

**ELDER READINESS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**  
**December 18, 2007**

**Goal: Arlington enables its aging population to have equal access to Arlington's array of housing, transportation, recreation, health care and lifestyle choices so that they can continue to contribute and remain valued members of the community as long as possible.**

**Strategy 1: Enhance communications on elder issues, programs and services.**

**Develop a communications plan:** Educate and inform the community about existing services and how to plan for the needs of people as they age. Fall 2007. Short-term. (C-1 through C-6)

- Public Information staff in the County Manager's Office, Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Environmental Services (DES), Department of Libraries, and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR) will develop a marketing plan to educate the community on such topics as housing, leisure, education, transportation, supportive services and health care.
- Develop new materials needed to carry out marketing plan, including topics such as accessibility and universal design in public buildings and housing.

**Establish a County-wide Interdepartmental Work Group on Elder Readiness:** This Work Group will be chaired by the DHS, Aging and Disability Services Division Chief and established in December 2007. Short-term. (C-3)

- Members of the Elder Readiness Work Group will include the following departments: Community Planning, Housing and Development; Environmental Services; Fire; Human Services; Libraries; Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources; and the Human Rights Office. Others will be added as needed.
- The general charge of the Work Group will be:
  - Share information about specific programs and services,
  - Identify strategies to make publications and policies "elder-friendly,"
  - Assure that information and services are available to older Arlingtonians with limited English proficiency,
  - Jointly plan and market a comprehensive menu of community activities and opportunities that serve older persons in the areas of leisure, education, libraries, employment, transportation, cultural activities, volunteerism and civic engagement, and
  - Collaborate in the County's initiative called "Arlington Cares" that focuses on customer service.

**Strategy 2: Expand services through use of trained volunteers.**

**Recruit and train volunteers through the Wisdom Works Initiative:** As part of the new grant funded "Wisdom Works" program in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources

(PRCR), the Office of Senior Adult Programs will be recruiting volunteers to enhance senior services over the next two years. Short-term. (C-7; CI-5)

- Develop plans to make internet access available to participants at the centers, and
- Provide transition assistance to newly- or nearly- retired adults.
- Explore partnership with Libraries to use volunteers to assist elders search for information using computers

**Leverage the resources of the County’s Volunteer Office:** The Elder Readiness Task Force recommended the creation of a Volunteer Coordinator to recruit, train, and supervise volunteers for services to elders. This recommendation is not feasible within existing resources and staff recommend working with the DHS Volunteer Office to meet some of these needs. Additionally, staff will seek opportunities to apply for other funds, such as grants. Mid-term. (C-8)

- Look for venues to increase the availability of the federally funded RSVP Volunteer slots in Arlington in concert with the Office of Senior Adult Programs.
- Seek opportunities to expand volunteer services to elders and strategies to increase intergenerational projects.

### **Strategy 3: Implement the Task Force recommendations.**

**Support non-profits serving elders:** The Elder Readiness Task Force recommended creating a non-profit agency whose mission is to ensure an elder-friendly community with services and fund-raising arms. Staff believes it is cost prohibitive to establish a new non-profit agency solely dedicated to this mission since it would take substantial start-up funding for staff, space, and operations. However, there are a variety of established non-profit agencies that could focus on specific needed programs and services for elders. Mid-term. (C-10)

- Staff will work with current non-profits to enhance their capacities to deliver services to elders.
- To the degree resources are available staff will support non-profits in applying for funds from foundations, corporations and other governments.

**Identify the Commission on Aging as lead to monitor the Implementation Plan:** The Commission on Aging has reviewed its committee structure and aligned its charge to provide leadership in monitoring and assisting with the ERTF recommendations. Short-term. (C-9)

**Fund a position responsible for implementation of this Plan.** Due to resource constraints, a new position to implement the Plan is not being recommended. The short term initiatives are being undertaken with existing staff. (C-11)

**Develop progress reports:** The Task Force recommended an annual report to update the community on the progress of this plan. Because of staffing limitations, it is proposed that formal progress reports are developed every three years for the community, with more “informal” reports annually to the Commission on Aging. Short-term. (C-12)

