

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Sabrina B. Landreth
City Administrator

FROM: Sara Bedford
Director, Human Services

SUBJECT: Oakland Commission on Aging
Annual Report of 2019

DATE: May 7, 2019

City Administrator Approval

Date:

5/16/19

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive The Oakland Commission On Aging Annual Report For 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The attached annual report is from the Commission on Aging detailing their activities, observations, and recommendations on behalf of Oakland Seniors. Highlighted in this report is Commission work on Age Friendly Cities. In 2018 the City of Oakland entered the network of Age Friendly Cities identified by the World Health Organization. Since then the Commission on Aging has sought community input including Age Friendly meetings in all seven districts and a community engagement survey that is still open for responses. Based on input from the community and internal knowledge the Commission has recommendations for action priorities pertaining to seniors.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive The Oakland Commission On Aging Annual Report For 2019.

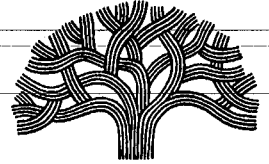
For questions regarding this report, please contact Scott Means, Aging and Adult Services Manager, at (510) 238-6137.

Respectfully submitted,

SARA BEDFORD
Director, Human Services Department

Item: _____
Life Enrichment Committee
May 28, 2019

CITY OF OAKLAND



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May 28, 2019

Oakland City Council
Life Enrichment Committee
Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: Oakland Commission on Aging Annual Report of 2019

Chairperson Taylor and the Members of the Life Enrichment Committee:

SUMMARY

The changing face of Oakland: in 2019, for the young, electric scooters and bicycles have made it faster and easier to meet up with friends and take advantage of an ever-expanding choice of dining opportunities, from food trucks to Michelin-starred restaurants. As Oakland becomes a more and more desirable place to live, the Mayor's Commission on Aging is committed to ensuring equity for the fastest-growing segment of Oakland's population: Oakland's seniors. Seniors vote in larger numbers than any other group; they care about their neighborhoods and their city as a whole; they contribute their time, their wisdom and their resources. For those with limited access to transportation, for those who live in Oakland's food deserts, for those who are homebound and facing health challenges, the City, in partnership with a variety of agencies, provides a lifeline. In spearheading Oakland's membership in the World Health Organization's network of Age-Friendly Cities, the Commission's vision is to make Oakland a livable city for *all* ages.

The World Health Organization (WHO), through its U.S. liaison, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), welcomed Oakland into its network on September 7, 2018 following receipt of a letter from Mayor Schaaf. By taking this first step the City of Oakland, led by the Commission on Aging with our community partners, has begun moving toward making Oakland an Age Friendly City.

The eight domains of an age friendly city identified by WHO provides a framework for examining our city and its services:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and Social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

During the Fall of 2018 we held community listening sessions throughout Oakland, focused on these eight domains, and asked, “How are we doing as a City? What’s working? What’s not working?” We have also begun a city-side survey process, and we are reaching out to community partners and decision makers. Our goal is simply stated, ambitious, and eminently reasonable: to shape Oakland as a model city for people of all ages.

BACKGROUND

In the forty years between 2000 and 2040, the number of older adults in the United States will have more than doubled, with growth among older minorities far outpacing growth among white seniors (125 percent compared to 54 percent). In 2040 there will be nearly 80 million older adults in the US, more than twice as many as in 2000. Additionally, the senior population is becoming increasingly diverse. Between 2012 and 2030, the white population of 65 and older is projected to increase by 54 percent compared with 125 percent for older minorities. The Census Bureau defines older adults as: “Young-old” (65-74 years), “Old” (75-84) and “Oldest-old” (85 and older). *The 85+ years category is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. (2012). A profile of Older Americans: 2012.)

Oakland’s senior population growth is slightly faster than the country’s rate; forecasts project a steady increase in Oakland residents who will be over the age of 65 by 2030, with constant population growth heading into the mid-century. The well-documented housing crisis, with its steep rise in prices, has already begun to impact Oakland’s over 55,000 seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes. Sixty percent of seniors who rent their homes have a housing cost burden well over 30% of their household income, according to the Senior Services Coalition April 2018 report.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that roughly 16 percent of older adults in Oakland are living below the federal poverty level, nearly double the rate in the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward metropolitan area. The Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County reports that 18.3% of Alameda County residents age 65+ live below 150% of the

Federal Poverty Level of \$1,011/month. (FPL). 150% of the FPL is currently \$1,517/month, \$23 less than the Fair Market Rent of a studio apartment in Alameda County, and Oakland rents are higher still. The Coalition also reports that 3 out of 4 single Alameda County seniors live below 200% of the FPL, and well below the Elder Economic Security Index of \$2,170/month— a measure of what it takes to meet basic needs in Alameda County. One in five calls to the Alameda County Community Food Bank are from older adults. We must marshal our resources to improve the lives of Oakland elders who live in poverty.

