated that some of their friends participate in county programs instead.

- “a lot of my friends don’t live in the City of Rockville. And that’s one thing I think that keeps a lot of people from ... coming”
- “they have to pay more, too, if they want to go along for the trips or the use of the center”
- “some of my friends do participate in the county programs, they do the exercises... line dances and all that that the county has.”

Transportation

Participants were asked whether transportation is an issue for them getting to programs and services. Most of the participants reported that they still drive, so transportation is not an issue for them personally. However, participants all mentioned homebound and seniors with physical limitations as having a particularly challenging time. One participant mentioned that her sister “hasn’t come out for the winter” while another participant feels the “transportation system of the county leaves a bit lacking” and expressed the need for door-to-door transportation, or assistance leaving the home and getting into and out of a vehicle. Participants talked about the need for seniors to feel independent and not have to solely rely on friends and family.

- “I drive here, I’m still driving. I can, so it’s no problem.”
- “Yeah, I’m still driving until my children say otherwise.”
- “My sister uses the bus and she’s 84 or 85, she uses the bus when she comes [to Rockville Senior Center] but she hasn’t come out now for the winter. I mean, I brought her yesterday but ordinarily she takes the bus.”
- “they’re pretty much housebound. So, they really couldn’t go anywhere, even going to church was something where they need assistance.”
- “The cab service for handicapped is good but it’s not filling the needs of many... a lot of people who are essentially housebound or people who are in need of partial care in transportation and getting in and out of the house, let alone getting in and out of a vehicle... a service that covers that somehow...would be very helpful to many people”
- “I did have a friend...who was coming to [Rockville Senior Center], she had a stroke, she has limitation, but the bus was picking her up and at one point the bus driver told her he couldn’t pick her up anymore because the other riders were complaining that it took too long for her getting on and off the bus.” [Note, this scenario may not be entirely accurate.]
- “calling on neighbors or friends for transportation...is doable and friends and relatives may be willing but I don’t know if they enjoy it as much as being independent. So being independent or having that option would be very helpful. And the handicap transportation system of the county leaves a bit lacking in that category.”

Transportation Options – Circulator

At least one African American participant was aware of the circulator bus in Rockville. While others described the existing senior bus schedule as inconvenient because it requires users to stay at the grocery store longer than necessary. Participants agreed that the circulator would provide more autonomy and control over their schedule.

- “that [Rockville] bus, if I remember correctly, it goes at like 10:00 and takes you back at 12:00, and it doesn’t take you two hours to grocery shop.”
- “the mayor has talked about...circulators that would come into the neighborhoods and get you out and go into the Rockville area, and that would take care of, like you said, you see people, it takes two hours, but yet it would circulate regularly and get you out there and get you back home. [Circulator] to do errands that you may want to do out in Rockville. That would be helpful, if Rockville had something like that.”
- “The three places that I really need to go all the time really is to the drug store, to the grocery store, and the post office. But I’m limited in my capacity to run in and out of stores and things like that. The only grocery store I go to now are those who have a scooter.”
- “But I would like to have, be able to utilize the services of a taxi or [Circulator].”

Other Rockville Senior Services Community Centers

African American Seniors discussed participating in programs and services at community centers in neighborhoods with large senior populations. Several believe Rockville and Twinbrook to have more seniors than Thomas Farms. Others believe the Rockville Swim Center would be a good place for programs and services, as a “hub for seniors”. While one participant indicated she would attend programs and services at Lincoln Park Community Center “if they’re done as well as they do them here [Rockville Senior Center]” while another participant does not like the Lincoln Park Community Center fitness center.

- “Thomas Farm would probably not [have] many users among the senior population [because there isn’t a large senior population in Thomas Farm].”
- “They have some seniors but certainly not like Rockville and Twinbrook. And so I think the municipal [Rockville Swim] center may be...a hub for seniors.”
- “So those kinds of things I think are easy to recognize where the senior population within the various communities in Rockville, and this one [Rockville Senior Center] is located in a very convenient place. The Swim Center is perhaps kind of convenient, but there are a few other hubs in Murrayville, Lincoln Park, where there are lots of seniors. Twinbrook has lots of seniors.”
- “I live in Lincoln Park. The Lincoln Park Community Center has a Chinese senior citizen group that comes in on a regular basis. And I would go to senior programs at the Lincoln Park Community Center if they’re done as well as they do them here [Rockville Senior Center]. I would be willing to go right in my own community.”
- “This is a difficult place [Rockville Senior Center] to compete with... I find this more convenient.”
- “I was going to do exercise down at Lincoln Center but had to go down the steps, so doing steps is good exercise for me in my own home so I didn’t feel comfortable going...I didn’t like the way that the fitness center was.”

Awareness of the Programs and Services

Participants were asked about their awareness of programs and services offered at Rockville Senior Center. All participants are members of the Rockville Senior Center and reported feeling knowledgeable about the programs and services offered at Rockville Senior Center.

- “if you belong and you’re a member you get the Rockville Senior Center newsletter, everybody in Rockville gets Rockville Reports. They may have something in there concerning the Senior Center, but even if you just walk in here they’ve got flyers on a lot of their things as well.”
- “The recreation guide usually takes care of that.”
- “The guide gives you explicit what’s going on.”
- “It’s in the mail, it’s online, and the only one, the summer one, they don’t [mail], you have to come here and pick it up.”

Although the African American participants felt knowledgeable about programs and services offered through Rockville Senior Center, not everyone was fully aware of the various transportation and taxi options available through the City versus Rockville Senior Center. However, the lack of knowledge about transportation options may be due to the fact that this group largely still drives and is not in need of transportation. Another participant suggested that the Senior Center help inform seniors of various transportation options, including Uber and The Lift.

- “I just wondered do they come here [Rockville Senior Center] and pick up people, or do they come to your house?”
- “can anybody use it or do you have to be on certain income?”
- “The City Center bus I see at the grocery store a lot. Do you have to be here to get on the bus, or does the bus come to your house and take you to the store?”
- “I don’t know whether they have certain days when they go to certain stores, I think there may be certain days.”
- “Maybe the Senior Center needs to make seniors more informed about, what is it, Uber? ... they have something called Lift, too, I think. Maybe...get senior citizens acquainted with those services.”

Participants were also asked how easy or difficult it is to navigate the programs and services offered through Rockville Senior Services. Participants indicated they find it easy enough to enroll either online or in person at the Rockville Senior Center.

- “You can do it online or in person here.”
- “online, they have the course number and you login, there’s a recreation thing, you have your ID, your login. There are a few things on there where they’ve said you can’t do it, a few, I mean, maybe two or three of the ones that you can’t do online but everything else, the only problem with that is everybody doesn’t have access to computers.”
- “didn’t keep their [computer] literacy up ... And even those who had computer literacy when they were working gave it up when they quit.”

Overall participants indicated that the easiest way to get information to them and their friends is online. While some participants indicated snail mail is also useful. A community bulletin board was also believed to be useful, but with limited reach. One participant questioned effective sources of information for the homebound and those with limited transportation and believed newsletters to be a useful source of information. Additional sources of disseminating information were the Rockville City Website and Rockville Channel 11.

- “I think the easiest way is probably mail. The thing is, which we have no control over, is do they read it. You know, people get stuff all the time, they get it but if they’re not interested they’re not going to look at it...that’s something we don’t have any control over.”
- “I’m always online, I have a note, you know, ‘23rd, go online and see what the new programs are.”
- “I look at the recreation guide online, I don’t register online. I think I tried it once, it seemed kind of complicated, so I would just rather come here and do it or mail it in. But I just usually come here and do it.”
- “online is getting to be more popular.”
- “The *Sentinel* and the *Gazette* may be, in my circles, yesteryear resources.”
- I and most of my associates find [Community bulletin boards] informative and useful. I would not stop them but I think they don’t reach far enough, they only get those of us who are already involved and people who, that category of people that are not necessarily homebound but limited transportation and circulation, don’t see it. And they don’t get, if they get the news, I guess they get a newsletter, *Rockville News*, I don’t know what happens to them.”
- “[Rockville City Website] All the time, I was just on there this morning.”
- “*Rockville 11*, Channel 11, I’ve seen them scroll things [programs and events] on there.”

African American participants were very knowledgeable about programs and services in Rockville, but none felt knowledgeable about county programs and services.

- “Programs and services in Rockville compared to the county [are] certainly better advertised for Rockville citizens.”
- “I don’t get flyers or newsletters or those kinds of things on activities in the county, but I do get them in the Rockville newsletter and other circulars.”
- “Rockville put[s] out that nice recreation guide four times a year.”

Participants were asked about the best ways to inform them of programs and services. Most participants indicated that the Rockville Senior Center must coordinate with community, civic, and faith-based organizations as an effective way to help disseminate information not only to seniors, but to the wider community.

- “there are organizations that the city could utilize to get information to citizens, especially seniors... my church organization that I mentioned could be on the list of contact groups, as well as civic associations, many of the communities have active civic associations and they know who live in the community and age range, and people in the organizations are familiar with the limitations and interests of each other. And so civic associations would be one of the kinds of groups, I don’t know that they’re on the distribution list or information list for the city distribution.”
- “I think the NAACP, I don’t know whether they get anything on Rockville senior programs, so that might be something you need to look into, Masons, Elks, veterans groups, American Legion, Dawson’s Market and at Walgreen’s.”
- “Community Ministries of Rockville, which had about 18-20 churches in the city, and that’s another hub to get information out and disseminate it, and they have an interest in doing so, they have an interest in being actively in contact with their clientele...the one for the city is very active and very proactive. If you asked them to participate I’m sure they would be happy to, I don’t know if you’ve heard of yet, the Village concept. And that was sort of spearheaded by Rockville Community Ministry and it’s going, it’s beginning to take a lot of root and, and growing, and I think that same organization would be very glad to help get information out to people in the various communities through those twenty churches.”
- “one of the things I found out, at least in my household family and part of social circle, children and grandchildren come by and check your cell phone...And they’ll put the recreation guide on it. But many of them are not aware of it and so this is why I’m saying these organizations are very good outlets for getting the information popularized. I don’t think they have to continue to do it, but once it gets in the individuals’ thought system it will get used more than it does now.”

African American participants were asked about their opinions of the programs and services at the Rockville Senior Center, what they like and think needs improvement. Overall, participants spoke very highly of the programs and services offered through the Senior Center. However, several participants thought the Center could do a better job alleviating miscommunication about program location by installing monitors at the doors with information on the time and location of onsite events. While one participant felt there should be more consistency through evaluation and feedback on programs and services, others felt that feedback was received and programming was designed or redesigned accordingly. One participant commented that she appreciates the variety and quality of programs and services and the attentiveness of the staff.

- “When I go into seminars at hotels and such places there’s a monitor scrolling [with information about] where... [the event] is, what it is, who is sponsoring, [a] monitor by the door. Two units here [Rockville Senior Center] could serve that purpose... As soon as you come in the door you should be able to look at it and see everything that’s going on in this building today.”
- “I have come here for classes and seminars, I think there needs to be more consistency. And just like you’re doing today... an evaluation of whatever you attended, was it successful. I don’t

think there's consistency...there should be some feedback to the staff about what the participants felt about it."

- "I think they [Rockville Senior Center] do a pretty good job of taking suggestions...new ideas. This Philadelphia trip is the result of that, people expressing an interest in wanting an overnight trip, and so now, they have the Philadelphia trip. So when they can, they have their limitations, too, but they at least will... I can take suggestions back to the powers to be."
- "[the] variety of things [programs and services], quality, monitoring on part of the staff, or staffing the programs such that they have staff available for the programs to coach the participants through, it is a great help. And the staff also develops a lot of the programs and get input from the participants so that they can modify next month or next quarter, and that's very helpful. And I don't think many of the centers could do that, it takes too much staff."