**Goal: Provide affordable, appropriate and accessible housing options.**

**Strategy 1: Provide a range of housing choices serving a range of income levels.**

**Establish a “Concierge Service”:** The Task Force recommended implementing concierge services in existing market rate multi-family apartment buildings with elevators, in areas with a large number of elders. (H-1)

The Task Force review of housing options in Arlington determined that there were housing options for low-income and high-income persons. There are 1,233 units (independent apartments and assisted living units) available for individuals whose income is below 50 percent of the area median (currently \$31,605 for a single person). There are about 800 units for individuals with very high incomes. However, there are few units for middle income elders. Mid-term.

- The Concierge Service is a modification of the nationally recognized NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) projects<sup>1</sup>. These projects provide a fundamental structure for the continuum of care for older adults.
- Selected apartment buildings must contain elevators because they are especially suitable for elders with declining abilities; climbing stairs is one of the first difficulties encountered. Services would include: Guidance for residents to available private and public sector programs, such as private geriatric care managers and home care, assistive hearing devices, Medicare counseling and problem resolution, elder law attorneys, and large print publications in the Arlington Libraries collection.
- This recommendation would require new funding resources to support the marketing of the concept to apartment owners and condominium associations, as well as to support the salary of the concierge service.
- Staff will explore options to obtain additional revenues such as grants.

**Engage civic associations:** Develop the “neighbor watching out for neighbor” program already successful in many areas. DHS staff will continue to provide support to the Commission on Aging in their current effort. Mid-term (H-2)

**Establish the Arlington Assisted Living Residence:** The Arlington Assisted Living Residence was purchased by the County in June 2003 as part of the LPACAP funded supportive housing initiative to serve 52 persons ages 55 and over with serious mental illness, mental retardation, and/or physical disabilities. As outlined in the introduction, federal and state funding has been identified to renovate the facility. The annual operating costs are estimated at \$2.1 million, and would be partially supported by revenue from Auxiliary Grants, private pay, and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance. However, there will be a funding gap of about \$1.0 - \$1.5 million which was recognized as part of the Fiscal Year 2008 budget for support by local funds. Short-term. (H-3)

**Establish Service Coordinators in HUD financed buildings:** Staff will encourage the management of HUD financed buildings to apply for identified HUD grant funds available to fund Service Coordinators. Service Coordinators actively link residents to services that they may need. (H-4)

**Modify the asset limits for the Housing Grants Program:** The County’s Housing Grants Program currently has an asset limit of \$35,000. Short-term. (H-5)

- This recommendation would expand the asset limit to that of the Homeowners Grant program which is \$340,000. Both programs derive their authority from the same statutory

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<sup>1</sup> NORC Supportive Services Program paradigm is a community-based intervention designed to reduce service fragmentation and create healthy, integrated communities in which seniors living in NORCs are able to age-in-place with greater comfort and security in their own homes; UJC (United Jewish Community) website.

provision of the Code of Virginia. By comparison, the Real Estate Tax Relief program for Elderly and Disabled Households has an asset limit of \$540,000, as allowed by state statute. Changing the asset limit in the Housing Grants program has the effect of not disadvantaging renters relative to homeowners. Furthermore, there are older renters who do not have pensions and depend on the income of their savings for monthly expenses. Raising the asset limit will be of benefit to working families because it will allow them to save for a down payment for a house or for retirement which they cannot realistically do with an asset test of \$35,000.

- Assets and income would be treated as they are with the Homeowners Grant.
  - All liquid assets would be counted. However, personal effects, cash value of life insurance, one motor vehicle (highest assessed value if multiple), and IRA's and other retirement instruments would be exempt.
  - All distributions from IRAs and retirement instruments would be counted as income in determination of a Housing Grant as they are with the Homeowners Grant.
- This increase would require a change to Chapter 44 of the Arlington County Code and action by the County Board.

**Review the feasibility of recommending changes to the zoning ordinance:** The Housing Division and the Housing Commission will consider: Short-term. (H-6; H-7)

- Applying the Affordable Housing requirements to new continuing care retirement communities;
- Amending the ordinance to permit Accessory Units; and
- Determining if there are impediments to the establishment of co-housing options.