No summary of the needs of Oakland's seniors can omit the heartbreaking effects of homelessness. Nearly half of Oakland's older homeless adults first became homeless after the age of 50, according to a 2016 report. (Brown RT, Goodman L, Guzman D, Tieu L, Ponath C, Kushel MB (2016) Pathways to Homelessness among Older Homeless Adults: Results from the HOPE HOME Study. PLoS ONE 11(5): e0155065. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0155065>) This significant study states: "Identifying those at highest risk of losing housing in late life and working to prevent housing loss or provide early support to exit homelessness may be an effective strategy to prevent progression to chronic homelessness in these adults."

THE ISSUE

During the Commission on Aging listening sessions in Fall 2018, elders in all areas of Oakland identified some major common issues affecting their lives, including:

- the availability of healthy, fresh food,
- a strong desire for effective communication,
- the need for well maintained, accessible parks, community centers, and other gathering places.

At the Commission's February 2019 retreat we discussed these issues and added the housing crisis, especially the effect of homelessness on seniors, as our priority issues for 2019. We also resolved, as a Commission, to become more effective advocates for the needs of Oaklanders as they age.

Grappling with these issues proactively makes economic as well as human sense; seniors with access to good nutrition, exercise, and opportunities for socialization stay healthy longer and require fewer costly interventions. Stable housing is a basic right and an absolute necessity for older adults. Strategies such as expanding the city's case management services are an effective means of averting the crises that can tip seniors into homelessness. By meeting the identified, voiced needs of seniors, Oakland can most effectively manage the resources needed to address directly the serious issues faced by our most vulnerable elders.

Oakland's elders are the stable core of our community. They participate in civic life by voting in greater numbers than any other segment of the population. They have seen

change and many have endured hard times, but every listening session we held was marked by optimism and a can-do attitude. Seniors overwhelmingly expressed a desire to “stay put” in Oakland and contribute to the well-being of their neighbors.

ACTION

To launch work on Age Friendly Oakland the Commission formed an ad-hoc committee. In meetings that also included community partner Center for Elders Independence (CEI) the Age Friendly Committee developed a plan for community input. Starting in September 2018 the Commission embarked on a series of seven community listening sessions, one in each district, to gather community input regarding Age Friendly Cities. In addition to community members, people from a variety of agencies attended these sessions, including organizations that are not solely senior focused, such as Next Door and AC Transit.

When Oakland made the commitment to become an Age Friendly City AARP provided support through our community partner CEI to implement a community engagement survey for Oakland seniors. The survey questions were pre-set by AARP so nothing needed to be created. However, the Commission was required to provide 500 responses by December 31, 2018. Facilitated by CEI, Littleton Consulting Group administered the surveys and we made this time-sensitive goal. The Commission recognizes the initial segment of the population who replied to the survey did not adequately represent the demographics of Oakland so the survey period is still open as of this writing and we are actively circulating a slightly shortened version of the survey, to obtain a more representative picture of the needs of the city as a whole and its various neighborhoods.

NEXT STEPS

The Commission’s action priorities for 2019 focus on four important areas: Communication, Housing, Parks, and Food.

Develop Effective Communication

The listening sessions throughout Oakland made it clear to us that communication is a topic that cuts across many domains. For instance, many seniors brought up transportation as a problem area; but seniors at every session were largely unaware of existing programs such as Oakland Paratransit for the Elderly & Disabled (OPED). The listening sessions themselves served as information-sharing conversations, among seniors as well as various representatives from City, County and community organizations in attendance. After AC Transit was made aware of the initial sessions, they sent a representative to each of the remaining ones who was able to gather important feedback and also answer seniors’ questions.

At our retreat the Commission committed itself to helping develop an effective network for seniors to receive important information as well as communicate feedback. Possibilities discussed include creating one or more “one-stop” information centers in key locations, reviewing the effectiveness of information delivered by mail, and investigating methods for promoting computer literacy among seniors. The various public and nonprofit agencies offering services to seniors can be valuable channels of information to and from their clients; such a coordinated communication effort can be a cost-effective way to improve communications as well as delivery of services. Expansion of case management services will also bring information to seniors at risk of isolation.