Gaps in Available Services

African American participants were asked about senior's unmet needs in their community. Participants agreed that programs providing opportunities for homebound seniors to socialize while also providing relief for their caregivers is needed. One participant also mentioned increasing the volunteer base for activities such as snow removal.

- "it would be nice if some of the people that are homebound could get out at least once a month and get out and be among other people. It would be great but I know a bus with a lift would definitely be needed for that."
- "But the, the other part of it is getting the caregivers relieved a couple times a month at least."
- "Some places have senior daycare facilities and it doesn't have to be a daily 8-hour, 12-hour kind of, 10-hour kind of situation. It could be something like a short period, 3-4 hour daycare. Those kinds of things both get people out of the house, get them socialized with others in their generation, and gives the relief, provides a relief for the caregiver. And I don't know of any programs like that. But there may be some."
- "There was an interesting article in the *Post* shortly after the snow that talked about how young kids and teenagers used to be lining up with their shovels asking you [to shovel], now you can't find them anywhere... When we were young we used to do that, that's how we made our money."
- "I guess if they could increase their, of course they can't make people volunteer but an increase in the volunteer base would be very helpful. The mayor and her husband are out every snow storm."

Participants were asked about programs and services that they or others like them would like to participate in that are not currently available. While one participant could not think of any gaps, she felt the variety of programs and services to be extensive, several others mentioned the need for transportation, elder daycare and expert lectures on topics relevant to adults 60 and over. Several participants liked the idea of a bulletin board at the Rockville Senior Center for members to informally

connect based on shared interests. All agreed about the need for the Center to facilitate the dissemination of information to utilize the skills of adults over 60.

- “I think transportation and daycare, elder, senior daycare would, would be very helpful.”
- “it would be nice to have a bulletin board here [Rockville Senior Center] that would have to be kind of monitored, ‘Are you interested in’, and somebody, you could put up your name and your telephone number and what the interest is, and anybody could get in touch with each other and see what you can get going.”
- “[bulletin board] I don’t [know] anything about playing cards, I know nothing...I would just like somebody willing to sit down with me and teach me about card playing, that’s the kind of things that would be on the bulletin board.”
- “Also we need to have some way of utilizing the skills of the over 60 people... we don’t have a way of connecting broadly enough to get that information out. The bulletin board would certainly help with that.”
- “A lot of us talk about health. But maybe it would be helpful if we had someone who could talk about it in a more enlightening manner... especially health because all of us have input on that and all of us have needs.”
- “I personally cannot think of any. They have such a variety, they have a lunch program every day, a supper club, I think it’s now every three months, but the variety here, to me there’s something for everybody, at least something between the exercises, the trips, the seminars, the clubs, the luncheon, the birthday parties every month.”

Participants discussed how not having needed programs and services to assist family caregivers is difficult on Rockville families. A participant shared an example of how his neighbors formed a coop to assist with snow removal as a way of addressing an unmet need.

- “There are people who have home care relatives in the house and they’re sort of trapped in the house with them, and it’s very demanding on caregivers. But I don’t know of any ready relief other than calling on family members who are sometimes out of town.”
- “Some of my community formed sort of a coop, bought a snow thrower, there’s ten people, there were ten people in it, the...five young people agreed to do the driveways and the sidewalks for the five older.”

Barriers to Participation

Participants were informed that Rockville Senior Services would like to see more adults age 60 and older who are not currently participating in programs and services start participating. Additionally, the Center would especially like to see more African American men and women participating. The participants were asked about their thoughts on reasons more African Americans are not utilizing programs and services at Rockville Senior Center. One participant described the Center as a very open and welcoming atmosphere. Another suggested establishing advocates in the community to help get more African Americans involved. This participant suggested that the lack of African American participation may be a

lingering effect from a time when African Americans “felt very excluded”. Another participant thought the Center should do a better job advertising to stimulate interest in both participation in programs as well as volunteer opportunities.

- “I can’t really think of a reason why because the center certainly is welcoming. Everybody’s cordial and I can’t think of a reason other than the things we have said about the lift and all of that... I guess we seem to be pretty involved...I do know of one person who wanted to come but she wasn’t old enough, so as soon as she’s old enough I will encourage her to come. And I guess we’ll just have to take it upon ourselves to encourage other African-Americans to come here.”
- (Awareness) That’s one. Another is, I found that a lot of people are overloading themselves with other kinds of activities. I’m one of them. And so they feel tired from doing all of the other things, some of them are for family, some of them are community, and most of us have either relatives or friends who have high maintenance requirements, not necessarily financial but assisting those people who are not familiar with the programs here and who don’t utilize them. So I think that’s one of the things that the [focus group] participants who are here need to be stronger advocates among our associates and acquaintances, to get people involved in something outside of the traditions that they have been in for many years when they were, felt very excluded. And that carries over to now when the exclusion is not there, and they still feel this.
- “feedback, if made available widely to the city population, would do a lot towards stimulating interest and utilizing the programs, and in bringing new information and asking for volunteers... We were talking about youth participating in the various things but the youth can now get credit in school for participating...and so those things could be just a little more advertising.”

Two African American participants mentioned making the Rockville Senior Center meeting spaces available to other organizations or groups and conduct tours and open houses as a way to bring new people to the Center. One participant added, “there’s something about having been there, ‘I saw that and I’ll go back’.” A third participant also shared that some people simply lack the interest in participating in programs and services. When asked for any final thoughts on getting people involved in the Rockville Senior Center, a participant commented and others agreed, “Just don’t give up”.

- “I am the treasurer for the Willing 3Cs and I notice when we had our meeting... before Christmas...we had a beautiful turnout, I think we had about 25 people... And our meeting is here now at this center... And I thought it was helpful...somebody came and was helping us...what they usually do is tell you what’s going on and the programs that you might want to participate in.”
- “other organizations, social organizations, clubs or groups that meet periodically that might want to come here periodically just for a tour. So if you’re part of, or know somebody who is a part of a lodge or a club... a tour once a quarter or once, twice a year through the senior center might be helpful, informative, and it may not be just this one because there are other centers around, there’s something about having been there and, “I saw that and I’ll go back.”

- “And I talk to friends that are my age or older who are eligible to come [to the Rockville Senior Center], they’re just not interested and that’s the one thing we don’t have any control over. We can tell everybody we know, I do it on my street, I do it at my church, at our civic association meetings, we actually get the senior newsletter and that gets passed around. So I don’t know of what kind of strategy you can really do just to make people want to come... I just don’t know that coming to a seminar or doing something when they really wouldn’t have that big an impact on other activities that you’re doing.”

Innovation, Trends and Best Practices

Participants were asked about other organizations or programs and services that are especially unique and interesting. African American participants believe that the Rockville Senior Center is providing the best programs and services in the community.

- “I think the senior center is the most unique.”
- “I don’t know of anybody that touches it, I really don’t.”
- “This is a difficult place to compete with.”

5.2.2 Other Rockville Residents Age 60+ Focus Group

Utilization of Services

Participants were asked about their awareness of the programs and services available for adults age 60 and older offered through Rockville Senior Services and Senior Center. Participants overwhelmingly indicated that they are not aware of programs and services offered through Rockville Senior Services and Senior Center. A younger, recently retired participant indicated she didn't know what she didn't know.

- “We know what we know but we don't know what we don't know.”
- “I'm not that well informed”
- “I've seen on the web, on the City of Rockville website what's available for seniors in Rockville. I don't know what's available other than what I'm looking for but, it would be nice to know, have more of a portal for seniors to say, you know, 'I'm looking for fitness classes during the day,' or 'I'm looking for adult services', or a bridge club, or adult daycare, and 'What are my options?' So I think a streamlined inventory of services that everybody can get to when you just kind of do a search... 'Where's the adult daycare in Rockville', or 'I have somebody with Alzheimer's, I need help'. So there needs to be a comprehensive catalog of these things... What about people that don't have computers... you need a paper copy, it gets pretty complicated, what you need, but there should be such a catalog of some sort.”
- “recreation guide...that's really just for classes... it doesn't mention what you're talking about [comprehensive catalog of programs and services]... But why not add to that, why not have a page in there that lists help with Alzheimer's, senior assistance programs in addition to, that would save some money because they're printing this thing anyway... but it's just things that the city offers... we need to expand that.”

Participants largely reported being non-users of programs and services designed specifically for adults age 60 and older. When asked the reasons why participants are non-users, two participants attributed their lack of participation to laziness, while another prefers the flexibility of working out at a gym with a drop in schedule of classes.

- “In my case it's called classic laziness...Really, I go through that catalog and I check off all these things I'm interested in and I don't come over and do them. I should be working out at the gym, there's some art classes I'd like to take. I don't know, but life gets in the way of one's plans.”
- “We talk about it a lot, my wife and I ... like you say... [we're] lazy.”
- “I belong to a fitness center, Gold's Gym, and the reason that I belong there, I'm a member here and I could go to the swim center fitness room, but the reason I like that is because they offer a variety of classes all day long and you don't have to sign up for them. You just go and you pay a monthly membership, which is not terrible, and then you can take five or ten classes a week and you just get a schedule and you can just show up. And I just like that flexibility. If I sign up for a class here, if I want to take four classes a week, I have to sign, I have to sign up for four classes

but then I have to be there at 9:00 each day or something. So I like the idea of having the open availability of classes when I'm available."

Participants were asked about programs and services they're interested in participating. Participants expressed an array of thoughts on participation in programs and services, including:

- "So if I can't figure it out myself I don't want it, and I'm getting to that point that I'm not sure I want to come to a class and listen to a younger person tell me how to do it [art]. But maybe I would."
- "I'm going to go back to aerobic water exercises because it was fun and you get to know the people and it's sort of a little social group actually in many ways, and it's also excellent, I plan to. If only I can find someone to remind me to take my hearing aids out."
- "There is a program...Senior Sneakers...you go between the hours of maybe 10-3, Monday through Thursday at the ... [gym] I go to, and you pay a reduced rate and you can use the gym... But they're Montgomery County, though, they're not in Rockville. That's what I'm saying, Rockville should have something similar to that particular program."

Though participants were not currently participating in programs and services at the Rockville Senior Center, most reported having participated in the past.

- "I have taken some courses here [Rockville Senior Center] in computer, various types of computer programming... I'd like to see a course in how to use an iPad more effectively. Also, I have a smartphone, I'm a stupid user, I still haven't figured out how to use it, so again, having some kind of offering there that would help people who need a little help getting started."
- "I've done the gym at one time."
- "And we did take a, an exercise class in this building."
- "I've attended some workshops here and lectures, and then some of the special events that they have like the Christmas time yard sale and many of the birthday party events and things like that."
- "I'm here representing the Chinese Culture and Community Service. We do have a senior nutrition program that is sponsored by Montgomery County, but also come to Rockville... We have activities every Friday we actually use the [Rockville Senior Center] space, the all-purpose room... for an activity from 9:30-2:00. And it's been very, very appreciated and each day we have about 80-90 people."
- "I do have a garden plot out here and that's been something that attracted me to come... to be able to rent the garden space and have the tools available and be able to grow my own vegetables. So I think that's really great."