## **Strategy 2: Encourage the provision of a safe and accessible environment.**

**Develop and disseminate information on accessibility and universal design features:** The Inter-Departmental Work Group will develop and disseminate materials. This will include checklists about accessibility and universal design features for the general public, as well as builders, home owners, construction professionals, mortgage lenders and others. Short-term. (H-8; H-9, H-11)

**Review public facilities design plans to promote elder-friendly features:** Staff will review plans for new or remodeled County facilities, parks, and pools to promote elder-friendly design features that promote a safe and accessible environment. Staff will examine the feasibility of developing and adopting the use of a checklist of required and desirable features for design review. Short-term. (H-10)

**Encourage mixed-use development with high quality pedestrian environments:** Staff will continue to use the site plan process to encourage mixed use development with high quality pedestrian environments. Staff will encourage developers who still have approved site plans that use brick pavers to voluntarily substitute alternatives. Short-term (H-12).

**Promote inclusion of elder-friendly design features in “green’ buildings.** A task force composed of DES, CPHD, and PRCR staff is assessing all County buildings for accessibility features and is developing a list of universal design features that will be reviewed at the same time. Mid-term (H-13)

**Publicize disability tax credit:** Staff will promote the General Assembly’s expansion of the state’s disability tax credit to a livable home tax credit as initiated by the Northern Virginia Aging Network. This \$500 tax credit currently allows homeowners to modify a home with accessibility features. After implementing regulations have been developed by the Virginia Department of Housing and

Community Development, the \$500 credit will be available to those who have purchased a new home with these features. Short-term.

### **Strategy 3: Enhance the living environment for elders in long term care residences.**

**Establish a regional family council:** Work with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and the Arlington Commission on Long-Term Care Residences to assist families of nursing home and assisted living residents to develop a regional family council to provide information and support to each other. Short-term. (H-14)

**Develop a pilot program for resident centered care with a nursing home:** DHS staff will support local advocates and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman initiative to designate funding to promote “culture change” and person-centered care in nursing homes. The General Assembly has directed the Department of Medical Services to convene a stakeholders’ group and determine how to use civil monetary penalties for this purpose. DHS will collaborate with the stakeholders’ group. (H-15)

**Report EMS concerns to the Long-Term Care Residences Commission.** DHS will provide to the Long Term Care Residences Commission quarterly summaries of reports made by EMS of suspected abuse or neglect in long-term care residences. Short-term. (H-16)

## **Goal: Ensure access to key supportive and health services.**

### **Strategy 1: Enhance access to the array of community based services needed by elders with declining physical and or cognitive abilities.**

**Implement outreach and marketing efforts:** DHS and PRCR staff will implement an outreach/marketing effort, in concert with Commission on Aging efforts, to reach civic associations, faith groups, service clubs and non-profit agencies to help elders and their family’s access services. Short-term. (SS-1) Staff will:

- Make a minimum of 12 presentations to groups, assist in planning and participate in health and information fairs, and advise groups on useful written materials.
- Coordinate outreach efforts with other organizations in the local aging network, such as the Arlington Steering Committee for Services to Older Persons, Interfaith Council, non-profit agencies, such as Meals on Wheels, professionals, such as elder law attorneys and physicians, and local businesses serving the mature market.

**Conduct in-home assessments:** DHS staff will provide one free in-home assessment to each elder and his/her family who requests assistance. For elders who can afford the service, referrals will be made to private geriatric care managers. Short-term (SS-2)

**Develop supportive services and health care resources:** Staff will seek additional resources for supportive services and health care resources. Increases in the availability of these services at affordable rates over the course of the next decades will be key in determining whether Arlington residents can “age in place.” Mid and Long-term. These services include, but are not limited to: (SS-3)

- Assistive technology such as medication dispensers,

- “Handy man program” (e.g., replacing a washer or a ceiling light bulb, repairing a hole in a fence),
- Substance abuse services,
- Nursing case management, occupational therapist and social work assessments.
- Personal care and homemaker service.