The link between social connections and health is well established: longevity research by the Population Reference Bureau shows that older adults who are socially isolated face a risk of premature death that is on par with the health risks associated with smoking. (<https://www.prb.org/todays-research-aging-healthy-aging-longer-life-spans/>) Seniors themselves are highly effective communicators with each other, and building on the network of public and private agencies, including our thriving senior centers, will produce dividends that go beyond the mere communication of information.

Housing Solutions: Bring Seniors to the Table

The Commission on Aging would like a member to be present on the Oversight Board of Measure W. The implementation of Oakland City Council Member Rebecca Kaplan’s vacant-property tax, presented as measure W, may yield from \$3,000 - \$6,000 per parcel starting in 2020, earmarked for homeless services, affordable housing, programs to fight blight and illegal dumping, administer the tax and defend possible lawsuits. All of these are issues directly affecting seniors; all were brought up by those attending the listening sessions, especially in East Oakland and West Oakland, and a Commission member will bring valuable perspective to the Oversight Board.

Likewise, the Commission on Aging stands ready to collaborate with various City departments and commissions in addressing planning and public policy issues such as the development of large publicly and privately owned vacant lots, re-use of empty homes, buildings and smaller parcels of vacant land, and the role played by rental leases in providing a more level playing field for property owners to uphold viable livability for all ages. As a matter equity, elders must be represented in every discussion, public and private, of housing strategy and implementation.

Parks and Open Spaces for Everyone

The Commission’s concern with housing dovetails with the need for parks and outdoor spaces that are clean and accessible. Every citizen needs exercise, recreation, and access to green spaces to maintain physical as well as mental health. This is especially true of our most vulnerable populations: children, seniors, and – yes – homeless citizens as well. It is disrespectful to every citizen, old and young, whether housed or

unhoused, for the city to permit camping in our beautiful parks and pretend that it is serving anyone's needs. The Commission stands ready to partner with the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation and other agencies and organizations willing to collaborate on solutions for rehousing our homeless citizens and reclaiming our parks so that they can be used and enjoyed by everyone.

Food Security: A Basic Right

A persistent concern for the Commission is the status of food insecure seniors in Oakland. Since identifying hunger among the elderly as a growing issue in Oakland in the 2017 report, the Commission has successfully petitioned for City funding to support SOS/Meals On Wheels with a series of one-time grants. This has been helpful to the stability of that organization, and for this report, we are asking the City to add that as a permanent budget item moving forward. During that same council report, we also identified the then-newly announced Sugar Sweetened Beverage tax as a resource to help expand the reach of organizations that are committed to improving the nutritional outcomes for underserved seniors in Oakland. In late-2018, a committee was formed to consider grants submitted for funding through the SSB tax. Several senior nutrition-focused groups have applied for funding in the current round of submissions, including SOS/Meals on Wheels, Mercy Brown Bag, and Spectrum Community Services/congregate meals.

The Commission is asking that the Sugar Sweetened Beverage Grant Committee and the City of Oakland approve funding for all of the nutritional programs submitted by these organizations. We strongly feel that the City's ability to fund these programs, as identified in the 2017 council report, reflect a strong commitment to addressing systemic issues in Oakland and delivering against suggested solutions.

The Commission would like to propose an additional solution to a systemic issue in this council report. During the previously-mentioned listening sessions, composed as part of our Age-Friendly City activities, the Commission learned of a problem that affects certain communities in the city, most specifically the East Oakland area. We listened to accounts from longtime homeowners who detailed the travails they must endure just to find fresh groceries in the area. This often involves trips outside of the area of 10-20 miles in distance just to access a proper grocery store (the departure of the WalMart store on Hesperian was cited as particularly deflating for residents). Local market trips include shopping at gas/convenience stores, liquor stores, and mom & pop mini marts. Shoppable items at such location normally do not include fresh fruits, vegetables or meats, and often times the dairy is processed to be more shelf stable. Seniors at the West Oakland listening session echoed these concerns.

One idea that we love from Mercy Brown bag involved the use of a "Produce Truck" that traveled to various locations in the city to deliver fresh fruits, vegetables and dry goods to residents. The Commission is asking the Council to consider how such a program may be used to address "food deserts" in the area, specifically East Oakland and West

Oakland. The Commission will work to understand associated costs and can submit to the City Council as is needed. Alongside produce home-delivery programs, we feel this approach can help to bridge the gap while newer grocery store projects play out over the long term. Proper nutrition becomes more important as we age, and we feel the availability of fresh food and better-for-you options will benefit the city's seniors and contribute to a more livable and age-friendly Oakland.