Participants who do not participate in programs and services offered through Rockville Senior Services and Senior Center were asked what prevents them from participating. An artist and former art teacher indicated that she doesn't think the art classes would be at the caliber she'd expect. A recently retired

participant indicated she hasn't mentally transitioned to retirement and therefore hasn't considered the programs and services available. Another participant attributed her lack of participation to laziness, and also mentioned that she appreciates the assistance offered in the fitness room. A Chinese Culture and Community Service Center representative indicated that their members utilize the programs and services.

- "I always think it's going to be on a level that's a little lower. Like art, I'm an artist and have taught a lot. I would never have somebody come here for art... you'll get a higher quality in a college, if you go to one of the colleges and take their art course it's going to be a better course."
- "it's an age thing, I just haven't quite gotten into that mindset yet that it's available and I just recently retired."
- "I just don't do it right now because I'm lazy, as this lady says...But it's available and open and it's comfortable to go and they have help within the fitness room... I really like that too."
- "Chinese Culture and Community Service Center [members]... some of them do, I just don't know... our center also have activities like line dance, Mahjong and English teaching, and computer learning. We have our own programs so some of the senior, our own senior members participate in those classes."

Transportation

Participants were asked whether or not transportation is an issue for them to attend programs and services. Though several participants are still driving, one mentioned that she was unable to secure transportation service to a doctor's appointments when she was temporarily unable to drive and as a result was forced to take a taxi. Although not in need themselves, some participants were aware of transportation offered through the Rockville Senior Center. Other participants were unaware of Rockville senior transportation options and believed it difficult for non-driving residents to not only get to doctor's appointments, but to the Center as well.

- "I temporarily couldn't see well enough to drive... [and] I had to get to the doctor and I couldn't find any [taxi] that would give me a reduced rate...They told me if I waited, if I applied someplace and waited a month or two then I would have something, but I didn't have time, I had to do it, so I ended up having to pay for taxis. So that's something I think would be nice, if they had a temporary program where you could pay at a reduced rate to be taken to your doctor or whatever."
- "I don't know how extensive they are but I do know that if I want to come to the senior center and my car isn't running, I can call the senior center, they will pick me up and bring me here, and take me home... Now I don't know if that's just Rockville City residents or if somebody who lives on the outskirts."
- "The transportation system I think is great, the transportation that we have, that Rockville has here with the busses that will bring you here to the Center, they will get you to the grocery store and help you get your groceries in, I think is wonderful if people want to stay in their homes..."

and not be in a senior assisted living but to be able to still do that and get to the store without having to drive to get here. And then the taxi coupon for low income seniors really does help a population that really needs helping. And I agree that it should be kept for low income because I think that is a service that's needed."

- "I can easily imagine that a lot of people who live on the other side of Rockville from here would find that it would be difficult getting here if they didn't have a car."
- "I do know that the city busses will take you to your doctor's appointments." [This is a misconception, Rockville Senior Center busses do not take seniors to appointments.]

Other Rockville Senior Services Community Centers

Participants were asked whether they would use programs and services through Rockville Senior Services if offered at neighborhood community centers. Participants believe King Farm, Lincoln Park and Twinbrook would be especially good communities for Rockville Senior Services to provide programs and services.

- "Sure. And King Farm has a community center and they might be very interested in having courses over there... having speakers or having classes taught right there might help people."
- "the amount of residents in the east side by Lincoln Park and Twinbrook, I think it would be very beneficial to have programs or even a center there in that area. Because again, it's a long ways. Rockville's not that big but for them to come over here it's, it's quite a bit farther... and especially if we're serving a lower income population, I think it would be really nice to have additional services in the east side of the city, definitely... it's not that it's so far but when you're tired and you just want to hang out and do your exercises and then go home or something it was just a little too far."
- "I was thinking of joining the gym [at the Rockville Senior Center] but I live in Twinbrook Forest, which is in that area, and it was just too far for me to come [to the Rockville Senior Center] every day or a few times a week for me."
- "Yes...the gym, if they [Twinbrook] had a gym or something like that, yeah."

Awareness of the Programs and services

Participants were uncertain how the Rockville Senior Center communicates information to seniors and the community at large and overwhelmingly thought emails and mailings would be helpful ways to disseminate information about programs and services.

- "So if you're a member of the Rockville Senior Center, in other words you've paid your \$30 or whatever it is, you get e-mails?"
- "I'm a member of the King Farm listserv, which is enormously helpful to me for different reasons, and I'd love to be on the listserv for Rockville Senior Center."

- “I’m a member here but I’m not on the listserv... I think it would be nice to periodically send it out to everybody 60 and above or whatever, whether you’re a member or not, and say, ‘Here’s how you sign up’”
- “I get mailings.”
- “So you’d think that if they were looking to expand services they would send something to the whole [email] list.”
- “maybe once a year or every six months or something they could ... send [email] out saying, ‘This is the only one you’re going to get for six months but if you want to find out more, here’s how you signup’.”
- “In the mail... We get it every two months or something like that.”
- “I don’t think [receives mailings].”

Effective Sources of Information

Participants were asked about the best ways to inform them of programs and services. Most participants prefer email, while others still prefer postal mail. All participants agreed that an annual mailing to all Rockville households would be worthwhile to inform residents age 60 and older and their families of programs and services. Participants indicated that the Rockville City Website would be a good source for information on senior services, but were unaware that much of this information is currently available on the Rockville Senior Services Website. Another participant commented that she no longer believes printed newspapers to be an efficient use of resources. All participants agreed about the need for a central resource or repository of information for senior services. One participant also suggested a presence at community events as a source for increasing awareness of programs and services.

Email and Postal Mail

- “E-mail, absolutely, yeah”
- “E-mail, yeah”
- “E-mail”
- “E-mail for me”
- “Regular mail for me because I don’t want any [email]”
- “Postal mail is probably what I would want to get, but not too often, once a month maybe some sort of little note about new services, about services you might have forgotten, that kind of thing I think would be best by regular mail.”
- “I think it might be really worthwhile for the City of Rockville to publish maybe once a year something like that [Montgomery County seniors resources guide] and mail it to every household in Rockville, not just the members of a Senior Center, but to every household...Because I may have my mother just moving in with me, and I’m 45 let’s say, and I want to find something for her to do. Or I may invite her to live with me if I know that there’s things for her. So I think it really is beneficial to mail a mass mailing to every single resident with the services for seniors at least once a year.”

Rockville City Website

- “I go into the website frequently but I know what I’m looking for so I would probably not notice a little box somewhere that says ‘New information for seniors’, I probably wouldn’t see it.”
- “I think website would be helpful, if I’m searching for anything that would be related to Rockville City then the first thing I go is Rockville City website and search for what I need.”
- “Yeah, I would do the same thing [search Rockville City website].”

Printed Newspapers

- “The printed newspapers are kind of going out, it’s just not worth the money to put an ad in something like that.”
- “*Beacon* newspapers is the one... that might be a good place to advertise.”

Sources of Information

- “One of the best things that the Rockville Senior Services can provide is a focused communication because there’s a lot of services ... out there and we need to have a repository of that information available that we can tap into. For example, when you decide you’re going to have a Villages, where do you go for information, where do you find the resources if you want to start a Mahjong club or a transportation club or a series on nutrition or a series on health topics for the elderly, or whatever the topic might be, how do you, where do you access that... there ought to be someplace within the City of Rockville that is the resource for this kind of thing that you can tap into electronically.”

Community Resources and Outreach

- “[King Farm Community Center has] an event in October... And we get 60-70 different merchants who are represented, many of them are public service, we had somebody from Shady Grove Hospital this year, we had somebody from the Red Cross. Why not somebody from the Senior Center set up a table? I mean, you’re going to reach, because people come to this not just from King Farm but from areas, from Derwood and Falls Grove, and this has been the fourth or fifth year we’ve done this and each year it gets bigger.”

Gaps in Available Services – Villages

All of the participants were aware of the Village concept and felt it a key missing component to the programs and services available to Rockville senior residents. Several participants are actively involved in starting neighborhood Villages in their communities and expressed the need for a Rockville liaison or central clearinghouse to assist with the creation of neighborhood Villages. Participants believe that the Village concept will assist with residents’ ability to age-in-place.

- “What you’re looking for is just temporary help getting to a doctor or something when you need it. That is the basis [for] trying to start a Villages program in King Farm...if you could get a program started in your community where, we only have about fifteen members now but if you

need a ride to the doctor you would call whoever is covering the telephone and you'd tell them what you need.

- "I know about the Village because like five years ago I tried to start a Village."
- "I did, too."
- "I'm very familiar with it."
- "And that might be a service that the Senior Center, or Senior Services in Rockville wants to get involved in, is encouraging and providing a liaison to the Villages. Try to get them because instead of saying Rockville's going to do everything, maybe they could do some more coordination to get Villages started within these neighborhoods."
- That would be good because the services we're talking about aren't really necessities, but... make life a little easier for everybody.
- "The *Beacon* newspaper... on the front page [there] was this big meeting that Montgomery County had for Villages, aging in place. We've been involved with this now only for about 4-5 months and I've been fairly active in the Rockville Villages Advisory Committee and that was the first I had heard of that meeting that took place in December, and was touted as being an enormous success. And it had I think... close to two hundred people there, but I never heard of it. Not that I should have necessarily, but it seems to me somebody in Rockville should have said, 'Hey, there's this thing going on and maybe you might want to attend.' So communication to me is a huge issue with what's missing here."
- "We're trying to establish a Village movement in King Farm. Not just what we think would be helpful but what other people who attended our last meeting thought would be helpful. Socials is right at the top of the list because in our community, if you have little kids, you get to know the parents...if you have a dog, you get to know other dog owners, and so on. But for some reason or other seniors don't have a way of getting together on a social basis and getting to know each other. Another, home care could be helpful at certain times... it's not going to happen too often, and if somebody took advantage of this service then maybe there would be some way that they could commit, return the courtesy so to speak."
- "I'm just getting to the point, and I think it's a result of this whole discussion on Villages and aging in place, etcetera, because just in the last year or so there's been physical things which have occurred in my life and my wife's life that have made me realize that I'm no spring chicken anymore and that there are some things here which would not have appealed to me even a year or so ago because in my own mind, my own ego, I didn't want to admit that I was a senior citizen and didn't want to be seen over there with all of those people who were on walkers or what have you. But I'm past that now. So I'm more receptive as a consequence of the recent experiences, I want to be more involved. Number one, I want to engage more with people like my buddy... who is a superb influence on me, seriously, and so I'm ready to take, be more active, both in the creation of what I think we need to have in King Farm, but also what we need to have in my view, a broader Rockville and Montgomery County services availability so people can indeed stay in their own homes and age in place. And I see the Rockville Senior Center as the possible central focal point for enabling that to occur."

Barriers to Participation

Participants were asked whether there is anything about Rockville Senior Services or Senior Center that prevents them from participating.

Stigma

The word “senior” is stigmatizing and as a result is a barrier to participation for a younger cohort of adults. Most of the participants mentioned a lack of association with the word “senior” and as a result, don’t view a “senior center” as a place for them. Several participants agreed that the Rockville Senior Center might consider changing the name to eliminate the word “senior”.