**Open Walter Reed Adult Day Health Care Program:** The Center has been designed to serve up to 30 adults with physical or cognitive disabilities in need of care during the day time in a safe and protected environment, allowing family caregivers to continue working or to obtain needed respite. The opening of the program was suspended because of the loss of LPACAP funds. The FY 2008 budget of the Virginia General Assembly includes \$50,000 in start-up funds for this program. The approved Fiscal Year 2008 budget provides \$358,700 of funding for this program from local tax dollars. Short-Term. (SS-4)

**Expand options for surrogate decision-making services:** DHS staff will look for resources to expand services offering options for surrogate decision-making (e.g., guardians, conservators, agents under health and financial powers of attorney, representative payees) in addition to the existing DHS volunteer program. Short-term. (SS-5)

**Use assistive technologies to foster elders’ independence.** Staff will seek additional resources to enable elders to receive occupational therapy assessments on a sliding fee scale and assistance with paying for assistive technology items. Short-term (SS-6).

**Establish a model program in Northern Virginia for older adults with mental illness.** The General Assembly provided funding for the creation of two pilot programs to serve seriously mentally ill older adults; one of these programs will serve Northern Virginia. These new programs were funded in response to the advocacy of the Northern Virginia Community Services Boards and the Northern Virginia Aging Network. Arlington County will manage and operate the pilot project on behalf of the Northern Virginia region. The one million dollars approved for Northern Virginia will support a specialized geriatric mental health team that will work with about 40 seniors with mental illness residing at Eastern State and Piedmont Geriatric Hospitals as well as working with those in the community that are at risk of long-term hospitalization. Short term. (SS-7)

**Develop an in-home substance abuse program.** Staff and the Arlington Steering Committee for Services to Older Persons supported Vanguard, Inc. in their recent grant request for funds to provide four substance abuse forums. Mid-term (SS-8)

**Participate in the development of a regional PACE initiative:** DHS staff will participate in regional planning for the development of a PACE (Program for All Inclusive Care of the Elderly) to serve individuals who are age 55 and over, participate in both Medicare and Medicaid and are eligible for nursing home care. PACE maintains individuals in their homes and provides all the acute and long-term care that enrollees require, much of the service in an adult day care setting. Short-term. (SS-9)

## **Strategy 2: Increase the safety and independence of elders living at home.**

**Support availability of emergency alert systems:** DHS staff will support the Virginia Hospital Center’s Life-Line program and the Commonwealth Attorney’s program for free recycled cell phone distribution to call 911. The former is currently available only to people who can afford the full monthly cost. Staff will explore resources to make subsidies available. DHS and Fire Department

staff will look for resources to expand the availability of a variety of emergency alert systems, including electronic initiatives. Mid-term. (SS-10)

**Use volunteers to offer safety checks:** In conjunction with the Fire Department, and the SALT Council (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together), DHS staff will initiate a program to use volunteers to offer safety, fall prevention, and accessibility checks in the home. Short-term. (SS-11)

- Ten volunteers will be recruited and trained and will assess the homes of 150 frail elders by end of Fiscal Year 2008.
- Office of Emergency Management will continue to disseminate materials to older residents to prepare for emergencies.

**Goal: Ensure accessible, affordable, reliable, safe transportation.**

**Strategy 1: Provide flexible alternatives to the single-occupancy-vehicle trips.**

Arlington's STAR (Specialized Transit for Arlington Residents) program is an alternative ADA paratransit service to WMATA's regional MetroAccess Services. Paratransit service complements the extensive fixed-route rail and bus service provided by WMATA and local jurisdictions. The overall goal of the STAR program is to offer equitable access to high-quality alternative paratransit services to qualified Arlington residents delivered in a professional and cost effective manner.