Enhancing the Commission's Effectiveness

On June 3, 1997 the City Council authorized a \$2.00 increase, from \$23.00 to \$25.00, in select parking citations to provide the Senior Service Set-Aside. Between 2001 and 2009 the Commission was able to provide grants to a number of senior services organizations with this money, but the Senior Service Set-Aside funding was terminated by the Council in 2009 at the request of the City Administrator. Having a budget of our own again will greatly enhance the Commission's effectiveness, as we are frequently made aware of on-the-ground needs in various programs as well as innovative pilot projects that could become models for larger scale improvements in services, and we are committed to developing truly effective methods of communication. Accordingly, we are asking the City Council to restore the Senior Services Set-Aside.

2018 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Commission on Aging is a crossroads for vital information affecting seniors. Every month we hear in-depth reports from a wide variety of agencies and groups that focus on the needs of seniors, as well as regular reports from our thriving Senior Centers. In effect, we are the eyes and the ears of Oakland's elders, to keep the Mayor and the members of the City Council informed and to provide information to seniors throughout the city. We are committed to our growing role as an effective advocacy voice for Oakland's elders, as well as a point of communication and coordination to enhance the effectiveness of the many public and private efforts to address the needs of our aging population.

Monthly televised Commission meetings are a great way for any Oaklander to be in the know about local senior issues. During the past year the Commission engaged with a variety of agencies who support the health and welfare and equitable treatment of older Oakland residents and their families.

- **Community Tech Network**, a non-profit that provides digital literacy instruction with a focus on equitable access informed the Commission about technology grants through the California Public Utilities Commission. Their presentation led to Human Services applying for this grant now pending review.
- **DayBreak Adult Care Centers** presented their Core services, which includes: family caregiver support, senior injury and medication safety, scholarship, nutrition, caregiver training, and an EMS Referral Pilot. DayBreak and Highland

Hospital in collaboration with the Downtown Oakland Senior Center currently offers culturally appropriate programs and healthcare services for Oakland's Eritrean population.

- **Pickleball!** Oaklanders were informed about **Pickleball**, the fastest growing sport for Seniors in the United States. However, Oakland was the only Alameda County City without pickleball courts. During the preceding months Oakland Pickleball became a reality through advocacy and the willingness of Oakland Parks and Recreation to allow a court to be restriped for this activity.
- **Senior Food Security:** The Alameda County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County made their case for an equitable share of the Sugar Sweetened Beverage (SSB) grant funds to go to Senior nutrition and education programs. The presentation emphasized that economic insecurity and lack of access to healthy, nutritious food impact many Oaklanders. SOS Meals on Wheels, Mercy Brown Bag, and Spectrum presented at the meeting and later applied for the SSB grant. At the time of this writing SOS Meals on Wheels is recommended for funding.
- **California Department of Aging** made a presentation about their **Ombudsman** program, which provides services, including investigating complaints for residents of long-term care facilities, information and consultation to resident's and family members, educating and training facility staff on resident's rights, and informing seniors about the various resources available to them
- **The East Bay Korean-American Senior Center** presented their services, which includes lunches served to more than 50 seniors five days per week. The Korean Center is requesting Oakland to consider the equitable funding of their meal program based on financial supports provided to the Unity Council, Family Bridges and two Vietnamese senior services organizations.
- **North Oakland Village** pledged their ongoing support including volunteers to help make Oakland an Age Friendly City. As a group North Oakland village supports Commission activities such as the Annual Older Americans Month event and is a huge proponent for Oakland to build a fully accessible intergenerational playground, with a preference to renovate the old structure near the Rotary Nature Center by the Lake Merritt.
- **California State University, East Bay Nursing** students attended a Commission meeting as group as part of their orientation. This group of young people embarked on field work that included assisting case management and food distribution programs. These efforts help existing programs to keep seniors out of nursing facilities through home visits and other wellness checks. The Commission interaction provides an important context to this work.

- **Older Americans Month:** In order to actively engage with the broader older adult community and to raise awareness of senior issues the Commission on Aging hosts an annual Older Americans Month event. For 2018 the theme, “Engage at Every Age,” was a perfect rallying cry for the Age Friendly focus of the Commission. Older adults and their companions along with service providers and advocates filled Frank H. Ogawa with informational booths, music, performances, speakers, and intergenerational art.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Scott Means, Manager, Aging & Adult Services Division, at 510-238-6137.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Stadmire, Chairperson
Chair, Mayor’s Commission on Aging