- “for some people you have a stereotype, when you say a “senior center”, that’s the only thing you really have in common with most people is your age.”
- “if you’re feeling healthy and vital you don’t necessarily want to go and be in that situation because you’re not going to necessarily have anything in common really with them. And even though I’m getting up there, I still feel that way. I’m not sure that I want to be surrounded by people who just have in common with me their age.”
- “Yeah, there’s a lot of that I’m sure. In fact, I sort of feel that way myself sometimes [not sure she wants to be surrounded by people who just have their age in common].”
- “Because when I was 50, you know, I was a lot younger than I am now and I felt differently, so now when I meet somebody 50 they’re like a child.”
- “Well, I’m a little too young. I mean... I do fit into that age group but just having recently retired, I haven’t quite gotten into, ‘Okay, I can come up here during the day and take classes.’ And we’re working part-time and volunteering and things so I’m still trying to work out my schedule, so. I plan to take full advantage of it because I know that there’s wonderful programs here, and I’ve seen the quality of them, just be outstanding. My friends who have taken the art classes, watercolor and things, their painting is unbelievable. I think it will be something I will take, I will strongly take advantage of, I just haven’t done it yet. I’m a member but that’s about it.”
- “I think maybe changing the name might be a good thing, too. I’ve read a lot of different places and some of them are going to just ‘adult’ or ‘active adult’, or something that you can attach an age to, but you don’t really call it ‘senior’. It could be a person’s name of the center, ‘The Bob Silva Community Center for Adults’ or something like that, but that might be a little bit of what’s keeping people away. You don’t think of yourself as a senior.”
- “That’s a good point [changing the name and not thinking of yourself as a senior].”

Fees

The cost of programs and services was also mentioned as a barrier to participation for seniors who are on a fixed income.

- “What about their fee schedule here [Rockville Senior Center], most of the courses, and the gym of course, charge a fee for most of their activities, for example, the French course, I think it was \$40-50... And that really adds up in a hurry when you’re on a fixed income.”
- “if we’re using a city facility and city resources, a lot of which are already paid for by tax revenue, at least to some extent, whether some of those course fees might be less than they are. Not necessarily free, but maybe less. And I don't know if that’s a barrier, or not... when I saw that it was \$40 I was going to send my wife and not go.”
- “we’re on a fixed income, very small income, and so I’ve gotten very parsimonious with everything that I spend, I ask myself do I really need this or not, and so even lowering those fees a little bit... there are always at least two or three things I’m interested in here, you add that up and it’s just out of the cost.”

Access to the Senior Center

Some participants mentioned the lack of access to the Rockville Senior Center via Piccard Street as a hindrance and creates a “hassle” to attend.

- “Piccard Street coming through so that I can get here... Access is key... I can get here a whole lot more easily, and many people who, who live in King Farm would avail themselves of this facility if that were there.”
- “for me it’s access... I came to this January birthday party and as I was leaving I stopped by the front desk because I wanted to get some kind of cardio workout going for myself. I picked up, I think it was three flyers, one of which was specifically cardio. That was January the 6th, I carted them home and that was great. They’re done now, they’re over, and why didn’t I sign up? The main reason is because it’s a hassle getting here. And again I say if access were easier I think I would have followed through on that.”

Ways to Stimulate Participation

Participants were asked what Rockville Senior Services and Senior Center can do to get people like them interested in participating in programs and services. Participants mentioned more social and intellectual programming as well as outreach to minority groups to engage populations not currently engaged in the Rockville Senior Center.

- “Happy hour once a month”
- “... choose one area to make it outstanding, to make this memorable, this rec center, hire a resident poet to write poetry and have all kinds of classes on poetry, and so we would be a literary rec center, or literary senior center. Or something a little different...capture peoples’ imagination and get them to do something outside of themselves maybe, something different. And something a little more intellectual than is normal at a senior center, to hire very good attorneys to, not just lecture about wills but to lecture about more obscure things.”
- “one of the things I was thinking of is along your line of intellectual stimulation, they do a lot of things here that are like that, but maybe really advertise it as such... get outside yourself, there’s

constantly things like I've mentioned, the watercolor classes and things that are really good, but it's getting people to attend."

- "should there be some direct contact between the senior center to the Chinese population, to the Latino population that doesn't speak English... I don't know the answer to that question, but it's something that maybe should be looked into."

Awareness and Communication

Participants overwhelmingly felt that the Rockville Senior Center needs to do targeted outreach to the larger community (e.g., younger seniors, younger adults) and communication and advertising to promote the Center and its programs and services.

- "if you're trying to get younger seniors involved, people who are 60-70 [years], it might be nice to advertise that as new seniors or, more social events for people to get out and to know what's here at the [Rockville Senior] Center. Because I know most of my friends who are our age, we don't think about it, we're still working or just or not thinking about joining a senior center, but it might be nice to have some events or programs specifically targeted to young seniors to say, "Come here and see what we have," or "Get involved," in some way.
- "the extent to which the [Rockville] Senior Center is broader than seniors. And I say that in the context of at some point the folks in the city who are now 50, 45, even younger, hopefully are going to mature and graduate to our status and maybe we ought to start thinking broader than just 60 and somehow promote ourselves as more than a senior center or more than senior services, and not to relegate any of the services to a lesser status but broaden the status along the lines mentioned in terms of disability services or services where younger people can be involved within the broader community. That's kind of a random, not well thought out thought but something that broadens, broadens the concept of community."
- I've learned so much personally from this group today, I didn't know half the things that you [another participant who is younger and recently retired] were talking about and I've lived here a long time. And so it's a communications problem."
- "I think awareness and communication is important... I live here for thirty-some years in Rockville City, I don't remember I receive anything related to senior programs from City or Rockville or Montgomery County. Once in a while I receive something from Montgomery Community College about adult education program. Other than that, I don't remember seeing anything, and I'm sure there's some programs would be very interesting and if I know it, I probably will attend it."
- "I've been fairly active in the Rockville Villages Advisory Committee and that was the first I had heard of that meeting that took place in December, and was touted as being an enormous success... but I never heard of it. Not that I should have necessarily, but it seems to me somebody in Rockville should have said, 'Hey, there's this thing going on and maybe you might want to attend.' So communication to me is a huge issue with what's missing here."
- "[Rockville Senior Services Home Maintenance program] something that probably needs a lot more advertising because it is a great program."

- “I didn’t even know that it [Rockville Senior Services Home Maintenance program] was available.”

Innovation and Trends and Best Practices

Although participants in the Other Rockville Residents focus group are not members and do not currently participate in programs and services at the Rockville Senior Center, most reported past participation in programs and services at the Center. Overall, participants thought very highly of the programs and services the Rockville Senior Center provides the community.

- “As far as [Rockville] Senior Center is concerned, it is a wonderful facility with so many, countless opportunities.”

5.2.3 Community Leaders Focus Group

Awareness of the Programs and Services and Senior Needs

Community Leader participants were asked about their knowledge of programs and services offered to Rockville residents. Several participants were aware of programs and services offered either through Rockville Senior Center or as a result of their involvement in organizations for which they volunteer. Participants felt unaware of programs and services community-wide.

- “I think I’m fairly aware of what’s happening at the [Rockville] Senior Center because I’m involved in the Senior Center. I don’t know that I know what’s happening around Rockville other than what’s at the Senior Center and I’ll go a step farther and say I don’t know that Rockville actually publicizes its senior events or its senior programs as well as it might.”
- “If you belong to the [Rockville] Senior Center you get a newsletter and you know what’s going on within the Senior Center and what [services] they provide. If you go outside to the city areas, I don’t think they get the same information as we get.”
- “I do volunteer work with Community Ministries, so I know they have an elder program but if you don’t do volunteer work with Community Ministries or you don’t know Community Ministries, you don’t know that those programs exist and I think part of the problem is, and I talk to people in my community who don’t know what’s out there other than what they get from the [Rockville] Senior Center... we have the website for our community and we have e-blasts for management, that we put city news on once a week so sometimes those events and activities will come up but otherwise there’s really, unless you want to actually sit and go through the city website and look for or search for senior events, activities, programs, you don’t know.”
- “people who belong to the [Rockville] Senior Center are more aware.”

Lack of Awareness in Programs and Services

Participants in the Community Leaders Group were asked their perception regarding the lack of awareness among seniors of the available programs and services. Some participants thought the Rockville Senior Center members are more aware of programs and services as a result of their membership, while other seniors are not as aware, specifically Latinos. Several participants thought that the City of Rockville as well as Rockville Senior Services and Senior Center need to do more to increase awareness of programs and services.

- “The [Rockville] Senior Center members understand and get a lot of information because they know what’s going on here, what services are provided, but once that goes outside to the other older individuals that are outside the Senior Center, I don’t [know] if they get that information or not.”
- “We’ve talked to *Rockville Reports*, actually recommended in a very small meeting some of us had with them a few months ago about actually doing a senior page because that goes door to door to all city residents and I know in *Rockville Reports*, at least the first one that advertised or

announced this survey, it was a little tiny box about this big and if you didn't go through *Rockville Reports* or you couldn't see that little box because as you get older, you need glasses more, you missed the fact that there was a survey at all. So I think that... the city just needs to figure out how to reach its population better."

- "There are programs that aren't part of the [Rockville] Senior Center like the fact [that] you don't have to take your trash cans up to the curb, that you can have the refuse workers come if you're unable to bring those up that I think people aren't necessarily aware of and some of it's just like pushing that message out and reminding people, 'Hey, these things are available to you if you need them.' I think snow removal is probably a big thing... because a lot of people didn't know they could've called the [Rockville] Senior Center and had some volunteer go out and help them out or some of the communities posted and unless you are tuned in... you wouldn't know that's there. So you had seniors saying, 'I was stuck in my house for a week, I didn't know what to do.'"
- "And a lot of people don't know to go to *Channel 11* either to get the information."
- "I think there's a lot of people out there that don't get the services because they're not technology savvy or affordable and then we have a lot of people that speak different languages still that are not connected. We don't have a connect to city services. Once again, that's across the board, not just senior, because of their language barriers."
- "I've got minor suggestions for how to better advertise... if they just put a senior button on the city's webpage that could take you to all the things that you guys were talking about because the [Rockville] Senior Center does offer a lot, but they could have input from the Chinese daycare, senior daycare system... Chinese American Organization...CCACC, and also in the Hispanic community, have a button on the senior [website] because a lot of the seniors are techno savvy, sort of, they can get on the internet, they can find the basic, but if we... help them by having a senior button that would take them to the senior services, they could list all kinds of things in there to make it better advertised."
- "*Rockville Reports*... have their reports in different languages so that they could get that information out as well. They do it with [Spanish] Hispanic [sic] but they don't do the other [languages], they have talked about maybe Chinese."
- "I think we have a vast array of resources here [Rockville] Senior Center. I think it all comes back to people, they don't know where to get them. They're out there, but there's not a one stop shopping that you can go to get, not just city but county and federal assistance."
- "Asian population, they're very well aware of the services provided and have a big presence up here at the [Rockville] Senior Center, but the Hispanic population, is out of touch in any way, every way with senior services."
- "but they still don't understand what the actual Senior Center provides because they're so used to just going to that community and not going outside the community because maybe they didn't want to drive or they don't even know what's, what's available to them."

Gaps and Duplication of Services

Participants were asked where they see a need for additional programs and services for adults age 60 and older. Participants identified affordable housing, neighborhood Villages and additional community resources as some of the gaps in programs and services needed, but currently not available.