**Expand paratransit options:** The recent comprehensive review of the STAR program highlights that changes and improvements are required, particularly with regard to equitable access and cost effectiveness. Service expansion would require more resources, which in turn need to be part of the County's budget process. With input from DHS and STAR users, staff from the Department of Environmental Services, Transportation Division is working on the following initiatives to improve current services: Mid-term. (T-1)

- Expanding call center hours further into the evening and on weekends to improve access for all users while phasing out informal direct bookings to providers.
- Investing in the basic systems that support STAR (replacing the computer servers and phone system that can make call center access and trip booking problematic).
- Investing in web-based booking capability - expanding access for all users.
- Updating and distributing program description and procedures to all participants.
- Evaluating the potential for increasing shared-rides to improve cost effectiveness.
- Initiating travel training to assist STAR participants in accessing the fixed route bus and rail system to meet some/or all of their mobility needs.

**Evaluate requests for same day service.** STAR is a scheduled alternative ADA paratransit service that is intended to be shared-ride and to mirror the experience of fixed-route transit. Same-day service by nature is unscheduled and greatly reduces the opportunity for shared rides. Although unlimited same-day service that is not managed through the central call center has been eliminated, DES Transportation staff currently is evaluating alternatives to address the need within limited categories and subject to adequate management controls. Short-term. (T-2)

**Follow-up with WMATA regarding MetroAccess service.** DES Transportation will provide input to WMATA at regularly scheduled meetings to improve the MetroAccess certification process and will follow-up with MetroAccess staff in specific instances when problems are brought to County staff's attention. Ongoing. (T-3)

**Encourage the use of bicycles.** Staff will promote awareness of the extensive bike lanes network and the amenities that allow use of bicycles, particularly in conjunction with public transit use. (T-4)

**Promote car-sharing.** Arlington's car-sharing program has been greatly expanded over the last three years with over 73 car-sharing vehicles located on streets in both Metro corridors, Columbia Pike and Shirlington. Staff will negotiate with the Flex Car program to ensure those over the age of 75 with good driving records can access the program. Ongoing. (T-5)

**Strategy 2: Attract more people to use transit more often by providing easy-to-use service where and when it is needed.**

**Make use of low-floor buses.** DES Transportation has recently accepted delivery of eight low-floor buses with multiple secure wheel chair positions for delivery in the fall 2007. These will be deployed on the highest ridership lines serving County facilities (Route 41) and the hospital (Route 51). DES Transportation Division will only purchase low-floor buses in the future as the existing fleet is gradually replaced. WMATA has already replaced over 50 percent of its buses on routes through Arlington with low-floor CNG buses and the intent is to continue to expand the low-floor fleet. Short-term. (T-6)

**Expand the use of Smartrip technology.** DES Transportation Division will install Smartrip technology on its buses by fall 2007. (T-6)

**Upgrade bus stops and install additional bus shelters.** DES has completed an inventory of all bus stops in the County, incorporated this information in GIS and has adopted bus stop standards. Bus stops are being upgraded through both the County's capital program and through private development site plan requirements. Short-term. (T-6)

**Offer travel training to encourage use of public transit.** DES Transportation Division will launch comprehensive travel training and assistance program for elders, as a follow-up to the current Northern Virginia Transportation Commission initiative and the successful DES Commuter Services transit promotional program aimed at teens. Short-term. (T-6)

**Strategy 3: Create unitary resource center for transportation assistance.**

**Explore feasibility of establishing a consolidated mobility management service.** DES Transportation's contract program Commuter Services has a web site with comprehensive transit and paratransit information. DES and DHS will assess the feasibility of creating a mobility management service, i.e., provide one-on-one counseling to elders to access the transportation service that will best suit their needs for a specific trip. Mid-term. (T-7; T-8)

**Strategy 4: Continue to improve walkability.**

**Expand use of technologies.** Over one-half of the signals in the County are now equipped with countdown signals. DES will be expanding by fifteen to twenty locations each year. Mid-term. (T-9)

**Assure that curb cuts are safe and easy to use.** Wherever new curb cuts are installed, they will comply with the requirement that a clearly identifiable and level sidewalk (maximum 2 percent

cross-slope) be provided. The County also responds to individual requests for new curb cuts. Short-term. (T-9)

**Sidewalk width.** Staff will ensure compliance with requirement of six-foot sidewalk clear zones in commercial areas and on arterial streets at the time of new construction or renovation. New development approved under site plan generally includes conditions related to vehicular and pedestrian connectivity of streets, pedestrian-oriented development, and safe pedestrian design. Short-term. (T-9)

**Educate pedestrians on safe methods for crossing streets and educate drivers on proper behavior around pedestrians.** The WALKArlington program uses the Streetsmart brochures and publications in English and Spanish that are produced and distributed annually by the Council of Governments. The WALKArlington program will be working with other County agencies to achieve better community exposure for these materials in the future. DHS and PCRC staff will work with WalkArlington program staff to reach out to the older Arlington population. Short-term. (T-10)

### **Strategy 5: Ensure safer older drivers.**

**Conduct outreach programs on driver training:** Staff will conduct an outreach program at senior centers and other locations to provide information such as existing driver training courses and specialized assistive devices particularly helpful in vehicles. Information about DMV services, including specialized testing for driver skills, capacity and judgment, will be included.

- Train 300 elders on driver safety, adaptive equipment, and alternative transportation methods by June 2009. Short-term. (T-11; T-12; T-13)

<b>Goal: Encourage participation in civic, cultural, educational, social and recreational activities.</b>
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### **Strategy 1: Seniors will have a variety of ways to connect with their communities, including civic engagement and social opportunities.**

**Enhance senior center buildings:** As recommended in the County's Public Spaces Master Plan, PRCR and DES will assess existing facilities and identify capital projects that will be needed to enhance the appeal and relevance of senior centers for a growing new generation of seniors. Mid-term. (CI-1)

**Provide "One-stop-access" at Senior Centers:** PRCR and DHS will seek opportunities to expand collaboration and provide one-stop access to the degree staff resources allow. Currently, DHS staff provides some mental health counseling and presentations on a variety of topics such as fraud and scam prevention, Medicare, real estate tax relief, and Housing Grants at the Senior Centers. Staff will seek additional resources to provide information, referral, counseling and training of volunteers at senior centers. Mid-Term. (CI-2)

**Promote engagement of senior citizens as resources to address community needs:** Recognizing that Arlington's increasing senior population can be a positive resource, County staff will implement programs to connect senior adults with volunteer and part-time employment opportunities for community service. This can be done in conjunction with transition assistance to newly- or nearly-retired adults. The PRCR Office of Senior Adult Programs will collaborate with DHS Agency on Aging, Volunteer Office, and Employment Center; Department of Libraries; the

Arlington Public Schools; and the wide array of community partners. This effort has already begun through the grant-funded Wisdom Works. (CI-3; CI-4; C-5)

**Goal: Pursue legislative and regulatory changes to ensure availability of appropriate programs and services to meet elder needs.**

**Strategy 1: Improve quality of care in nursing and rehabilitation centers.**

**Strategy 2: Assist elders to avoid or delay institutionalization.**

**Strategy 3: Encourage purchase of long-term care insurance.**

**Strategy 4: Facilitate the development of assisted living residences.**

**Support legislative initiatives:** On an annual basis, staff will provide information for the County Board's consideration for legislation to address the needs of elders related to the four strategies listed above. Staff will actively work with the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Association of Counties, and other statewide organizations on legislative issues to support these strategies. Staff and commissions will collaborate with others and use opportunities, such as the Governor's Health Reform Commission, to advocate regarding elders issues. Ongoing. (L-1 through L-9)

Following are elder friendly legislative initiatives needing ongoing advocacy identified by statewide organizations, staff, and commissions working on elder issues:

- Expanding Virginia's Medicaid criteria for admission to nursing homes since Virginia's criteria are the most restrictive in the nation.
- Increasing Medicaid payments to providers of facility and community based long-term care services.
- Enacting staffing standards and enhanced mandatory training requirements for long-term care residences.
- Raising the Medicaid personal maintenance allowance from 165 to 300 percent of Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Raising the State payment for assisted living (the auxiliary grant, in Northern Virginia currently \$1,220 per month).
- Providing points for universal design features when the Virginia Housing Development Authority awards tax credits.
- Tracking initiatives to participate in the federal-state Long-term Care Insurance Partnership and providing this information to Arlington residents.