Affordable Housing for Older Adults

- “One of the things that I heard in one of the master plan listening sessions held here was seniors who want to live in Rockville who are retired on fixed incomes and don’t want to live in plus 55 housing are finding it too expensive to stay... I think that’s critical, I hear it in my rather affluent community, too, where people, moved in fifteen, twenty years ago were working full time, making good salaries, retired, now fixed incomes, are saying, ‘we can’t afford to stay in Rockville anymore and we want to stay in diverse communities, culturally, age-wise, we don’t want to be stuck in a senior housing thing.’ And so it surprised me a little bit when I heard it... some of the seniors were saying, ‘it’s getting harder to stay here but we like Rockville. We’ve been here, we want to stay here but can we afford to?’”
- “look at renters, now we do have the moderately priced dwelling unit program, but again, there’s people kind of fell [between]... don’t qualify... right above that... and a lot of seniors do rent and that’s maybe where we have not been addressing the affordability issue.”

Villages

- “Some of the communities are trying to develop their own Village concepts to help seniors in their communities. And I think it would be helpful... we are trying to help define that position... to have a hub here, then spokes out to the community so the communities are kind of controlling their own destiny. There are seniors out in those communities and sometimes it’s simple things, you may not be homebound, but you are a senior who wants to stay in your home and there are things you can no longer do.”
- And when I have people come to me and say, “Can we form a seniors club?” But we want to be able to share ideas and help each other and do things together and I think that’s so critical to take that whole concept forward.”
- “I think when you look at our population you have a lot of seniors whose families aren’t necessarily here. They don’t have that support system and so it’s supporting them but I think it’s also providing resources and information for their children or grandchildren who are in other places who are looking to help with, remotely, in terms of helping their loved ones.”
- “I think the Village is extraordinarily important to advocate for, but I also think that we need a comprehensive matrix of all the resources available to people. It’s all scattered everywhere and we just need to have someone put it together so that you actually have, once again, one stop resource shopping. And we could build everything off that because you know what you have and what you don’t have and the experience of everybody of what is needed in a particular section of the city.”

Community Resources

- “The Rockville City senior population is not going down, it’s going up, and as people choose to stay here, it’s going to go up considerably more so I think it’s very critical to have that whole resource guide with the names, the numbers, the webs, the organizations that are actually available to do that kind of thing.”
- “the city’s already kind of moving in this direction but offering more programming, particularly like exercise classes or those sorts of things, not just here at the Senior Center but at other rec centers around Rockville, because I think, particularly when you talk about other parts of our community, like Twinbrook, people might be more familiar, more comfortable to go to the rec center that’s in their neighborhood versus coming across town, and I know we are starting to do some programming that way but I’d really like to continue to see a push for that.”

Duplication of Services

Participants were asked about overlap or duplication of efforts in programs and services for adults age 60 and older in Rockville. Though participants identified a few overlaps in County and City programs and services, none thought this duplication a problem, and believe the overlap provides more options and is considered beneficial to older residents.

- “At times there’s competing interests between the Rockville Senior Center and the Montgomery County Senior Services, they all offer similar type programs. There’s a little bit of cross pollination there, but there’s also people that are very attuned to Montgomery County services and not attuned to Rockville, or attuned to Rockville and not attuned to Montgomery County.”
- “Why is there an issue with duplication for the senior community, who cares if they can get duplicate services, because they may be able to get it from the County or the City, whoever’s closer, whoever’s more available.”
- “I don’t think duplication of services in this avenue is that much of a concern because it’s a useful beast.”
- “you get to choose which one’s better.”
- “Caregivers Coalition and there’s the County Caregivers Coalition, and I think there’s an overlap there, but I don’t think anybody would really think it’s a bad thing... duplication of that’s for the betterment of everybody.”

Barriers to Participation

Participants were asked about barriers to services adults age 60 and older encounter in Rockville. Overall and throughout the focus group, participants identified transportation and access to the Senior Center, stigma, awareness, language, and income as the primary barriers to services (see *Lack of Awareness in Programs and Services* and *Affordable Housing for Older Adults* for discussions on awareness, language and income as barriers) .

Transportation and Access to the Senior Center

As with feedback from the Other Senior Group, some participants in the Community Leader Group felt that the lack of access to the Rockville Senior Center via Piccard Street prevents some older residents

from attending programs and services at the Rockville Senior Center. While others voice safety concerns with opening access.

- “Transportation is an issue because some of my neighbors say, ‘we’d love to go to the Senior Center but, driving to the Senior Center and winding all through the community’ and ‘why can’t you just break through the parking lot?’ Which they could, that’s a suggestion to reach that end of the city... The problem is you don’t get those people here because they won’t drive through the neighborhoods.”
- “You don’t want to create that kind of a traffic issue.”
- “Increasing the bus service, maybe have more of them run... more bus service to get them [seniors] here on time because then you’ve got the routes going, you’ve got a network set up. They take the buses here will take them shopping, they will bring them here, they will bring them to other senior events and if we can show a need for more of that then it might be something to get, which is easier and quicker than getting a road cut through that the community’s going to fight.”
- “...there was a resident I met a few months ago who was probably in her 80s and lived on her own in a townhouse. She had given up her car. She was still very mobile but she depended on the ride-on bus service here in the county and she was telling me about the bus she was on... I think that was one of the bus lines that was just proposed for elimination, back in the Fall she was like, ‘I need that, that’s how I get to the doctor’s office, the grocery store.’ She walked to the bus stop and it was one of the ones that the county cut, and so I didn’t have a way to follow-up with her but I very much worry about people like that and that’s not an age specific program. Ride-ons for everyone, but people who rely on some of these public transit routes... More the reason to do the circulator sooner than later.”
- “if there’s a commitment to senior services in the city then the city budget has to reflect those...But it’s important to be able to reach out to those residents who can’t drive here or don’t want to drive up Rockville Pike because God knows, I wouldn’t want to drive up Rockville Pike from here... to make sure that they’re included and I think it’s an inclusion issue as much as, as anything else.”

Stigma

As with feedback from the Other Seniors Group, Community Leaders also identified the word “senior” as stigmatizing and a barrier to participation for some adults age 60 and older.

- “I’m a senior, I’m 66, and I have a, I don’t want to come here... it’s true. I’d rather, it’s silly, but I pay for a membership in a club, I pay for a personal trainer because I have this thing about it right now and I absolutely, and I’m a good example of someone that’s, that’s silly.”
- I’m not old... and I think the connotation of senior is a little scary even to people who are older... this came up in council last year, do you change the name of “senior” to something else, and if you do, what do you change it to that’s still... you’re talking about a population that’s from 60 to 100 and how do you merge those populations?”

- “Oh, the Rockville Senior Center,” but then you’re looking within the Senior Center at the transportation issues, the income issues, the cultural issues, the language issues, the generational issues, and how do you make that work.
- “We’ve got to figure out some way of getting to those individuals... And the word ‘senior’... we talked to an individual, I don’t know how old the lady was but she didn’t want her daughter to come [to Rockville Senior Center] even though she’s an elderly senior as well. It’s like we don’t want to come together.”

Evolution of Senior Services

Participants were asked how programs and services for adults age 60 and older will need to evolve to meet the increasing demand given the expected growth of this population in Rockville. Participants identified adequate staffing and the development and support of the Villages concept as top priorities in planning for the future.

- “need more people, more staff. Because, you know, we have one person here right now [who] works part time and if we get to where we want to go to the Villages, we’re going to need more people to do that type of work... we need a person who doesn’t have to be a staff individual, but who is head of the volunteers. And that could be a volunteer as well, but you need somebody to be able to handle and organize everything correctly.”
- “I think we need to go full force ahead with the Villages concept in some form for this city because that whole aging in place is so critical to our residents and if that means staffing, if that means creating a group somewhere else other than here to support that, to grow that, because I look around my community, I moved in thirteen years ago, I wasn’t a senior thirteen years ago and nobody in my condo was a senior thirteen years ago and I’m looking at probably 45-51 units are seniors now... And when I have people come to me and say, ‘Can we form a seniors club?’ We want to be able to share ideas and help each other and do things together and I think that’s so critical to take that whole concept forward.”
- “I would agree with that [full force ahead with the Villages concept]. I think when you look at our population you have a lot of seniors whose families aren’t necessarily here. They don’t have that support system and so it’s supporting them but I think it’s also providing resources and information for their children or grandchildren who are in other places who are looking to help with, remotely, in terms of helping their loved ones.”
- “I think the Village is extraordinarily important to advocate for, but I also think that we need a comprehensive matrix of all the resources available to people. It’s all scattered everywhere and we just need to have someone put it together so that you actually have, once again, one stop resource shopping. And we could build everything off that because you know what you have and what you don’t have and the experience of everybody of what is needed in a particular section of the city.”
- “I think that Rockville should be really proud of what they’re doing. The RSI [Rockville Seniors Inc.] and the forward looking that they’ve been doing already. So there may be other places that are starting this, but these guys have been doing it for years and years and years and

they're leaders in trying to reach out to the seniors. I just think it all comes out to staffing, time, money, getting it together."

5.3 Stakeholder Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 Rockville stakeholders, including representatives of organizations that provide services to adults age 60 and older and City of Rockville government officials. Among other topics, stakeholders were asked about services provided to older adults, barriers to utilization of services, underserved populations, and perceived gaps in services. Findings and themes from the stakeholder interviews are included below.

Barriers to Care

Older adults overwhelmingly wish to maintain their independence and lifestyle in their own homes and communities (Wiles, et al, 2012). Nearly 90% of older adults desire to “age in place” by remaining in their residence as long as possible (Keenan, 2010). While organizations provide services to promote continued independence and quality of life for older adults in communities, some older adults do not use these services. Adults age 60 and older face a variety of challenges in terms of getting to and participating in the programs and services offered; identifying the barriers is a critical step to getting older adults access to the care they need and want.

Stakeholders were asked questions about barriers to service participation for adults age 60 and older in Rockville. Barriers to participation most often mentioned by stakeholders include a lack of awareness of available programs and services, financial, transportation and language.

Awareness of Programs and Services

Stakeholders discussed a wide range of marketing efforts utilized to inform the aging population of the programs and services available. Information about programs and services are typically available and distributed via:

- print Newsletters/E-Newsletters
- e-mail (listservs)
- websites
- catalogs
- brochures
- flyers
- presentations/forums/fairs/events
- community liaisons/outreach workers
- posters
- newspaper/newspaper inserts
- radio shows
- Channel 11
- Facebook
- Twitter
- referrals

Many organizations mail program information directly to Rockville homes as well as provide information in locations throughout the community, including the Rockville Senior Center, libraries, and community centers as well as post online on their websites and send emails. Stakeholders mentioned that older adults often prefer the more traditional types of marketing, such as newsletters, as they like to have information literally “in their hands”. To this effort, one stakeholder suggested including information on senior services as an insert in household bills.

- “all these people one way or another get a Rockville utility bill and there could be an insert in the utility bills ... water, trash, or both... an insert... about senior services... You don’t have to read Rockville Reports, but your property tax, your utility bill, you certainly have to open them and if you’re not opening them somebody comes looking for you.”

Stakeholders were asked about their perception of seniors’ awareness of programs and services. Overall, organizations indicate that older adults are unaware of existing organizations and services provided in the community. Most stakeholders indicated that despite marketing and information distribution efforts, seniors are generally unaware of the programs and services available in Rockville. In response to questions about awareness and the lack of awareness of programs and services, stakeholders shared the following:

- “...we just had a summit on aging....we broke up into various work groups and focused on avocation and housing and employment and civic engagement, health and wellness and services, and every one of those groups came up with a theme that people don’t know what exists and there’s a much larger need to do communication and education and outreach.”
- “Number two would probably be just, just knowing that these services exist. A lot of people don’t even know that they can call an agency and get professional help at home to stay independent.”
- “...There is, we’re trying really hard to break it but of course there is because a lot of the marketing online, for example, isn’t going to touch the older seniors. And then the problem is the isolated seniors that we’re trying to reach, or the younger seniors that you’re trying to reach before they hit a crisis point, are either a) not interested or b) really, really hard to reach because they’re isolated.”
- “... Yes, totally. And people in Rockville think that they are not eligible to receive any services from the county, that they should call the city, and that’s a very serious misconception.....I can say one more thing that’s really important, because Rockville is an incorporated city there’s always been kind of a confusion between what city covers and what the county covers as far as services. And to clarify, it’s important the city residents in Rockville understand that aging and disability services of the county serves them, the city does not have the same level of services in aging and disability services, they have a senior center..., but there’s no overlap at all.”
- “One of the barriers that I hear about frequently is just knowing about what’s available. There are lots of great programs available in Rockville and Montgomery County, whether it’s through transportation or education or lots of different areas, but how to know about them, and again, I

think that comes back to a lot of us do much of our promotion online, via e-mail, via websites, so how to help people that are in their homes who maybe don't use a computer understand what the options are, [it's] not necessarily that some of the needed services aren't out there, it's just how do you let people know that they're available and that they would qualify for them."

- "Not everybody knows all the services that are offered or how to access them or what the opportunities or the options are."
- "And one very important is the lack of knowledge of the resource around you, they don't, people don't know what they have sometimes..."

Organizations employ online (e.g., website, email, social media) as well as traditional marketing techniques (e.g., postal mail, catalogs, flyers), yet still report a lack of awareness among older adults. This suggests that online and traditional marketing techniques alone may not increase awareness about organizations and services.

- "It's tricky because most people that really do need our services are not on social media. But you can argue and say, 'Well, their caregivers are'."

Older adults cannot reasonably be expected to be aware of services, because organizations themselves report that they are unaware of services. This lack of awareness can result in ineffective referrals of older adults to services. Given limited resources, including staff, organizations find it increasingly difficult to keep abreast of services provided by other organizations.

Community Outreach

Most service providers mentioned cultural and language barriers to participation in services for ethnic minorities. However, it's unclear whether these providers fully engage ethnic community stakeholders as a way to engage ethnic communities. The ethnic community stakeholders should be on boards, involved in all facets of senior service provisions, including programming, design, operations and outreach and coordination with organizations that truly want to eliminate barriers to participation for the ethnic communities.

- "Rockville City senior program...just looking from our side, if you only have a senior center here, which is a nice facility, and just sitting there for people to come may not be enough, maybe you should go out and tell people and encourage people."
- "Communication by letting people know what is there. Go to neighborhood groups. More coordination between where seniors may congregate and senior services. Go to Sunday service and say "here's what we offer." Why aren't there displays at religious institutions and Asian markets that talk about services in local language. Offer to be a speaker at a Rotary/Lion's Club group, here are brochures."
- "When you make a recommendation for the City of Rockville for their communication efforts, it's important to not segment the populations. Well, if we're talking about senior services we're

just going to talk to seniors. That's a common mistake that really shouldn't be repeated in the City of Rockville."

- "Reaching out, investing in community based programs and services instead of having people come out to centralized location where there would be a senior center, a hospital, or other hubs, realizing that you really need to bring programs, people, and services to where people are. That's a good trend to support. That comes back to isolation, touches on the outreach to other language capacities, it's really a very nice trend to see and I hope the Villages are able to be a part of that."

Financial Barriers

While the median income for the City is above the national average, 7.9% of those 65 and older in Rockville are living below the poverty line. As a result, lack of financial resources was noted by most stakeholders as a barrier to participation in services for some older adults as well as for the organizations providing services.

Seniors

Several stakeholders noted that lack of financial resources is a barrier for many seniors participating in the programs and services they want and need. Since many older adults live on a fixed income and the cost of living continues to increase, they are experiencing a decreasing amount of resources.

Many organizations offer free services or reduced fees and sliding scales to seniors that fall beneath a certain financial threshold, however there is limited capacity. Though Medicaid covers some of these services for this group of seniors, there are programs and services for which there is no financial assistance and Medicaid coverage. As a result, stakeholders noted financial barriers for both low and middle income seniors.

- "...the biggest barrier I would say would be financial, but fortunately having Medicaid available for the higher levels of care has helped us to meet some of those needs within our community. In Maryland there's no Medicaid available for assisted living so anybody who comes in, if they were to come directly into our community for assisted living, it's like independent living, they have to financially qualify to have assets to pay for it because there's no Medicaid available at that level. I wish there was but there isn't."
- "The number one [barrier] would be affordability, paying for it because it's not inexpensive if you're not getting it for free to the government. That's number one."
- "...surprise to many is that we do have a large number of seniors, 25% or so are below some of the county's, what they call the minimum standard of income or the minimum standard of need. People are struggling with housing and health, being burdened by housing cost."
- "Their income level is usually fixed so it's difficult for them to pay for all the services that might be available but they have to pay for it."
- "Affordability. You got money you can get whatever you want, basically. If it's there, we have a huge service continuum in the public and private sector. Someone can afford to pay for geriatric case management services or private homecare, transportation, that's not an issue. So clearly

affordability for most seniors in the county and in Rockville is a major barrier... affordability is just across the board, that's for transportation, that's for housing, it's just for living, the high cost of living in Montgomery County, so groceries and any other service is pretty steep here."

- "Income or financial barriers and transportation barriers are the number one and two."

Organization Funding

Stakeholders identified financial barriers for organizations that serve seniors as well. Most stakeholders discussed funding limitations as the main barrier to providing more programs and services and serving more seniors. This limitation was also expressed in terms of inadequate staffing.

- "...our biggest problem is lack of funding to meet everybody's needs."
- "...So, you know, right now it's just being able to offer some of the things we know we should be offering but the funding's just not there..."
- "...staffing of senior services is something I think always requires a hard looksee. Human service professionals tend to be low paid to begin with. Many organizations don't have much in the way of training budgets or education budgets and it can sometimes be very difficult to attract terrific staff and I think one thing that the city could do is to ensure that the budget is there for the level of personnel and the kind of personnel that is needed and that training and education is afforded those folks... there's a lot that goes in to running a quality senior program and oftentimes I see folks concentrating on the clients and the volunteers but not the staff so I would just put in a word for staff."
- "And I just don't know that the city has ratcheted up, they could certainly use two more case managers at the senior center, fully funded, full-time, easily. That's just minimal and then the support staff to help them make their work possible."
- "I think staffing is huge. I think you have to have the proper number of people on staff to support the programs that we want to do."
- "...there have been a few forums and groups that have spent time dedicated to look at what needs are out there, what best practices exist nationwide. We all know what more we need to do, it's very often an issue of funding."
- "...clearly funding is always a barrier. Everyone wants to serve a particular individual and come together to pool our resources and share, but oftentimes there still isn't the funding needed. Well, there might be a lack of an appropriate service... it's the lack of the resource is the barrier for all partners we're trying to problem solve together. There might be mission restrictions or, categorical type funding that doesn't allow people to do some things outside the category. So not enough flexible discretionary dollars to do creative problem solving. I won't say it doesn't exist, but a lot of funding is pretty prescribed in terms of what it's intended to do."
- "[funding] It's absolutely never enough...our contract with the county for our transportation program hasn't grown in the ten years that we've had it. So what we're able to leverage with what we get is extraordinary but we're still only scratching the service of the need here."

Not only was funding indicated as a barrier to providing programs and services, but it was also mentioned as a barrier in terms of collaborating with other service providers, which also negatively affects the care older adults receive.

- “There’s not enough time for me to collaborate with other, or to reach out to other agencies to see if there’s a need for me. And the barrier’s funding, we’re working on that at our agency, though.”
- “Again, it’s highly competitive for funding. So I think there’s some resistance to collaboration on everyone’s part because you want to provide a continuum of care there’s limited funding and you want to have your programs.”
- “I would say that in our sphere of the non-profit sphere, it’s again those finite resources that sometimes become a barrier to collaboration because we’re all looking out for the interest of our own constituencies and our employees and organizations.”

Transportation

Transportation as a barrier to service provision is well documented in the literature. Numerous studies determined access to transportation influences the likelihood of older adults utilizing community-based services, especially for those who are distanced from programs and services (Berke et al., 2006).

Some studies suggest that enhancing public transit services can increase access to community-based services among those who need transportation assistance.

Given the literature, it was not surprising that nearly all stakeholders identified transportation as a barrier to Rockville’s older adult population participating in programs and services. Though different transportation services exist in Rockville, stakeholders report that few seniors are aware of the array of options. As seniors age and are not as mobile, it becomes more difficult for them to utilize many of the existing services. Most stakeholders strongly urged the city to find a way to foster older adult friendly transportation to render this crucial service easier and more accessible. One option mentioned by a few stakeholders was a circulator. Stakeholders indicated that existing options are not meeting seniors’ needs in a variety of ways, including more specialized and individualized assistance with door-to-door transportation. The following comments from stakeholders illustrate transportation as a major barrier to services.

- “Transportation I think would be one [barrier], I think Rockville does have the van but it only takes them to the Senior Center but people need to go elsewhere, right, so can we create a program that would give people access, thus reducing their isolation.”
- “...I wish we could, we could find a way to subsidize our transportation because, again, what is the biggest barrier, well, it’s money, but what’s the second biggest barrier, it’s how do you get to the programs.”
- “The barrier could be transportation, getting people to a particular site. We could open up a new senior center, but unless we’ve planned for the transportation and to get people there.”

- “We already have people who would probably like to take advantage of our services but are unable to get transportation for whatever reason. And some take Metro Access but Metro Access is often, often leads to long wait times so I think people are reluctant to take that, take that option. So I think that’s the biggest thing that will have to change in order to accommodate.”
- “We just had the Summit on Aging and ...what we hear is the transportation is always a barrier to service how great we can make our transportation services, it’s out there, transportation is a big barrier for seniors.”
- “I would say definitely the centralization of the senior programs all being at the senior center, seems a barrier to me. I feel like there could better served if it was more spread into the satellite community buildings... I think there’s a movement back to that but I think that would help with the transportation because a lot of seniors can walk to their community building.”
- “I think the biggest problem is transportation.... There are a lot of people who will ask about our volunteers to drive them places and they’re not covered for that. We don’t check driver’s license and we can’t accommodate that level of liability. But there are a lot of people that need help getting to and from the super market or doctor’s appointments or church or whatever it is. I can’t even measure how many people have asked me about transportation.”

Language as a Barrier

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 33.2% of individuals in Rockville aged 65 and older speak a language other than English at home, and 22.1% indicate they speak English less than very well. Given these statistics it was not surprising that many stakeholders identified language as a barrier to participation in services and programs for non-English speaking seniors. When asked about underserved populations in Rockville, stakeholders shared:

- “I would certainly say people that English is a second language are underserved.”
- “There’s a huge Chinese population in Rockville but we don’t really serve that population because of the language barrier and cultural things but that’s kind of a separate industry.”
- “Cultural and language again, yes. I think this country is good, open the door to all the people, but for those new immigrants I think there is seniors it’s difficult for them and for us.”
- “Maybe the programs are there and they don’t even know because of the language [barrier]. The language is a very big problem.”

Stigma

The stigma associated with older adults was also identified by several stakeholders as a barrier. Stakeholders believe that some older adults perceive certain age related terms to have negative connotations (e.g., “senior”). As a result, some older and younger “seniors” may be less likely to participate in services that use these age related terms. Stakeholders shared the following regarding stigma as a barrier.

- “Seniors of today are much more active and don’t want to be pegged, necessarily as seniors, you know, they’re very active seniors.”
- “I don’t think we do enough activities that are of the more active kind. That’s why people get this idea that the senior center is only for ‘old people’.”
- “...one very good topic is that people are denied [sic] to getting help because they don’t want to identify as a senior. They feel like, “Oh, I am a, still strong.” So that’s what they let go.”
- “The Black population, the Asian population, all minority groups, but that’s not necessarily because they’re not [given] the opportunity for the services, it’s just that there must be a stigma.”

Organizations face the challenge of marketing their services using language that attracts rather than alienates older adults, selecting terminology that is least likely to “turn off” older adults off will be key.

Underserved Populations in Rockville

Stakeholders were asked which populations of seniors in Rockville they believe to be underserved. The link between underserved populations and the most frequently reported barriers is not surprising. The following section describes the populations stakeholders identified as underserved.

Isolated and Homebound Seniors

Isolated and homebound seniors were identified as an underserved group in Rockville, though stakeholders acknowledged they were unclear about the scope of the problem and more data would be helpful.

- “...one of the problems, one of the biggest challenges that we have is that we’re trying to find people that are isolated. The people that are isolated are not in people’s eyesight, they’re not in their vision. But if we work with the Village program, the whole idea is that you might not be involved in that whole system of senior services but you’ll know that your next-door neighbor, you haven’t seen him in three months.”
- “I would say any homebound senior is in trouble, is really at risk for a decline because of social isolation and also because of physical, people are less motivated to do things when they’re on their own just by themselves and I guess that’s a difficult audience to tap into, people with disabilities, too.”
- “The ones that are just kind of forgotten about that don’t have family that are on their own...there are the seniors who are kind of forgotten about because they either don’t have family or the family lives elsewhere and they don’t have friends or outlive friends and people kind of forget about them. If they’re not involved with a church that looks after them or something like that then they can be forgotten about so that’s a challenge for all communities not just Rockville but finding them and making sure that their needs are being met whether they can afford it or not. Sometimes they can afford it but they don’t even know the services are out there to help them. And the ones that can’t afford it, obviously, they need a little bit more, first

need to find them and then we need to be able to help them with some assistance to get services.”

- “Not just City of Rockville, you have ... people who are isolated for some reason, folks who are not connected to anything and those always are a great concern no matter where they reside, Rockville or anywhere else in our county. And so we’re reaching out to those isolated folks that’s a concern.”
- “...the people that are more isolated in their homes tend to also be underserved.”
- “...I think that the isolated ones, the people who are at home independently, more likely living alone but sometimes with a spouse, and have for various reasons found themselves isolated because they, a) we don’t know they’re there so we can’t reach them because we have no idea what’s going on and who they are and where they live. Because of the lack of ability to reach out to them, then they don’t know anything about what’s going on. And social isolation, social isolation is closely linked with many problems, depression, physical decline, cognitive decline, it’s just a killer basically, so it’s not good.”

Although most stakeholders discussed physical limitations as the cause of seniors being homebound and thus isolated, several others identified a lack of adequate senior friendly transportation as a cause to social isolation.

- “I would say that the biggest barrier for seniors generally is transportation.....for example, you might have a senior who was able to drive last week but now this week he or she is no longer able to drive. What happens then? He or she has to figure out what to do about that. If there’s somebody, now there’s Uber, of course, but they have to kind of figure that out and what can they afford and how are they going to get to their normal activities and most times people just stop doing all of the things that they used to do.”
- “Going back to the transportation issue, if people aren’t able to get out and not only just get the services they need but also socialize with other people. That just leads to a whole host of health issues, if no one is checking on them, something minor could happen and it could stem on to something that is potentially life threatening. So I think it’s that isolation piece that is the biggest risk.”

Low and Middle Income Seniors

Seniors lacking financial resources were identified by many stakeholders as an underserved population. As noted previously, though many organizations offer free or low cost services, the capacity is limited, so not everyone that needs and qualifies for assistance receives it. In addition, while qualifying seniors can and do receive financial assistance, many stakeholders expressed concern for “the middle income gap” seniors. These seniors fall in the middle income range with too much income to qualify for subsidized services or financial assistance, yet not enough to afford programs and services they may need and want.

- “...What we have found is, in Village world... when you’re very wealthy you just pay for it, no problems. When you’re very poor and you live in the City of Rockville it’s a, maybe some other places, you’re lucky enough to access some charitable groups who give you that service for free. When you’re falling between those two groups, and many older adults do, that is they have on the paper saying like sufficient income, but their expenses related to maintaining their decent quality of life, I’m not talking, Ritz Carlton and jet-set and going all that, just take their medication, getting free [sic] housing, having healthy food, puts them in a situation where they cannot afford to buy those services, and so they fall between the cracks.”
- “Middle income and people who don’t qualify for Medicaid but are over income for any kind of benefits...the people that are the hardest, I run an economic security program, are people who worked long enough or made enough money so that they don’t qualify for the services for people who are “very low income,” but they also don’t have enough money to live. There’s no subsidies for them, that’s how, those are the people who don’t get case management, those are the people who might be underinsured, those are the people that don’t qualify for free transportation potentially but can’t afford the rate that transportation is... in terms of the clients that we see it’s very frustrating to see someone who makes \$800 a month, which is over what you can make for many benefits, there’s nothing for them.”
- “If you’re really poor then you can get qualified for Medicaid or if you know the right attorney you get qualified for Medicaid and they’ll provide some home care or they’ll send you to and help pay for a nursing home. But the people that have a little bit more money than that but, aren’t wealthier are kind of stuck in the middle. They can’t afford us yet they’re not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. I would guess I would define them as the underserved.”
- “I know that Rockville is trying to help with healthcare, but the way it is increasing, it’s just inadequate to meet the needs of people. They have certain structures of how they qualify for certain things and then if they do happen to make a little bit too much then they’re not qualified and yet it’s so expensive that they have to make a choice between one thing or the other. And so, it’s beyond Rockville, it’s countrywide but I think that needs a little bit more attention.”

Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities were identified by several stakeholders as an underserved group in Rockville. Both language barriers and cultural issues were identified as factors.

- “Let me tell you... it’s very hard for them when they arrive to a new country, to a new language, to a new beginning, and to a new system.”
- “Latino and the Chinese American group, African American is not a language issue, it’s more of the minority status and a feeling or perception that maybe they’re not being served or it’s just that the advocacy agenda for any group and that’s their advocacy agenda.”
- “...I would certainly say people that English is a second language are underserved.”
- “Language barrier, particularly with Spanish individuals, because we have a high population in our parish and in this general vicinity of Spanish speaking individuals that’s underserved.”

- “Underserved, well, I mean, the Black population, the Asian population and the, all minority groups, but that’s not necessarily because they’re not the opportunity for the services, it’s just that there must be a stigma.”
- “...I really wonder about our Hispanic community because I don’t see when I do go to the senior center I don’t see a whole lot of Hispanics. I do see a few but not a lot, not, again, not proportion.”
- “I can only speak for Chinese community, Chinese community that’s particular for senior, there’s basically two group of people. One is like me, it’s educational, professional and retired. The other one is immigrant, particularly because a lot of young people come here for school, for job, and then their parents came with them. Those parents have language and culture barrier and it’s not a small population. So maybe increase some channels for those kind of people who have culture and language barrier that can make them feel comfortable.”

Gaps in Senior Services

Stakeholders identified homecare services and case or geriatric case management services as the most common gaps or services that are needed, but currently not available in Rockville.

Homecare Services

Homecare services cover a wide range of assistance, including help with laundry and chores, to personal grooming. Many stakeholders believe that more affordable homecare services are needed. In addition, these services were often identified as a critical piece to seniors’ ability to ‘age-in-place’.

- “If you don’t offer services at the person’s home to help them stay at home they very often lose the capacity to stay home. That renders them either homeless or in a nursing home, costing everybody tenfold more than they were when they lived at home. So a lot of the programs and services that we’re serving have evolved as a response to many years of documented need.”
- “Rockville does that very well and I give them kudos for that, and that’s the light home care at home... I’m not talking about physical care, I’m talking about laundry or grocery runs, picking up prescriptions, changing the bed sheets and all that, these things are not funded by anything, health insurance or state or federal program. They just don’t see that as a need that they need to pay for, and therefore it’s such a crucial element in a person’s life [that] goes unmet. We have proof because we did that in public housing on the county level. When you offer very small amount of hours a week, I’m talking four hours a week, three hours a week, sometimes that’s enough to help somebody remain at home and live a good quality of life. Whereas if you didn’t have that the ramification would be quite severe. And yet you can’t [convince] state or federal, or anybody, that this is an important thing. And the City of Rockville is awesome in doing just that.”
- “...as people age they need more help in their homes and having help with light housekeeping, laundry, shopping, personal care, etcetera, it’s a big, it’s a big help... different chores around the house and some may need the personal help also with bathing and grooming, and we provide that as well.”

- “Chore services are the only thing [gap in services] that immediately come to mind.”
- “Homebound services... I know there’s a need, I just don’t know how much of a need there is.”
- “Affordable home care... this is another thing that people who don’t have money but don’t have too little money... everyone talks about staying at the home to reduce cost.... but if you don’t have access to home care you have nothing. I don’t know how a city addresses that, if people really want to keep people out of institutions it’s not just case management, it’s also physical assistance.”
- “I believe that the home care, personal care program is not able to meet all the demand.”
- “I think that what we’re already seeing as an extraordinary need in the Rockville region and everywhere is chore services. Who is going to shovel your sidewalk when you need it shoveled, there just aren’t enough reliable and affordable vendors to go around now and that is only going to become more severe as we move forward.”

Case or Geriatric Care Management Services

Several stakeholders identified case management and geriatric care management services as needed in Rockville, and often necessary to help older adults ‘age-in-place’.

- “Services that are needed are subsidized case management services... if people really want to keep people out of institutions it’s not just case management, it’s also physical assistance.”
- “They call it the counselor, somebody who can really guide people to services that are available.”
- “I would say it would be a wonderful thing to have... case management for people, I would suggest being a bit more expansive about that and doing what they call a geriatric care manager....These are people, either social workers or nurses, who are trained in helping older adults and their families assess their current situations, have a sense of goals or what the person and his family would like to accomplish, and help them accomplish those goals. So it’s helping people with the decision making process around their aging situation and accomplish, follow through with a plan. I’ll give you an example, if somebody lives at home and they’re alone, they recently lost their wife, the kids live in Minnesota, they’re worried about their older parent, maybe he fell and they don’t know what’s going on in the house, they send in somebody who is a geriatric care manager, who just look at the person, have a conversation with them, look at their home, and discusses, “What’s your goal?” Whatever your current living situation, “Do you want to move?” and then they kind of review the various options, “You could stay home and maybe have somebody offer you home care or cooked meals, and we have transportation services that will take you to adult daycare,” whatever it is. But these are people who know a lot about aging and aging resources, and they’re very expensive because they’re private and nobody funds that. Somebody who can go in a house and meet with a family and help them design a personalized plan to help them accomplish their goals is huge. I wish geriatric care managers were insurance reimbursed but they’re not.”

- “For case management I am going to push and push, and I think other agencies are subsidized funding because it’s such a great need, not just for thirty day readmissions but overall for people.”

Additional Themes that Emerged

Affordable Housing

Seniors ability to remain in Rockville and age-in-place was a concern identified by most stakeholders. The high cost of living, the need for affordable housing, and employment opportunities were also noted in relation to this.

- “... a lot of people are moving away from Rockville because of the high cost to live in this area. As a place to live they might not be able to live here due to limited income, a lot of seniors will say to me, “You know, it’s not necessarily that it’s our income is fixed, that it’s not changing, at this point in our lives we don’t have the opportunity to change what we’re making.”
- “If you own a home in Rockville and your property taxes continue to go up and your income continues to decline, even if you finished paying off your mortgage, how can you afford it? So you’re chasing people out who should be able to stay.”
- “We’re involved in strategic planning processes right now to try to anticipate some of that growth and look at the funding that might be necessary... And again, looking at the housing models to try to promote more aging in place, so that’s something that’s being looked at both within one’s own home but also in group homes and neighborhood living, people want to stay in Rockville or stay in the neighborhood.”
- “I think that employment is going to move more to the front and center because people cannot afford to live forty years of life unemployed and our society is not going to be able to afford it either.”
- “Our cost of living is very high and we have an affordable housing program, but we don’t get new units unless a new building goes up and I think it’s 15% of any new apartment building past a certain size has to be affordable. I think some seniors get housing that way, but it’s not limited to seniors and there’s this sour spot of incomes where you’re making maybe \$60,000 or so a year and you’re impoverished but you can’t afford to live in this area. In some areas that’d be a very nice job and you could have very nice housing, but in this area you don’t get anything for that.”

Villages

Many stakeholders expressed support and excitement for the Villages movement in Rockville. Support for the Villages concept included reaching the isolated and homebound; assisting older adults with aging-in-place; promoting a stronger sense of community; and greater opportunity to engage seniors in volunteer opportunities and increase accessibility to services. Similar to the Village Coordinator position in Montgomery County, several stakeholders believe a Village Coordinator is needed as a resource to facilitate the rollout of the Villages in Rockville neighborhoods.

- “I think that the Villages will help us in a lot of ways to be able to reach some homebound seniors that we might not know about, we might not know that they need help. It might be even just as simple as referring Meals on Wheels to them to be able to get a healthy meal at home. So there’s just a lot of things I think we’re going to be able to do.”
- “One of the problems, one of the biggest challenges that we have is that we’re trying to find people that are isolated. The people that are isolated are not, they’re not in people’s eyesight, they’re not in their vision. But if we work with the Village program, the whole idea is that you might not be involved in that whole system of senior services, but you’ll know that your next-door neighbor, you haven’t seen him in three months.”
- “Villages and the neighbor helping neighbor models. Just like civic engagement, civic and social engagement or community involvement... it’s always been there but I think it’s getting a renewed emphasis because in order to combat social isolation and all of the ills... when someone is isolated, so all these ways to try to connect with people and support them in their homes is a national trend, cost effective trend and clearly happening here in the state, in the county, and in the, the city of Rockville as well.”
- “Villages concept and that seems to be a new thing around the country of helping people age at home, and so there’s this whole Villages concept being promoted... have people come together as a community to meet the needs of their community, kind of like in the old days when neighbors helped neighbors. So that’s something that’s pretty innovative and is a trend in the country to help seniors age in place.”
- “I’ve had different calls lately about people wanting to do this or do that or need some sort of help in their home and I want to say, ... ‘If you lived here or there, your Village could help you,’ but Rockville doesn’t have an established Village yet so I don’t know if that’s something that’s coming down the road. But I think that’s another place that people try to age in place as much as possible so they can get support to do that for as long as they can.”
- “Seniors have so much to give, they’re not the drain on society that people tend to categorize them. To utilize the gifts of seniors and having a Village would be one great way to do that. A lot of Village volunteers happen to be seniors that live in the community that can help support each other. So I think just that sense of, ‘My city is here for me, there are people that are here for me, I don’t have to leave.’ I think that’s really important just for that feeling of connection and just for stability within Rockville.”
- “As a society grew, we have moved away from your family next door, and neighbors don’t know neighbors so Villages will bring some of that back, but it’s a way to keep people in their homes and if we can provide, and the senior center does this, they provide reputable service companies, contracting companies that will help you with projects that are low cost.”
- “Several of our services are innovative... one of the things we’re doing is working with senior Villages to help them improve their transportation services. We’ve identified a really terrific cloud based software program to coordinate volunteer drivers and rides, and with grant funding we’re able to purchase access to that system for the senior Villages.”

- “Village concept for seniors, they can find everything within a good distance, making these services for seniors more accessible and easier.”
- “I think that having the Village coordinator is kind of groundbreaking... keeping people living in their community for as long as possible is really what the Village program is all about, and to actually have that as part of our Area Agency on Aging is really unique and it’s something very innovative that we’re doing.”
- “I know that there’s a strong Villages movement in the city. And what I would like to see, what I’ve heard is that we need some sort of a center to the hub so that... there would be a person at the senior center who would be the touch point for that, the conduit for the information. And the person that would be helpful to the individual neighborhoods who are setting up their Villages.”
- “Efforts are being made [by the City of Rockville], they just need to be expanded. The city should invest in capacity building for neighborhoods. Helping Villages build their capacities in whatever way they want, it would be really nice for the city to have somebody to support the neighborhood. If you’ve seen what came out of that community forum, we kind of knew that before, is that people like to have a citywide hub of some sort that’s local neighborhood’s ability to do their Villages. A citywide person would also have capacity to reach out to other language groups.”

One stakeholder knowledgeable about Villages believes that building this capacity and infrastructure is a fiscally smart decision for cities such as Rockville.

- “And I think it [Villages] would require tremendous creativity in finding a better way to triage, a better way of reusing. [With a] dwindling pool of funds, the biggest investment is building capacities for people to find solutions elsewhere. I wish government could do it all, but currently, Villages are one of very many great solutions for response to people’s needs as they age at home.”
- “If you don’t offer services at the person’s home to help them stay at home they very often lose the capacity to stay home. That renders them either homeless or in a nursing home, costing everybody tenfold more than they were when they lived at home. So a lot of the programs and services that we’re serving have evolved as a response to many years of documented need.”

One stakeholder was cautious of the Villages concept due to the potential for territorial competition for volunteers.

- “The Villages, we were working with the JCA on a sort of similar pilot program, and the problem with the Villages is the Villages don’t want to work with other Villages, they only want to work with the people in their Village. So if I have Gaithersburg help it will only help people in their zip code... but that’s not what I need, I need the person who might live in Gaithersburg but they might work in Silver Spring and so if somebody in Silver Spring needs a ride and it’s a block from their place of business, I need to know that they would even consider that. And we found the

Villages to be very territorial... So, then suddenly we're competing for volunteers to help the broader community and they want to help their Village and then we're in competition."

The following list includes topics and issues identified by a smaller group of stakeholders, but are important for Rockville to consider in moving forward with planning for the increase in the senior population.

- "The diversity of the senior population (age, employment status, race, and language), and the need for programs and services to address this diversity. Working seniors as well as younger seniors, for example, may be interested in programs and services that have evening and weekend hours."
- "Volunteerism can and should be increased in Rockville. Additional senior volunteer opportunities and coordination of these opportunities would be beneficial to both seniors and Rockville. Coordination of volunteers to assist seniors with homecare needs, like shoveling, would also be beneficial."
- "Additional data on use of services and underserved populations would be helpful."
- "Services and programs for vulnerable populations of seniors, such as disabled, those with dementia should be reviewed."

6 Local and National Trends and Best Practices

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2010) defines “aging in place” as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.” An AARP survey found that nearly 90% of those over 65 years want to stay in their residence for as long as possible, and that 80% believe their current residence is where they will always live (Keenan, 2010). The meaning of the term “aging in place” to older adults themselves is multifaceted and embodies not only a sense of independence and autonomy but also a sense of attachment, security, and feelings of connection (Wiles et al., 2011). Efforts currently in place in the City of Rockville and Montgomery County, as well as those envisioned for the future, clearly articulate a mission that not only considers the community and neighborhood surrounding it’s older residents, but that seeks to leverage this connectedness to ensure high quality of life and access to needed services.

With the leading edge of the Baby Boom generation turning 65 in 2011, the full gravity of service needs for this population will likely not be felt for another decade. Findings from the National Health Interview Survey indicate that this group is likely to experience higher levels of disability and functional care needs than their previous cohorts (Martin et al., 2010). Because older adults who don’t qualify for Medicaid may have difficulty paying for community-based services, recent attention has moved toward affordable, innovative strategies for fulfilling unmet needs and supporting positive aging in place. The “Village” approach is one such strategy.

According to the Village to Village Network, there are currently 190 fully operational Villages nationwide, with another 150 in some stage of development. Very little formal research has been conducted on the Villages model. In fact, there are no national studies that have examined the effectiveness of the model for promoting aging in place or for serving specific populations. One descriptive study of 30 fully operational Villages revealed that the majority of Village members are White, non-Hispanic, and own their own homes (Scharlach, Graham & Lehning, 2011). This work revealed important challenges facing or likely to face Villages. First, only three of the Villages surveyed had a member base that was at least 15% non-White. The vast majority had an underrepresentation of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-Pacific individuals. Second, there are concerns about long-term sustainability of the model - particularly those Villages that rely on membership dues - as members age and may begin to experience reduced cognitive, physical, and financial resources. The authors point out that inclusion of the Villages in existing federal, state, and local community-based initiatives may ultimately be necessary to ensure Villages stability and ethnic minority representation.

Two aspects of the Villages implementation in Montgomery County set it apart from others in terms of sustainability: 1) the establishment of a Village Coordinator position within the Department of Health and Human Services, and 2) participation in the Washington Area Villages Exchange (WAVE) - a coalition that facilitates networking and information-sharing among 48 established Villages in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. Still, as results from this report indicate, there are

challenges in achieving ethnic group participation in community offerings and those challenges are likely to affect the Villages as well.

The state of research on the Villages model translates to other services and programs designed to support aging in place – research on the impact of various approaches on aging in place is lacking. Recently, MetLife Mature Market Institute in partnership with the Stanford University Center on Longevity (2013) developed a list of livable community indicators for sustainable aging in place that can be used by local governments using readily available information about their community. The report notes that the major challenge to developing the indicator system was the lack of existing data at the city or township level.

As a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities since December 2015, Montgomery County is one of only 77 progressive communities in the United States working on concrete changes in multiple domains that affect the quality of life of older residents, including transportation and mobility, housing, socialization and leisure, health and wellness, communications, employment, and security and safety. Particularly noteworthy are the establishment of two full-time staff positions at the county-level that are devoted to age-related issues, including the aforementioned Village Coordinator and a Transportation and Mobility Manager. Further, Montgomery County has recently joined communities in only 15 other states who have made a formal commitment to recognizing and supporting older adults and their families affected by cognitive impairment via the Dementia Friendly America initiative.

One strategy for identifying and defining best practices and approaches to support aging in place in the community is to participate in these and other networks (e.g., WAVE) in order to promote information sharing and communicate lessons learned. Regardless of the community supports in place, of critical importance is the extent to which older adults are aware of these services. An aging in place-focused survey of approximately 4,600 older adults ages 50 and over in 11 states demonstrated that while a majority of older adults were aware of nursing homes in their community (88%) many fewer were aware of aging in place support services such as home repair support (37%; Tang & Pickard, 2008). Those older adults who were unaware of community-based services were more likely to think about moving out of their current home due to health problems than were those aware of such services. Findings in this report suggest a need for greater community awareness of services in the City of Rockville and Montgomery County, particularly for ethnically diverse and lower income residents.

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